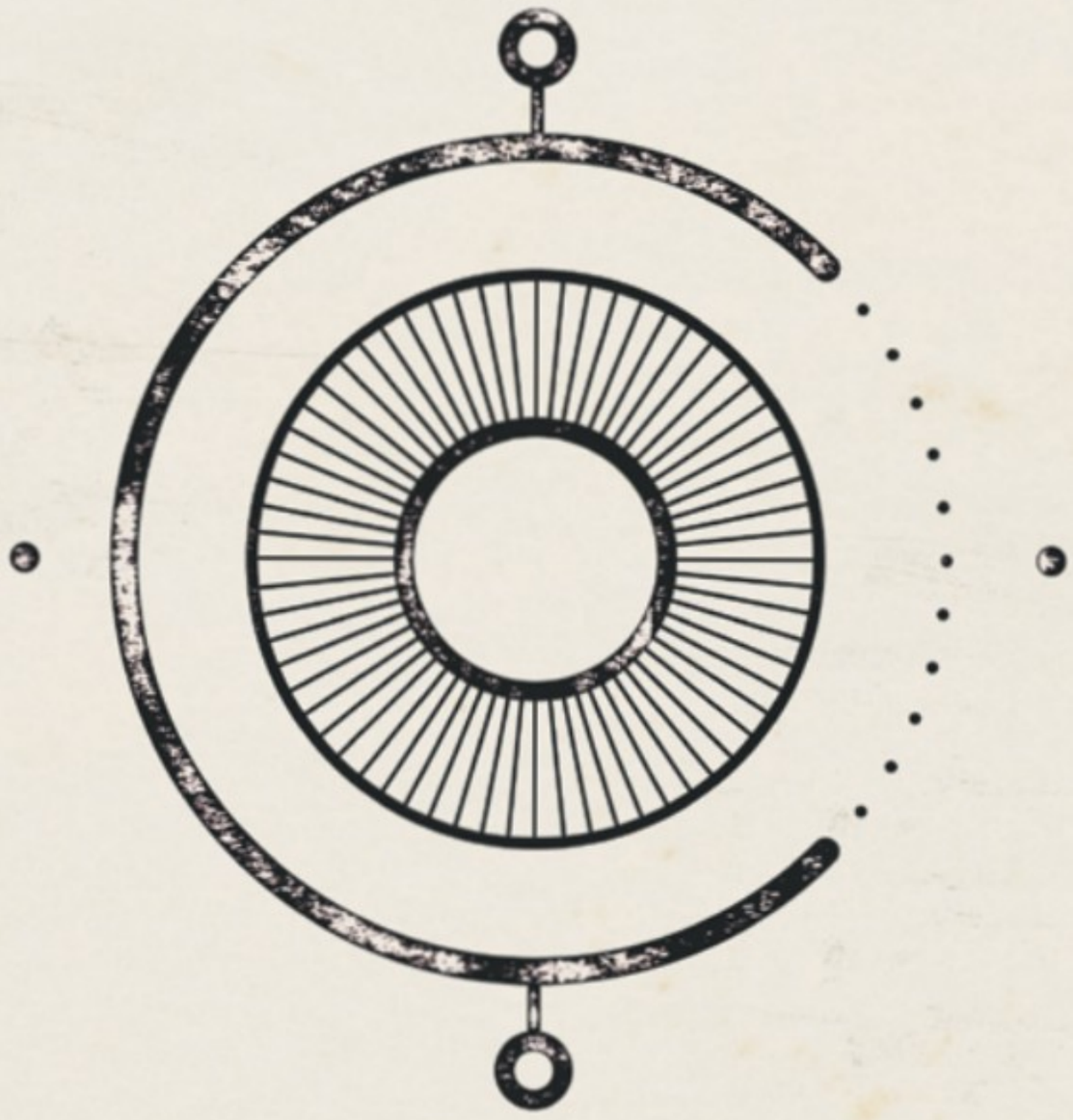
CANDELA OBSCURA

CORE RULEBOOK

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Property of Lightkeeper Ezra Ashford :



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Thank you, fine reader. Enjoy your adventures in the Fairelands.

Candela Obscura Core Rulebook

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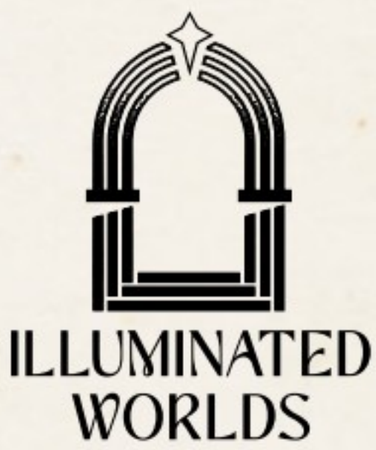
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Cortnye Queen Transaction: CRIT1014003

Contents

INTRODUCTION 1
- What is a Roleplaying Game? 1
- Overview of Gameplay 2
- The Rules 2
- Setting Overview 4
- Roles & Specialties 4
- Safety Tools 5
- Touchstones 5

THE CORE SYSTEM 7
- A Conversation at the Table 7
- Drives & Actions 8
- Gilded Dice 8
- Setting the Stakes & Expectations 9
- Making an Action Roll 10
- Consequences 12
- Resistances 13
- Gear 14
- Marks & Scars 14
- The Legacy of Harm in Horror 16

MAKING A CHARACTER 19
- Step 1: Choose a Role & Specialty 19
- Step 2: Determine Action Ratings 25
- Step 3: Determine Drives 26
- Step 4: Determine Resistances 26
- Step 5: Gild Actions 26
- Step 6: Choose Abilities 27
- Step 7: Add Character Details 33
- Step 8: Form Relationships 33

CREATING YOUR CIRCLE 39
- Step 1: Answer Circle Questions 39
- Step 2: Name Your Circle 40
- Step 3: Choose a Chapter House Location 40
- Step 4: Choose Circle Abilities 41
- Step 5: Assign Resource Points 41

HOW TO PLAY 43
- Assignments 43
- Play Structure 44
- Play Guidance 46
- Character vs. Character Adjudication 47
- Drives & Resistances 48
- Actions 50
- Gear 52
- Character & Circle Advancement 54
- Full Example of Play 56

THE SUPERNATURAL WORLD 65
- Introduction 65
- Phenomena 65
- Alchemy 70

CANDELA OBSCURA & BEYOND 73
- Candela Obscura 73
- Exoteric Order of New Sciences (EONS) 78
- Office of Unexplained Phenomena (OUP) 79
- Pyre 80
- The Red Hand 82
- Unabridged 83

THE FAIRELANDS 87
- Setting Introduction 87
- The Time Period 89
- Timeline of the Fairelands 90
- Hale & The Fairelands 92
- Language 96
- Technology 97
- Economy 97
- Transportation 98
- The Triumvirate 98
- Life in the Fairelands 103
- Newfaire Districts 107
- Oldfaire Sites 127
- Fairelands Landmarks 145

RUNNING THE GAME 159
- GM Principles 159
- Making Moves 160
- Session Zero 162
- Preparing for Play 163
- Creating a Lightkeeper 164
- Combat & Marks 165
- Countdown Dice 166
- Adjudicating Stakes & Expectations 167
- Assignment Structure 168
- Example Assignments 169
- Additional Assignments 187
- GM Resources 188
- Additional Inspiration 197
- Rules & Rolls Reference 198

INDEX 203

Cortnye Queen Transaction: CRIT1014003



Cortnye Queen Transaction: CRIT1014003

INTRODUCTION

You have entered a gilded world of terrifying magick.

This is the moment when we could say, we ought to say, "Only you can save us." That would be empowering, but it wouldn't be true. That's not the way the world works, and that's not how real heroes are born. Instead, we invite you to fight, explore, investigate—dare we say, play?—in this place where arcane forces and human corruption come together like alchemy.

Candela Obscura is a horror tabletop roleplaying game (TTRPG), built on the Illuminated Worlds System, about occult investigators hunting down the dangerous supernatural forces making incursions into a world very much like your own.

Candela Obscura is also the name of the paranormal secret society charged with protecting the world from deadly magickal phenomena. Though we've worked to collect knowledge of this magick and its creatures over the centuries, our understanding is still limited. We know they come from a realm beyond our own, but what they want and why they're here is still a mystery to us.

As a member of this organization, you will traverse the wide landscape of the Fairelands, the capital of which is the sprawling, turn-of-the-century city of Newfaire—a metropolis built atop the ruins of an ancient, fallen civilization still teeming with the remnants of powerful magick. You will face unfathomable horrors within the crowded downtown streets of the Varnish, investigate strange disappearances in the cornfields of Tottergrass, and even delve into the writhing underground ruins of Oldfaire, to help us stop these powerful supernatural beings from tearing apart our world.

WHAT IS A ROLEPLAYING GAME?

If you've never played a TTRPG before, don't worry—we'll teach you everything you need to know. You're in for a series of sessions, each running anywhere between 2–5 hours, where you'll be embodying a person in this strange and dangerous world. You will make choices about how this character acts, what they say, how they feel—all while interacting with your fellow players to help them tell their own stories. You'll imagine, or invent, everything you do, and if you don't know if something will succeed or fail, you'll pick up your dice and roll to see what direction the story moves in next.

If you *have* participated in a TTRPG before, this style of play might work somewhat differently than what you're used to. Our game's primary focuses are investigation and social encounters, with instances of horror and violence interspersed. This means that all character types are useful throughout the course of an adventure and it's not essential to consider the balance of your party when building a team of investigators.

The game also functions primarily as a conversation—ideas, information, action, and dialogue are exchanged between everyone until a situation arises where the outcome is unclear. When dice are rolled to determine that outcome, the result helps ascertain whether the player will miss, succeed, or get a mixed success—meaning they get what they want but it comes at a cost. We'll talk more about this in detail soon.

In the meantime, know that on a miss or a mixed success, the scene should escalate—danger could make itself known, monsters can attack, gear may break, allies might be thrust into peril, or any number of complications will move the story forward in an exciting and dangerous way.

This back-and-forth—between players taking actions and the scene evolving based on those actions—is the language of play in this game.

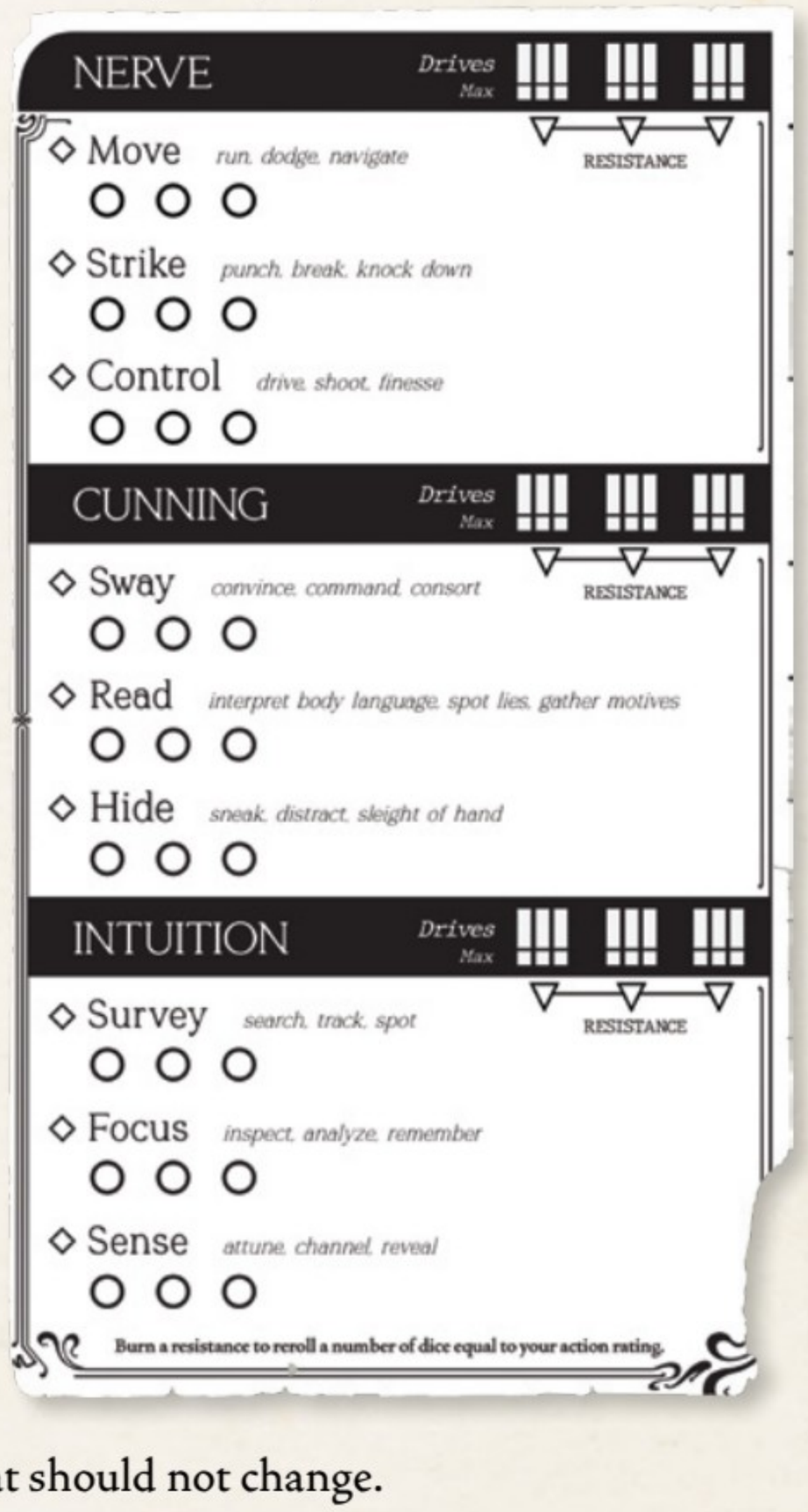
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OVERVIEW OF GAMEPLAY

Every table will have a group of players, known as player characters (PCs), as well as a gamemaster (GM) who facilitates the world, moves the plot forward, plays non-player characters (NPCs), and moderates the rules. GMs are not wholly responsible for the fiction but rather present the reality of the world so that players can make choices, and then they aid in determining the outcome of the results that come from those decisions. Building the narrative of *Candela Obscura* is a collaboration among equals empowered to take charge of different roles.

To begin, the table should have access to all of the game's character sheets, available as a download at darringtonpress.com/candela, and each player should have nine 6-sided dice, called *d6* for short. Three of these dice should be of a separate and distinct color from their counterparts. These will be referred to as *gilded dice,* and the remaining six will be known simply as *standard dice.*

Each character has a set of *actions*, which determine how many 6-sided dice the player rolls when attempting to do something in the narrative that has an uncertain outcome. The GM will set the stakes and expectations of the situation, and help the player select the action that best applies to the roll. When determining the outcome of the roll, the player will most often tell the GM their single highest result. Then, the GM will describe how the scene changes as a result of that roll.



Each character also has *drives*, expendable resources that represent their character's ability to push themselves in a given situation. They provide a means of grouping actions under three overarching themes: *Nerve, Cunning*, and *Intuition.* But, more importantly, this mechanic provides a way for players to improve their chances of success on any roll.

Additionally, every character has *abilities* that provide customized skills specific to each character type, and allow you to further customize your personal narrative.

This overview represents only a small, but important, fraction of the tools you'll use to successfully navigate an investigation. As you explore this book and play through the world, you may rest assured: things will become clearer.

THE RULES

There are only a few core rules within this world that should not change.

That is to say, when reading through the rest of this book, remember: this is your game. In nearly every case, you may pick and choose from the available rules and lore to provide the best possible experience for everyone at your table.

That said, there are some tenets to abide by in order to navigate this strange place. So long as the following rules remain intact, you are playing the truth of *Candela Obscura*.

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Rules of the World

- *Candela Obscura* takes place in a world that resembles your own. The average citizen neither knows about, nor would believe in, magick or its effects.
- There is a barrier, known as the Flare, between this realm and the beyond.
- There are places where the Flare is weakened—referred to as *thinnings*. These thinnings allow metaphysical energy, known as *magick*, to seep through the Flare.
- The myths, legends, and folktales of the Fairelands are stories created by average citizens to explain real magickal phenomena.

Rules of Magick

- Magick can become infused in mundane objects, places, or beings, permanently altering them. If a thinning is opened wide enough, creatures from beyond may also come through. Anything affected by magick or from another realm is known as a *phenomenon*.
- *Bleed* is the corruptive force left behind by powerful magick. This bleed also radiates from the phenomena that have made incursions into the world.
- When a person is exposed to too much bleed, they may be taken over by these supernatural forces, become corrupted, or die. The manifestation of bleed varies based on the phenomenon.
- People with inherent magick are rare in the mundane world. Many Candela Obscura members interact with magick by wielding powerful artifacts. These items may also reduce, contain, or eliminate bleed.

Rules of Candela Obscura

- Members of Candela Obscura are investigators of supernatural phenomena, attempting to protect the world from these dangers by securing and studying them.
- The organization has a hierarchy that includes a council of Lightkeepers who direct the resources of Candela Obscura. A small party sent out by a Lightkeeper to investigate a phenomenon is known as a *circle*. This mission is known as an *assignment*.
- There are Candela Obscura *chapters*, local enclaves of many members, throughout the world. Each has access, via a thinning, to the organization's transdimensional vault, known as the Fourth Pharos.
- The Fourth Pharos is the fourth iteration of a lighthouse stronghold that sits within the Flare. Inside, there are vaults where the most powerful books, artifacts, and phenomena are kept for safety. The security of these vaults is maintained by centuries-old, constantly turning magickal astrolabes.

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SETTING OVERVIEW

In the northern country of Hale lies the fertile valley known as the Fairelands, a diverse and prosperous region currently in recovery from a brutal six-year war. On its western coast sits the central hub of politics and progress, the capital city of Newfaire.

Filled with technology that resembles your own during the turn of the twentieth century, this civilization stands upon the ruins of its ancient, alchemical predecessor known as Oldfaire. With a blend of ancient and modern architecture that resembles the integration found in such cities as Edinburgh, Lima, New York, Paris, and Istanbul, citizens are nestled within historical Brutalism and the recent evolution from Art Nouveau into Art Deco.

In the Fairelands, modern development consumes arcane history, and players grapple with both the horrors from beyond the Flare and the great forces that rule the mundane world. More about the Fairelands can be found on page 87.



ROLES & SPECIALTIES

As *Candela Obscura* is a horror game of investigation, we recommend prioritizing a journey of self-discovery and metamorphosis, rather than fully forming every detail of your character before the first roll of the dice.

Character creation is an opportunity to investigate the world of *Candela Obscura* on two fronts: What do you wish to explore within your character? What does your table wish to explore as a team? As long as we make empathetic choices and prioritize the needs and health of our friends at the table, we can use the game as an opportunity to explore the aspects of this world that both excite and scare us.

Characters are made up of a *role*, the position they fill within their circle, and a *specialty*, the unique set of skills and experiences they possess. You may choose from the following roles and specialties:

Face (*Journalist & Magician*) characters seek mastery of the people.

Muscle (*Explorer & Soldier*) characters seek mastery of the body.

Scholar (*Doctor & Professor*) characters seek mastery of the mind.

Slink (*Criminal & Detective*) characters seek mastery of the unknown.

Weird (*Medium & Occultist*) characters seek mastery of the arcane.

Candela Obscura is a world of monsters, both magickal and human. This provides a particularly keen opportunity to step into the skin of that which scares you. Consider playing someone unlike yourself, imagining a new world from a new perspective. Or play someone exactly like who you wish you could be, would never be, or are.

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SAFETY TOOLS

Because you are about to embark upon missions of unexplainable horror, you must take into account the safety of the people at your table. By understanding and respecting the boundaries and needs of the friends you are playing with, you can dive deeper into the parts of the world that most excite the group.

There are a number of safety tools available should you wish to use them, and you are encouraged to explore the TTRPG Safety Toolkit, curated by Kienna Shaw and Lauren Bryant-Monk, available at https://bit.ly/ttrpgsafetytoolkit for more information and resources.

TOUCHSTONES

There are many cultural touchstones from your world that you can use to explain the game to friends and inspire the stories you tell.

Books: *The Night Circus* by Erin Morgenstern; *Faeries* by Brian Froud and Alan Lee; *Neverwhere* by Neil Gaiman; *The Ballad of Black Tom* by Victor LaVelle; *Scary Stories to Tell in the Dark* by Alvin Schwartz; *A Darker Shade of Magic* by V.E. Schwab; *Frankenstein; or, The Modern Prometheus* by Mary Shelley; the *Sherlock Holmes* series by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle

Comics: *Hellboy* created by Mike Mignola; *Bizenghast* by M. Alice LeGrow; *Constantine* created by Alan Moore, Stephen R. Bissette, Rick Veitch, and John Totleben; *Department of Truth* by James Tynion IV; *The Invisibles* by Grant Morrison

Films & TV: *The Prestige* by Jonathan Nolan and Christopher Nolan; *Lovecraft Country* by Misha Green et al.; *As Above, So Below* by John Erick Dowdle; *Crimson Peak* by Guillermo del Toro; *Penny Dreadful* by John Logan et al.; *Ripper Street* by Richard Warlow et al.; *Arcane* by Christian Linke and Alex Yee et al.

Video Games: The *BioShock* series by Ken Levine et al. from 2K Games; *Bloodborne* and *Elden Ring* by Hidetaka Miyazaki from FromSoftware

Candela Obscura stands on the shoulders of giants. If you enjoy this game, we highly recommend the library of magnificent tabletop games that influenced its creation. These include: *Apocalypse World* by Vincent and Meguey Baker; *For the Queen* by Alex Roberts; *Kids on Bikes* by Doug Levandowski and Jon Gilmour; *Kingdom Death: Monster* by Adam Poots; and *Monster of the Week* by Michael Sands.



In particular, we would like to tip our hats to the TTRPG *Blades in the Dark* by John Harper from Evil Hat Productions. John's work is an incredible inspiration both in mechanics and tone, and it is our great joy to count them as a friend. Should your investigators turn to a life of smuggling and thievery, we encourage you to take your circle to play among the scoundrels of Duskvol.

Additionally, *Vaesen* by Nils Hintze et al. from Free League is a game of beautiful Scandinavian lore. Though set within completely different worlds, we hope that the monsters of the Mythic North would find themselves at home among the creatures of the Flare.

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THE CORE SYSTEM

A CONVERSATION AT THE TABLE

Your group's exploration of the world will take the form of a structured conversation between the players and the gamemaster. The GM will present the situation and give players the opportunity to respond, and when the group reaches a place in the scene where the outcome of a decision is uncertain and there is the possibility of consequences to the action, dice are rolled to determine the result. Remember that there is no one person in charge of the story you tell—you are all working together to figure out what happens next.

Though the GM's role is to facilitate all of the conflicts, enemies, adversaries, monsters, and threats you face, this doesn't mean they are playing against the rest of the table. Instead, the GM's goal is to provide a set of challenges that drive the narrative while, in equal measure, providing opportunities for players to show off their character's skills.

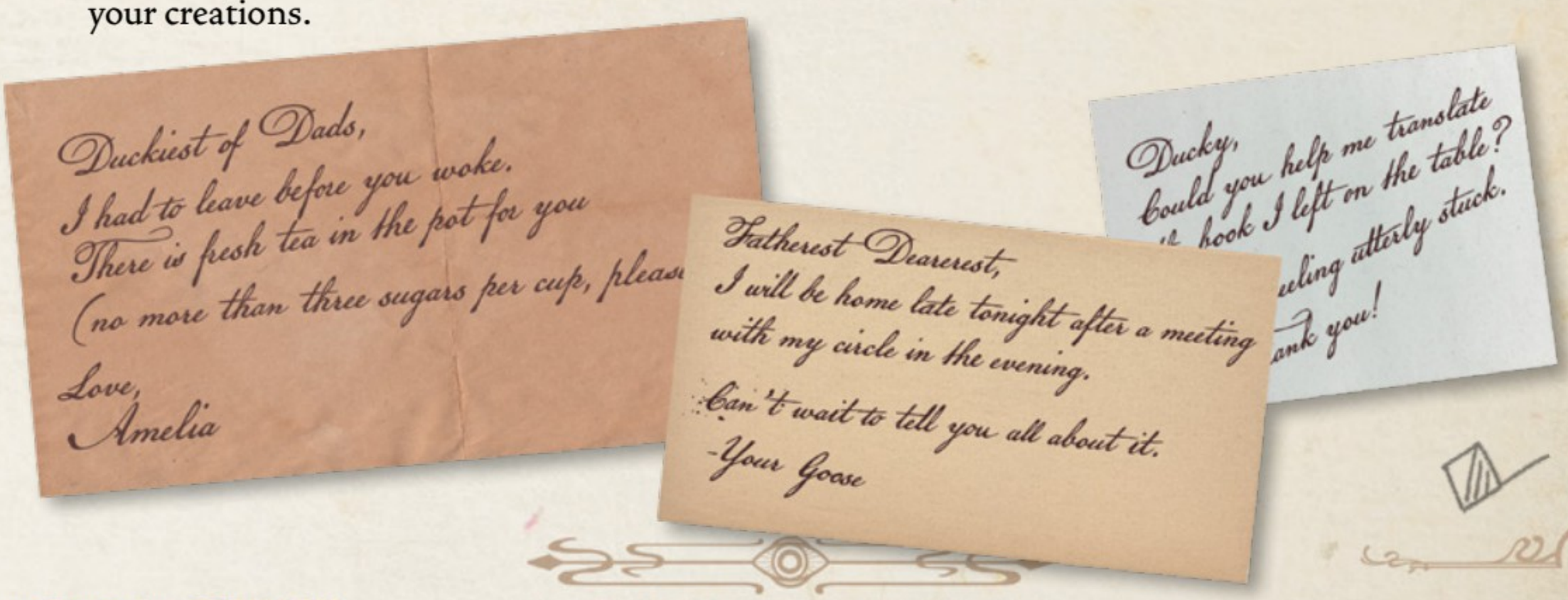
Within a "fiction-first" TTRPG like *Candela Obscura*, the narrative drives the action, rather than the reverse. To support story development and healthy collaboration, you may hear people use phrases like, "Yes, and..." Meaning: when someone pitches a concept, says a line, or takes an action in good faith with the story, you should look for opportunities to support them and use your creativity to build upon their ideas.

ON COLLABORATION AT THE TABLE

Utilizing the practice of "yes and-ing" one another should not be interpreted as carte blanche for players to narrate outside the bounds of the fiction you are establishing together; but rather an opportunity to foster a supportive atmosphere at the table. We encourage you to relish your collaboration by introducing ideas that honor the truth of your shared fiction. When we balance the equally important moments of taking the spotlight and shining the spotlight on our friends at the table, a story emerges that is much richer than any one person could tell alone.

The rules, lore, and mechanics in this book are meant to work for you. Anything here may be adapted, modified, or omitted based on your table's needs and desires. Within this text, we've introduced the Fairelands and included our guidelines for play, but the writing of a stranger should never supersede the needs of your friends.

You may always choose to customize the world, our paranormal society, or anything else you see fit to change. It is our great pleasure to have this text serve as a foundation for your creations.



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DRIVES & ACTIONS

In *Candela Obscura*, three different drives (*Nerve, Cunning,* and *Intuition*) encompass the nine actions you can use to overcome the challenges of an assignment.

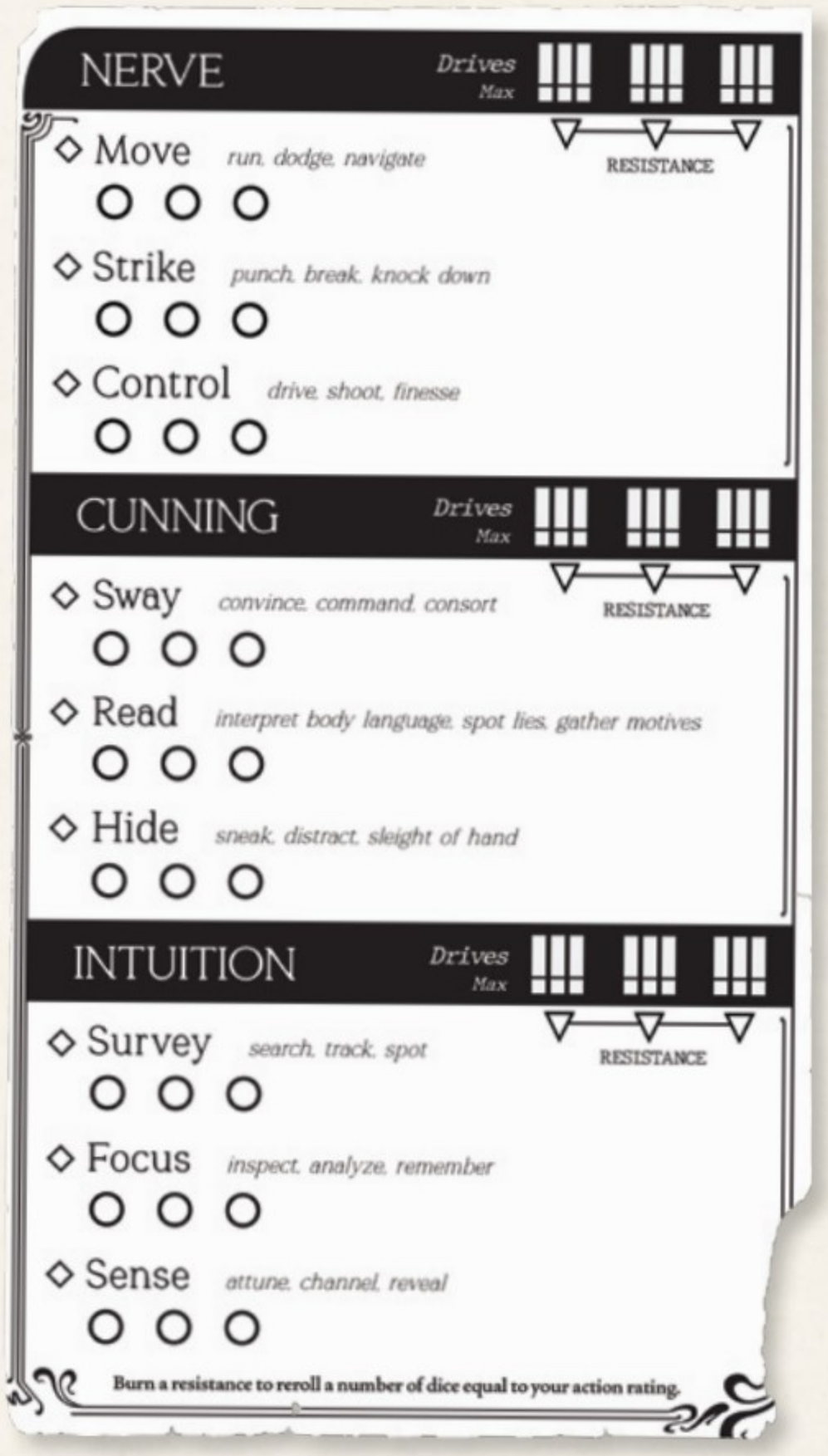
Each action has a rating between 0–3 that represents the number of dice you will use when attempting that action. This reflects how well your investigator generally performs this type of behavior under pressure. Actions are covered in more detail starting on page 50.

Each drive has a number of points between 0–9. You can spend any of these available points to add an additional die (*+1d*) when rolling with an action within that drive. The collection of dice you use for a roll is known as a *dice pool*. For example, you may spend Nerve to add +1d to a Move roll, or Intuition to add +1d to a Sense roll. Drives are covered in more detail starting on page 48.

All drives have a maximum, which determines the highest number of points your character can have in that drive. They also have an amount currently available, which will decrease as you spend them.

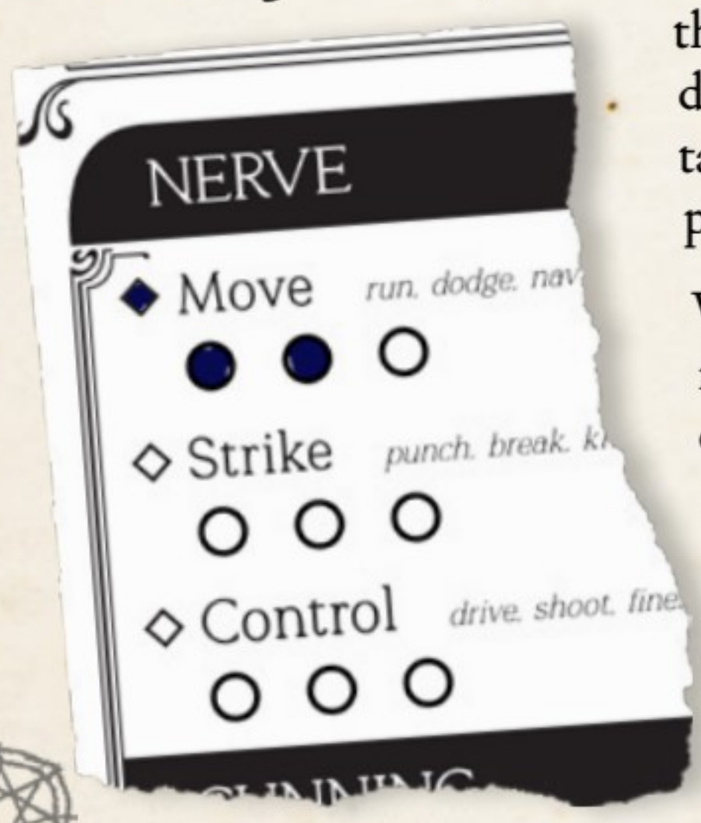
When your drive is empty, you cannot spend any more points until you refresh that drive, covered on page 41.

You may also spend drive to assist another investigator in your scene. For more on helping an ally, see page 11.



GILDED DICE

Some of your actions will be *gilded*, denoted by a filled-in diamond. Utilizing this action can help you earn back spent drive points, and narratively represents a skill that reinvigorates your character. When you are rolling with a gilded action, you replace one of your standard dice with a gilded die (a d6 of a different color). If, after you make the roll, you choose the result of the gilded die, you can refresh a point in the drive that encompasses that action. For example, if you take the gilded result on a Survey roll, you earn back 1 point in Intuition.



Why wouldn't you always choose the gilded result? You might roll a 6 on a standard die and a 4 on a gilded die. Instead of taking the full success, you could choose to take a mixed success. You may prefer to recover 1 drive point, sacrificing a cleaner narrative outcome for a mechanical benefit.

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SETTING THE STAKES & EXPECTATIONS

Stakes

Before a roll is made, the GM may need to set the stakes. This gives the player an idea of the severity of consequences that might be in store on a mixed success or a miss.

There are three levels of stakes:

Low stakes: The consequences of a miss or a mixed success won't result in immediate, significant danger. This might occur when you're searching a room with plenty of time, or convincing an innocent civilian to help you.

Standard stakes: The consequences of a miss or mixed success might put you in immediate, significant danger. This could occur when you're searching a room while under the threat of being caught, or trying to make a deal with somebody important. *By default, every roll is standard stakes unless otherwise noted by the GM.*

High stakes: The result of a miss or mixed success will put you in immediate, significant danger or cause major narrative consequences. This might occur when you're searching a room that contains a dangerous creature, or negotiating with a powerful adversary.

Dani, playing a Soldier, is being threatened at knifepoint in an alleyway she is investigating. She describes scrambling behind a dumpster to put distance between herself and her attacker. The GM tells her to roll Move and explains that the situation is high stakes.

Expectations

The GM should also ensure that the expectations of a roll align with the player's. If the action is something they believe will only yield a limited result even at its most effective, this should be communicated to the player before a roll is made—and likewise, if something will inherently work very well even on a mediocre roll. This helps to align the player's expectations of how a roll will go before they decide to move forward with taking the action.

Kat, playing an Occultist, is in the middle of a dangerous encounter with a shadowy phenomenon. Only moments ago, a member of their circle tried to shoot at the figure, and the bullets passed right through it. Pulling out their Ghostblade, they describe how they lunge at the entity. The GM tells them this will be a Strike roll, and because they are using the Ghostblade, it will be more effective than with a standard hand weapon.

The Conversation

PCs should always have the opportunity to adjust their approach after receiving this information. Only once the stakes and expectations have been aligned should an action roll be made. This conversation allows players to spend their resources, like drive, appropriately for the given situation. They may want to spend more, or less, once they understand what's possible.

Carlos, playing a Journalist, is attempting to gain access to a government building in Silverslip. He approaches the Periphery officers standing out front and asks them to let him through on "important business." The GM asks what he's looking to roll here, and he answers, "Sway." The GM agrees, but warns him they won't be easily convinced, so the roll won't be very effective: "They may escort you inside on a success, but they aren't just going to just let you pass." Carlos thinks for a moment, then decides to mark the gear Press Credentials, asking the GM if that will make his argument more impactful. They agree; on a success, he will be free to go inside. Carlos decides to spend 2 Cunning now that his goal of going in alone is possible.

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MAKING AN ACTION ROLL

The core dice mechanic of the Illuminated Worlds system is known as an *action roll*. When there is a question as to whether a move you're making could succeed or fail and the consequences are important to the narrative, the GM will call for an action roll.

1. The GM tells you what action you'll need to use, along with the stakes and expectations of the roll. At this time, you may change your approach to adjust expectations, lower the stakes, or modify the narrative implications.
2. You take a number of d6 equal to your action rating and add them to your dice pool. If the action you are rolling with is gilded, replace one of your dice with a gilded die.
3. If you'd like, you may spend 1 or more points from the drive that action falls within to add additional dice to the roll.
4. Check to see if any of your abilities apply to the situation—these may let you gild additional dice, add bonus dice, or give you other benefits.
5. Roll the final dice pool and tell the GM the highest result. If any of the dice are gilded, you may take the gilded result, even if it is lower, to earn back drive points.

After failing a Move roll to catch up to a suspect, Dani is running through a crowd searching for them. The GM tells Dani to make a Survey roll with high stakes, because failing here would mean she loses the target for good. Dani has a 2 in Survey, and she decides to also spend 1 point in Intuition to help with the roll, for a total of three dice in her pool. Survey is also gilded, so she replaces one of these three standard dice with a gilded die, then rolls.

She rolls a 3 and 4 on her standard dice and a 2 on her gilded die. Deciding it's better to take the mixed success, rather than earn back her drive on a failure, Dani chooses the 4.

The final result will guide the way the narrative unfolds.

On a 1–3 result, the roll is a failure. Usually, you don't accomplish what you wanted, and there are consequences.

On a 4–5 result, the roll is a mixed success. You accomplish what you wanted, but it comes at a cost.

On a 6 result, the roll is a full success. You get what you wanted without complication.

On multiple 6s, the roll is a critical success. You get what you wanted, and something extra.

For more about consequences, see page 12.

Announcing the result of her roll, Dani asks the GM what happens next. With a mixed success on Survey, the GM says, "Fighting through the crowd, you finally spot your target—they are a ways ahead of you, pulling themselves up onto a cable car about to depart. Now, you know where they are, but you won't be able to get there in time. Because of the high stakes here, take a Brain mark from the stress of the situation. What do you do?"

Cortnye Queen Transaction: CRIT1014003

AN ACTION RATING OF ZERO

If you have a rating of zero in the action you need to roll, and you decide not to spend drive to add dice, you can still attempt the action. In that case, you'll roll two dice and take the lowest result. *Note that you can't get a critical success on this (even if you get two 6s).* If you are rolling this way with a gilded action (or if any of your dice are gilded for another reason), you don't get the opportunity to choose it as your result—but if it is the lowest outcome on the roll, you still earn back drive. Remember that you may always spend drive to add additional dice to a roll, and this can be very helpful on rolls where you have an action rating of zero.

> *Carlos jumps in: "I'm going to shout to the cable car to convince the driver to stop before the target can get away!" The GM tells him to make a Sway roll, in which he has an action rating of zero. He also has no Cunning left to spend, so he rolls two dice and takes the lower result. It's a 2—he runs toward the car shouting, but the trolley is too far, and neither the passengers nor the driver notice. Nearby people on the street begin to react to the commotion he's causing.*

THE RULE OF SIX

There is one rule that always applies when making an action roll: you cannot use more than six dice at any time. No matter how many bonus dice you get from assistance, abilities, or drives, you can only ever roll a maximum of six dice in a single action roll.

HELPING AN ALLY & MAKING A GROUP ROLL

You may help an ally on a roll by describing how you aid them in the fiction, and then spending 1 point from your own drive that contains the action they are using. This will give them +1d on the roll. You may not spend more than 1 drive point to add additional dice. By involving your PC in the situation, you are also opening yourself to the dangers of consequences should the roll go poorly.

When helping an ally, remember that you are offering aid. Use this as an opportunity to support their time in the spotlight rather than overshadowing it.

> *Kat steals a carriage to continue their pursuit and must roll Control to navigate the cart effectively with their circle inside. They have an action rating of 1 in Control, so they have one die in their pool. Dani says that she wants to help, and Kat agrees. Dani describes how she stands on the top of the carriage to keep an eye on the fleeing cable car above the crowd, then she spends 1 point of Nerve. Kat takes the additional die and rolls with two in their pool.*

When more than one PC wants to help someone with their roll, or multiple members of a circle want to collaborate on one action, a *group roll* can be made. Choose a PC to lead the attempt—they will use their action rating on the roll, plus any drive they want to spend. Then, any others who are participating may spend 1 drive point to add an additional die to the pool. The roll may not use more than six dice.

Not all PCs who want to be involved in the group roll must spend drive to do so. The mechanical benefit is only one aspect of their aid—the GM should evaluate how the effectiveness of the action changes based on the contributions of the group, and adjust the expectations of the roll accordingly.

> *Having pursued the cable car, the circle sees their target hop off and disappear into the backdoor of a warehouse. Approaching the door, Carlos finds it locked. He says he wants to put his shoulder into it to see if he can ram it open. The GM tells him that would be a Strike roll, but also sets expectations, explaining that this won't be very effective—the door is reinforced and designed to prevent break-ins. Carlos asks Dani and Kat if they will help and they both agree. Dani spends 1 Nerve to add an additional die, but Kat has none to give. They describe lining up in an attempt to hit the door at the same time. The GM sets new expectations, saying the Strike action will definitely be more effective with all of them involved.*

Cortnye Queen Transaction: CRIT1014003

CONSEQUENCES

On a miss or mixed success, the GM introduces a consequence. This is called *making a move*. Some GM moves are prescriptive and come from a particular threat (such as a monster or villain), while others are more subtle, or narrative-based. No matter what move they choose, the fiction will change as a result of the miss or mixed success. For more on making moves, GMs should see page 160.

MIXED SUCCESS

On a mixed success, you get what you want, but it comes with a consequence or cost. This is the most common dice result in the game and has the benefit of advancing the story while heightening tension. A mixed success could introduce additional dangers or create complications. For example: you only achieve a portion of your goal, you take marks while performing your action, or your behavior alerts enemies to your circle's presence. There are any number of consequences that could fit within the narrative while propelling the adventure forward.

On a **mixed success**, the GM's move can include:

Damage: You do what you intended, but take some damage in return. This consequence works well when the action you are performing is physically dangerous. You might strike at an enemy with your brass knuckles, but also take Body marks in return.

Complications: You do what you meant to, but there is a side effect. If you're trying to sneak past someone, and you roll a mixed success, you may get by them, but you leave a trail that they notice, or make a sound that raises their suspicion.

Concession: You make it part of the way, but something happens. In a negotiation, you might convince an NPC of the validity of a portion of your argument, but they bring up details that need clarification—or points they won't budge on. If you're sneaking, you may make it halfway there before you see an unexpected obstacle. *Mixed successes shouldn't be used when it would completely negate the premise*. Meaning: a mixed success from sneaking shouldn't mean you get caught. This might also manifest as a tough choice you're forced to make; the GM says you can do one thing or the other thing, but not both.

Cost: You do what you set out to do, but there's a cost involved. You convince the guard to let you inside an area, but only for a limited amount of time. You negotiate an outcome, but the NPC requires a favor from your circle in return. You successfully pick the lock, but it takes longer than you expected.

Trouble on the Horizon: This is an announcement of future problems. It might manifest as noticing footsteps coming around a corner, hearing an approaching creature's roar, or spotting something that indicates you're being followed.

An Opportunity Lost: An opportunity becomes impossible, or requires more of a commitment than you initially thought you needed to make. You win your scuffle with a minion, only to notice that the person you were after is gone.

Higher Stakes: You accomplish your goal, but find yourself in hot water. You're able to open the ritual gate and shove the demon in, but it takes you with them.

Remember that you only roll when an action is difficult or dangerous. A Journalist asking an innocent bystander what they saw probably doesn't require a roll—the potential consequences are low and the Journalist is inherently skilled at what they do. If they're interrogating a suspect they've cornered in an alleyway trying to escape, the dice are likely to come out.

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MISS

On a miss, the outcome doesn't go your way—though the GM may, in some limited cases, choose to let you achieve your goal along with a significant consequence. Usually, you won't achieve your desired outcome, but this shouldn't always come from character incompetence. Perhaps the enemy was prepared in a way you didn't anticipate, or the surrounding circumstances were too difficult for you to contend with.

On a **miss**, the GM's move can include:

Damage: You don't get what you want, and take significant damage because of it. This consequence works well when the action you are performing is physically dangerous. You try to dodge out of the way of an attack, but it's unsuccessful and you take a Body mark.

Complications: The goal wasn't achieved in the way you wanted, and because of that, something happens to further complicate the scene. While sneaking into a suspect's office, you've tripped an alarm or dropped the item you're holding.

Trouble on the Horizon: Failure to accomplish the objective leads to a discovery of future problems you must face. You don't get to the door in time to stop the cultist from escaping, and suddenly the ground starts to crack below you. Their ritual worked—a phenomenon is pulling its way into our world.

An Opportunity Lost: A previous opportunity becomes impossible. The escape route now has a new patrol of guards, or an important negotiation doesn't end in your favor.

Higher Stakes: You don't succeed, and this causes the stakes in the scene to escalate further, putting you in a more dangerous position—the next roll you make will have increasingly dire consequences. Failure means you're looking down the barrel of a gun.

If you're ever facing more powerful opponents, note that the GM might use more than one consequence. This is often reflected in the stakes the GM set for the roll.

RESISTANCES

For every 3 maximum drive points you have, you also gain 1 point of *resistance* in that drive.

Resistance is a character's way of pushing back against a consequence. Any time you don't like the result of your roll, you may choose to burn 1 resistance point from the drive related to that action. (Your resistance points are not affected by your drive expenditures, as resistance relies on your maximum drive points, not your current available points.)

For example, if you want to resist the consequences of a Control roll, you would burn a Nerve resistance. Even if your Nerve only has 1 current drive point available to spend, if your maximum is 3, you still have that resistance available to burn.

After burning a resistance, you may reroll a number of dice equal to the rating of the action. If you spent drive or were assisted on the previous action roll, those dice are not included in the resistance roll. If that action is gilded, you still roll with a gilded die. If the action you are rerolling has a rating of 0, you roll two dice and take the lowest result. You must take the new result of the resistance roll unless you choose to burn another resistance point to roll again.

> *Kat ducks behind a set of wooden crates, hoping to go unseen by the fiery apparition that is guarding the warehouse. The GM calls for a Hide roll, in which Kat has an action rating of 2. They decide to spend 1 Cunning and roll three dice. The results are two 3s and a 1, all failures. Fearing the repercussions of being spotted, they burn a Cunning resistance to reroll two dice. The results are a 3 and a 6, making the new result a full success.*

Resistances are automatically restored when you use the Refresh resource between assignments. For more on Refresh and other Candela Obscura resources, see page 41.

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GEAR

Candela Obscura is primarily focused on the narrative aspects of the game; therefore, gear is not intended to be mechanically complex. It is generally assumed that your character has the tools, equipment, and money to do what they need to do. However, there may be certain objects that are harder to come by or can give your character a distinct edge.

Gear often changes the effectiveness of a roll—meaning: the result might be more successful when you are using gear than it would be without it. A clear example is the difference between rolling Strike while punching with a bare hand versus rolling Strike when wielding a knife. This can apply across the board to many different situations, such as handling a supernatural specimen with a Bleed Containment Vial as opposed to without one, or quietly breaking into a building using Burglary Tools instead of needing to smash a window.

In some cases, gear may even grant you the ability to roll in a situation where you wouldn't normally be able to; without climbing gear, you likely couldn't roll to scale the side of a glass building, and without a map, you likely couldn't roll to know the way to a hidden location.

Every PC has access to up to three pieces of the gear on their character sheet during an assignment, but you don't have to select these items beforehand. Instead, during play, you may declare that you have a piece of gear that is listed on your character sheet and mark it. This will keep you from having to plan too far ahead and allows your character to be prepared for anything that comes their way. See page 52 for more about gear.

MARKS & SCARS

Marks represent the harm you incur during your investigations. There are three different types of marks you may take:

Body: Represents physical harm—lacerations from a jagged knife, bites from a creature, broken bones from a fall.

Brain: Represents mental strain—exhaustion from an intense conversation, anxiety from the fear of being caught, stress from an onslaught of terrifying beasts.

Bleed: Represents magickal corruption—the chilling touch of a ghost, the venom of a monster, the harmful energy radiating from an artifact.

A character can sustain 3 marks in each of Body, Brain, and Bleed. Whenever you would take a mark in a category that already has 3 marks, you drop incapacitated and take the fourth mark as a scar.

Some gear and abilities allow you to *soak* a mark. When a mark is soaked, it leaves no damage. If you must take multiple marks, you can soak the amount the gear or ability allows, and still take the rest. You can only heal your marks using Candela Obscura resources between assignments or by using specific abilities or gear.

A *scar* represents a permanent change to your character, both mechanically and narratively. Erase all marks in the category you overfilled, then come up with a scar that best reflects the lasting effect of the damage and write it in an available scar slot. Lastly, shift a point from one action rating to another to reflect how the scar changes the way your character interacts with the world. You will be able to return to play when your circle gets you somewhere safe. If your character should take any marks beyond the fourth in a category, those marks are carried over.

Carlos already has 3 marks in Body and takes 2 more. He clears his current Body marks, takes a scar, then notes 1 Body as the carry-over. Next, he shifts one action point from Read to Strike.

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Example Body Scars

Event	Scar	Result
Phenomenon spit acid in face	**Blinded**	Still learning to move with subtlety, and quick to lash out *-1 to Hide, +1 to Strike*
Arm was crushed by monster	**Lost Right Arm**	Less aware of their surroundings, eager to prove they're still capable and strong *-1 Survey, +1 Strike*
Pushed from a docking airship	**Spinal Injury**	Back brace causes slower movement, so they use charm in times of trouble *-1 Strike, +1 Sway*

Example Brain Scars

Event	Scar	Result
Failed to save a friend from death	**Cannot Sleep**	No longer sure they want to be in Candela Obscura, will flee dangerous situations *-1 Sense, +1 Move*
Trapped in a burning building	**Fear of Enclosed Spaces**	Not as detail-oriented, they look out for future danger *-1 Focus, +1 Survey*

Example Bleed Scars

Event	Scar	Result
Pulled into a mirror by an apparition	**Shifting Appearance**	New people cannot remember them, and they can use this characteristic to go undetected *-1 Read, +1 Hide*
Magickal creature burrowed under skin	**Body Covered in Mouths**	Hands shake when the mouths are hungry, isolate themselves among books *-1 Control, + Focus*
Possessed by the spirit of an ancient alchemist	**Ghost Trapped within Body**	Has trouble communicating with this added voice inside their head, can now channel magickal phenomena *-1 Sway, +1 Sense*

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THE LEGACY OF HARM IN HORROR

The mechanics of marks and scars within *Candela Obscura* are straightforward, but the legacy of mechanizing how people experience harm and disability within the horror genre is not. For each mark, but especially when taking a scar, it is of vital importance that players make choices that serve a nuanced narrative over basic rules.

> *Carlos was injured in a fight when a monster attacked. This would be his fourth mark in Body, so he must take a scar instead. He describes how breaking his leg and gaining a limp has affected him.*

When a PC takes a scar, we encourage the player to look deeply at their character and consider the way they might change throughout the campaign.

> *Carlos now walks with a limp, so he's decided to transfer a point from Move and put it into Survey. He has new mobility constraints and experiences pain, so he will be slower on his feet. Carlos will also be more observant of his surroundings because he wants to avoid danger and protect his fellow circle members from harm.*

Or:

> *Carlos now walks with a limp, so he's transferring a point from Survey and putting it into Move. His character is afraid of being injured again, so he knows how to get out of the way of attacks and is quick on his feet. Because he's experiencing a new fear as a result of his injury, Carlos is more focused on moving quickly than staying observant of his surroundings.*



When you make choices regarding your character's injuries, remember: people are affected by harm in a myriad of ways. Disability and mental illness are facets of the human experience and are not convenient narrative beats behind evil actions, or "evil people." Players should build their characters with care so they can explore the world of *Candela Obscura* to the fullest.

Due to the legacy of harmful mental health representation in the horror genre, we would like to clarify: Brain marks represent mental and emotional stress. In the same way a week of long workdays, a friend receiving an injury, or witnessing a death (violent or otherwise) would weigh on a person in your world, Candela Obscura members face stressors and traumatic events that impact them beyond the immediate moment.

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If a character takes a Brain scar, consider how the traumatic or stressful events they've experienced will affect them long-term.

> *Kat failed to save a friend from magickal harm. In their state of grief, they exhibit outbursts when they feel out of control. At the same time, they're incredibly empathetic, and after this experience, they're especially good at talking with witnesses. Because Kat is too distracted after their loss to behave subtly, they're going to move a point from Hide to Read, as they can now connect more deeply with others.*

Or:

> *Dani misused a magickal artifact to devastating effect and is now overwhelmed by high-stakes decisions. Because of this experience, she is even more dedicated to becoming a master of arcane artifacts, and spends all of her free time training with her Lightkeeper. Dani is going to move a point from Control to Sense, because now she's focusing her studies on the magickal rather than the mundane.*

Scars—especially Brain scars—should be understood as both a mechanical and narrative change to your character and not an opportunity to engage in ableist stereotypes.

While Bleed scars may seem removed from this discussion, you should treat them with similar care. The addition of magick does not make the experience of harm any less human. Furthermore, we often analogize what we don't know—rituals from other cultures, sacred rites, and practices from traditions that aren't our own—to be "strange" or "mystical." When crafting the magick in your game, we ask you to design with empathy. Every table is different, and many may not appreciate having deeply sacred symbols, artifacts, and rituals fictionalized.

> *Carlos witnessed something terrible and, in retaliation, a monster cut the pupil of his eye in half. Now, he sees mysterious apparitions overlaid on the mundane world. He is afraid of this change in himself, but doesn't feel safe telling anyone about it, for fear of endangering an innocent person. He is going to move a point from Focus to Sense, because he has a harder time perceiving details, but can see supernatural phenomena he's never noticed before.*

In *Candela Obscura,* scars are, with few exceptions, permanent. The idea of "permanent scars" does not align with the modern understanding of healing trauma. But, just like you, consider that your character cannot begin the process of tending to deep physical, mental, and even magickal trauma until they are in a safe place for an extended period of time. Over the course of a campaign, your circle should experience only brief moments of respite—this is a challenging game of horror.

If you would like to see your character heal from scars they've taken, you have options. You may engage with an ally who has taken the Doctor's ability Lifesaver, the only way to heal scars within the mechanics of the game. You might choose to play a different character for some time and return to this one down the road when they've had a chance to recover. Work with your GM to decide which scars they could have healed during this time away.

Above all: make choices that will facilitate the story, while keeping the well-being of your fellow players in mind. To best explore this world of magick and monsters, we urge you to build and play your characters prioritizing specificity, humanity, and compassion.

They say there's nothing to worry about, but that's all wet and everyone knows it. I can't stop thinking about the fallout from the ~~Second~~ Last Great War.

750,000 military casualties

35,973 pilots

No more.

Cortnye Queen Transaction: CRIT1014003



Cortnye Queen Transaction: CRIT1014003

MAKING A CHARACTER

During your time within the Fairelands, you'll embody a member of Candela Obscura who is aware of supernatural phenomena and seeks to protect the world from deadly, magickal incursions. Through this character, you will experience the world, making choices for them that will impact the story and the others within it.

To get started, print out all of the *Candela Obscura* character sheets, then follow the steps in this chapter.

STEP 1: CHOOSE A ROLE & SPECIALTY

First, choose your character's *role* and *specialty*. Roles describe the function the character plays in the group, sometimes known as their "archetype." Each role has two specialties to choose from, which helps further define their focus. A character's role and specialty determine their starting actions and drives, their choice of abilities, and some of the gear they have at their disposal during an assignment. Each specialty has its own custom character sheet.

CANDELA · OBSCURA

Welcome Investigator,

Congratulations, you are now a member of the Circle of Night Side. My name is Ezra Ashford, and I am, and will continue to be, honored to lead you and our esteemed circle members on this journey into discovery of the unknown.

This circle has only just formed; there is no baggage here. With mutual respect and kindness, we will be able to form the Circle of Night Side into what I have no doubt will be the most successful and healthy assemblage our organization has yet known. We have a strong and vital team, and together we can face anything.

Dossiers on myself and your fellow circle members are enclosed with this letter, please study them before our first meeting, the details of which will be sent in a separate correspondence.

Though we have not yet interacted, my knowledge of your experience in the organizatio

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ROLE: FACE

The spokesperson, heart, or charismatic member of the group, a Face character is generally a confident individual who is skilled in acting, persuasion, or motivation.



Journalist: You are a bold investigator who knows how to get to the bottom of things. Your primary drive is Cunning, and your abilities are focused on collecting and assessing information.



Magician: You are a talented entertainer who knows how to deflect attention and create illusions. Your primary drive is Intuition, and your abilities are focused on performing and detecting tricks.

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ROLE: MUSCLE

The protector, fighter, or daring member of the group, a Muscle character is generally an intrepid individual who is skilled in combat, tactics, or physical activities.

Explorer: You are a fearless daredevil who knows how to navigate difficult and dangerous environments. Your primary drive is Nerve, and your abilities are focused on endurance and confronting danger.





Soldier: You are a trained warrior who knows how to fight and make tactical decisions. Your primary drive is Intuition, and your abilities are focused on combat strategy and discipline.

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ROLE: SCHOLAR

The studious, logical, or intellectual member of the group, a Scholar character is generally an educated individual who is skilled in academics, critical thinking, or technical activities.



Doctor: You are a skilled physician who knows how to conduct medical procedures. Your primary drive is Intuition, and your abilities are focused on anatomy and healing.



Professor: You are a professional academic who knows a great deal about your chosen field of study. Your primary drive is Cunning, and your abilities are focused on critical thinking and leveraging your expertise.

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ROLE: SLINK

The streetsmart, roguish, or nefarious member of the group, a Slink character is generally a subversive and clever individual who is skilled in crime, the underworld, or clandestine activities.

Criminal: You are an accomplished outlaw who knows how to operate successfully in the underworld. Your primary drive is Cunning, and your abilities are focused on street connections and nefarious activities.





Detective: You are an experienced investigator who has an outside perspective on the ins and outs of the criminal world. Your primary drive is Nerve, and your abilities are focused on uncovering the truth and stopping malefactors.

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ROLE: WEIRD

The arcane, magickal, or supernatural member of the group, a Weird character is generally connected to the occult and skilled in enigmatic lore, psychic abilities, and understanding thinnings.

Medium: You are an adept psychic who knows how to commune with the otherworldly. Your primary drive is Intuition, and your abilities are focused on divination and connecting with spirits.



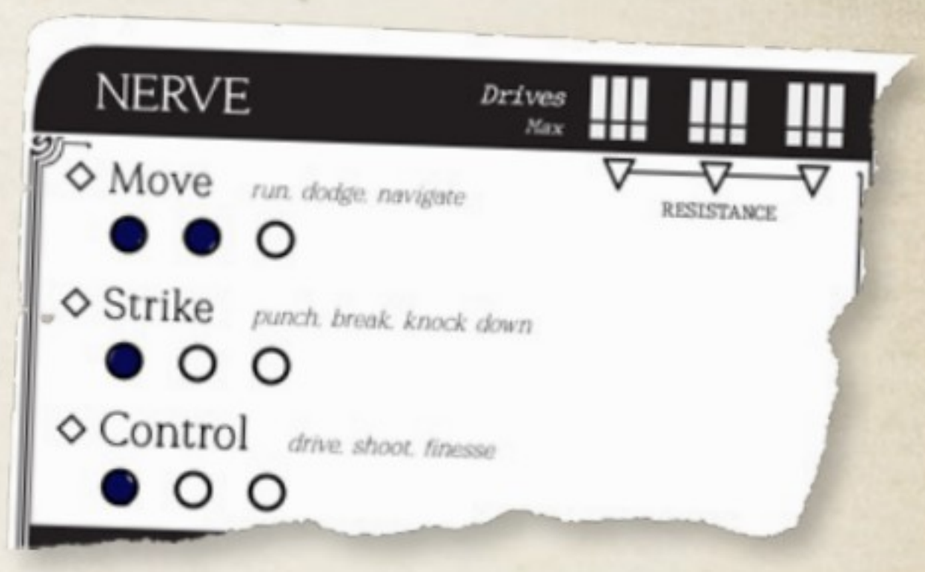


Occultist: You are a highly studied practitioner of the mystic arts who has a fundamental knowledge of the supernatural. Your primary drive is Intuition, and your abilities are focused on ritual and knowledge of the arcane.

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STEP 2: DETERMINE ACTION RATINGS

Next, you'll determine the action ratings for your character.



Your character starts with 5 points in actions that are already determined by their role and specialty. These are represented by the bolded circles on your sheet. Fill these in with something erasable (like pencil), as they might shift during play.

Journalist (Face): Read 1, Survey 2, Focus 1, Sense 1

Magician (Face): Sway 2, Read 1, Hide 1, Focus 1

Explorer (Muscle): Move 1, Strike 2, Survey 1, Focus 1

Soldier (Muscle): Move 2, Strike 2, Control 1

Doctor (Scholar): Control 1, Read 1, Survey 1, Focus 2

Professor (Scholar): Sway 1, Survey 2, Focus 2

Criminal (Slink): Control 1, Hide 2, Survey 1, Focus 1

Detective (Slink): Control 1, Hide 1, Survey 2, Focus 1

Medium (Weird): Read 2, Survey 1, Sense 2

Occultist (Weird): Control 1, Read 1, Focus 1, Sense 2

Then, choose one action with a 0 rating, and raise it to 1.

Finally, distribute 3 points however you'd like, in a way that best reflects the kind of character you want to play. *You may not raise any action rating above 2 during character creation.*

> *Kailey decides to play a Doctor, who starts with 2 points in Focus, 1 in Survey, 1 in Read, and 1 in Control. She chooses to raise her Strike rating from 0 to 1, then has 3 more points to attribute. She puts 1 in Move, 1 in Sway, and an additional point in Strike, raising that action rating to 2.*

Actions are covered in more detail on page 50.

ON CHARACTER CREATION

When crafting your character, it is crucial to avoid the harmful stereotypes often present in the historical and horror genres. For instance: if you are creating an Explorer, be careful not to appropriate another culture's real-world history. Similarly, Mediums should not use other cultures' attire as a costume, and Doctors should not indulge in any historical practices that are rooted in racist and ableist ideologies. Although PCs may be ill-disposed, tactless, or even cruel, you should always strive to construct your protagonists with integrity.

first meeting with Night Side went well, but it feels as if I've suddenly adopted four more adult children. Their first expedition begins tomorrow, so I'll have to come up with some inspiring words or invite them over for tea. Maintaining distance as a means of gaining respect is banal.

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STEP 3: DETERMINE DRIVES

Next, fill in the drives that your character starts with. Your character starts with 3 points in drives that are already determined by their role and specialty. These are represented by the filled-in notches below each drive point. Fill in the points above those notches in something erasable (like pencil) to indicate that you currently have this resource available to you.

Drives are covered in more detail on page 48.

Journalist: Cunning 3

Magician: Cunning 1, Intuition 2

Explorer: Nerve 3

Soldier: Nerve 1, Intuition 2

Doctor: Intuition 3

Professor: Cunning 2, Intuition 1

Criminal: Nerve 1, Cunning 2

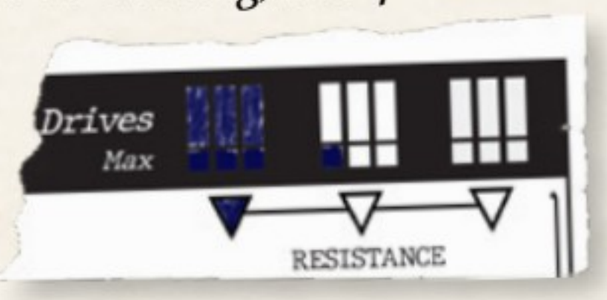
Detective: Nerve 2, Cunning 1

Medium: Cunning 1, Intuition 2

Occultist: Intuition 3

Next, distribute 6 additional points in drives however you'd like, in a way that best reflects the kind of character you want to play. To do this, fill in the bottom notches with something permanent (like ink) and the points above them with something erasable (like pencil). *You may not start with any of your drives above 6 during character creation.*

> *As a Doctor, Kailey starts with 3 drive points in Intuition. She has 6 more to spend, so she puts an additional point in Intuition, 2 points in Cunning, and 4 points in Nerve.*



STEP 4: DETERMINE RESISTANCES

For every block of 3 drive points, you also take a resistance in that drive. Fill in any resistance points you have with something erasable (like pencil).

> *Kailey has a maximum of 4 drive points in Intuition and Nerve, so she marks 1 resistance point for each of those drives. She only has a maximum of 2 drive points in Cunning, so she doesn't mark any resistance.*

Remember: Spent drive does not affect your available resistances. This resource is calculated based on maximum, rather than remaining drive.

STEP 5: GILD ACTIONS

Your character starts with a gilded die in one action, determined by their specialty. This is represented by the filled-in diamond to the left of the action on your character sheet.

Journalist: Survey

Magician: Sway

Explorer: Move

Soldier: Strike

Doctor: Read

Professor: Focus

Criminal: Hide

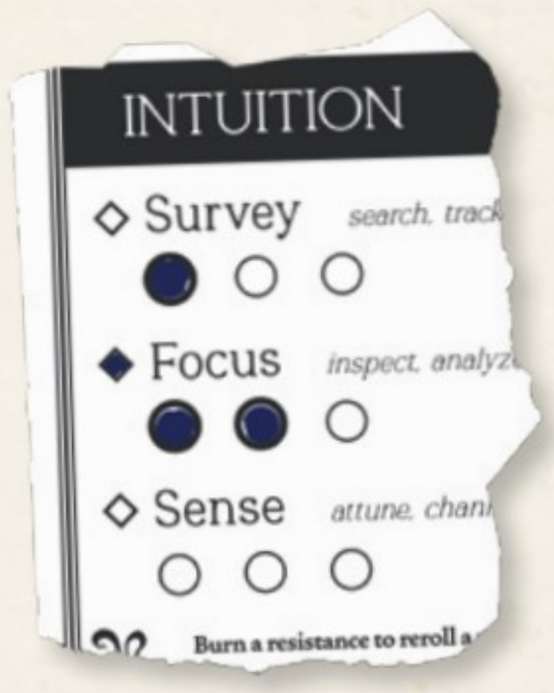
Detective: Control

Medium: Sense

Occultist: Focus

Then, gild an additional action of your choice. Remember: this will help you to earn back drive during the game, so it is best to gild an action within a drive where you have points to spend, so that you *can* earn them back.

> *As a Doctor, Kailey starts with Read gilded. She decides to also gild Focus to help her earn back Intuition.*



Cortnye Queen Transaction: CRIT1014003

STEP 6: CHOOSE ABILITIES

Along with the opportunity to make action rolls, each investigator has their own set of powerful abilities. Choose one ability from your role and one ability from your specialty at character creation. If you are having a hard time choosing, take the top option in each section.

ROLE ABILITIES

Face

◇ **I Know a Guy:** Once per assignment, ask the GM who you know nearby that could help you. The GM will tell you who they are, and explain why this NPC might have insight into the investigation.

◇ **Sweet Talk:** You know how to work the room. After you make small talk with someone, you may add +1d on any Read rolls you make in which they are the target. If your current Cunning resistance is 2 or higher, that die is gilded.

◇ **Cool Under Pressure:** On any high-stakes roll, you may always spend Cunning instead of the drive the action falls under.

Muscle

◇ **Behind Me:** Spend 1 Nerve to choose an ally in the same scene who is about to take a mark from a phenomenon, then describe what you do that allows you to take the mark instead.

◇ **Adrenaline Rush:** For each mark you take, you may immediately refresh a drive point of your choice.

◇ **Endurance:** When you take enough marks to become incapacitated, instead, roll a number of d6 equal to your current Nerve resistance. On a 6, you aren't incapacitated and don't take a scar.

Scholar

◇ **Well-Read:** You're highly educated and retain knowledge better than most. When you spend Intuition while making a roll, on a result of 3 or less, earn back any of the Intuition you spent.

◇ **Occult Researcher:** Take 1 Brain mark to ask the GM for an important occult detail that you would recognize from your studies, but has not yet been revealed in the scene. If there are none, clear the Brain mark.

◇ **Meticulous Notes:** If your current Cunning resistance is 2 or more, add +1d to all Focus rolls. After an assignment, increase your Illumination track 1 additional point because of the detailed notes your character returns with.

Slink

◇ **Scout:** If you have time to observe a location, you can spend 1 Intuition to ask a question: *What do I notice here that others do not see? What in this place might be of use to us? What path should we follow?*

◇ **Saw This Coming:** Three times per assignment, you may add +1d to a circle member's roll without spending drive by saying how you prepared for this kind of situation together.

◇ **Death Defy:** Once per assignment, when you should take 1 or more marks from an enemy, you instead escape unscathed. Describe how your quick thinking keeps you safe from harm.

Weird

◇ **Great Wards:** You can inscribe and maintain a warding symbol on one person at a time. Describe the material they must hold to bind it (salt, sand, etc.). They take +1d on Move rolls against phenomena.

◇ **Let Them In:** Whenever you take 1 or more Bleed marks, you also gain additional information about the phenomenon that harmed you. Ask the GM one question about the source of the bleed.

◇ **Ritual:** When you have a few minutes to prepare, you may take a Bleed mark to perform a ritual on yourself or an ally: *Circle of Protection* (*soaks 1 Body mark for the person within*), *Reinvigorate* (*refresh 1 resistance*), *or Remote Viewing* (*one moment*).

Cortnye Queen Transaction: CRIT1014003

SPECIALTY ABILITIES

Journalist Abilities

◇ **Insider Access:** Your line of work offers you special privileges. Once per assignment, automatically gain access to an important person or place by using the Press Credentials gear.

◇ **Open Book:** You can get people to open up to you very quickly. When you attempt to connect with others by sharing something deeply personal, add a number of dice equal to your current Cunning resistance to a Sway roll. On a success, they will reciprocate.

◇ **Lie Detector:** When you make a Read roll in an attempt to figure out whether a person is telling the truth, gild an additional die. The first Cunning you spend on the roll is worth +2d instead of +1d.

◇ **Press Conference:** You can spend 1 Cunning to gather a large group of people together to make announcements, ask questions, or stage a distraction. All Cunning rolls you make at this assembly take +1d.

◇ **In the Trenches:** You've done enough dangerous journalism work to know how to keep yourself safe. Once per assignment, you may burn 1 Cunning resistance to soak a Body mark.

◇ **Well-Researched:** You can spend 1 Intuition to ask the GM a specific question about a place, group, or concept that you may have researched before the assignment. They will tell you what you know from that preparation.

Magician Abilities

◇ **Misdirection:** When you use your words or actions to distract a target from what is actually happening here, make a Hide roll. The first Cunning you or an ally spends on this roll is worth +2d instead of +1d.

◇ **Escape Artist:** Spend 1 Nerve to automatically escape ropes, cuffs, manacles, or a creature that has grappled you.

◇ **Practiced Patter:** You've long rehearsed for a moment like this. When making a Sway or Hide roll, you may spend Intuition instead of Cunning.

◇ **Uncanny Eye:** You may spend 1 Intuition to ask the GM a question: *How can I leverage something here to my advantage? What here doesn't work the way it appears? What is out of place here?*

◇ **Flourish:** You know how to cover your mistakes with flair. On a roll where you could spend Cunning, if you fail or get a mixed success, you may spend 2 Cunning to push the result up one tier—from a miss to mixed success or mixed success to full success.

◇ **The Prestige:** Your magic is usually all smoke and mirrors, but you have one trick you've learned that's real. Roll Sense when you perform it, and on a success, take a Bleed mark. Circle one option when you take this ability: *change appearance, levitate, summon mundane object, teleport a short distance, or throw your voice.*

NAME: Swift (Surname Unknown) **OCCUPATION:** Illusionist

ATTRIBUTES: Cunning, Charismatic, Slippery, Trusts No One

Swift is a charlatan, and good at it. Lost both their mothers in the war and ended up on the street at fifteen, fending for themselves. Necessity taught them sleight of hand; they became an absolute master of misdirection, developed an act, and took it on the road. Discovered a phenomenon while performing one of their fake séances live on stage. The most charming person I have ever met. Certainly masking. I have no choice but to trust them, even though I've always considered those who pretend to speak to the dead to be the lowest of the low.

Cortnye Queen Transaction: CRIT1014003

NAME: Isadora Álvarez **OCCUPATION:** First Sergeant, Infantry
ATTRIBUTES: Incredibly Strong, Disciplined, Focused, Stubborn

Izzy comes from a family of soldiers. Excelled at military academy but dropped out, turning down the safety of nepotism in favor of becoming a front-line soldier. As deadly with her bare hands as she is with a loaded rifle. She could kill me with her pinky, but doubt that she would unless absolutely necessary. Experienced her first phenomenon out on the Verge during her service. Loss of her left arm hasn't slowed her down; replaced with a mechanical construct. I enjoy her dark humor, though I hate to imagine why she developed such a coping mechanism. I would like to talk to her more, but I will avoid discussion of the war wherever possible.

Explorer Abilities

- ◇ **Obscure Lexicon:** When you encounter an ancient or esoteric language, you can spend 1 Intuition to understand what it says.
- ◇ **Field Experience:** You've traveled the world and been in many dangerous positions before. Once per assignment, describe to the group how a previous adventure is similar to your current situation and refresh 1 Nerve for everyone in your circle.
- ◇ **Mind Over Matter:** When you are told to use a specific action on a roll, you may take a Brain mark to utilize an alternative action instead. You may also spend the drive that corresponds with your chosen action. Describe how you adapt to your situation.
- ◇ **Tenacious:** When you have 1 or more Bleed marks, gild an additional die on Move, Strike, and Control rolls while in danger.
- ◇ **Narrow Escape:** You've been in numerous hairy situations during your fearless exploits. Add +1d to your Move roll when you attempt to escape a trap or ambush.
- ◇ **Not Again:** Once per assignment, you may take a scar to have an automatic full success on an action. If you do, it's as if you've had this scar all along—tell your circle how got it, and why the lesson you learned is helping you succeed here. Don't adjust your action ratings when you take this scar.

Soldier Abilities

- ◇ **Basic Training:** You have tactical experience in high-pressure situations. When you make a Survey roll in a dangerous place, also add a number of dice equal to your current Nerve resistance.
- ◇ **Geared Up:** You and one ally in your circle may mark an additional gear slot during each assignment.
- ◇ **Sharpshooter:** When you want to make a ranged attack with a weapon, you may spend 1 Nerve to steady your aim before shooting, and add +2d to your next shot at this target.
- ◇ **Tactician:** When you are in a dangerous scenario, you may spend 1 Nerve to ask the GM a question: *How do I get to safety? What poses the largest immediate threat to my circle? Where is the target going to move next?*
- ◇ **Compartmentalization:** You have trained to detach yourself from the horrors of violence. Once per assignment, you may burn 1 Nerve resistance to soak a Brain mark.
- ◇ **Volunteer Duty:** Between assignments, instead of spending resources, you can offer a helping hand to your Lightkeeper. Describe how you aid the organization, and refill 1 point in any Candela Obscura resource on your circle sheet. You may not spend any resources during this downtime.

Cortnye Queen Transaction: CRIT1014003

NAME: Morgan Ansari **OCCUPATION:** Doctor

ATTRIBUTES: Devoted, Unhesitating, Single-Minded, Grieving

He was top of his class studying biology before the war. Dropped out after his brother was killed to join the Nurse Corps; saved countless soldiers who would have otherwise perished. After the war, Morgan got his MD and went into private practice. I know he sees a large number of veterans and doesn't charge them. I also know the Grand Halen Hospital would like him in their ER, but he keeps turning down their offers. He's quick to action and hot-headed. I can't say that I don't admire him for it.

Doctor Abilities

◇ **Patch Up:** When you have a few moments of calm, you can make a Focus roll to heal 1 Body mark on an ally. On a 4–5, spend 2 Intuition to accomplish this. On a 6, spend 1 Intuition. On a 3 or less, you may take a Brain mark to take the 4–5 result instead.

◇ **Non-Combatant:** Your pain spurs others to action. If you haven't hurt anyone yet during this assignment, when you take a mark, each of your allies in the scene can recover 1 drive point of their choice.

◇ **Dissection:** When you make a Focus roll to dissect a piece of organic matter affected by bleed, gild an additional die. You cannot take Bleed marks from this inspection.

◇ **Resuscitation:** When a nearby ally takes a scar, you can make a Focus roll in an attempt to immediately revive them. On a 6, it works. Though they still receive the scar, they're back on their feet. On a 4–5, it will cost 3 drive points of your choosing. This cannot be used when a PC takes their fourth scar.

◇ **Lifesaver:** Between assignments, you can spend 1 Stitch to work on healing an ally's scar. When you do, make a Focus roll. On a critical success, fill three. On a 6, fill two. On a 4–5, fill one. When the track is full, the scar is healed and 1 action point may be shifted.

◇ **Anatomical Strike:** You know where the body is most vulnerable. When attacking an enemy, you may roll Focus instead of Strike.

Professor Abilities

◇ **Steel Mind:** Once per assignment, when you should take a Brain mark, you may instead burn 1 Intuition resistance to soak it.

◇ **University Resources:** Your university has alumni all over the world. Once per session, describe a person you know from your tenure as a professor, and ask the GM where they can be found locally.

◇ **Learn from My Mistakes:** Any time you get a result of 3 or less on a roll, describe what lesson you learned from your failure, and refresh 1 drive point of your choice.

◇ **Better Part of Valor:** When making a Control or Move roll to flee danger, gild a die. On this roll, the first Nerve you spend is worth +2d instead of +1d.

◇ **Verbose:** When you make a speech or hold a conversation to assist an ally, the die you give them is gilded.

◇ **Chemical Concoction:** You know how to mix chemicals together to achieve particular effects. When you take Laboratory Equipment as gear, you may spend a few minutes concocting a mixture that is: *acidic, explosive, flammable, loud, sleep-inducing, sticky, or toxic.*

Particularly hit it off with Morgan—a real live wire. See a lot of myself in him. Suppose that could be good or bad.

Cortnye Queen Transaction: CRIT1014003

Criminal Abilities

◇ **Street Smarts:** You know how to keep an eye on your surroundings. Whenever you make a Survey roll, you may spend any drive instead of only Intuition.

◇ **Leverage:** On a successful Read roll, you may ask the GM what your target truly wants. On any Sway rolls you make using this information, also add a number of dice equal to your current Cunning resistance.

◇ **Hardened:** When you take a scar, you may choose not to shift any action points as a result.

◇ **Born in the Shadows:** When attempting to avoid security or detection, gild an additional Hide die.

◇ **Tricks of the Trade:** You've learned how to navigate tricky or dangerous situations to keep yourself out of harm's way. On any Hide or Sway roll you make, you may spend 1 Nerve to lower the stakes before rolling. If this is already a low-stakes roll, you may not use this ability.

◇ **Sticky Fingers:** After a successful melee attack, you can spend 1 Cunning to pilfer an item from your target undetected. *This could be their wallet, a weapon they're carrying, an important document, etc.*

Detective Abilities

◇ **Mind Palace:** When you want to figure out how two clues might relate or what path they should point you toward, burn 1 Intuition resistance. The GM will give you the information you've deduced.

◇ **Interrogation:** When you are questioning someone about information they are resistant to revealing, add a number of dice equal to your current Cunning resistance to your Read roll.

◇ **Back Against the Wall:** When you are making a high-stakes roll, you may take a Brain mark to make any Nerve you spend worth +2d instead of +1d.

◇ **Inspection:** You have experience examining crime scenes. When you make a Survey roll to gather evidence about what might have happened in this location, gild an additional die on the roll.

◇ **Stakeout:** You are good at collecting information while remaining undetected. When you are tailing a suspect or conducting surveillance, you may use Survey instead of Hide.

◇ **One Step Ahead:** Once per assignment, you can produce a useful mundane object you've had with you all along. When you do, fill in the empty gear slot and write the object in this space. This does not count toward your gear limit.

NAME: Lim Dae **OCCUPATION:** Thief

ATTRIBUTES: Empathetic, Fluent in Sign, Unassuming, Shy

Where to start with Dae. She's been to prison more times than I can count, and yet somehow always manages to wheedle her way right back out again. She is a thief by trade. Her parents were prominent archeologists before the war, and though I've never met them, I read some of their work. She came in contact with her first phenomenon in an ancient mausoleum when she was quite young. As a child growing up in crypts filled with traps, she mastered the defenses of Oldfairen tombs. After that, standard-issue breaking and entering was incredibly simple for her, I'm sure. But Dae has a real steal-from-the-rich, give-to-the-poor ethos that I find, frankly, both moral and appealing. Working with her will finally force me to stop putting off learning Halen Sign Language. She uses an intriguing hearing device that she's agreed to teach me more about.

Cortnye Queen Transaction: CRIT1014003

Medium Abilities

◇ **Miasma:** You can spend 1 Intuition to tell if and how a person or object has been affected by bleed.

◇ **Bending Spoons:** You can make a Sense roll to control an object in the room with your mind: *flip a switch, knock something over, move a small object, put out a light, etc.* On a mixed success, you may take a Bleed mark to make it a full success instead.

◇ **Cold Read:** On a successful Sense roll, you know what ailment, stress, or loss a person has in their life, even if they're trying to hide it.

◇ **Premonitions:** You have visions of the future. When an ally is about to take 1 or more marks, burn an Intuition resistance to warn them about the coming danger. Then, soak one of these marks.

◇ **Last Moments:** While touching a corpse, you can burn an Intuition resistance to hear, smell, and feel that creature's last few moments of life. By taking a Bleed mark, you can push yourself to see a still image of the last thing they saw before death.

◇ **Commune:** You can make a connection with a nearby sentient phenomenon in order to communicate with it. Take a Brain mark and make a Sense roll to open an empathetic or telepathic connection to ask a question. On a success, you get an answer. On a 4–5 result, the phenomenon will ask a question in return.

Occultist Abilities

◇ **Ghostblade:** You can attune a ritual knife to yourself. If you coat it in your blood (take a Body mark), it is particularly effective against magickal beings and can strike invisible or ethereal enemies.

◇ **Blood of the Covenant:** The first time a dangerous phenomenon inflicts a mark on anyone in your circle, you refresh a number of points, in any drive, equal to your current Intuition resistance.

◇ **Speak Their Language:** You can speak the supernatural language of any phenomenon you encounter. Describe what strange or terrifying way you communicate with each other.

◇ **Play the Bait:** You know how to draw the attention of a phenomenon—you just have to play the bait. Make a Sense roll to bring a nearby phenomenon toward you.

◇ **Extend Your Senses:** When you make a Sense roll to understand more about a phenomenon you've encountered, also add a number of dice equal to your current Intuition resistance to the roll.

◇ **Forbidden Ritual:** You know a highly complex and extremely dangerous ritual that will achieve a desired outcome. When you use this ritual, immediately take a Bleed scar. Determine what the ritual is and what its effects are: *change the environment, conjure a phenomenon, or save a dying person.*

Does Swift really think I haven't attempted to contact her through all these years? Of course I have. Again and again, in the beginning. She never came through. Am I supposed to believe she simply doesn't want to speak to me? I refuse. The far more compelling explanation is simply that Spiritualism has its limits, and contacting a specific deceased person is one of them. Morgan agrees with me; Izzy refuses to engage in the discussion at all. Fine, so long as it doesn't get in the way of the work.

Cortnye Queen Transaction: CRIT1014003

STEP 7: ADD CHARACTER DETAILS

Next, think about how your chosen action ratings, drives, and abilities impact the kind of character you want to play. Use the choices you've made to inform more of their personality and worldview.

For example:

> *Kailey is playing a Doctor with a high action rating in Strike. She may have honed this skill through years stuck in one bad situation after another—she knows how to throw and take a punch. Or she may use this skill to force her way out of bad situations—she can break down a door, but would never lay hands on an innocent.*

In both instances, the action points are distributed equally. It's up to you to decide on your character's personal ethos and past experiences.

Use the following character sheet prompts to help you flesh out your PC:

> **Catalyst:** Briefly describe why your character joined Candela Obscura—what happened to make them devote their life to this cause?
>
> **Question:** Explain what your character hopes to find out over the course of their investigations—what knowledge are they pursuing that motivates them to charge into danger? (This may align with your Catalyst or represent a completely different desire.)
>
> **Style:** What is your character's overall feel and aesthetic?
>
> **Name and Pronouns:** What does your character call themselves, and what are their pronouns?

Also, review your Illumination Keys at the bottom of the character sheet. These are goals for you to play toward during each investigation and will be used to evaluate character advancement. If any don't fit what you're hoping to explore with your character, feel free to replace them with others from a different character sheet or something you come up with in collaboration with the GM. More on Illumination Keys can be found on page 54.

STEP 8: FORM RELATIONSHIPS

This is a game about magick and investigation, but the story lives entirely in the players at the table. We encourage you to invest in deep, complicated, nuanced relationships from the onset, then build the horror of your sessions around the emotional journeys players have chosen to explore.

At this stage, the table should share their characters with one another. Record their names on the left side of your character sheet in the Relationships section. Then, choose one type of relationship and an accompanying question from the options listed in this section to assign to each. If you'd like, you can roll a d6 to help select the question, or make up your own.

The relationships here are one-sided. Meaning: it is not necessary for two characters to feel the same way about one another, or even know how the other feels. Sometimes the most impactful relationships are based on holding one another in different regard. In any case, have a conversation with the other players about what relationships you are interested in your characters navigating, and get their consent for any of the choices you make before proceeding.

Each relationship is a guide, each question a suggestion. They are designed to create a conversation between players to enhance both characters' story arcs. We encourage you to always choose the most impactful option, and explore ideas outside of this book that might facilitate your particular group.

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RELATIONSHIP QUESTIONS

They are your…

Bully

1. This person does something that makes your life more difficult. What do they do, and why do you think they treat you this way?
2. What do you admire about this person, but would never say?
3. You stand in the way of something this person wants. How has this changed their behavior toward you?
4. Despite the antagonism, your relationship with this person is the most constant of any connection in your life. What do they do that feels reliable?
5. Despite the nature of your relationship, you once did something very kind for this person. What happened, and do they know?
6. This person knows your weakness and how to manipulate it. What is it, and how does this change your behavior?

Champion

1. This person protects you from something. What is the threat, and how do they help?
2. This person once spoke out on your behalf at great personal risk. What was the situation, and how did it affect you?
3. This person has told you that you are in danger. What are they protecting you from?
4. This person does something to help you in your everyday life. What is it, and how do you thank them?
5. You once did something very cruel to this person. Why do you believe they continue to protect you anyway?
6. This person makes you a better person. In what way are you different when they are with you?

Confidant

1. This person keeps your dark secret. What is it?
2. You are very cautious around everyone but this person. Why?
3. What does this person do that lets you know you can trust them?
4. You two are planning something in the future. What is it, and why does it make you nervous?
5. To the outside eye, you two have a very different relationship. How do people assume you're connected?
6. You two once got away with something illicit. What was it, and how did it change your lives?

Coworker

1. You've employed this person for years. Why did you hire them?
2. You both hate your outside job and find Candela Obscura a welcome distraction. What about your day job would you change?
3. You both stole money from your employer. How did you do it, and why?
4. Through the work you do together, you've discovered something wonderful about this person few people ever see. What is it, and do they know how you feel?
5. You had a new job opportunity, but didn't want to leave this person behind. What was the other job, and why did you stay?
6. You owe this person more loyalty than others would expect. What did they do for you?

Swift has been comparing trade secrets with Dae at every opportunity. A few years ago, I would have been the person they were swindling.

Cortnye Queen Transaction: CRIT1014003

Enemy

1. You disagree on a fundamental belief. What is it?
2. Despite being enemies, you and this person share a secret. What is it, and how does it bring you together?
3. This person harmed someone you love. What did they do, and what retribution do you seek?
4. You were once allies. What tore you apart?
5. You two share a common enemy. Who is it, and why have you both reluctantly teamed up against them?
6. You're in love with your enemy. What caused these feelings to develop, and why do you keep it a secret?

Family

1. You're related by blood, but don't like each other. Why?
2. This person has always been your closest family member. What do you rely on them for?
3. This person has chosen you to carry on a family legacy. What is it, and do you believe you are worthy?
4. You identify with your chosen family rather than your blood. What does this person do that affirms that belief?
5. Your other family doesn't trust this person. Why is this, and do you agree?
6. This person was a large part of your upbringing. What was their role in your life, and how did it make you into the person you are today?

I have successfully learned Halen Sign Language, though Dae uses so much modern slang that I'm still lost speaking with her. She spends the majority of her time in Morgan's office, working next to him. They rarely converse. It's quite sweet.

Lover

1. You two met in an unexpected way. Where were you, and what happened?
2. What personal difficulty have you two recently navigated together?
3. You love this person but they don't love you back. How has this affected your relationship?
4. You keep your love a secret. Why?
5. You once did something terrible to protect this person. What did you do, and do they know?
6. Your family doesn't approve of your relationship with this person. Why?

Mentor

1. You admire this person above all others. What makes you feel this way?
2. This person once taught you a valuable lesson. How did they do it, and why?
3. This person brought you into Candela Obscura. How did they convince you to join?
4. You resent your membership in Candela Obscura. What does this person hold over you to keep you coming back?
5. This person once saved your life. What happened?
6. What lie did this person teach you about the world? Do they know you've uncovered the truth?

Issy and Swift are getting on like a house on fire. I expect they'll be forming what Candela Obscura would call an "unhealthy attachment between circle members" in less than a month. If it ends badly, we'll all be pinched. Still, i'm happy for them. Must be nice. Issy is delightfully intimidating, which will be good for Swift.

Cortnye Queen Transaction: CRIT1014003

"Intimidating" isn't exactly the right word to describe how I feel about Issy. She's firmly dedicated to her belief that war is not only a necessity, but the only way to end major disagreements between nation-states. To know people who think as she does are the ones making decisions about our ships and our soldiers—that is terrifying. It's not the woman herself that I find daunting. It's what her belief system means for the rest of us.

Muse

1. What about this person drives you to pursue your dream?
2. This person lights up every room they walk into. What do they do that draws the attention of others?
3. You would do anything for this person. What history do you share that makes you so devoted?
4. This person has inspired you to change something specific about your life. What was it?
5. Something about this person fascinates you. What is it, and have you told them?
6. This person fuels an obsession of yours that you find dangerous. What is it, and why do you still keep them in your life?

Old Friend

1. Growing up together, what did you two always get in trouble for?
2. You've seen this person change over the years. How are they different from the person they once were?
3. You once had a terrible fight with this person. What from that fight still weighs on you today?
4. There once was a third person in your friendship. What happened to them?
5. You come from the same home or background. What drove you both away from that shared history?
6. There was a long period during which you two did not speak. What happened, and why are you interacting again?

Rival

1. You've been in competition for years now. What drives you to best one another?
2. There is something you secretly admire about your rival. What is it, and why will you never tell them?
3. You both share an ally that seems in conflict with your rivalry. Who is it, and why are you tied to them?
4. Your rival is much better at a particular skill than you are. What is it, and how does this change your behavior?
5. If your rivalry ended, you would still want this person in your life. Why is that, and what do you do to stay tied to them?
6. You once grievously harmed each other. What harm did you inflict, and how did it change your relationship?

Sibling

1. You're so close that you're practically of one mind. Still, what do you hide from them?
2. You two couldn't be more different. What's one thing you never agree on?
3. You two have another sibling. Why are you estranged from them?
4. You two share a number of secrets, but you protect one above all others. What are you hiding?
5. This person once asked you to do something against your morals. What was it, and did you fulfill their request?
6. You call yourselves siblings, but you're not related by blood. What is the true nature of your relationship, and why do you lie?

Cortnye Queen Transaction: CRIT1014003

Soulmate

1. What do you see in this person that they don't see in themselves?
2. What characteristic of this person do you find endearing, but others find odd?
3. Because of your closeness with this person, you've lost someone else you love. How has this affected your relationship?
4. You believe this person is your soulmate but they don't know. What keeps you from being open with them?
5. You and this person belong together, but something in your lives drives you apart. What is the cause of this opposition?
6. Time with this person feels like coming home. What about them makes you feel this way?

Stranger

1. You have no history, but feel you can trust this person. Why?
2. A characteristic about this person seems so familiar. Who from your past do they remind you of?
3. What about this person feels magnetic to you?
4. Though you've never met, you share something with this person. What is the connection, and how do you feel about it?
5. You have a secret this person must not learn. What is it, and what do you do to protect it?
6. This person has something you want. What is it, and how do you plan to acquire it?

I keep catching Morgan admiring Izzy while she goes through her daily exercises. But I have terrible news for him vis-a-vis her proclivities. He'll find someone nice, I have no doubt. The boy looks dashing when he tries.

Ward

1. Why did you decide to financially support this person?
2. You fundamentally disagree about something important. What is it, and why do you care for them anyway?
3. You feel the need to protect this person. What is the threat, and what actions do you take to ensure their safety?
4. You once had a different ward. What happened to them, and what does this person do that reminds you of them?
5. You can no longer support this person in the way you once did. What changed, and how have you reacted?
6. For all you provide, this person does something particularly wonderful for you. What is it, and how has it affected your life?

IMPLEMENTING QUESTIONS

Use the answers to these questions to inspire richer details in your relationships. As you explore the facets of each connection, be as specific as possible while still leaving room for exploration and spontaneity.

Kailey says to Kat: "You are my ward. I financially support you in secret because I was in the same circle as your mother, and I believe she died during an investigation due to my negligence. If you knew the truth behind her death, you might seek vengeance, so I purposefully keep you in the dark. I've come to love you very much and will risk my life to improve yours."

Kat says to Kailey: "You've become my muse. You inspired me to leave the religious cult known as Pyre, where I felt like a tool of destruction. You've shown me a better way to live, and for that I am grateful. You lost your soulmate, and I have a small amount of real magickal ability. So, I'm dedicated to learning more about death during my work with Candela Obscura, because I hope that connecting you with the spirit of your lover will make you smile again."

Cortnye Queen Transaction: CRIT1014003



Cortnye Queen Transaction: CRIT1014003

CREATING YOUR CIRCLE

Candela Obscura is an organization founded upon centuries of tradition, and therefore holds loyalty among their core values. There are many chapters, composed of many circles, all over the world. These chapters may work closely with one another or operate in relative isolation. Your characters are members of the Fairelands chapter of Candela Obscura, and the details of your circle are up to you. For more on the organizational structure of Candela Obscura, see page 74.

It is up to your group to decide how your circle operates. Are you so tightly knit that you live, eat, and work together every day? Do you all treat Candela Obscura like a job that must remain separate from daily life? Building off what you established with individual relationships, answer one or more Circle Questions, or create your own. Establishing the shared history behind your group of investigators will facilitate circle creation, and provide additional seeds for storytelling throughout the campaign.

Remember: you don't need to know every detail right now, and it's often better that you don't. Make the choices that seem obvious now, leave open what doesn't suit you, and always feel free to make changes down the line.

STEP 1: ANSWER CIRCLE QUESTIONS

Choose one of the following questions (or create your own) to help determine some shared information about your circle. Optionally, you can roll a d6 and select the question from the result of your roll. Discuss the answer as a group and decide how it might affect your character.

d6	Question
1	You have all known one another for a long time, but your circle was recently formed. Why were you brought together, and how do you each feel about it?
2	You all share a common goal that's secret to the Lightkeepers of Candela Obscura. What is it?
3	You've never met, but members of your circle are infamous. What did they do, and how do you each feel about it?
4	Your circle was retired, but Candela Obscura recently brought you back. Why were you all dismissed, and why did they call you in again?
5	Your circle once did something incredibly heroic. What did you do, and do other people know about it?
6	Your circle once did something horribly evil. What did you do, and how do you seek absolution?

Now that you've created a shared history, use your circle sheet to continue building your team. You will all utilize this sheet to chart your starting position and track your circle's progress over the course of multiple game sessions.

Cortnye Queen Transaction: CRIT1014003

STEP 2: NAME YOUR CIRCLE

Naming something is very powerful. You may imbue something with intent or recognition—you could even transform something you fear into something you love with the right name.

When you choose your circle's name, you should consider how your team feels about their place within Candela Obscura, or how Candela Obscura as a whole governs their circles. The name might serve as an invitation, an oath, or a shackle.

Though you could choose anything, the name should, in some way, define your group. Perhaps it refers to your purpose, your approach to investigations, your scope within the organization, your location, etc. For example: the Circle of Quiet Commons, the Circle of Vim & Vigor, the Circle of Squares.

STEP 3: CHOOSE A CHAPTER HOUSE LOCATION

Your circle is one of many investigative teams in Candela Obscura's chapter within the Fairelands. There are chapter houses scattered through the various districts of Newfaire and across the many regions of the valley, where members of Candela Obscura can come together to discuss their investigations in private and recover safely between assignments. Decide where your circle's chapter house is located, and what that looks like.

> *The Circle of Skull & Sovereign maintains a small townhouse on the Eaves. Three out of the four members are highly educated and exceedingly wealthy. The townhouse is richly appointed and they hire a live-in nurse to care for the frail Lightkeeper who lives within. They never want for material resources, but must rely on their member born in South Soffit for any reliable information about the more nefarious activities in Newfaire. No one would believe it, but this circle loves to loosen their ties and host a night of drinking and cards.*

Or:

> *The Circle of Loyal Malefactors has a hideaway in the Bridleborne Mountains. All five members are also redrunners, who smuggle illegal scarlet liquor into Newfaire. They never have trouble procuring weapons or transportation, but they all stick out like sore thumbs when they investigate magickal phenomena in the ritzy portions of the capital. They often joke about being "too bad to do good," but everyone in this circle would take a bullet for one another, and they always prioritize the protection of innocents.*

Or:

> *The Circle of Congruence has existed within Briarbank College for decades. Its current membership boasts only three professors, who each specialize in a different area of study. With access to both Candela Obscura's archives and the college's library, there's no information they cannot uncover—though this group is certainly not known for charging into danger. This group keeps a terrible secret from their Lightkeeper that, if uncovered, might cause them to be kicked out of Candela Obscura, or worse.*

Example Chapter Houses

The Empty Office: On the fourth floor of a medical building in Silverslip is an office that belongs to a Doctor Lygon, though no such person is known to work there.

The Boot and Saddle: In the backrooms of a run-down bar in South Soffit, there is a small but functional space for Candela Obscura members to meet.

The Rust Warren: An underground bunker in the Haven Hills left over from the war, it has been utilized by members of Candela Obscura when needed.

Cortnye Queen Transaction: CRIT1014003

STEP 4: CHOOSE CIRCLE ABILITIES

Like your own role and specialty abilities, your circle has abilities that your group can utilize during an assignment. During circle creation, select one ability. Every time you advance, you'll choose another.

Stamina Training: Your circle has three gilded dice at the beginning of every assignment that anyone may add as +1d to any roll. Once a die has been rolled, it is expended.

Nobody Left Behind: When a member of your circle drops incapacitated from taking too many marks, any roll a player makes in the scene to protect them, or get them out of danger, has +1d.

In This Together: When you spend drive to help an ally on a roll, on a result of 3 or less, you both earn back 1 drive point of your choice.

Interdisciplinary: When choosing a new ability during character advancement, once per campaign, each character may choose an ability from a character role or specialty outside their own.

Resource Management: When your circle hits a milestone on the Illumination Track, earn back 1 Stitch, Refresh, or Train resource.

One Last Run: When you select this ability, the next assignment is your last. Everyone gets to take all four options during this character advancement instead of only two.

STEP 5: ASSIGN RESOURCE POINTS

As a group, your circle has a number of pooled resources available that allows them to recover and train between assignments.

> **Stitch:** Clear all marks for one PC.
>
> **Refresh:** Recoup all used drives and resistances for one PC.
>
> **Train:** Take a d6 that may be used on any roll in the next assignment.

At circle creation, assign a number of resource points equal to 1 plus the number of circle members. Between assignments, each player may spend up to two resources of their choosing. While their use can be played out in-game, they can also be utilized "off-screen."

Resources are not replenished until the Illumination Track is completely filled. That makes them especially valuable, and means they should be used wisely. This encourages you to be courageous during investigations and clever during downtime.



Cortnye Queen Transaction: CRIT1014003



Cortnye Queen Transaction: CRIT1014003

HOW TO PLAY

ASSIGNMENTS

Assignments are the individual mysteries Candela Obscura asks a circle to investigate. An assignment might arise from a strange death or highly unusual situation that requires the group's expertise in the occult. Each assignment will generally last a single session of gameplay, though it could last longer if you and your table decide to take a break and pick it up at another time.

Though you may enjoy *Candela Obscura* in a stand-alone session (known as a *one-shot*), the game is designed for you to play over the course of many interconnected sessions, known as a *campaign*. In a campaign, your circle will embark on a number of different assignments in an effort to protect the Fairelands from terrifying supernatural dangers.

ASSIGNMENT REPORT
-CANDELA OBSCURA-

ASSIGNMENT ID NBG-843 REPORT DATE Late Spring 27

LIGHTKEEPER G. Ashford CIRCLE NAME Night Side

MEMBER NAMES D. Lim M. Ansari
Swift I. Alvarez --

ASSIGNMENT SUMMARY

Circle was able to contain a phenomena accidentally summoned by students from arcane text found in library at Briarbank College. Circle of the Cryptic Quill, local to the Green, aided Night Side by keeping innocents from danger. found an Ancient Fairen stele at a commercial construction site in Revenant Park while using Blood Detector during investigation.

INJURIES? (IF YES, EXPLAIN BELOW)

☒ YES ☐ NO

Morgan gave himself four stitches after falling into the construction pit and slicing open his forehead.

CONT'D ON NEXT PAGE

Cortnye Queen Transaction: CRIT1014003

PLAY STRUCTURE

The Opening

A GM will begin most assignments by setting the stage for the investigation you're about to undertake. This may take the shape of an opening narration, presenting players with details about the event that led to Candela Obscura's involvement. Think of this like the cold opening of a television show that prepares the audience for the rest of the episode's investigation, and serves as a dramatic means to express the knowledge that Candela Obscura provides to its investigators.

At any point, but especially at the beginning of your assignment, you may consult your Lightkeeper. This NPC is in charge of overseeing your circle in the Fairelands and decides what investigations to send you out on. The GM will integrate them into the story at their discretion, but they should serve as a resource for your team and a gateway to the wider organization. Remember: the cold open provides a wealth of information, and the Lighkeeper's purpose is not to repeat this tale—only to facilitate further exploration. For more on Lightkeepers, see page 74.

The Investigation

The investigation is the main portion of an assignment, where you will search for clues, follow the paths they reveal, face off against nefarious forces, identify the phenomenon, and—hopefully—put an end to it before it consumes you. This is where the mystery of the assignment unravels and you have the opportunity to show off what makes you a worthy member of Candela Obscura. Take risks, put yourself in danger, and relentlessly pursue the truth.

Remember that the storytelling in this game is the responsibility of every person at the table. If you want to see a specific scene during an assignment or have a goal for your character in a campaign, don't be afraid to communicate what you're looking for with your GM. When you're not sure what to do next, you can lean on your Catalyst and Question to drive your character toward their personal objective, and use your Illumination Keys to guide your roleplay. This is your opportunity to bring your character to life.



Cortnye Queen Transaction: CRIT1014003



Assignment #TTG-491

Closing an Assignment

Once your circle has captured or killed a creature from beyond the Flare, discovered a thinning, or contained a source of magick, it's likely time for the assignment to draw to a close. In most cases, Candela Obscura has the resources to clean up the scene, transport creatures discreetly, and get investigators back to their chapter house. If your table is interested in taking artifacts or creatures back to the Fourth Pharos yourself, you are welcome to play out those scenes, but it is important to know that your circle is not alone in handling the aftermath of an assignment.

In this phase, you'll also check for any earned Illumination, discussed in detail on page 55.

Between Assignments

Once your circle has finished an assignment, you may take some time to rest before setting off again. During this phase of the game, you'll clear all used gear slots and spend Candela Obscura resources to help you recover and prepare for the journey ahead. You may each choose up to two resources to use for yourself: *Stitch* (heal all of your marks), *Refresh* (refresh all of your drives), or *Train* (take a bonus die for the next assignment).

When you spend these resources, you are encouraged to play out a scene with your other investigators (or with the GM) that showcases what your character is doing in their downtime. If you choose to spend Stitch, you may have a scene with one of your circle members where they tell you about their family while they patch you up at the chapter house. If you choose Refresh, you might describe the way your character blows off steam in a casino in Red Lamp or by piloting a dirigible high above the city. If you choose Train, your character may attend classes at Briarbank College, or hit the bag at the local boxing club.

Cortnye Queen Transaction: CRIT1014003

PLAY GUIDANCE

Play to Find Out

As storytellers, you should always play to find out what happens next. This means that everyone at the table, including the GM, organically discovers the story together. The decisions you and the rest of the investigators make during an assignment, combined with the random results of the dice, create the opportunity for you to change the story at any moment. Don't be afraid to make bold choices, try something dangerous, and embrace the consequences. The story will always be better for it.

Fiction-First Storytelling

Candela Obscura is a fiction-first game, meaning you should always prioritize leading with what your character is doing rather than what kind of roll you want to make. For instance, if you're looking to bust through a locked door, it's best practice to say "I lower my shoulder and run at the door so I can try to break through it," instead of "I roll Strike to break down the door." This approach grounds the conversation in the fiction of the world, allowing you to focus on the action of the scene rather than worrying about how to mechanically accomplish it.

Sources state that though Otherwhere's technological effectiveness may be meager and their reliability uncertain, there is still no doubt as to the implications of the advancement. What was once a promising shield of technology against our former enemies is now no more than a mere parlor trick. We find ourselves on an even playing field.

When asked for comment, Premier Mallingson stressed to reporters that "this development was inevitable" and suggested that her government has been preparing for this day in earnest since Otherwhere signed the armistice.

But the Star's source within the Primacy claimed, "We were very much taken by surprise."

"While our reports do indicate that Otherwhere has joined the electrified world," said Premier Mallingson, "there is simply no need to panic. They are years behind us technologically, and Hale remains a world leader in groundbreaking invention and machinery. No citizen of the Fairelands should lose sleep over this news."

But there is speculation among Primacy chamberlains that it is only a matter of time before Otherwhere decides to test out its capacity to use electricity in weaponry, which leaves this reporter with a question: What does that mean for Hale?

It is only after you say what you are doing that we refer to the game mechanics in order to see what applies. While playing, you say what you do, and the GM narrates what happens next. Conversations between a PC and an NPC are a great example of this. The discussion may go back and forth until there is a point where the outcome is unclear. For example, you could ask an NPC to act against their best interests, reveal hidden information, or back down from a fight. This is when the mechanics are engaged in order to continue the story.

Make Choices, Leave Openings

You don't need to know everything about your character at creation—in fact, it's often better to make a few bold choices to give yourself something to jump off from. This leaves an opening for discovery during play. Your action ratings and drive points will give you an idea of where your character excels, but sometimes the most profound and intricate personal details will develop over the course of your campaign.

When you leave openings in your backstory, you provide the GM opportunities to integrate personal details into future assignments. You might establish that your father was an investigator with Candela Obscura who went missing when you were a child. The only thing he left behind was writing about a large spider-like creature that was stalking innocent victims. Down the road, the GM can introduce familiar elements to your story—more journals your father kept, a colleague from his past, or the reprise of the spider-monster now stalking somebody new. By providing strong choices with open ends, you give yourself and your GM the opportunity to integrate your character into the plot in exciting and deeply personal ways.

Cortnye Queen Transaction: CRIT1014003

Play in Good Faith

When engaging with the mechanics, it is the expectation that you approach them in good faith. For example, don't repeatedly use an action simply because it provides you with more dice, don't keep the scene focused solely on you to the detriment of the story, and don't make decisions for other players at your table. This game system gives the players profound influence over the narrative—that means the players must use this power for good and in a way that aligns with the goals of the rest of the table. To put it simply: *play nice and be considerate of others.*

Pitfalls of the Genre

This game is designed to provide a thrilling and, at times, unsettling experience for players. While there are moments where it may elicit fear and unease, ultimately, it is meant to be enjoyed. Remember that the goal is not to traumatize players, but to provide a safe and controlled environment in which to explore darker themes and narratives. The intention is to create a sense of anticipation and excitement, while also allowing players to feel a sense of agency in the face of danger. Ultimately, this game is meant to be a fun and engaging experience, and it is up to both the GM and the players to balance the intensity of the game with the enjoyment of the players at their table.

Communicate

Sometimes, things just aren't working. Your character's mechanics aren't operating the way you want them to, you feel that somebody is hogging the spotlight, or you don't think your play style meshes with the rest of the table. Whenever an issue arises, communicate with your fellow players. You can always pull the GM aside and ask them for what you need, even if that means reworking your character or adjusting the established narrative.

Additionally, ask the other players how you can best support them in play. The GM is not the only one in charge of making sure all players have a good time—that responsibility falls on the shoulders of everyone at the table.

CHARACTER VS. CHARACTER ADJUDICATION

It's possible a player character will find themselves in a situation where they want to make a roll against another player character. This kind of play is not built into the system, so when this happens, have a discussion at the table about the purpose of the roll and the desired outcome for both parties. Sometimes, a PC might hope to accomplish a goal the other player has no plans to impede, in which case the fiction can move forward without the need for one or more rolls. Whatever the situation, resist the urge to immediately utilize dice. Slow down and have a conversation, ensuring that the conflict is truly between the characters involved in the scene, and not the players at the table. If it is possible to make a ruling that doesn't involve a randomized resolution method, like dice, we recommend you take that course instead.

If both players and the GM agree there is a narrative reason to adjudicate a PC vs. PC conflict, it is up to everyone involved to collaborate and agree on a method of resolution. Once a decision has been reached and the table understands the method, stakes, and consequences, only then should play proceed.

Morgan is excelling as of late, but I worry about his headfirst attitude. Not that I don't appreciate it, but I'd by and large prefer to have a living investigator over a dead one. Imagine the paperwork. I'll try to figure out the geomancy for protective sigils that might suit him...

Cortnye Queen Transaction: CRIT1014003

DRIVES & RESISTANCES

Drives are an expendable resource that you can use and replenish during a session. They represent your character's ability to push themselves past their standard capacity. If the roll goes poorly, resistances are your way to push back on the potential consequences, and represent how well a character can make split-second adjustments under pressure to help them succeed.

Nerve

When you spend Nerve on a roll, you're physically exerting yourself beyond your usual capacity. If you're rolling with Move, you might push your body to its maximum speed during an escape. If you're rolling with Strike, you might take the extra moment to pull back your swing for increased power on a punch. If you're rolling with Control, you might pay extra attention to the movement of your fingers while picking a lock.

> *Carlos is attempting to pursue a mysterious figure up a fire escape. He has an action rating of 1 in Move, but decides this is an important roll, so he pushes himself by spending 2 Nerve to add +2d to the action roll.*

When you burn a Nerve resistance, you're relying on your physical aptitude to help you push back on the consequences of a roll. Ask yourself what you do with your physical body to propel yourself through the moment.

> *Carlos makes the action roll with three dice and they all land on 3 or below. That's bad luck, especially on a high-stakes roll like this. The mysterious figure is likely going to escape here, so he decides to burn his Nerve resistance to try again. He only has 1 point in Move, so he can only reroll one of his dice—but it lands on a 6, a full success! He asks the GM what happens next.*

Cunning

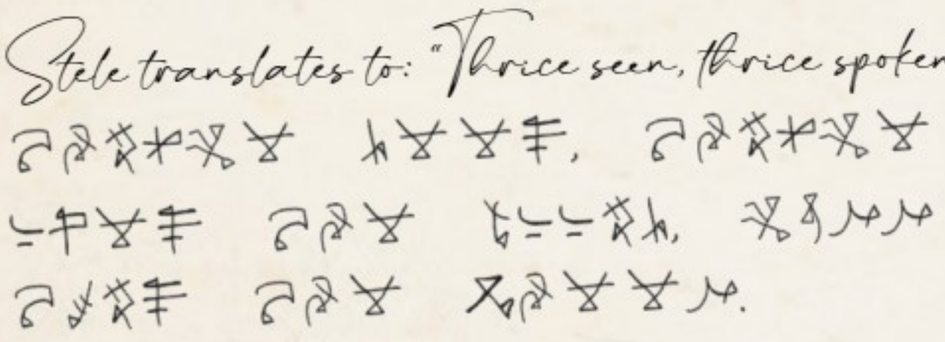
When you spend Cunning on a roll, you're paying particular attention to the way in which you are interacting with others. If you're rolling with Sway, you might turn on extra charm to convince a bouncer to unlock a door. If you're rolling with Read, you might hone in on somebody's tells or inflections. If you're rolling with Hide, you might move carefully to avoid detection.

> *Dani is attempting to convince a bouncer into letting her circle enter a private party they were not invited to. She has an action rating of 1 in Sway, and decides to spend 1 Cunning to add an additional +1d to the roll.*

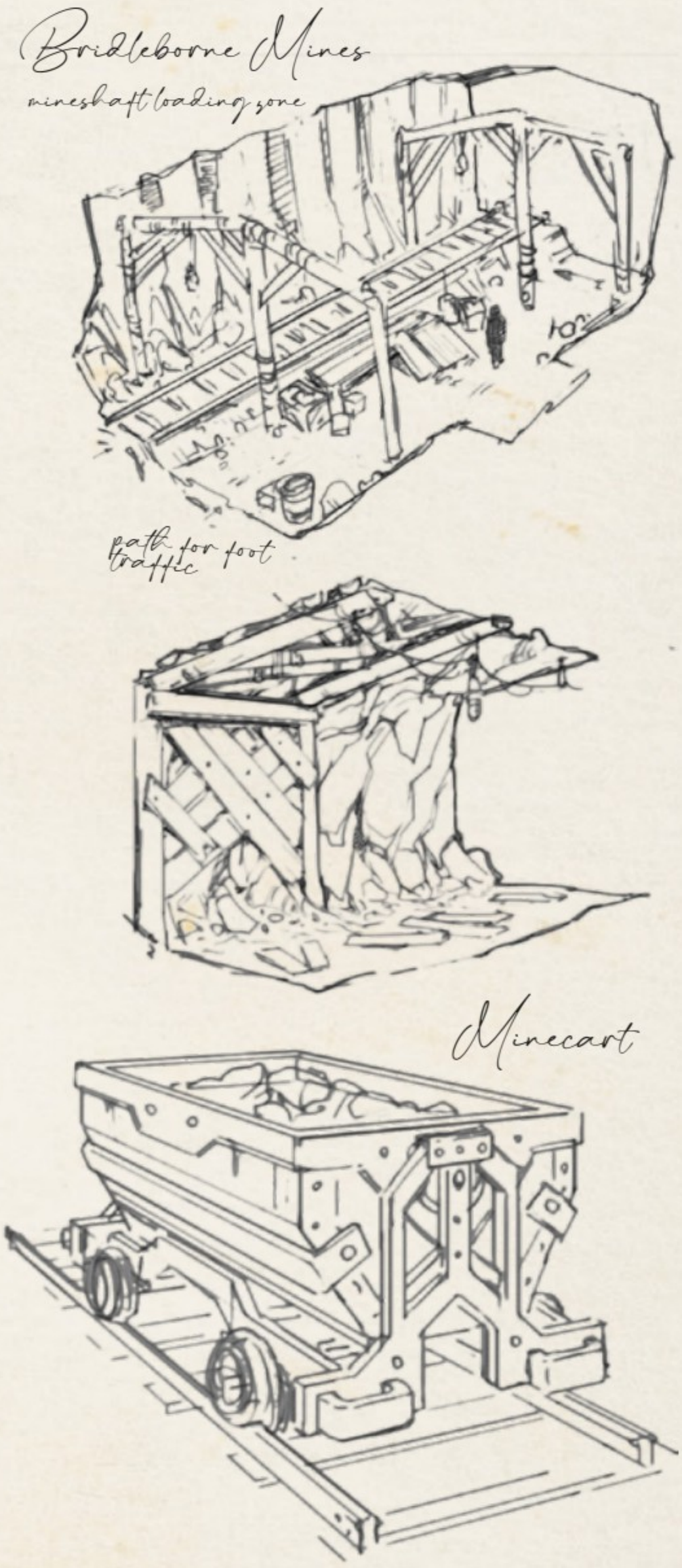
When you burn a Cunning resistance, you're relying on your social skills and acuity to push back on the consequences of a roll. Ask yourself what you say or how you adjust your presence to better your chances of success.

> *Dani makes the action roll with three dice, and her highest result is a 5. She knows a consequence here could mean they are followed or granted only a limited amount of time inside. Dani decides to risk it and burn her Cunning resistance to reroll one of her dice. She gets a 3, so her attempt to push back on the consequences was unsuccessful and she must accept this new result. She asks the GM what happens next.*

Stele translates to: "Thrice seen, thrice spoken, open the doors, call the words, turn the wheel."



Cortnye Queen Transaction: CRIT1014003



Intuition

When you spend Intuition on a roll, you're using your natural instincts to better perceive the world around you. If you're rolling with Survey, you might close your eyes and listen intently to find the source of a mysterious sound. If you're rolling with Focus, you might take an extra moment with the object you're examining to study its fine details. If you're rolling with Sense, you might open yourself more fully to the supernatural world by burying your hands in the soil.

Kat is trapped in a collapsing mineshaft within the Bridleborne Mountains. With a cave-in imminent, they are trying to find the best escape route for their circle. They have an action of zero in Survey, but know how important this roll will be, so they spend 2 Intuition for a total of two dice in their pool.

When you burn an Intuition resistance, you're relying on your innate senses to help you push back on the consequences of a roll. Ask yourself what you tap into within yourself to defy the negative outcome.

Kat makes an action roll and the results are both 1—on a high-stakes roll like this, they know a failure could result in body marks from the large rocks falling around them. They decide to burn an Intuition resistance and attempt another roll. Kat doesn't have any points in Survey, so they will have to roll two dice and take the lower result. One die comes up a 4 and the other a 5, giving them a mixed success. They ask the GM what happens next.



Cortnye Queen Transaction: CRIT1014003

ACTIONS

Move: *Run, Dodge, Navigate*

This action is all about your physical movement and how it aids you in accomplishing your goal.

You might use Move when climbing a rope, avoiding a foe, sprinting for your life, leaping across a chasm, or leading the charge.

> *Kat watches as the rope bridge they are on begins to snap and crumble. They want to sprint to the other side before the whole thing collapses under them. The GM tells them to make a Move roll.*

Strike: *Punch, Break, Grapple*

This action is all about your strength and how you apply it to the situation.

You might use Strike when punching an enemy, lifting a heavy object, wrestling someone to the ground, busting down a door, or breaking an artifact.

> *Carlos has found the hidden door, but the keyhole has been filled in with molten steel—somebody didn't want people going inside. Carlos decides to ram the door with his shoulder in an attempt to break through, so the GM tells him to make a Strike roll.*

Control: *Drive, Shoot, Finesse*

This action is all about your dexterity and hand-eye coordination.

You might use Control when picking a lock, throwing a knife, firing a weapon, forging a signature, or handling a vehicle.

> *Dani makes it to the cockpit of the plummeting dirigible, where the pilot sits motionless and blue. She pushes his dead body to the side and grabs hold of the wheel in an attempt to keep the flying machine from crashing into the ground. The GM tells her to make a Control roll.*

Sway: *Convince, Command, Consort*

This action is all about your charisma and presence.

You might use Sway when intimidating an enemy, charming a stranger, ordering a crowd to disperse, impressing someone, or convincing a person to do what you want.

> *Kailey is held at gunpoint; her adversary has a look of fear in his eyes. "I'm not here to hurt you!" she says, trying to convince the terrified man that she isn't an enemy. The GM tells her to make a Sway roll.*

Read: *Interpret Body Language, Spot Lies, Gather Motives*

This action is all about your insight into people and discovering their intentions.

You might use Read when questioning a witness, identifying who in the room is suspicious, analyzing the behavior of a group, deciphering a spoken code, or communicating across a language barrier.

> *Carlos is having a conversation with the woman who owns the flower shop where a missing person was last seen. "He came in to order hydrangeas, paid up front." Carlos wants to know if she is withholding any information, so the GM tells him to make a Read roll.*

Cortnye Queen Transaction: CRIT1014003

Hide: *Sneak, Deceive, Sleight of Hand*

This action is all about your ability to blend in with your surroundings and mislead others.

You might use Hide when sneaking past a monster, disguising yourself as someone else, creating a distraction, pickpocketing a target, or veiling the truth.

> *Dani is in a gallery trying to swap the Ancient Fairen artifact for the forgery she constructed while going unnoticed by the security patrol. The GM tells her to make a Hide roll.*

Survey: *Search, Track, Spot*

This action is all about your situational awareness and how well you can recognize important details in your environment.

You might use Survey when following footprints, looking for the best exit, trying to spot a person in a crowd, searching your surroundings for a clue, or navigating a tomb.

> *Carlos enters a politician's office, looking for the place this person would hide important documents. The GM tells him to make a Survey roll.*

Focus: *Inspect, Analyze, Remember*

This action is all about your mental acuity and ability to identify the details of an object.

You might use Focus when inspecting an artifact, translating a text, recalling a phenomenon's weakness, interpreting a grimoire, or creating a written code.

> *Kailey finds alchemical symbols on the wall of a chamber in Oldfaire and wants to know if she can deduce what they mean. The GM tells her to make a Focus roll.*

Sense: *Attune, Channel, Reveal*

This action is all about your connection to magick and how well you can utilize it or recognize its effects.

You might use Sense when examining bleed, channeling an arcane ability, perceiving a phenomenon, communicating with the supernatural, or performing a ritual.

> *Kat is talking with a ghostly phenomenon that haunts a sepulcher within the Nekropolis of Oldfaire. They want to ask, "Why do you continue to inhabit this land?" The GM tells them to make a Sense roll.*

CHOOSING AN ACTION

You will discover over the course of your campaign that there are numerous interpretations for each action, and they can be utilized differently depending on your approach. On any given roll, you could make a case for one action over another, especially if the action roll the GM calls for doesn't align with how you imagine your character behaving in the situation. Equally, two characters might accomplish the same goal utilizing very different actions.

> *Kailey is playing a Doctor. She needs to get into a party hosted by the Premier, so she pretends to be a foreign dignitary and makes small talk with security while standing in line to get in. She describes the extravagant compliments she gives the NPC, and makes a Sway roll.*

> *Dani is playing a Soldier. She also needs to get into the Premier's party. She pretends to be a foreign dignitary and makes small talk with security while standing in line to get in. She describes the elaborate lie she tells the NPC about her recent travels, and makes a Hide roll.*

Cortnye Queen Transaction: CRIT1014003

GEAR

Due to the nature of investigation, it can be difficult for players to prepare for any given situation to the same degree as their characters would be able to. This means that players should only select the gear their character uses in the moment that they need it, rather than trying to plan ahead and finding themselves lacking.

> *Carlos is playing a Journalist. In the midst of a high society party, he finds that his circle needs a distraction in order to evade a dangerous agent of the Red Hand. Carlos tells the group that he's selecting the Camera gear on his character sheet to use as a distraction. He describes gathering a large crowd of partygoers together to take a group photo for the newspaper, looking to use this distraction to allow his group to slip out the back door. The GM tells him this adjustment will make his action more effective and asks Carlos to make a Sway roll to keep focus off of his circle while this happens.*

PCs have the capacity for three pieces of gear on their person. They may select all three in one moment of dire need, or make each decision over the course of an assignment. Gear slots only reset once an assignment is complete.

Whenever possible, you should tailor your gear to your character. Though all members of Candela Obscura can carry a hand weapon, a wealthy Professor might carry an ornate revolver and never leave home without it. Meanwhile, a Criminal might swipe anything readily available, changing out blades and guns based on need rather than personal attachment.

Certain pieces of gear have descriptions of the mechanical effects that come into play when the item is used:

- **Soak Body/Brain/Bleed:** When taking this kind of mark, you may expend one gear slot to say you have the item instead, keeping yourself from taking the relevant number of marks.
- **+1d on rolls:** Take an additional die on specific rolls when using this gear.
- **Gild rolls:** Gild an additional die on specific rolls when using this gear.
- **# of uses:** You may only use the item a number of times before it is gone. When you expend a gear slot to use it, reduce this number by 1.

Candela Obscura Gear

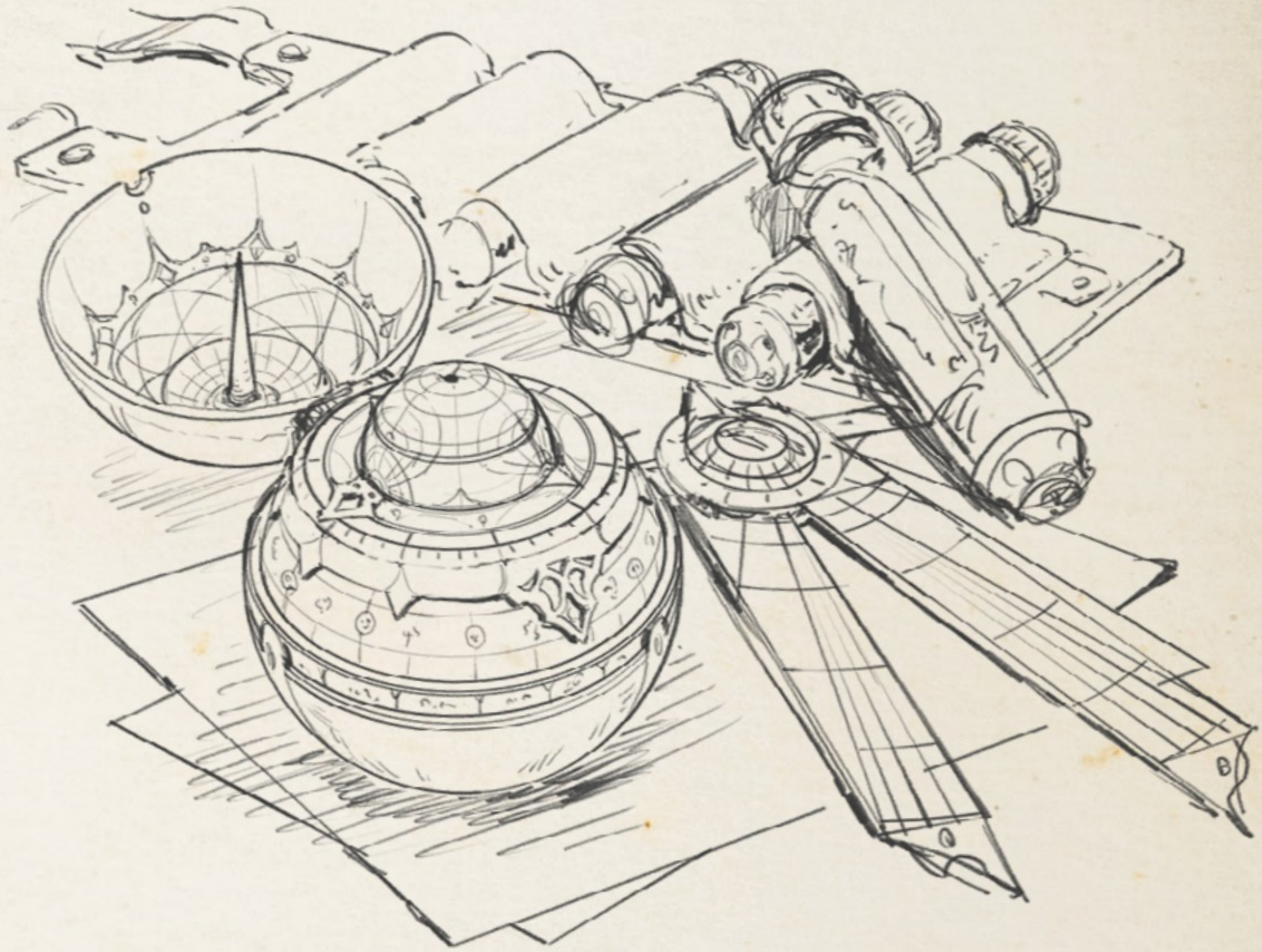
Certain gear is standard issue for members of Candela Obscura—any player could have one or all of these items. We've provided basic descriptions in this section, but you should work with your GM to make each selection specific to your campaign, character, or investigation.

Bleed Containment Vial: A small container that can hold the remnants of magickal phenomena. Traditionally, investigators will gather samples, like a pearlescent black ichor, from a crime scene to use or examine later. This item protects the user from taking Bleed marks from anything within, though they now carry a dangerous substance on their person.

Hand Weapon: A handgun, knife, brass knuckles, or other dangerous item that's easily concealed. Candela Obscura investigators are not always brawlers, but they usually know better than to charge into danger empty-handed.

Bleed Detector: A small flashlight, a spyglass, a music box, or other mechanism that allows investigators to perceive the evidence of phenomena. You might decide to use a lamp to view bleed like luminol, or carry a pipe with smoke that drifts toward magickal residuum. Work with your GM to invent a fascinating arcane object that works for your character.

Cortnye Queen Transaction: CRIT1014003



Specialty Gear

Each specialty also has their own personalized gear that can be utilized during an assignment. If you have any questions about how a piece of gear works, what its limitations are, or how you could implement it in a scene, have a discussion with the GM so they can make a ruling.

Circle Gear

Circle gear is a collection of gear that is available to the entire circle of investigators. Just like the gear on an individual character sheet, you should only select it as needed. When you expend the slot next to the blank gear line on your character sheet, you can record this item and declare that you have it with you. If you select a piece of circle gear, then it is no longer available for another player to choose during this assignment (unless it is narratively passed along to that player).

You can find additional gear you might acquire as an individual investigator or as a circle on page 190.

Cortnye Queen Transaction: CRIT1014003

CHARACTER & CIRCLE ADVANCEMENT

As your circle takes on more assignments, the characters become more capable and skilled, therefore the circle becomes more powerful and influential. These advancements are tracked both individually and as a group.

Illumination Keys

Illumination Keys are the narrative objectives that each specialty is trying to achieve by the end of an assignment. These keys contribute to the circle's *Illumination Track*, which is responsible for activating circle and character advancement. You can fulfill as many of these Illumination Keys as you'd like in a session, but you only need to accomplish one to contribute to the Illumination Track.

If you're ever unsure how your character might behave in a scene, look for ways to embrace your Illumination Keys. They serve as a guiding light for the specialty you're playing.

The Illumination Keys are listed on each specialty's character sheet.

Journalist (Face): Gather Statements, Hunt Down a Lead, Speak Truth to Power

Magician (Face): Perform a Trick, Spot a Ruse, Seek Out Real Magick

Explorer (Muscle): Study an Artifact, Discuss History, Run into Danger

Soldier (Muscle): Use Violence of Action, Protect Someone, Act Tactically

Doctor (Scholar): Avoid a Fight, Aid an Ally, Comfort Someone

Professor (Scholar): Mentor an Ally, Reference Research, Make a Plan

Criminal (Slink): Do Something Illegal, Make a Deal, Stand Up to Authority

Detective (Slink): Probe a Witness, Track a Target, Reveal a Clue

Medium (Weird): Connect with Someone, Sense Phenomena, Make a Scene

Occultist (Weird): Consult Arcane Texts, Collect Oddities, Act Bizarre

Illumination Questions

Evaluate the Illumination you've earned at the end of an assignment.

Did you contain or destroy a source of bleed?

Did you provide comfort or support for those affected by a phenomenon?

Did you bring something of importance back for Candela Obscura to protect or study?

Please note: "something of importance" includes valuable information as much as it refers to artifacts or creatures. While it might seem flashy to contain an all-consuming shadow beast, the organization would find it equally vital to learn that a member of their ranks secretly works with the Red Hand. Consider every way your circle can aid the organization's efforts.

Cortnye Queen Transaction: CRIT1014003

Tally Illumination

Illumination represents how much information your circle has and how influential it is. You begin the game with no Illumination points, and accumulate them through the assignments you take. When evaluating Illumination at the end of an assignment:

> Earn 1 for every Illumination question you answer "yes" to.
>
> Earn 2 if some, but not all, players fulfilled an Illumination Key during the session.
>
> Earn 4 if every player fulfilled at least one Illumination Key during the session.
>
> If nobody in the circle fulfilled any of their Keys, take no additional Illumination.

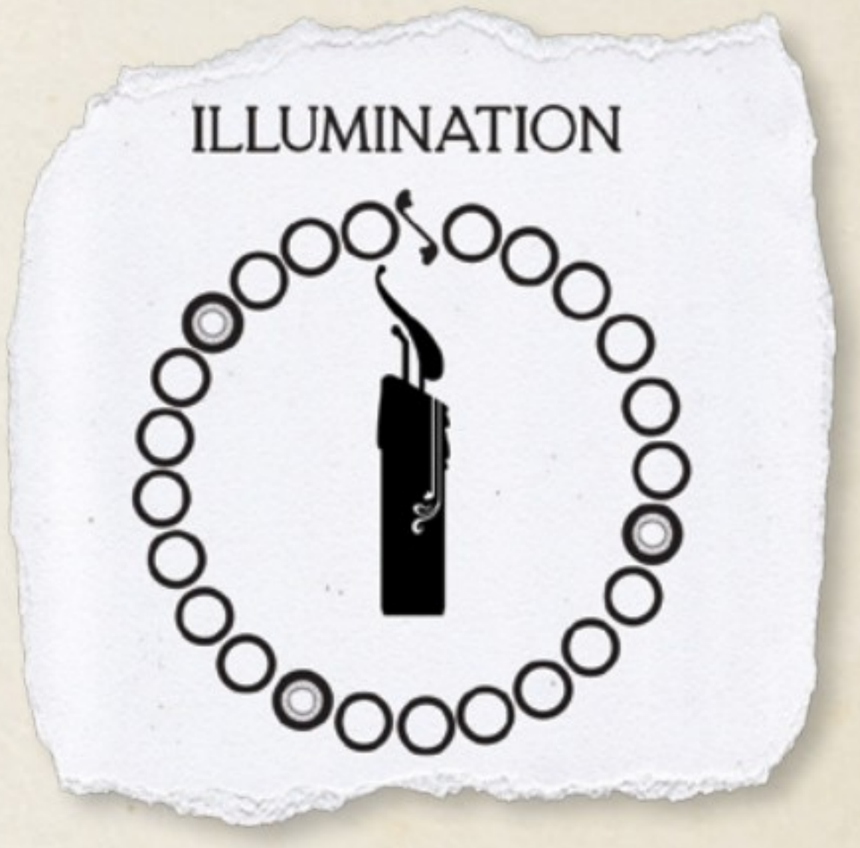
For example:

> *The circle defeated a monster that was devouring innocents and provided support by comforting the family of a victim, but didn't bring back anything of importance for Candela Obscura. They take 2 Illumination points.*
>
> *Carlos is playing the Journalist. During the session, he gathered statements and hunted down a lead. Kailey is playing a Doctor and aided an ally by patching them up after a fight. Dani is playing a Soldier and protected someone from harm. Kat is playing an Occultist, but forgot to focus on their Illumination Keys this session.*
>
> *Because only some of the circle members fulfilled their Illumination Keys, the group earns 2 additional Illumination points.*

Unlocking Advancement

The Illumination Track can be found on the circle sheet. When it fills, the circle advances, following these steps:

- Clear the Illumination Track. Any leftover Illumination counts toward your next advancement cycle.
- Choose a new circle ability.
- Each player can choose two different options for their characters:
  - Add 1 action point.
  - Add 2 drive points.
  - Take a new ability. *This can be from either the player's role or specialty.*
  - Gild an additional action.



The circle fills their Illumination track and has 2 points left over. They erase the track, then fill in the remaining 2 points. They talk amongst themselves and choose Resource Management as their next circle ability. Then, they each choose two options for character advancement: Kat chooses to add an action point to Hide and gild Read. Carlos takes 1 drive point in both Cunning and Nerve, and adds an action point to Sway. Dani adds an action point to Move and 2 drive points to Cunning. Kailey takes a new ability and adds an action point to Focus.

Cortnye Queen Transaction: CRIT1014003

FULL EXAMPLE OF PLAY

The Circle of Salt and Cinders is investigating reports of exsanguinated corpses in Hallowharbor, per an assignment from their Lightkeeper.

The Circle includes Leo the Journalist (he/him), Wyn the Occultist (they/them), Lydia the Soldier (she/her), and Iris the Doctor (she/her). Wyn and Iris fought together as partisans in the war, Lydia is Leo's ward, and Lydia was engaged to marry Iris's brother George before he died in the mysterious circumstances that led Lydia to Candela Obscura.

OUT OF THE SHADOWS

Elise, the GM (she/her), says, "Your investigation begins on the docks of Hallowharbor in the early evening. Porters are finishing up loading and unloading ships as sailors and traders from across Hale wind down their day. The Periphery has already set up a cordon at the site of the latest death. Two uniformed officers watch the street and there are two more down the poorly lit alley working on something you cannot see."

Carlos, playing Leo the Journalist, asks, "Can I distract these two to allow the others to sneak around and get a closer look?"

On Elise's nod, Carlos continues, "I'm going to stride up to the two uniformed officers to grab their attention. I say, 'Good evening officers, what do we have tonight? Dead body?'"

Elise says, "One officer responds, 'Periphery business, move along.'"

Carlos smiles. "Leo nods, appreciative, then adds, 'Of course! I just happen to write for the Halen Star, and thought I'd ask for a statement.'"

Elise asks, "Does Leo actually write for the Halen Star?"

"Sure do. I'll mark gear for my Press Credentials and show them off."

"Okay," Elise says. "Give me a Sway roll. On a success, you'll create enough of a diversion for the others to sneak by or around the officers."

"I've got 1 in Sway, and it's gilded, and I'll spend a Cunning. So that's two dice, and this one's gilded," Carlos says, holding up two dice, one green, the other gold.

Carlos rolls, getting a 6 on the green die and a 4 on the gold die.

He looks up from his dice. "I've only got 2 left in Cunning thanks to our last assignment, so I'll take the 4 on the gilded die and recover 1 drive in Cunning."

Elise confirms, "That's a mixed success. You get a choice: either they try to arrest you for interfering with their investigation, which will still distract them, or your deception isn't going to last very long."

Carlos says, "I don't want to get arrested. I'll take the limited duration."

Dani, playing Lydia the Soldier, says, "I'm leading the others around the corner to climb up a storm pipe to get a look at the alley from above."

Elise nods. "You don't need to roll just to climb up one story, moving at your own pace. What I will need is a Survey roll to get any information or a Hide roll to snoop on the scene without being noticed."

"Lydia joins the others at the edge of the roof and pulls out a mirror to peek down," Dani thinks for a moment. "I'd like to Survey. And should I mark gear for the mirror?"

Elise says, "You can have a small mirror on hand without spending gear. But the alley with the officers is dark, so you're not going to see a lot without adding light."

Kat, playing Wyn the Occultist, says, "But if we use a lamp, the two down there are going to notice. I guess we should see what we can get, maybe listening as much as looking?"

Carlos asks, "Do you want me to try to pull over the other Periphery officers?"

"You're in enough trouble as is," Kat counters. "Lydia's got this. Wyn will assist by watching the cops in the alley and pull Lydia back if they turn her way."

Cortnye Queen Transaction: CRIT1014003

Elise says, "Sure. Spend a point of Intuition for the assist, and Dani, give me that Survey."

"I've got 1 in Survey, plus 1 for Wyn's assistance," Dani says. "I'll spend 1 from Intuition as well for another die. That gives me three dice in my pool."

Dani rolls a 4, 6, and 6.

"Nice! That's two 6s for a crit."

"Excellent," Elise says. "On a crit, Lydia is going to get good information without anyone noticing, even though visibility is low. One, the body is shriveled, desiccated. But while there are bite marks…"

"I knew it! Vampires!" Kailey, playing Iris the Doctor, gestures to her notes.

Elise grins. "The bite marks resemble the work of a shark more than something with pronounced canines. The victim is wearing laborer's clothes, like most of the porters you saw finishing up work when you arrived. You also catch the logo of the OUP on one of the officers."

"Any distinguishing features to identify the victim?" Dani asks.

"Since you got a crit, sure. You overhear the Periphery officers talking a bit. The OUP guy says, 'Pocket contents—matchbook from the Drowned Rat.' Then the uniformed officer responds, 'That's a Wharf Rats bar,' in a voice that suggests the OUP investigator should know what that means."

"What does that mean?" Carlos asks.

"Good question," Elise says, "But right now, you should be concerned with the fact that you've attracted a crowd, and the Periphery officers are fed up. The one you were talking to raps a billy club on a metallic wastebin to make a loud clatter and shouts, 'That's enough of that then. You are all ordered to disperse! Read about it tomorrow in the Star or whatever rag you lot believe in.'"

"Are they all done spying from the roof?" Carlos asks.

"They've seen a lot, but the other Periphery officer is about to turn around and notice them," Elise says.

"I've got this," Kat says. "Wyn is going to toss a stone from their pocket to skip off the opposite roof and draw all the Periphery officers' attention away so they can sneak off."

"Smart, but risky," Elise warns. "Jumpy Periphery officers tend to shoot first and ask questions later. That'll be a high-stakes Hide roll."

"Sure thing," Kat says. "I've got 2 in Hide, and it's gilded. I'll spend 1 from Cunning to get to 3 dice."

Kat rolls a 2, 1, and 3.

"Yikes. I would really like not to get shot, so I'll burn my Cunning resistance to reroll."

"Remember, you'll only get the two dice for your action on the reroll, not the third from the spent drive," Elise says.

"Right," Kat answers, looking at the dice and thinking of the threat of gunplay this early in an assignment. "That's fine, I've got this."

Kat rerolls two dice, including the gilded die, and gets a 3 on the gilded die and a 4 on the other.

Kat weighs their options. "I'll take the 4 and get my drive back later."

Elise nods. "The 4 will get the two of you away, but Wyn, you're so dialed in to listening for what the Periphery officers are doing as you withdraw that you don't notice the loose roof shingle. It slides off and you twist your ankle while recovering to keep from crashing onto the roof and making noise. Take a Body mark."

"Worth it," Kat says, adding 1 mark to the Body track on their character sheet.

Dani says, "Let's go investigate that bar."

Elise paints the picture, "The Drowned Rat is just a few blocks away. Leo, you'd know from your friends on the crime beat that this place is aligned with the Wharf Rats. They're mostly into smuggling and theft from other shipping groups. They've got a long-standing feud with the Driftwoods, an older gang with a similar M.O. Are you all heading right in, or do you want to do anything first?"

Cortnye Queen Transaction: CRIT1014003

"We're just a group of friends looking for a quiet drink, right?" Carlos asks.

Kat says, "Wyn is just going to stride in, order some ales, and get a sense of the vibe."

"It's far from the nicest bar in town," Elise explains. "The place is a bit rough, but the thing that stands out to all of you is that people are on edge. The bartender challenges Wyn before they even get to the bar. 'What do you want?'"

"Tough crowd," Carlos shrugs. "Leo goes over and pulls out his credentials again. 'Good evening, sir. I'm a reporter with the Halen Star, I was hoping to inquire about a patron of yours, recently deceased.'"

"The bartender turns and growls, 'I bet you are. You another Driftwood mole trying to beat us to a score? Get lost.' Then he goes back to polishing a glass."

Carlos looks at his character sheet and grins. "Elise, I want to use I Know a Guy and say I know someone here. Who is it?"

Elise consults her notes. "That'd be Carrie Danton, the dancer you knew at the cabaret in Red Lamp back before the war. She stands up from a corner booth and approaches. Carrie's dressed like a laborer now, though she still wears a bold red lip and winged eyeliner. She says, 'Leo? I thought you'd died in the war!'"

"Leo smirks, 'A common misconception. Don't believe everything you read in the papers.' Then he reaches out in an offer to take her hand."

Elise grimaces. "It's filthy. She's straight off a shift.'"

"We were wading waist-deep in the sewers last assignment. This is nothing," Carlos says.

Elise says, "Someone give me a Sway roll and we'll see how this move goes over after Leo let everyone in Red Lamp think he was dead."

"I'll take this," Kailey says. "Iris steps up and nods to the bartender. In his line of work, I bet the bartender has some kind of old injury. Is there something I would notice and offer to help with?"

Elise considers for a minute. "Why don't you give me a Read for that."

"Sure," Kailey answers. "I've got 1 in Read, and it's gilded. So I'll spend 1 Cunning for a second die."

"And Leo will assist by giving Carrie a wink. Hopefully, she'll vouch for me." Carlos marks 1 Cunning from his sheet.

"That's fine," Elise says. "since this is about Iris finding a social in. Otherwise, that kind of assist wouldn't help a Read."

Kailey takes one die for her Read, one for the drive, and one for the assistance. They come up 2, 5, and a 4 on the gilded die.

"That's a gilded 4," Kailey says. "Hopefully, that's good enough to keep things moving."

"Carrie smiles, then turns to the bartender and says, 'Leo's good people.' Without Carrie vouching for you, this would have gone much worse. But Iris, you do notice the bartender's left shoulder is stiff, something you could definitely help with."

Kailey says, "Excellent. Iris puts on her best bedside manner and says, 'Sir, I happen to be a doctor, and it looks like that shoulder of yours could use help. I'm happy to prove our sincerity by offering you a salve that could help with the stiffness.'"

Elise says, "The bartender eyes you for a second, then lets down his guard and tries to move the shoulder, grimacing with discomfort. He waves you over to join him. However, on a 4, this display is not going unnoticed." Elise pulls out a die and places it on an index card, labeling it "Leo's past in Red Lamp comes calling." Elise then says, "I'm starting a consequence countdown die at 4 and reducing it to 2 immediately. When it reaches 0, someone bad from Red Lamp is going to catch up to you. And, of course, that will be a problem for the whole circle, not just Leo." (Countdown dice are covered in Running the Game on page 166.)

"Yikes," Carlos winces. "But that's future Leo's problem. Now, let's see what these folks know about the victim."

Cortnye Queen Transaction: CRIT1014003

"While Leo is asking around, Lydia is going to get a drink and try to blend in. I want to see if I can get a sense for why the people here are on edge."

"That'll be a Read roll," Elise says.

"I've got 0 in that, and don't feel like taking the lower of two dice. What if I'm trying to pick out important details from people's conversations?" Dani asks.

"That would be a Focus roll," Elise answers.

"Better, but I've only got 1 in Focus. Can someone help me here?"

"Absolutely," Kat says. "Wyn grabs a seat by Lydia and makes fake conversation while also listening for anything interesting."

"That makes sense to me," Elise agrees. "Wyn, spend 1 Intuition, and Dani, go ahead and give me that roll."

Dani rolls two dice, one for Lydia's Focus and one for the assistance. They come up 2 and 3.

"That's a shame," Elise says. "Do you have a resistance?"

"No, I burned it on the last assignment," Dani sighs.

"Well, at least we chose the circle ability In This Together. Since we failed, we can both refresh 1 drive of our choice," Kat says. "I'll take back my Intuition."

"I'll take an Intuition as well," Dani says.

"Even on a fail, I'll give you a little bit of information," Elise says. "You overhear several workers talking about Driftwood territory being strange lately. Two separate people discuss the strange atmosphere they felt the last time they were there."

"Do they hear where Driftwood territory is?" Carlos asks.

"No, but you know the area—it's dangerous, and it's nearby. In the meantime, the consequence for that failure. Leo, you're able to catch up with Carrie a bit while the others try to gather information, but one of the patrons sees you getting friendly with a member of the Wharf Rats." Elise thinks for a moment, then continues.

"The camera follows the bar patron out onto the street, then down a couple of maze-like alleys, where they knock at the back door of a restaurant, passing a message to a rough-looking dishwasher. Your characters don't know it, but the Driftwoods now see you as allies of the Wharf Rats."

Dani groans. "That means we need to solve this quickly."

Elise asks, "What's your next move?"

"We could go poking around in Driftwood territory to see if the strangeness is related to our murders?" Kat asks.

"Works for me," Kat says. "We need to move before whoever or whatever this is can kill again."

Elise says, "So, you finish up your drinks, bid Carrie and the Wharf Rats farewell, and head across the district into Driftwood territory, near where your investigation began. You mentioned wanting to investigate, but is your goal to flush out the Driftwoods gang, to pick up a trail, or something else entirely?"

Carlos suggests, "We could Survey to look for evidence of recent attacks, try to track down this culprit."

Kat says, "Ooh! I have the ability Play the Bait. So, I can roll Sense to bring nearby phenomena to me."

"You can do either," Elise says. "But each action will give you different information. The risks are more or less the same—dangerous attention from whatever might be lurking in the area."

"If Kat wants to be the bait, I say we let them," Kailey looks to the rest of the group. "That way we can set a trap."

Kat rubs their hands together. "This is my first time getting to use this move. I've got 1 in Sense, and I'll spend 3 Intuition as well. Anyone up for an assist? This should be a big one if we succeed, right?"

Dani says, "Lydia will assist by picking a good place for an ambush. A quiet street with street lamps to give Wyn good lighting."

Kat smiles, "That's five. Can we get to the max of six?"

Cortnye Queen Transaction: CRIT1014003

Kailey says, "Iris can assist by coaching Wyn on ways to move like they're in pain."

Elise nods, "Okay, everyone spend those drives for the assist. Kat, what does Wyn do to draw the phenomena in?"

"Building on what Kailey said, they're projecting a sense of vulnerability and fear, breathing fast to increase their heartbeat. Wyn is hamming it up by saying, 'Where have they gone? I'm all alone!' and making it sound as if they're crying."

"Are the others hiding?" Elise asks.

"Yes, but should we roll for that first?"

"I'll have Kat roll first," Elise says.

Kat rolls six dice—two for their Sense rating, two for their own added drive, and two for the assists. The dice come up 5, 6, 1, 3, 2, 1.

"Six dice and no crit?" Kat laughs.

"But with a 6, your trap works perfectly," Elise says. "Wyn, when you look to the end of the street, you see a twisting mass of shadows speed around the corner, light fleeing from its presence. Beneath the layers, you see ink-black scales, glowing red eyes, and so, so many teeth. You see its shadows choke out the nearby lights, including the one Lydia perfectly positioned you beneath. It's coming straight for you, Wyn, but you were all ready for this. What do you do?"

"Would we know what this is?" Dani asks.

"Lydia, I think you'd recognize this from a story you overheard a few weeks back. Two Candela Obscura agents from a local chapter house were talking about encountering the Umbralisk, a snake-like creature the size of a large dog that manipulates shadows to confuse its prey, then drains their blood with an array of razor-sharp teeth."

"So, vampire shadow serpent?" Kailey asks.

"Gross. But we've got you, Wyn," Carlos says. "If it doesn't like light, the flash of Leo's camera should daze it. Would that be Focus?"

Elise shakes her head. "Precision camerawork would be Control. And you're doing this from where?"

"I was thinking we'd be on the roof. I've got an action rating of zero in Control, and no Nerve. Help please?" Carlos asks.

"Sure thing," Dani says. "Lydia helps hold the camera steady so Leo only needs to aim the flash."

"Anyone else?" Carlos asks.

"I have no more Nerve to be able to help, sorry," Kailey says.

Carlos rolls one die because of Lydia's assist. It comes up a 5.

"On a 5, you catch the Umbralisk by surprise, and while the light disappears faster than you'd think, the creature roars and flails. But unfortunately, it isn't alone. About a half-dozen figures in dark clothing step out onto the street behind you, cutting you off. A tall one in a flat cap brandishes a club-sized iron pipe and says, 'Looks like the Wharf Rats hired themselves some snoops. What do we do with snoops, Driftwoods?' The others brandish their weapons. You're caught between some toughs and a monster. What do you do?"

Dani beams. "Lydia says, 'Finally, something to punch. You handle the Umbralisk, I've got these jerks.' And then Lydia pulls out a sledgehammer and jumps down to lay into the gang."

"The sledgehammer is your heavy weapon?" Elise asks.

"Absolutely," Dani says.

"Okay," Elise says. "You're going to need it. Taking on a half-dozen armed gangsters in close quarters is going to be a high-stakes Strike roll. And you can't dispatch all of them with one success."

"I just need to hold them off, so that's fine. I'm going to spend 2 from Nerve, plus my 2 in Strike, for a total of four dice, one gilded."

Dani rolls four dice and gets 5, 5, 4, and a 5 on the gilded die.

"That's an easy choice," Dani says. "I'll take the gilded 5 and refresh 1 Nerve."

Cortnye Queen Transaction: CRIT1014003

"With a 5, you can hold off the Driftwood toughs, but Lydia's going to take a beating doing it, to the tune of 2 Body marks. What's that look like?" Elise asks.

"Lydia fights next to a wall to protect her flank, but it's still six-on-one. She takes a pipe to the side as she kicks one enemy into the wall, then knocks one of the toughs into the wall but takes a gash to her leg. But her work is enough to give the others some time to corral the monster. Body Armor allows me to soak 1 Body mark, then with Adrenaline Rush, I get to refresh a drive for each mark I take, so I'll regain 1 Nerve for the one I couldn't negate."

"While Lydia is dispatching the scoundrels, what are the rest of you doing with the Umbralisk while it's stunned?"

Kailey asks, "It's better if we capture this thing rather than kill it, right?"

"Absolutely," Carlos says. "Plus, it's less cleanup, and Lightkeeper Lutz will appreciate the chance for close-up study."

Kat asks, "Could I use my Ward, but instead of having it protect me, I turn it into like... a summoning circle and have it trap the creature until backup can arrive to transport it safely back to the lighthouse?"

Elise thinks for a moment, "Interesting. I'll say you could do that with Sense, but it's going to be very dangerous, and containing it will require finishing a three-part completion countdown." She puts a die out on the table for the group to follow.

"Lydia's the only one with good Nerve actions and drives," Kailey says. "So, I think this might be our best bet, at least until she's done with the Driftwoods."

"I've got 1 in Sense," Kat says, "and I'll spend 1 Intuition as well."

"Iris is going to help with the ritual," Kailey says, spending 1 Intuition.

Kat rolls three dice and gets 2, 4, and 3.

"A mixed success reduces a countdown by 1, right?" Kailey asks.

"Yes." Elise moves the die from 3 down to 2. "You feel the ward's power constraining the Umbralisk. It writhes, the shadows expanding and contracting, creating a strobe effect as the streetlights return for split seconds at a time before the darkness swallows them again. But Wyn, your Ward isn't meant to do this, and the strain leaves both you and Iris vulnerable to the overwhelming power of magick. You'll both take 2 Bleed and 1 Brain."

"Yikes!" Kailey says. "Dani, a little help?"

"Is this where I can come in?" Dani asks.

"Yes," Elise adds, "but you're not in great shape yourself."

"These squishy folks need backup. Would it be a Move roll if I'm trying to fight and keep the monster in place while the ward solidifies?"

Elise looks to Dani, "How are you using your strength here? This sounds more like you're attempting to hold the creature in place, rather than out-maneuvering it, to me."

Dani agrees. "So, I've got the sledgehammer and I'm just going to use it to force this thing to the ground and keep it in place while they finish the ritual."

"You're welcome to try, but this could go very poorly for you," Elise says.

"I've got 2 in Strike, it's gilded, and I'll put 2 Nerve into it."

Dani rolls a 2, 4, 6, and a 3 on the gilded die.

"I'll take the 6. Let's finish this!" Dani says.

Elise picks up the countdown die and puts it away, the timer now complete with that full success. "With a 6, you land a staggering hit to the Umbralisk with the sledgehammer and are able to wrestle it into position while Wyn and Iris finish the ritual. The circle imprisons the creature for the time being. The Driftwoods aren't going to be able to rally before your Lightkeeper can get a removal team out to help you bring this thing in. Nicely done! Let's take a quick break and then tally Illumination and discuss what you're doing between assignments."

Cortnye Queen Transaction: CRIT1014003

BETWEEN ASSIGNMENTS

After the break, Elise pulls out the circle sheet. "Okay, Illumination Questions. Did you contain a source of bleed?"

"The Umbralisk, right?" Carlos asks.

"Absolutely. Next, did you provide comfort or support for those affected?"

"Do the other Wharf Rats count?" Kat asks. "Since they lost people?"

"Do you think they'd call that support?" Elise looks to the group.

"We got rid of the creature and kicked the Driftwoods' butts, so I'd say yes," Kat says.

"Fair," Elise agrees. "Third, did you bring something of importance back to Candela Obscura to study or protect?"

"Again, the creature," Carlos says. "That counts, right?"

"Yes. Three Illumination so far. Did everyone fulfill an Illumination Key this session?"

Carlos replies, "Leo hunted down a lead about the attack."

Dani looks at her Illumination Keys. "Lydia protected her circle and acted tactically when she selected the perfect position for the ambush."

"Iris aided an ally when she helped Wyn with the ritual to contain the Umbralisk," Kailey says.

Kat adds, "And Wyn acted bizarre to draw out the creature."

"Four for four." Elise puts four more marks on the Illumination Track. "Since you all hit an Illumination Key, that's 4 extra Illumination on top of the 3 from the questions. Seven Illumination gets you a milestone and leaves the track just over half full. Now, let's do downtime—be sure to clear your spent gear. A few of you are pretty banged up, right?"

"Yeah. Resource-wise, we've got 4 in Stitch, 5 in Train, but only 3 left in Refresh," Carlos says. "How are people's drives doing? Leo is out of Intuition, but good on Cunning."

Dani says, "Lydia is beat up, but okay on drives."

Consulting her character sheet, Kailey waves a hand, "Iris is fine."

"Wyn is down to 2 Intuition. Carlos, why don't you and I take a Refresh."

"And is it okay if I do a Stitch?" Dani asks, to which the others all nod.

Elise prompts, "So what does it look like as Leo and Wyn relax and refresh their drives?"

"Leo writes up the story of what actually happened, then concocts a reasonable excuse for the paper that explains away all the supernatural details as ritual killings with mysterious cult involvement."

Kat says, "Wyn is going to relax by helping their colleagues study the Umbralisk, taking copious notes to add to their collection of arcane texts."

"Nice. Make sure to refresh your resistances, as well."

"Lydia asks Iris to help with her injuries at the chapter house," Dani says. "Since she's more comfortable having a friend take care of her than going to the hospital."

"Absolutely. Iris used to do this for George, back in the war," Kailey says. "And this provides a good opportunity for me to do some training, so I'll take a die for the next assignment."

Elise nods. "Okay, that's 1 spent from Stitch and Train, and 2 from Refresh. You can each use one other resource, but you won't regain these until you fill the Illumination Track."

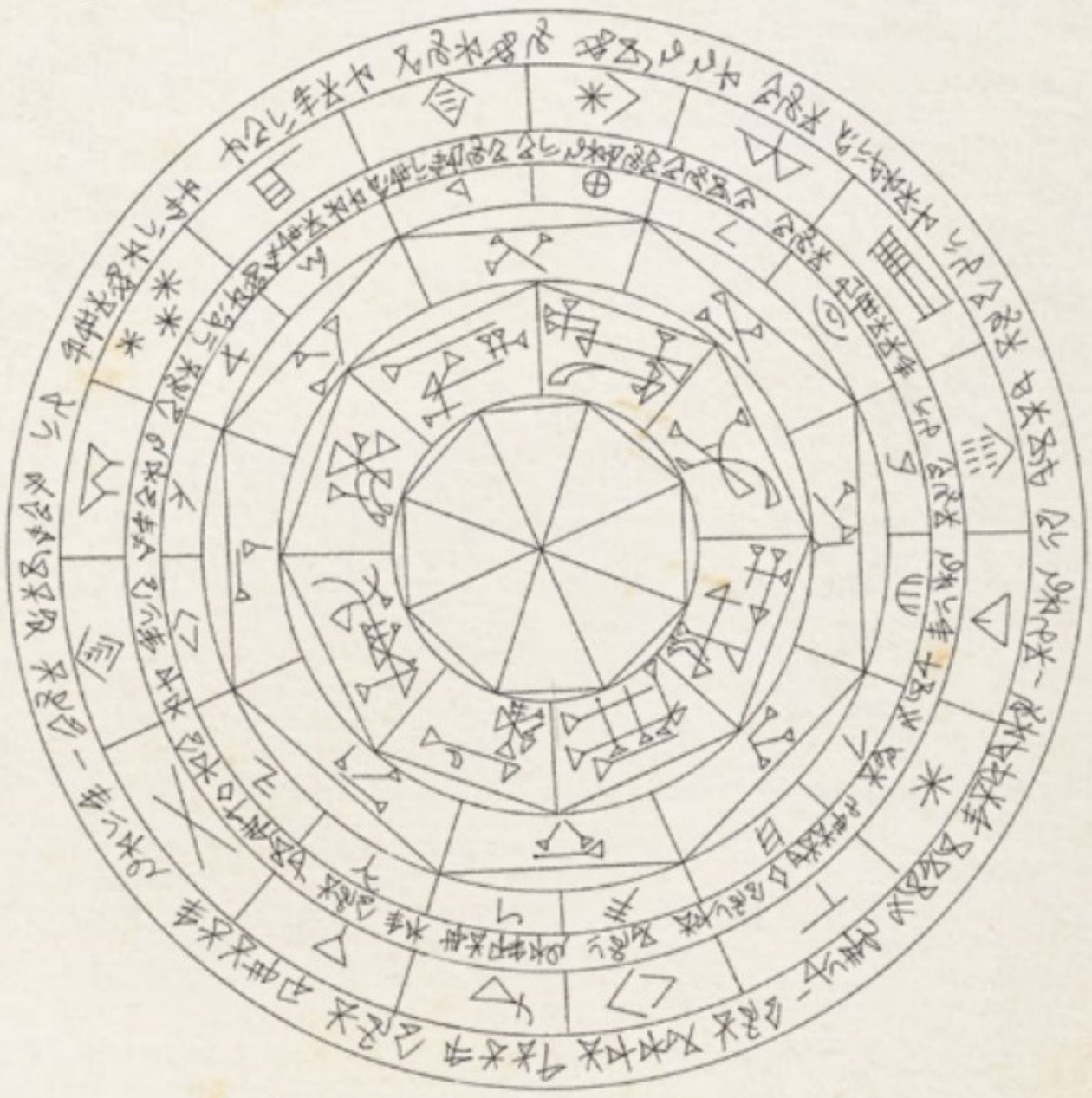
"Should we leave it at that?" Dani asks. "We've probably got two more assignments before we fill the track."

"Yeah, I think so," Kailey agrees and casts a mischievous look at Elise. "Who knows what our GM is planning for the next session."

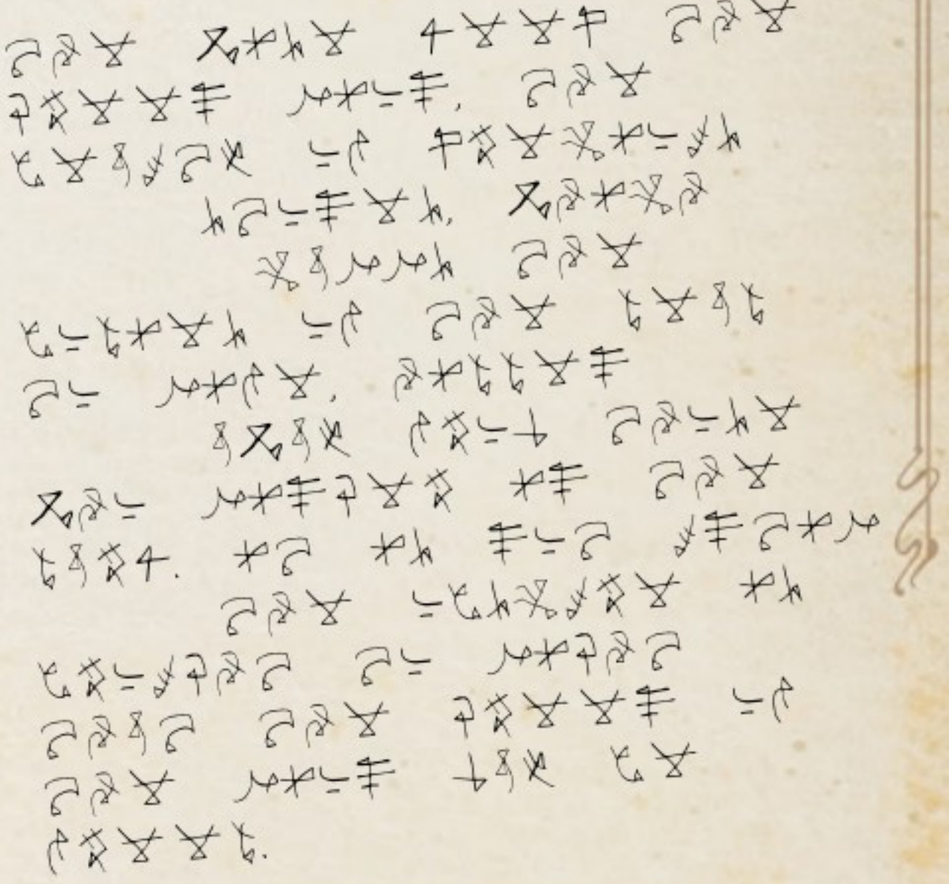
Elise smiles. "You'll just have to come back next week to find out."

Cortnye Queen Transaction: CRIT1014003

Mystery



The wise keep the green lion, the beauty of precious stones, which calls the bodies of the dead to life, hidden away from those who linger in the dark. It is not until the obscure is brought to light that the green of the lion may be freed.



QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

- What details should Elise have provided Lydia if she hadn't rolled a critical success investigating the corpse using her mirror? The GM should always aim to keep the fiction moving forward, so it's good to consider what the bare minimum of information is needed to move the story along, even on a miss (consider the instance at the bar, for example).
- Elise didn't require Dani to mark gear for an ordinary hand mirror. Would you ask a player to mark gear if they produced something similar? It's good to consider the types of items that would require a player to spend one of their three gear slots.
- Should the circle have had to roll to not get thrown out of the Drowned Rat, even with Carrie vouching for them? What other characters could Leo have known in that scene? How would different contacts inform the way the scene played out? What if the contact was hostile toward Leo? Should contacts from I Know a Guy always be friendly?
- If the assignment was running long, it might make sense to allow Wyn's ward ritual to trap the Umbralisk with a single success. Or do you think that the climactic obstacle in an assignment should always come with a completion countdown or take several rolls to overcome? Would you also have allowed Kat to utilize their gear in a way that wasn't strictly rules as written?
- What did you think of Elise's choice to let the camera flash stun the Umbralisk? Would you have ruled that the flash would make the creature too weak to resist the ward, or would you say the creature's ability to manipulate shadows would make the effort entirely ineffective?

Cortnye Queen Transaction: CRIT1014003



Cortnye Queen Transaction: CRIT1014003

THE SUPERNATURAL WORLD

INTRODUCTION

Magick

The average person in the Fairelands knows nothing about real magick. In fact, many civilians believe the clever tricks of stage magicians or have no way to differentiate between new scientific developments and the theatrical, miasma-filled shows of spiritualist frauds.

But magick is real and it is dangerous.

This corruptive and unwieldy force has led to the fall of civilizations. To say that magick comes at a cost would be a reductive half-truth—magick is inextricable from the horror of its use.



Bleed

Bleed is the destructive influence that emanates from magick. People, creatures, nature, and objects may all contain this corrosive power. Interacting with something or someone emitting bleed can, and usually will, do damage to anyone in its sphere.

Depending on the nature of the magick, it can manifest in a myriad of ways, and investigators should be wary of seemingly "less harmful" bleed. This devastating radiation knows no scale but time and exposure—toying with its incredible power comes at the risk of your own peril.

The Flare

The Flare is the barrier between worlds, preventing the flow of magick into our realm from the terrifying beyond. Though it typically burns away anything that passes through it, there are spots referred to as *thinnings* where this veil has become permeable—and all manner of phenomena can slip into our reality. These rifts are a central focus of Candela Obscura.

PHENOMENA

Investigators within Candela Obscura use the term *phenomena* to describe any and all mysterious occurrences. This could include a terrifying flying beast, a lake of seaweed that drowns victims, blood raining from the sky, a wardrobe that transfers human consciousness between bodies, or even a spirit trapped within a music box.

Remember, the myths of the Fairelands can be very similar to the fables and eerie tales from your world. With respect for various cultures and closed practices, you can use familiar lore to create entities that best facilitate the tales you wish to tell.

Cortnye Queen Transaction: CRIT1014003

Creatures & Monsters

Creatures that defy explanation lurk in the corners and shadows of this world. These beings come from across the Flare or are born of the magick that has already infected this realm. They prey on unsuspecting citizens unfortunate enough to cross their path, or Candela Obscura investigators clever enough to seek them out.



Magickal fiends are driven by their own unique desires and goals. Some may resemble one another, but the wise investigator never makes broad statements about all creatures from beyond the Flare. Through the work of Candela Obscura, these beasts remain largely shrouded from the public eye, but their impact can be felt across the Fairelands.

Example Phenomena

- **Coventis:** Giant bird-like beasts with sharp, curved beaks and long talons that live deep in the Scarlet Wood. Often confused for carrion birds, coventis are quite the opposite—they will only feed on living flesh. There is one known to hunt from Timberway Camp.
- **Chemighast:** These creatures stalk the ruins of Oldfaire with bodies made of blackened bone and flickering embers. They are the result of alchemical processes gone awry and move with the same ferocity as an explosive wildfire. Candela Obscura recently found a factory in the Steel that utilized a chemighast to power its machinery.
- **Bilgecreepers:** Small creatures that most often take the facade of severed human hands. They feast on decay in places of ruin, waste, or neglect, such as garbage sites, or regions where the environment has been devastated.

Environment & Hazards

Magick affects more than just the living creatures of the world. Even the environment itself can break out into violence. Magick can unleash powerful and unpredictable forces with the power to tear apart the very fabric of the natural world. This creates strange and dangerous phenomena that may be deadly to those who venture too close.

Example Phenomena

- **The Grim Branches:** There is a willow tree near the Stentorian River whose branches and roots drain the life force from its victims with a relentless and malevolent fury.
- **The Bloodfall:** In Westwreck, there are reports of rain that comes down from the sky in an eerie blood-like deluge, burning the skin of any who come into contact with it.
- **The Fatal Flora:** The scent of flowers from a particular garden in the Eaves induces vivid and terrifying nightmares, eventually stopping the hearts of its victims.

Cortnye Queen Transaction: CRIT1014003



I have decided against alerting Conservator Malik about what the circle uncovered beneath Revenant Park—just for now. Feels pointless to panic—or overexcite!—anyone until we have more information. For all we know, I could have mistranslated the Ancient Fairen, and then I would have just embarrassed us all, most especially myself, for nothing. I have never once in my life mistranslated Ancient Fairen, obviously, but I wouldn't want a foolish error to mean that I'd be stopped from exploring this line of inquiry further, or have my integrity called into question should I ever need the support of the Council, or father forbid, the Radiant Order. The only thing I can do is send the circle down into Oldfaire to investigate the location depicted on the Revenant Park stele. If I'm correct, it's an area of Oldfaire into which only one circle I know of has ever deeply investigated.

Cortnye Queen Transaction: CRIT1014003



Cortnye Queen Transaction: CRIT1014003

Spirits & Entities

In the Fairelands, ghosts are an enigmatic presence some believe in, though others dismiss them as a narrative intended to scare children and gullible Fairen citizens with money to spend.

However, in this world, ghosts are very real and can be found in nearly every corner of the Fairelands. Some spirits manifest as nothing more than eerie shadows flickering across walls, while others transform into malevolent apparitions attacking unsuspecting bystanders with malicious intent. The most piteous entities are the souls still entangled in the moment of their death, doomed to experience their demise forever. No two spirits are the same, and Candela Obscura believes their existence is heavily impacted by the circumstances of both their life and death.

Once someone passes beyond our world into the realm of death, they cannot be contacted. Although Mediums may speak to the spirits left behind in our world, it's important to note that not all deaths result in spirits who are unable to move on from this mortal plane. Those in tune with the world beyond would find it exceedingly difficult, if not impossible, to summon a specific spirit and communicate with them clearly and coherently.

Example Phenomena

- **The Phantom Fiddler:** An eerie silhouette found in the alleys of the Red Lamp district. Those who listen to their melancholic music for too long are racked with grief.
- **The Crimson Woman:** A figure seen wandering the outskirts of the Scarlet Wood, known to attack redrunners as they make their way through the trees at night.
- **The Laughing Boy:** Deep in the ruins of Oldfaire lurks the haunting figure of a child. He is known to steal important items, such as torches, tools, and journals, from anyone who crosses his path.

Artifacts

Even the most mundane items, once infected with bleed or tainted by magick, can become something corrupted, deadly, or otherworldly. While many of these objects are exceedingly powerful or even useful, members of Candela Obscura would do well to remember that caution can be an investigator's most valuable tool.

Still, one can employ artifacts to their advantage—but their acquisition almost always comes with a price. Should you recover an artifact during an investigation, it is important to remember that its use may result in further misfortune. Nevertheless, there may come a time when the application of these artifacts could prove advantageous.

Example Artifacts

- **The Conjurer's Companion:** This mysterious journal can aid the user's ability to uncover information. *Take 1 Bleed mark and write one yes or no question inside. The GM will supply a truthful answer.*
- **The Nightshade Necklace:** This alluring necklace features a single glittering jewel. Catching the light, it seems almost to enchant onlookers. *+1 Sway but take 1 Bleed each time this action roll is required. To remove the necklace, roll with Control.*
- **Facade's Foil:** This hand mirror can reflect moments of the present happening elsewhere—at the cost of the user's own reflection, corrupting their identity over time. *Make a Sense roll to use. On a mixed success, take 1 Brain and ask the GM one question. On a full success, take 1 Brain and ask two questions. On a 3 or less, the mirror will shatter.*

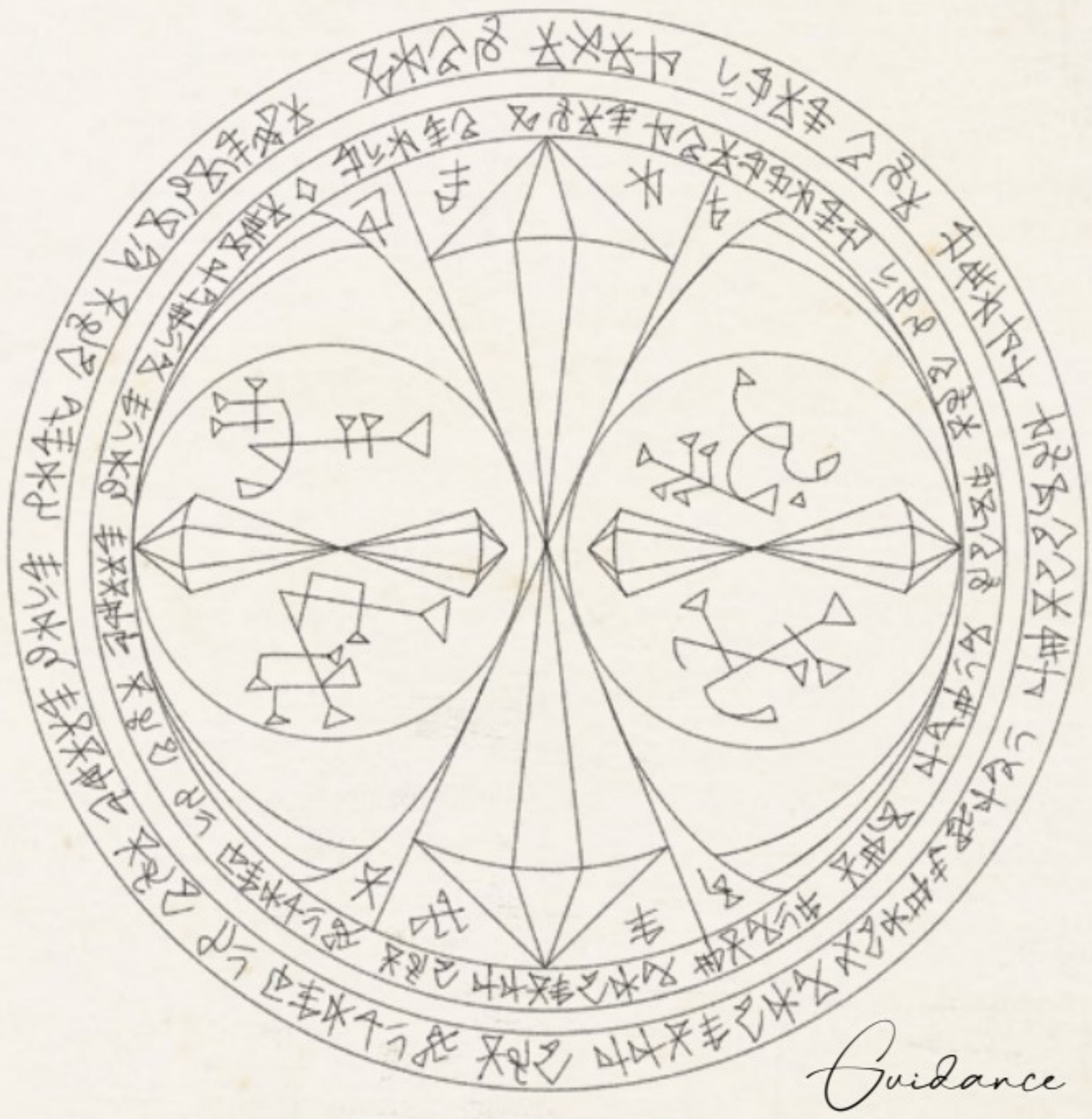
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ALCHEMY

It is common knowledge amongst Candela Obscura members that Oldfaire fell due to the misuse of magick. Much like the Fairelands harnessing electricity today (though hopefully to less disastrous effect), the people of Oldfaire harnessed magick for everyday use.

It was this use of magick that resulted in the civilization's demise. As the upper class, especially Empress Iomene and her council of alchemists, began to explore the powers afforded them by magick, the lower classes of society were forced to adapt to survive. This is similar to industrialization in the modern age. Magick became an integral part of such things as agriculture, architecture, child-rearing, education, leisure activities, politics, and war. With the overproduction of alchemical works and consistent misuse of their power, Oldfaire eventually fell victim to the very creation that once allowed them to thrive and expand their empire across the continent.

Now, all that remains of this once great civilization are the ruins scattered across the Fairelands, accessible only by those brave enough to journey underground to face the mysteries within. Among these historical structures lie the relics of the Oldfairen alchemists' quest to harness and manipulate magick. This includes the use of alchemical symbols and sigils, as well as experiments utilizing various metals and materials to both contain and channel magick and its bleed. Those who visit these laboratory and ritual sites are likely to encounter incredible amounts of bleed and the phenomena born of Oldfairen experimentation.



Today, numerous organizations attempt to harness and employ magick through the use of alchemy. Members of Candela Obscura will study for years to achieve only a fraction of the mastery the Ancient Fairens claim to have widely employed throughout their civilization. Investigators who wish to study alchemical processes should be wary of anyone who suggests that the art can offer them untold power or riches. One should begin by learning to translate Ancient Fairen to engage in firsthand sources recovered from Oldfaire.

Example Ancient Alchemy

- **Corrupt Correspondence:** During the time of Oldfaire, communication across vast distances was established through the use of alchemical connections between homes. This caused bleed to spread slowly with each use.
- **Tainted Agriculture:** Alchemy was used to enhance food production across the Ancient Fairen empire. Over time, this infected the citizens who consumed these crops with massive amounts of bleed.
- **Decaying Decor:** Alchemy was used to create intricate and ornate designs in much of the architecture throughout Oldfaire. This resulted in the slow erosion, and even mutation, of the underlying structures.

Cortnye Queen Transaction: CRIT1014003





Candela Obscura's blanket policy of neutrality is at best cowardly and at worst, frankly murderous. Access to magick and power of this kind, and we keep it locked away like a museum artifact rather than something that could be deployed to help people. How many of those casualties in the war could have been avoided if they'd decided to intervene? Certainly, it would have been risky—would be risky—but there are ways to manage and mitigate risk they haven't even considered in favor of a blanket ban. To that end, I'm not convinced it's all that risky to begin with. What's the point of these years of study, and research, and discovery if we can't use this information for anything good? A many-thousand-year-old policy of political neutrality makes no sense in the modern era. Otherwhere can now down hundreds in an instant with artillery the likes of which the world has never seen, and yet the council fears bleed. To sit idle is to support murder.

Cortnye Queen Transaction: CRIT1014003



Cortnye Queen Transaction: CRIT1014003

CANDELA OBSCURA & BEYOND

CANDELA OBSCURA

Candela Obscura is a secret society of investigators whose primary aim is the survival of mankind against supernatural forces. Your involvement with the organization begins with the mysterious tales set in the Fairelands—however, this secret society predates even the city of Oldfaire.

The Origins of Candela Obscura

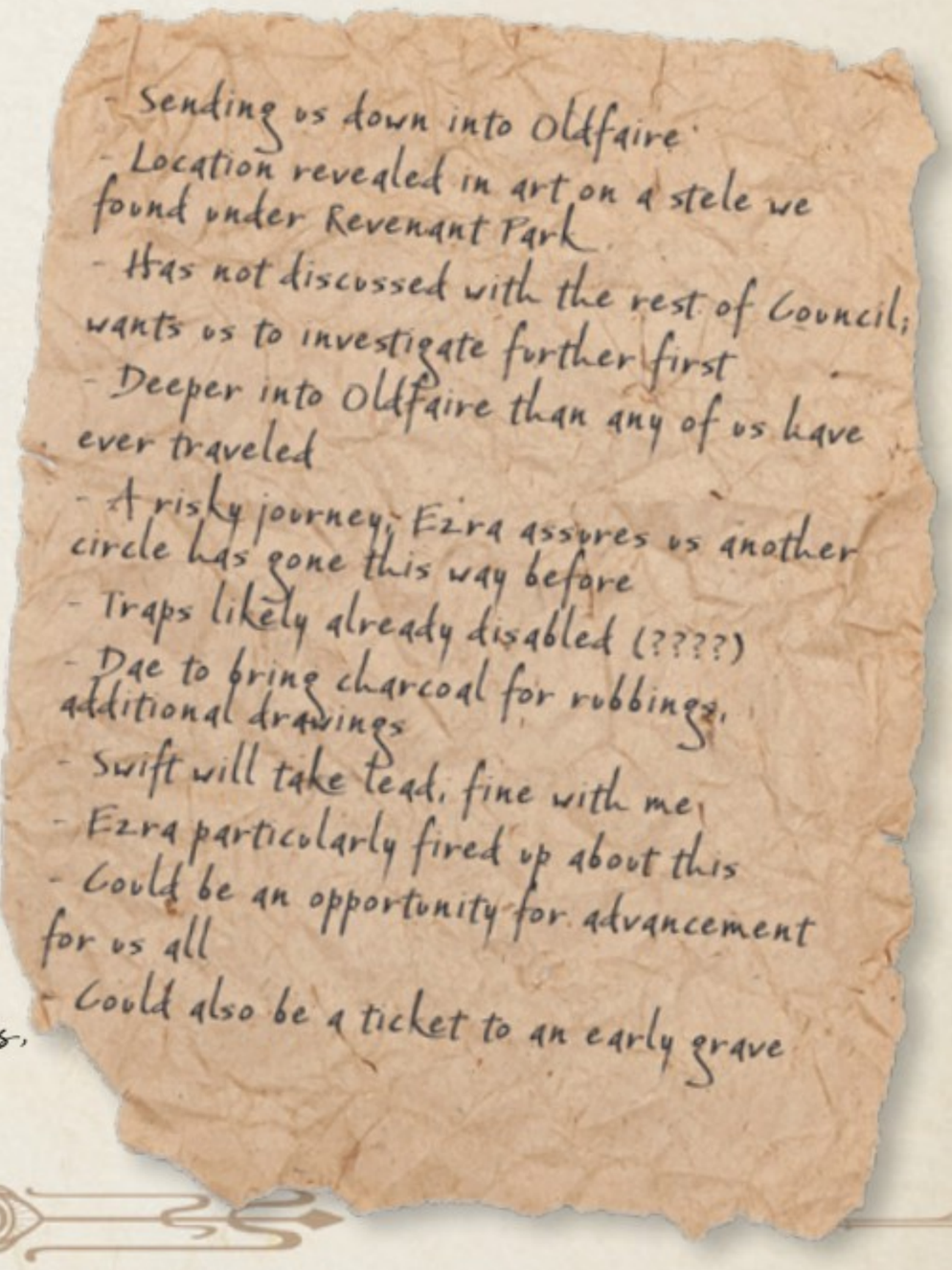
The Tome of Lumos is considered the definitive record of the activity of Candela Obscura around the world, going back to the organization's beginning, before the existence of cities such as Oldfaire. This text exists in a vast series of volumes, and it is the sacred charge of the Conservator of the Fourth Pharos to record the organization's affairs during their tenure. Within these enigmatic pages, it is written that Candela Obscura originated from a guild of hearth stewards called *Lightkeepers*.

In the time before electricity, during the reign of flame, people began congregating around enclaves of knowledge that advanced the very scaffolding of civilizations—the early days of architecture, politics, and technology. As these civilizations gained power, it was natural for people to attempt to store the details of their discoveries in writing—first in stone and then with increasing ease on hides, fabrics, and paper. The makings of the world were transcribed and read under the glow of campfires, candles, and eventually hearths.

The structures that stored this knowledge, libraries that came to be known in the Fairelands as *athenaeums*, were built to facilitate the study of scholarly texts or to conduct secluded meetings in dimly lit rooms as society slept. Rulers employed Lightkeepers—stoic defenders of knowledge and keepers of the fire—to ensure the flame did not devour the precious writings contained in these athenaeums.

Due to their complete access to the scrolls, tomes, and other artifacts contained within these unique collections, Lightkeepers accumulated vast knowledge. Additionally, they mastered a near-perfect method of memorization that allowed them to recall writing, or eavesdrop and disseminate the whispers of society's elites.

It was only natural that the great rulers of the world would come to collect and harness magick in their quest to hoard and utilize knowledge and power. When they succumbed to the temptation to use this magick for their own selfish purposes, Candela Obscura was born.


- Sending us down into Oldfaire
- Location revealed in art on a stele we found under Revenant Park
- Has not discussed with the rest of Council; wants us to investigate further first
- Deeper into Oldfaire than any of us have ever traveled
- A risky journey, Ezra assures us another circle has gone this way before
- Traps likely already disabled (????)
- Dae to bring charcoal for rubbings, additional drawings
- Swift will take lead, fine with me
- Ezra particularly fired up about this
- Could be an opportunity for advancement for us all
- Could also be a ticket to an early grave

I found a scrap of Morgan's assignment notes, saved here for posterity. He has such nice handwriting for a doctor.

Cortnye Queen Transaction: CRIT1014003

Organizational Structure

The hierarchical framework of Candela Obscura is evidence of its roots as a diverse and global secret society. Candela Obscura is composed of chapters across the world—each reflecting the culture and values of its circle members, dedicated to guarding against the dangers of magick and otherworldly forces that threaten humanity. The Radiant Order loosely governs and coordinates activities across chapters. This administrative body seeks to maintain global awareness of Candela Obscura's operations by facilitating communication and sharing resources between chapters. Only in times of global existential crisis does Candela Obscura convene an appointed group of Lightkeepers, known as the Conclave of Luminosity, to make important decisions for the organization as a whole. Bearing the scars of secrecy and mistrust, Candela Obscura typically abhors any attempts to implement centralized control over its chapters. Both a blessing and a curse, the history of the organization is riddled with complexities surrounding its decentralized approach to protecting the world from great evils.

Chapters & Circles

Regions throughout the world are home to Candela Obscura *chapters*. Chapters are made up of one or more teams of Candela Obscura investigators called *circles*. Each chapter operates and claims jurisdiction over regions that reflect its members' cultural and demographic makeup. Chapters increase their size, power, and influence by actively pursuing the perpetual inclusion and admission of members that represent the values of the regions they protect. This is a cornerstone of Candela Obscura's ethos—each chapter and its circle strive to represent the regions they operate within. Therefore, every chapter in Candela Obscura is unique, but taken as a whole, the organization represents the essence and influences of humanity at large. It is not uncommon for chapters to invite circles or individual investigators from distant regions to assist them when the need arises.

To operate effectively within their assigned regions, chapters establish multiple chapter houses. These headquarters serve as covert bases of operation for a circle of investigators. From the safety of each chapter house, experienced members of Candela Obscura known as Lightkeepers, watch over, mentor, and issue assignments to their circle of investigators.

Lightkeepers & Chapter Houses

When a member of Candela Obscura acquires three scars, the risk of them gaining a fourth and fatal scar is incredibly high. To protect their investigators, Candela Obscura will invite them to retire from the organization or, in some instances, become a Lightkeeper—though many choose to continue their work in the field despite the danger.

Though they may come to the position via another route, especially if they are experts in a particular area of magickal or mundane study, most Lightkeepers are former circle members that have relinquished field exploration. These veteran investigators are responsible for identifying potential phenomena and using their expertise to guide the efforts of their assigned circles.

Lightkeepers generally operate from the safety of a chapter house—the covert sanctuaries where members of Candela Obscura come together to facilitate work for the organization. These locations provide a circle with a home base to plan their investigations, research phenomena, and store artifacts if and until members can safely transfer them to the Fourth Pharos.

Depending on the needs of the group, a circle in the Fairelands might have a chapter house in Red Lamp, the Eaves, tucked within a cave of the Verge, or somewhere else within the valley. Chapter houses are established in a location that best facilitates the needs of each individual circle.

Cortnye Queen Transaction: CRIT1014003

Councils & The Radiant Order of Lightkeepers

The Lightkeepers of a region are known collectively as a Council of Lightkeepers. In order to facilitate worldwide collaboration and coordination between chapters, one Lightkeeper from each council is appointed to serve on Candela Obscura's Radiant Order.

Prior to its inception, chapters of Candela Obscura operated in complete isolation from one another. This all changed when a curious Lightkeeper, Lila Patel (she/her), set off on an expedition to visit neighboring chapters in an effort to exchange knowledge. When Lila arrived at the nearest chapter house, she came upon the headless remains of a Lightkeeper nailed to the ceiling, the building abandoned. Horrified, the curious Lightkeeper resumed her travels, hoping to spread word of this heinous act to the rest of Candela Obscura.

Within the next three chapter houses she visited, Lila found more of the same—one Lightkeeper was missing their arms, another their legs, and another their torso.

Upon arriving at the fifth chapter, Lila discovered the stitched remains of the Lightkeepers forming a fleshy monstrosity imbued with heinous magick. The creature groveled on the floor and chanted an occult warning of impending tragedy. The warning was erased from all records within Candela Obscura, including the Tome of Lumos. From this incident, word spread, and the chapters of Candela Obscura agreed to establish the Radiant Order to loosely maintain communication and coordination with each other.

Conclave of Luminosity

In times of historic crisis, the Radiant Order convenes the Conclave of Luminosity deep within the labyrinthine heart of the Fourth Pharos, the secret stronghold of Candela Obscura. During this event, each region selects one of its members to represent the chapter throughout the duration of the Conclave. Those members gain access to Candela Obscura's most guarded truths and secrets, and with this knowledge in hand, they deliberate until the Conclave comes to a unanimous conclusion.



While the diversity of Candela Obscura's membership brings forth great power to combat the dangers of groupthink, unfortunately, it injects regional interests into the decision-making process. Some have called it harsh pragmatism, others corruption. In either case, the inner political machinations of the Conclave of Luminosity have far-reaching impacts and shape the way its members arrive at each decision.

Some might ask why each chapter's most senior ranking member doesn't attend the Conclave of Luminosity. The answer is simple—because the Conclave of Luminosity discusses forbidden lore, its members are barred from ever returning to the mundane physical realm. Instead, they are sent as emissaries of humanity to wander into the infinitely terrifying magickal world beyond the Flare in search of information that could guarantee humanity's safety for all eternity.

Cortnye Queen Transaction: CRIT1014003

The Fourth Pharos & The Lore of Lighthouses

The Fourth Pharos is a monumental lighthouse that serves as a stronghold and a beacon of hope for Candela Obscura. It functions as the vault for dangerous artifacts, creatures, and knowledge, as well as the headquarters for the Lightkeepers of the Radiant Order.

Over the centuries, the Pharos has risen and fallen to powerful forces (both magickal and mundane). Today, this citadel is in its fourth iteration. After the fall of the Third Pharos, the Radiant Order found a way to access the Flare, the protective veil between realms, and constructed the Fourth Pharos within its bounds. Now straddling the mundane and magickal worlds, this vault is only accessible from specific thinnings that lead into the Flare. Chapter houses soon began to form around these special thinnings, creating the present-day network of Candela Obscura members worldwide.

The Fourth Pharos' otherworldly location protects this bastion from corruption within and without. Allowing one region to possess the most dangerous and powerful artifacts from around the world grants a nation incredible strength and invites unparalleled corruption. Throughout history, iterations of this lighthouse vault became valuable political and military assets that led to a great loss of human life. Equally, Candela Obscura could not stop the incredible amounts of bleed that corrupted the very landscape surrounding each Pharos, harming the people that called the area home. To this day, the ruins from previous iterations of the Pharos are infused with horrific levels of bleed.

Within the Fourth Pharos are magickal, perpetually spinning astrolabes. These arcane sculptures power the spells that keep the Pharos stable within the Flare and its dangerous vaults firmly sealed. This technology is repeated, to a lesser extent, in every Candela Obscura lighthouse around the world.

For centuries, Candela Obscura built these lighthouses to hold together the thinnings of the Flare and warn innocent civilians away from the dangerous magick that emanates from them. The astrolabes within help to contain the bleed from these rifts, as well as hold them closed so that the horrors from beyond the Flare cannot continue to pass through freely.

Within the Fairelands, lighthouses are found in a variety of unexpected locales: deep in the Scarlet Wood, tucked within the snow of the Bridleborne Mountains, at the bottom of the Vastchasm, and beyond. Their strange locations have resulted in homespun, though inaccurate, folklore about the purpose of these structures and the surrounding geography.

Operating within the Shadow of Morality

Candela Obscura's adherence to the principles of decentralized organizational control results in a complex relationship with power dynamics. As self-proclaimed "protectors of humanity and guardians of knowledge," the organization acts as a gatekeeper for access to immensely valuable secrets.

Many Lightkeepers perform questionable acts in the name of the common good or the self-interests of the regions they safeguard. The reality is these motives and agendas might come into direct conflict with one another. As with anything that operates within the obscure boundaries of society, the decisions that members of one chapter of Candela Obscura make in the shadows might disturb the hearts and minds of fellow investigators operating in another chapter.

There are Lightkeepers who dread the thought that, while Candela Obscura might one day save humanity from the powerful evils lurking in the darkness, it may not be able to save itself from the evils of humanity and its inevitable attempt to seize this dark power for malicious intentions.

Cortnye Queen Transaction: CRIT1014003

History within the Fairelands

In ancient times, the ruling class of Oldfaire used and abused the powers of magick, deeming themselves alchemists. As with any development that eases the burdens of daily living, or forces members of society to adapt, the citizens of Oldfaire embraced the technological advancements born of this power. Out of either ignorance or irreverence, the corrupting force of bleed soon overtook the city. Supernatural forces from this disaster tore a chasm into the sea and a great flood overtook Oldfaire.

Before its fall, upon the first signs of this civilization's destruction, Candela Obscura established a covert chapter in Oldfaire. They settled their chapter houses around locations of high magickal incursion, and this was the beginning of Candela Obscura within the Fairelands. Almost all written records from Oldfaire were buried with the city, but it is clear that in the centuries that followed, this chapter of Candela Obscura slowly expanded in size and influence.

Values

Members of Candela Obscura are protectors of the people. With their wealth of supernatural knowledge passed down through generations, they focus their work on collecting and studying magickal phenomena.

Style

Libraries full of ancient and esoteric literature, working by candlelight, formal attire, strange artifacts in glass cases, secret entrances, hidden passageways.

Key Assets

Ancient knowledge passed down by previous Candela Obscura investigators grants this organization the tools and training they need to operate in the field.

- **Lightkeepers:** These veteran members of Candela Obscura use their extensive education and experience in the field to assign the circles they oversee to the assignments they are best suited for.
- **The Fourth Pharos:** A vault located within the Flare that houses phenomena to keep them from corrupting the world with bleed and serves as a central hub for the organization's Lightkeepers.
- **The Chapter House Archives:** Every chapter house of Candela Obscura contains a highly protected collection of books, artifacts, and records.

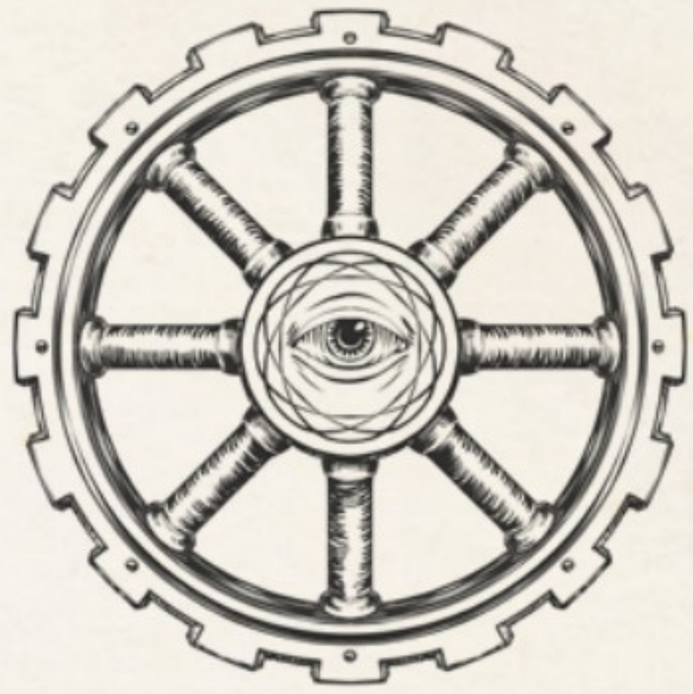
Notable Figures

- **Naomi Malik (she/her):** The Conservator of the Fourth Pharos, she leads the team that protects and controls this vault. Any requests to access artifacts, information, or other restricted resources cross her desk.
- **Xander Ikari (they/them):** An art dealer now aligned with Candela Obscura. They have intimate knowledge of the underground world of magickal artifact trafficking.
- **Allison Suarez (she/her):** A fellow member of Candela Obscura currently in isolation within the Fourth Pharos. She faced intense exposure to bleed on her last mission.

Cortnye Queen Transaction: CRIT1014003

EXOTERIC ORDER OF NEW SCIENCES (EONS)

Founded by a small faction of scientists and occultists, this insidious cohort believes in the very public incorporation of science with magick. While EONS works in the shadows, they own and operate numerous public-facing companies that experiment with the use of magick in their products and processes.



Values

The first true occult power of this century, EONS adheres to a daring set of tenets: the old societies have failed mankind, and it's time for bold action. EONS recruits some of the most brilliant minds in the Fairelands, and they have a particularly strong presence at Briarbank College in Newfaire. Their opportunistic viewpoints and unethical behaviors have resulted in a rivalry between EONS and Candela Obscura.

Style

Laboratories with beakers and brass, industrial spaces, upscale businesses, dense files, hastily scrawled notes, dangerous experimentation, alchemical symbology, electricity.

Key Assets

The expansive methods and resources of EONS enable a wide variety of metascientific research and experimentation. They devote incredible time and resources to the exploitation of arcane inventions. EONS is the power behind a number of dangerous companies, weapons, and even bioengineered monstrosities.

- **The Devil's Well:** Located under the Glass Sea, this was an attempt by EONS to create a vault styled after the Fourth Pharos.
- **Galvanica Engineering Works:** Located in the Steel, this laboratory is the home to many of EONS's top minds and their experimental works.
- **Adjuvant:** An experimental antidote for bleed, or rather, an attempt to stop the "negative human reaction to the natural phenomena of bleed."

Notable Figures

- **Elvira Dryden (she/her):** The elder and more business-minded of the twins that founded EONS.
- **Edric Dryden (he/they):** Elvira's twin brother, who rarely leaves their laboratory. He is the engine that brings Elvira's dark ideas to life.
- **Violet Boucher (she/her):** A brilliant scientist who recently joined EONS, Violet is eager to prove herself through extreme means.

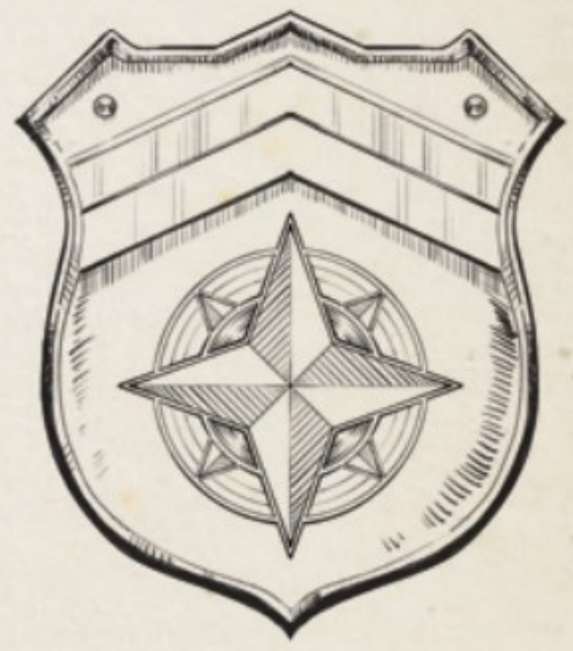
Example Assignment

Newfaire's latest subway line has become quite the attraction for hopeful commuters and tourists alike. But these innocent Fairens don't realize that EONS is also underground, attempting to create their own system of travel using magick rather than electricity. This teleportation machine is moving people, the trouble is that they arrive in their location at a much different age than they were when they left.

Cortnye Queen Transaction: CRIT1014003

OFFICE OF UNEXPLAINED PHENOMENA (OUP)

The OUP is the most underfunded and undervalued division of the Periphery. Omnipresent but invisible to normal society, they specialize in discovering, analyzing, and suppressing magickal phenomena. Very few government officials, even those with the highest level of security clearance, know the true focus of the OUP's work.



Values

The OUP's primary goal is to keep knowledge of magickal abnormalities from the public, and they will go to great lengths to do so. They may collaborate with Candela Obscura, but their bureaucracy is likely to do more harm than good.

Style

Government buildings, sterile offices, redacted files, confidentiality, red tape, uniforms, manipulated news.

Key Assets

Due to the nature of their work, other divisions of the Periphery regard OUP members with suspicion. Even so, OUP agents have access to mundane and magickal classified files that span centuries.

- **The Rediker Room:** Founded in 1883, this location houses a number of magickal phenomena unknown to the public.
- **The Sathe Device:** Named for the person that created it, this device can detect bleed on an object, place, or person.
- **Grayslate Sanatorium:** The asylum located in the Sidle. It's often used to hide away civilians and agents who were subjected to too much bleed. The OUP frequently uses the slang "they're going gray" in reference to this facility and the effects of bleed.

Notable Figures

- **Baxter White (he/him):** The long-time head of the OUP. He has a soft voice and a stern tone, and never suffers fools.
- **Marcos Vega (they/them):** The very long-time head secretary of the OUP. There is no secret they don't know and no string they cannot pull.
- **Farrah Naftali (she/her):** A close contact of Candela Obscura. She frequently goes against the orders of her superiors to collaborate with circle members "for the greater good."

Example Assignment

When members of Candela Obscura are called to the scene of a murder by their contact in the OUP, Officer Zukas (she/her) reveals that she called them for another reason. Acting as a whistleblower, she reveals that there is suspicious activity at the Brinkley Penitentiary—there are stories of a prison guard becoming consumed with rage and eating other guards and vulnerable inmates.

Cortnye Queen Transaction: CRIT1014003

PYRE

A fanatical, secretive sect of the Ascendancy, this religious cult uses the same powerful magick they claim to despise in their attempt to drive phenomena from the world. Their order is split into two divisions: the Flint (the assassins) and the Flame (the ritualists), both led by the High Inquisitor. Every member bears the mark of Pyre, which is branded into their flesh in a sacred ritual.



Values

Pyre believes that magick is a profanity that leads people away from the Mother's light of true devotion. Members of the order take on the "burden of magick," martyring themselves to fight off the phenomena that come through thinnings. Pyre's quest to stop harmful bleed sometimes aligns with the goals of Candela Obscura—but their dark, inhuman methods and the violent zealotry of their beliefs frequently make them the society's ideological enemy.

Style

Secret rituals, fanatical devotion, unyielding commandments, robes and swords, thick tomes of ancient lore, hallowed halls, dark underground catacombs.

Key Assets

Pyre's membership is composed of numerous high-ranking officials within the Ascendancy, making them particularly well connected to the governing bodies of the Fairelands. When religious zealotry cannot pull strings, they will utilize political blackmail to allow members of their order to act with impunity.

- **Swords of the Flare:** Pyre holds the secret to forging swords that can harm the otherworldly beings that pass through thinnings.
- **The Sepulcher:** An underground crypt that serves as a gathering place for Pyre.
- **Fountains of Lustration:** Hidden ritual sites, known only by Pyre, that help them cleanse the bleed from their bodies through horrifying magickal means.

Notable Figures

- **Diego Parris (he/they):** A knight of Pyre, known for the use of swift and incredible violence. He has killed numerous members of Candela Obscura.
- **Acolyte Tanaka Haruki (he/him):** A new member of Pyre, Tanaka is eagerly devoted to moving up the ranks to one day become the High Inquisitor. Even so, he believes that Candela Obscura's ways may not be as bad as everyone says.
- **Novice Idris Brand (she/her):** An orphan raised in Pyre. All orphans raised by the order are given the last name "Brand." Since a young age, Idris has been known for her particularly strong devotion to the order.

Example Assignment

Deep beneath the city of Newfaire, members of Pyre are performing an ancient ritual to call forth the Divine Radiance. This force is described only as a "massive and all-consuming light," and Candela Obscura has no knowledge of how to stop it.

Cortnye Queen Transaction: CRIT1014003

The Sisters of Ash

For decades, beginning around 1100 CE, a devout sisterhood operated an orphanage at the edge of the Scarlet Wood. These women displayed a cultish adherence to the beliefs of the Ascendancy, focusing their worship on the Mother and her embodiment of mercy and forgiveness. The sisters lovingly raised the young children in their orphanage as pious adherents of their faith.

As the War of Embers ignited across the land, a horde of vile men, branded as heretics by the Ascendancy, set out to sack and pillage the sisters' orphanage to enact vengeance upon the church. One night, as the sun set and darkness consumed the forest, the men descended upon the unarmed sisters and their wards.

At daybreak, the sun revealed a miracle—the sisters and the children of their orphanage were unscathed while the band of murderers appeared silhouetted on the horizon, each impaled upon the branch of a tree and writhing in agony. Over the next ten days, the sisters bravely climbed to tend to the dying impaled men, even as their blood soaked and nourished the trees. The sisters promised the men peace if they renounced their heretical ways and embraced the church.

On the eleventh day, the men renounced their heresy and begged for baptism to earn the sisters' mercy. Pleased and proffering forgiveness, the sisters ritualistically baptized the repentant killers in a holy fire, setting the trees ablaze. The ashen remains of the men, sanctified by fire, rained down upon the desecrated forest of blood-soaked trees. It was there, in the Scarlet Wood, that the Sisters of Ash were born—their obsidian robes adorned with the charred remains of the heretics.

It is debated whether the Sisters of Ash continue to act as inquisitors on behalf of the Ascendancy or as an obscure cult that sadistically murders heretics. Some believe the orphanage still exists, hidden in the Scarlet Wood, though no reliable sources have provided more than local folktales. A chronicler during the War of Embers wrote, "Woe unto them that have angered the Church—for none can escap the loving embrace of the Sisters of Ash."

While the legacy of the Ascen
it became clear that



The Sisters of Ash still exist as a sect of Pyre, and the orphanage still exists and raises children within the cult. Historians believe this "religious order" faded away after the War of Embers, but they are very real and as fanatical and violent as ever.

Cortnye Queen Transaction: CRIT1014003

THE RED HAND



Members of this organization consider themselves great curators of magick and will advertise this detail when the need arises. Trafficking in the illegal and immoral distribution of magickal artifacts, they always seem to appear in the right place at the right time.

Values

Above all, the Red Hand seeks power and profit. Members of this organization commonly wear gloves. Those who do business with them must ensure they remove their gloves when shaking on a deal—the Red Hand does not consider a gloved handshake binding.

Style

Backrooms, dangerous luxury, museums, pawn shops, handshake deals, refined clothing, people turning up dead, polished revolvers, fine leather gloves.

Key Assets

Red Hand members appreciate good taste and clever deals. They have a network of thieves and merchants spanning the globe. After centuries of trafficking magickal phenomena, there is no illicit request they will not oblige.

- **The Alizarin Gallery:** A well-appointed art gallery in the Varnish. Owned and operated by the Red Hand, this location is a front used to deal magickal artifacts.
- **Corsen's Curios from around the World and Beyond:** A tacky, occult-themed shop in Briar Green. It is another front for the Red Hand.
- **The Cormorant:** A smuggling ship the Red Hand uses to transport stolen goods. Depending on the port, they may further hide their product or simply pay off the necessary officials.

Notable Figures

- **The Proprietor (they/them):** The leader of the Red Hand. They are as mysterious as a shadow, as powerful as a king, and as deadly as a viper.
- **Aroha Tama-Kai (he/him):** A lifelong member of the Red Hand. He frequently appears after the dust of a phenomenon has settled and attempts to make deals with members of Candela Obscura.
- **Captain Scott "Skip" Huntly (he/him):** The ship captain who runs smuggling operations for the Red Hand. There's no vessel he can't operate and nothing he won't do for the right price.

Example Assignment

Rumor among the Owlers of Westwreck is that the Red Hand got their grubby mitts on something truly terrifying, raised out of a bottomless pit on the cliffs of the Verge. Candela Obscura needs investigators to intercept this delivery and learn the specifics of the artifact's power. But there's more than just a minefield in this area for the circle members to navigate.

Cortnye Queen Transaction: CRIT1014003

UNABRIDGED



The Unabridged are immortal humans who have perverted their natural life cycle through magick. They are impervious to the ravages of time but still susceptible to corporeal and supernatural harm. This organization's methods for becoming immortal are particularly horrifying, and many die in the process. The Unabridged look like any other mortal, but they do not possess shadows.

Values

Unabridged hold their order above all else. That said, members may also exist in any other organization, or none at all. For one reason or another, they have decided that an extension of life is worth the cost. As a consequence, many Unabridged put a very high value on human life—for good or for ill.

Style

Ancient knowledge, mysterious rituals, unnatural preservation, the slow stretch of time, secret meetings, a figure without a shadow.

Key Assets

The Unabridged have access to perhaps the most valuable asset of all: time. The unending lives of the Unabridged afford them the opportunity to acquire generational wealth and influence, and maintain dominance with relative ease.

- **The Acres of the Gods:** When the Unabridged pass on, their bodies are transported to a shared final resting place. These immortals favor, but do not require, cremation. Their remains hold incredible power.
- **The Auric Tome:** A centuries-old book of secrets known only to the Unabridged. It is written in the Aphthonic Code, a language with no spoken counterpart.
- **Nighthawk:** This substance prevents sleep. When used for extended periods of time, a person incurs bleed. Mortals are more vulnerable to its effects.

Notable Figures

- **William Fairweather (he/him):** Fairweather is considered by members of EONS to be the last true alchemist. He created an elixir that he called "Azoth," a substance that possesses incredible healing abilities.
- **Fatima Kofi (she/her):** One of the great hidden powers behind Pyre, she is believed by some to have founded this religious order. Many say she is the quiet hand puppeting members of the Chamber of the Primacy.
- **Clio (she/they):** Their age and history are unknown. Over the centuries, her name has become a stand-in for the embodiment of artistic inspiration. She holds incredible power in the Red Hand and is known to frequent art auctions, often placing exorbitant bids that are paid in cash.

Example Assignment

People in villages along the Stentorian River have fallen ill with a mysterious sickness that steals shadows. No one knows the cause, but Candela Obscura must find the force that is transforming innocents into Unabridged and stop it.

Cortnye Queen Transaction: CRIT1014003

OTHERWHERE ATTACK IMMINENT

MALLINGSON HIDES BEHIND LIES

Otherwhere likely to launch an attack with intent to seize or destroy Hale, sources close to the Mallingson government have exclusively told the Halen Star.

Premier Remedy Mallingson has repeatedly stressed that the public should not panic in the wake of Otherwhere's shocking development of electricity. For more on why our sources believe Halen defector, electrochemist and former Spiritualist Dr. Harold Ryan may have provided them with the technology, see Page Eight.

"Everyone here knows it's only a matter of time," said our source within the Primacy, on the condition of anonymity. "We have reports that Otherwhere has already developed technology that rivals Hale's most advanced weaponry. It won't be long before they are back on our doorstep, and Mallingson wants to pretend as if we're operating business as usual. She needs to tell the Halen people the truth."

This brave whistleblower has p themselves at grave risk by revealing thi information. We are and remain grateful t the many citizens like them who work har to provide accurate information and ensu the safety of the Halen people.

A spokesperson from Otherwh released a statement last week denying reports of electrified weapons, saying are

CANDELA · OBSCURA ·

OFFICIAL POLICY NOTICE

To all Lightkeeprs and Investigators,

A reminder in the wake of recent fearmongering news about a potential future war between Otherwhere and Hale: No matter the circumstance, no matter how dire, it is imperative to remember the 1901 Conclave of Luminosity voted to uphold Candela Obscura's policy of neutrality. The organization never uses magick to intervene in cases of national security or international combat. The perils are far too great, and would put every one of us—in Candela Obscura, in Hale, in the wider world—in danger should even the smallest error of practice occur.

Any member found violating, or planning to violate, this policy will be removed from service immediately.

Be well,

Naomi Malik

Naomi Malik
Conservator of the Fourth Pharos

I know that you believe the policy is hamstringing Candela Obscura, but there's nothing to be done, Ezra. The Conclave make their decision during the war. What could we possibly do about it?

Cortnye Queen Transaction: CRIT1014003

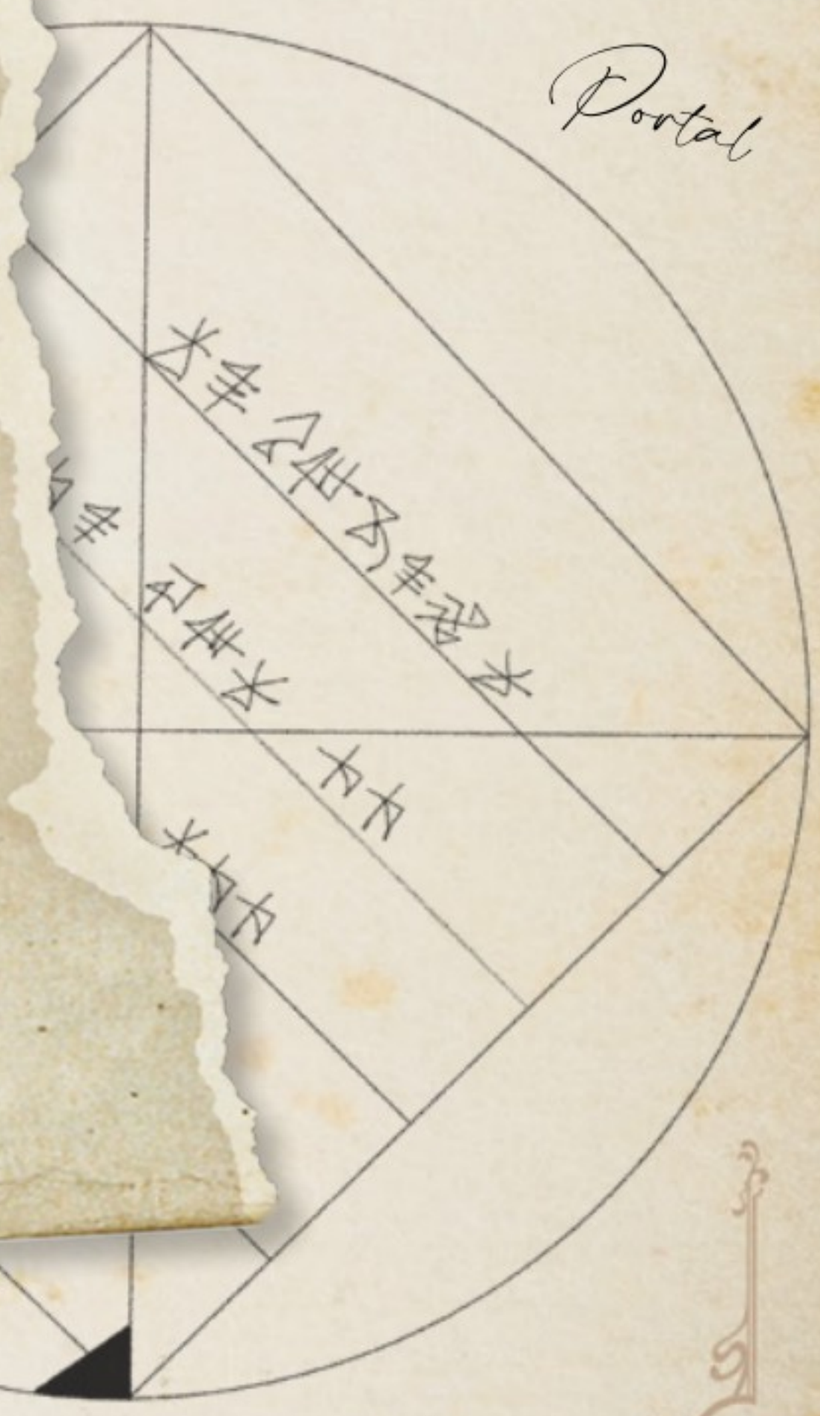


Wisdom



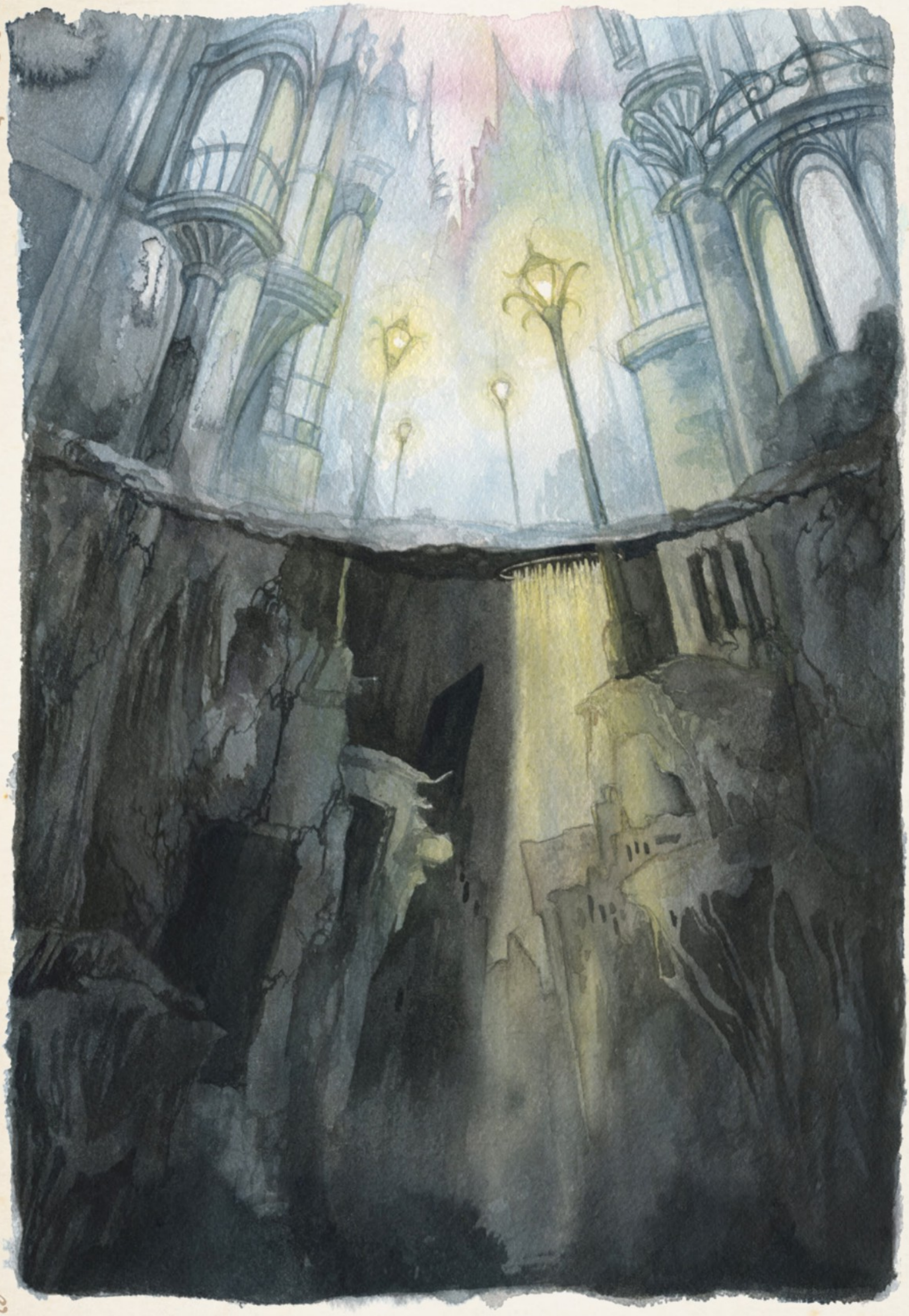
- Entering Ziggurat went according to plan
- Altar large, over 6ft., glyphs consistent with Ancient Fairen
- Dae took note of what may have been warning symbolism
- Upon approaching altar, Izzy spoke the words from the Revenant Park stele
- Unexpected result, all glyphs in chamber instantly alit
- Accompanying voice booming and deep, origin point uncertain
- Awakened magickal creature (?) assumed we were there to ask for help in the protection of Oldfaire
- Was confused to find we were not lomene, referred to itself only as "Eternal One"
- Had to educate the spirit on the current year
- Presented us with an offer of protection from (???) Did not recognize the word, likely contemporaries of Oldfaire.
- Requires vessel (?) and thinning in order to protect Newfaire

Morgan Ansari



Portal

Cortnye Queen Transaction: CRIT1014003



Cortnye Queen Transaction: CRIT1014003

THE FAIRELANDS

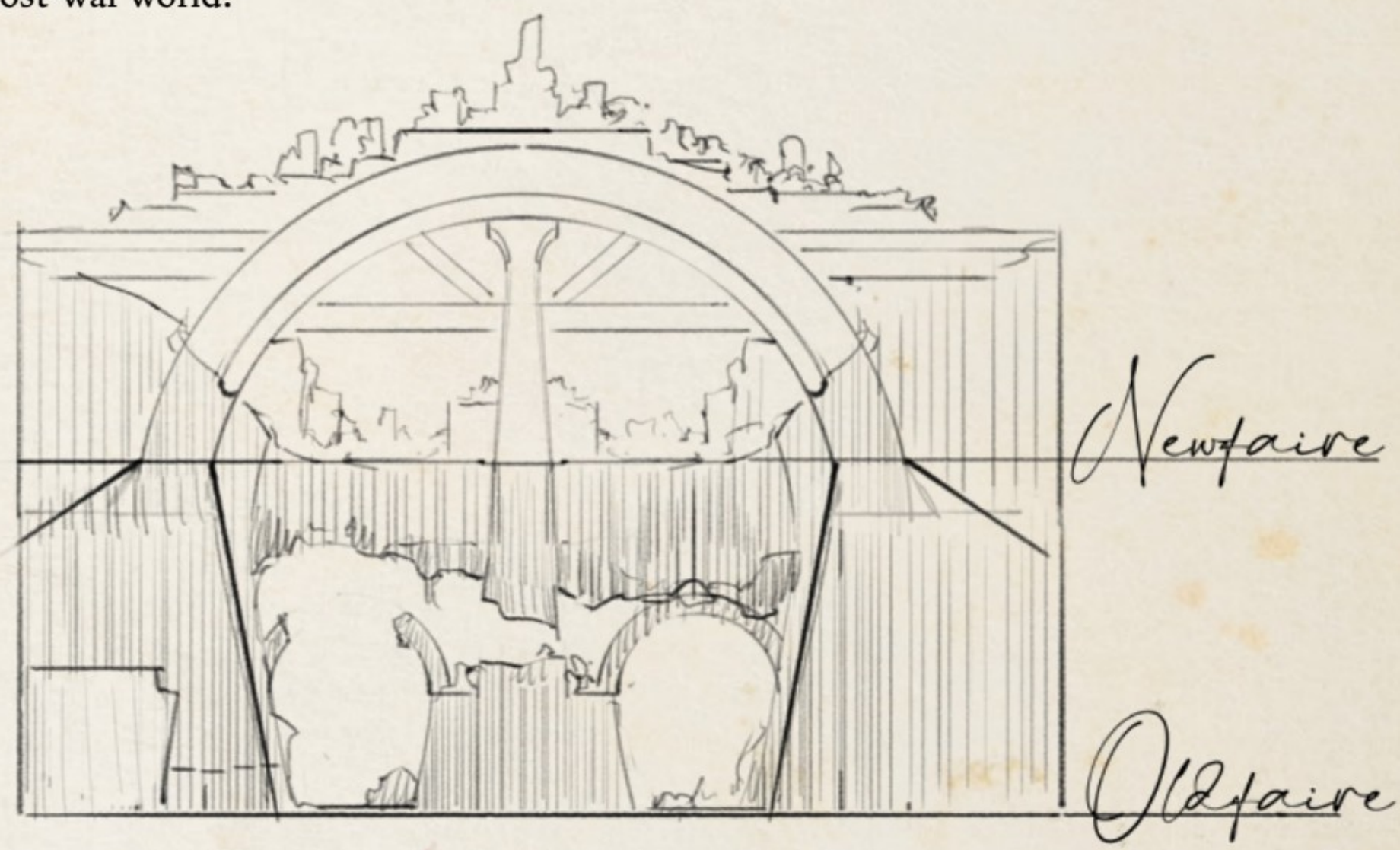
SETTING INTRODUCTION

The Fairelands, one of 12 regions within the country of Hale, is incredibly diverse in its geographic range. On the eastern side of this valley loom the treacherous Bridleborne Mountains, at the base of which lies the vibrant forest known as the Scarlet Wood, from which the illicit hallucinogenic substance known as scarlet is harvested. To the west, past the wastes of Westwreck and the unforgiving Haven Hills stand the jagged cliffs of the Verge, where standing stones from the Ancient Fairen people look over the Glass Sea. The mighty Stentorian River leads to the verdant fields of Tottergrass in the south, while the mysterious village of Seasway sits in the shadow of the burgeoning coastal metropolis of Newfaire in the north.

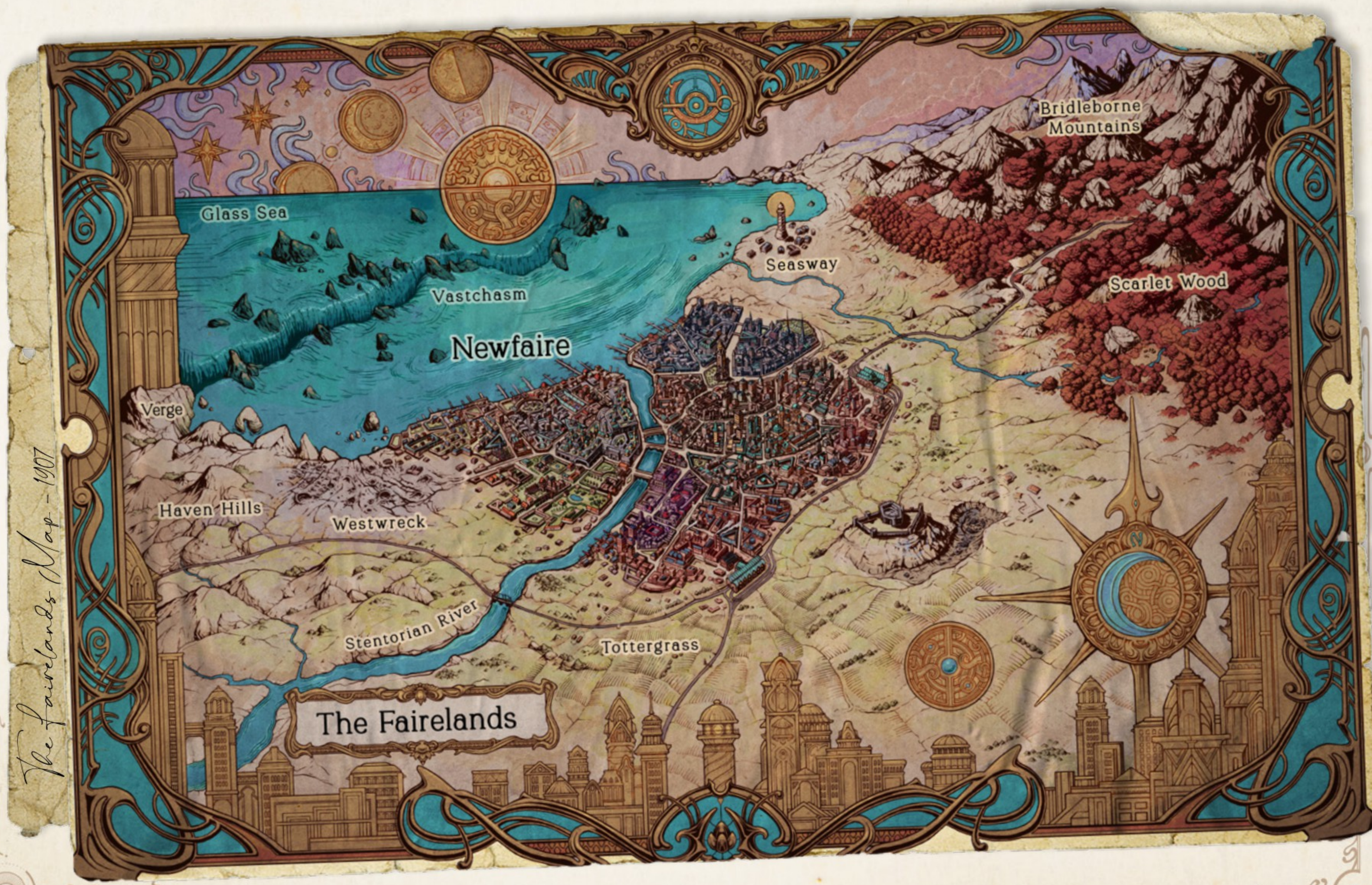
For over a decade, the world has grappled with the effects of a fierce cold snap known as the Shiver. While many northern countries face shorter growing seasons and incredible food shortages, the relatively temperate oceanic climate of the Fairelands continues to provide for Halen citizens. Because of its rich resources, the people of the region have dealt with near-constant invasions for as long as the land has been settled. This current period of peace will likely not last long.

That peace was hard-won through the implementation of electricity during the Last Great War. Filled with technology that resembles your own during the turn of the twentieth century, Newfaire stands upon the ruins of its ancient, alchemical predecessor known as Oldfaire. This place embodies the perpetual integration of the ancient and the innovative that occurs within such cities as Edinburgh, Lima, New York, Paris, and Istanbul. In Newfaire, citizens are nestled within historical Brutalist architecture and the recent evolution from Art Nouveau into Art Deco.

The stylistic war that drives fashion and architecture pales only to the political war happening between the Triumvirate—the regional government—and its citizens. The Triumvirate comprises three institutions—the Primacy, Ascendancy, and Periphery—which align with citizens who uphold strict, moralistic values. Meanwhile, technological advancement forces modern thinkers to examine the effects of mechanization on the community as they adapt to a post-war world.



Cortnye Queen Transaction: CRIT1014003

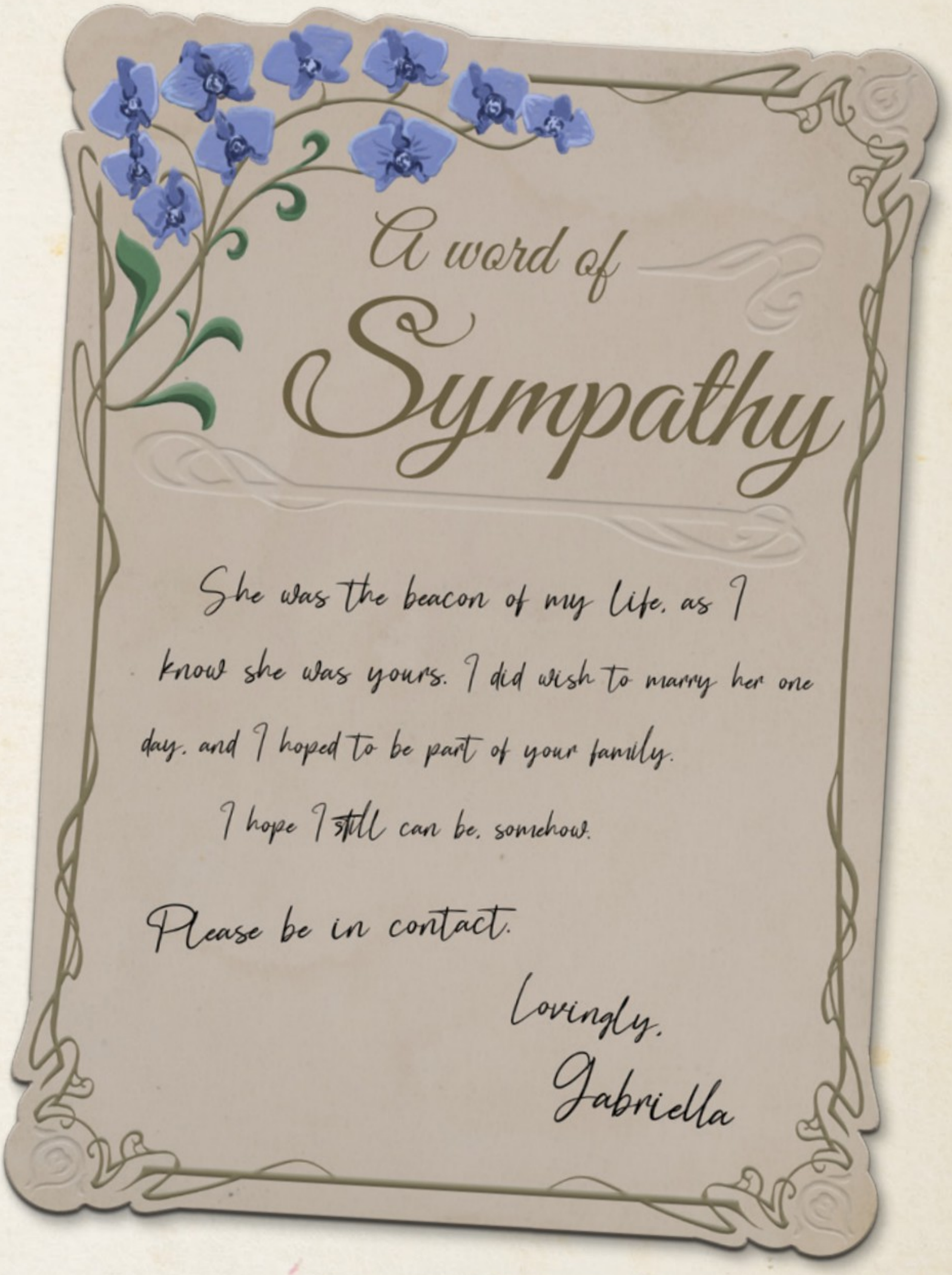


The Fairelands Map - 1907

THE TIME PERIOD

Our time in the Fairelands begins in 1907, right at the turn of the twentieth century. This is very similar to the same time period in your world—an era of electricity, industrialization, technological revolution, and a strong dose of spiritualism. If you can imagine art, music, locations, fashion, and inventions that appeared anywhere from the mid-1800s to the mid-1900s in industrialized nations, it probably also exists within the Fairelands.

What doesn't exist here is institutionalized racism, homophobia, transphobia, or other forms of prejudice that were so prominent in your world at this time. Though the citizens of the Fairelands may experience infighting about religion, politics, and the rule of law, those conflicts should remain individualized—there is no country-wide sense of bigotry. You will certainly find bad actors here who hold terrible beliefs, but those opinions should not be seen as representative of the culture of Hale and the Fairelands.



Cortnye Queen Transaction: CRIT1014003

TIMELINE OF THE FAIRELANDS

Archeologists believe there was a matriarchal line of Daughters named Iomene, but this is untrue. She extended her life through the use of magick.

-1605 CE

Invention of the earliest version of the Ancient Fairen alphabet. This evolves into the written language found in Oldfaire.

-1474 CE

Founding of the City of Farria. This period included wide use of pottery, bronze tools, and ornamentation with precious metals.

-1302 CE

The oldest surviving building in the Fairelands is constructed. Engravings depict a massive creature in the sky bearing barbed teeth.

-915 CE

The City of Farria falls, marking the beginning of the Ancient Fairen Period. The city currently referred to as Oldfaire is established in the valley.

-268 CE

Empress Iomene the Everlasting comes to power as the first monarch descended from commoners, bringing about widespread prosperity in the Fairelands.

-44 CE

Following the direction of her Council of Alchemists, Empress Iomene constructs the Ziggurat in the center of Oldfaire.

-2 CE

Empress Iomene the Vengeful disappears under mysterious circumstances. She is succeeded by Emperor Calinus.

4th Pharos established in -18 CE

0 CE

The Vastchasm is torn into the sea, flooding the Fairelands valley. Oldfaire falls.

✳ *-337 CE: Ancient fairens began successfully harnessing magick around this time.*

† *-249 CE: Candela Obscura arrives in the fairelands.*

Cortnye Queen Transaction: CRIT1014003

1219 CE

The War of Embers pushes refugees into the abandoned Fairelands, where they begin to build atop the ruins of Oldfaire. The Ascendancy becomes the primary religion of Hale and the Fairelands.

1441 CE

The Halen Renaissance begins, establishing the neighboring Fairelands region as a hub for artistic, cultural, and scientific advancement.

1637 CE

The Triumvirate of the Fairelands is established with the signing of the Charter of Confidence. Newfaire becomes the capital of the region.

1822 CE

Beginning of the Halen Civil War. Fighting lasts for three years. After the war, the Fairelands valley is admitted as the twelfth region of Hale.

1894 CE

The Shiver falls, shortening growing seasons and causing widespread famine for Hale and the other countries of the newly formed Northern Economic Alliance. The Fairelands valley remains fertile.

1898 CE

Otherwhere attacks the Halen merchant ship, the HMS Brilliance. The Northern Economic Alliance is broken and the Second Great War Begins.

1904 CE

The Second Great War ends thanks to the implementation of electricity. Premier Mallingson begins calling the conflict "The Last Great War."

1905 CE

The first yearly Newfaire World Exhibition occurs to celebrate post-war development.

X *1578 CE: Mapping of Bridleborne Mountain reveals the largest thinning on record. Attempts to construct a lighthouse fail.*

▽ *1901 CE: Lightkeeper Ferraz advocates for the use of magick in the war effort. The organization convenes the Conclave of Luminosity, who uphold the policy of neutrality in a decision to take no magickal action.*

History of the Fairelands Vol. 1

Cortnye Queen Transaction: CRIT1014003

HALE & THE FAIRELANDS

History

Hale occupies the western shore of the region once conquered by the Fairen people. In ancient times, the Fairen Empire extended through Hale, across the Glass Sea into Otherwhere, and throughout the rest of the Faraway (the Halen word for countries in the northern region). This made it the most widespread and wealthy empire in this period of history. Like many countries that share a common ancestry, peoples' food, language, and culture have traveled through communities, regardless of modern borders.

The ancient city of Farria is often referred to as the earliest major civilization within the Fairelands, dating back to -1474 CE (Common Era). This city, and its people, fell to the Ancient Fairens and transformed into the place now known as Oldfaire around -915 CE. Oldfaire reigned as a wildly prosperous and technologically advanced civilization, and became the hub of both trade and technology within the Fairen Empire. This city-state expanded in power and influence, most notably during the reign of Empress Iomene (she/her), until its mysterious destruction under the brief rule of Emperor Calinus (he/him). The turn of the Common Era (0 CE) is the signifier of this great fall—a time when the massive rift known as the Vastchasm split the Glass Sea. This flooded the city of Oldfaire, burying it beneath sediment for over one thousand years.

Hale's modern history and culture are shaped by three wars: the War of Embers, the Halen Civil War, and the Second Great War—later rebranded as the Last Great War by Premier Remedy Mallingson (she/her). While the specter of war has passed, present-day competition for resources and technological advancement across the northern region threaten to invoke the horrors of conflict once more.



The Halen flag

To understand the full historical context of the Fairelands valley and its place within Hale, it is important to examine the historical events leading up to its admission as the twelfth region of the nation.

The history of the modern-day Fairelands region began in 1219 CE, over a millennium after the fall of the Ancient Fairen Empire, and during the violent War of Embers. This religious war, also known as "the Ascendant Inquisition," had the public goal of driving heresy from Hale, but served the dual purpose of consolidating political power for Hale and many countries of the Faraway. This war forced thousands of refugees from many nations and cultures to seek shelter within the secluded valley of the Fairelands.

At the time of this conflict, legends from the fall of Oldfaire described the Fairelands as a desolate wasteland: cursed by the gods, flooded by the sea, and devoid of life. While this was true for a relatively short period after the splitting of the Glass Sea, this widely accepted belief allowed the refugees to remain hidden and safe while they established the city of Newfaire.

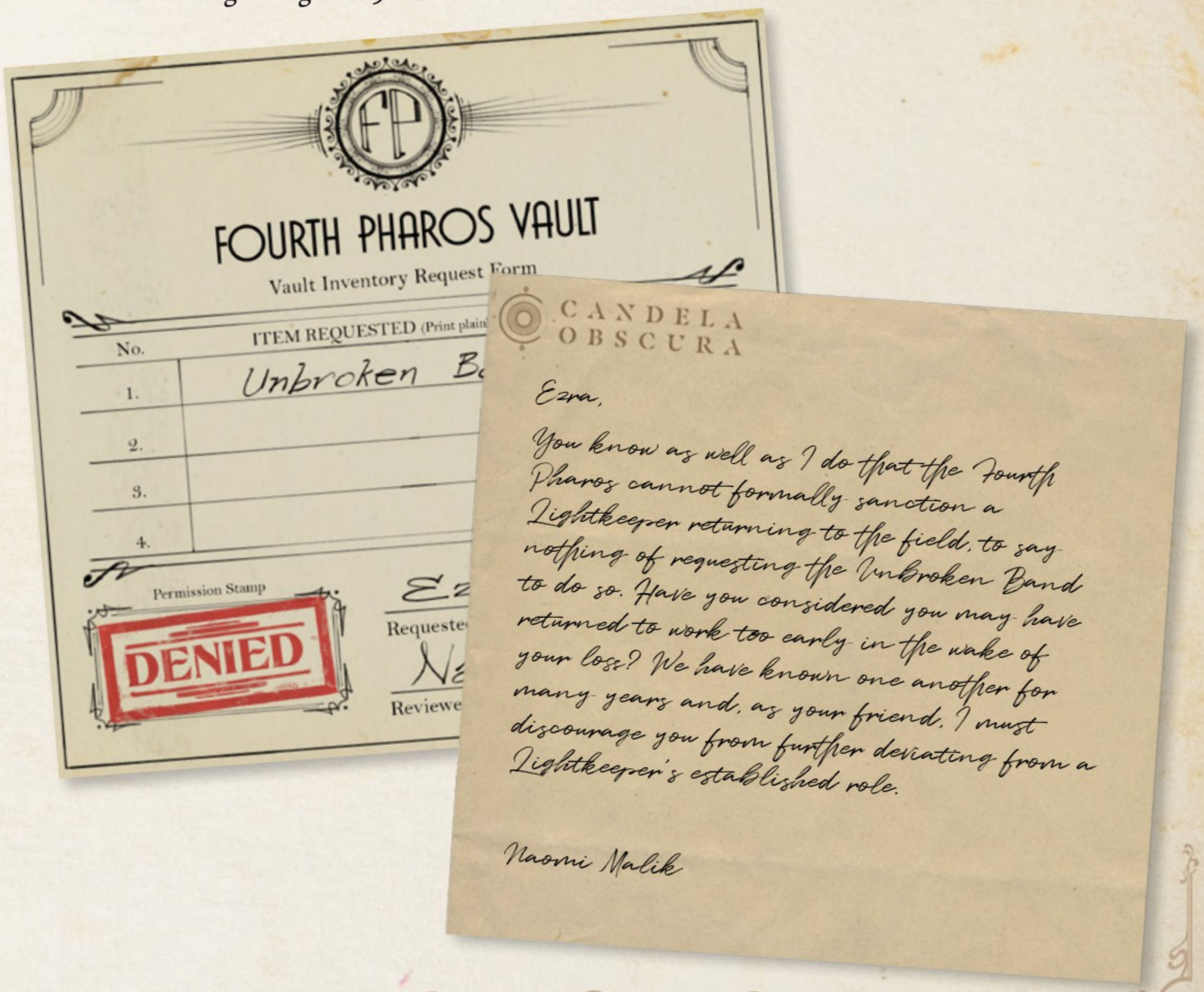
Cortnye Queen Transaction: CRIT1014003

Following the War of Embers, Newfaire benefited from the diversity created by refugees from all corners of the continent pursuing a common goal: to establish an accepting and prosperous community for themselves and their children. The vibrant city of Newfaire exploded into a kaleidoscope of culture and served as the catalyst for the larger Halen Renaissance. As Newfaire grew, so did its needs, and thus the Triumvirate was born—the first central government of the Fairelands.

The fierce independence of the modern Fairen people was challenged in 1822 CE, when the corrupt and power-hungry President of the neighboring nation of Hale, Conrad Harcroft (he/him), led a violent insurrection against his own government in an effort to seize total power and control of the Halen nation. This act of violence cast the country into a brutal conflict and spurred the Fairelands to action—they entered the Halen Civil War on behalf of the rightful Halen government, fighting to defeat the President and his forces. Together, the Fairelands and the legitimate government of Hale defeated the corrupt President and his loyalists.

To prevent such a heinous act from happening again, the Halen government permanently stripped the Presidency of its broad executive powers and offered the Fairelands admission into their nation-state. The citizens of the valley accepted this offer, contingent upon the guarantee that the Triumvirate was granted vast legal autonomy to continue to govern the Fairelands region.

Unbeknownst to citizens, the peace following the Halen Civil War was only a brief reprieve before the unimaginable horrors brought to their shores by Otherwhere during the Last Great War beginning in 1898 CE.


FOURTH PHAROS VAULT

Vault Inventory Request Form

No.	ITEM REQUESTED (Print plain
1.	Unbroken Ba
2.	
3.	
4.	

Permission Stamp

DENIED

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Requeste

Reviewe

CANDELA OBSCURA

Ezra,

You know as well as I do that the Fourth Pharos cannot formally sanction a Lightkeeper returning to the field, to say nothing of requesting the Unbroken Band to do so. Have you considered you may have returned to work too early in the wake of your loss? We have known one another for many years and, as your friend, I must discourage you from further deviating from a Lightkeeper's established role.

Naomi Malik

Cortnye Queen Transaction: CRIT1014003

The Last Great War

In 1894, a period of extreme cold weather known as the Shiver gripped the world, severely cutting food production for a majority of northern nations. In response to the Shiver, Hale, Otherwhere, and several other countries in the region established the Northern Economic Alliance through the signing of the Treaty of Salomere. This economic union created a brief period of prosperous international trade, boosting the wealth within this portion of the world to an extent unseen by such a vast, unified economic alliance since the time of the Ancient Fairen Empire.

Unfortunately, this period of prosperity ended on Mid Summer 12, 1898, when an Otherwhere naval vessel attacked and destroyed the HMS Brilliance—a Halen merchant ship en route from Newfaire to deliver food supplies to nations within the Northern Economic Alliance. Within weeks, Otherwhere sailed to the western cliffs of the Verge and launched an amphibious military invasion of the Fairelands. Thus began the Second Great War.



Historians debate the exact cause of Otherwhere's aggression. Most believe Otherwhere invaded Hale to seize resources, specifically the fertile land of the Fairelands, as Otherwhere's food supply was wiped out in the early years of the Shiver. Alternatively, a small sect of Candela Obscura historians think there was another catalyst for Otherwhere's aggression. They point to a single cargo manifest recovered from the wreckage of the HMS Brilliance that listed a dark gray stone structure containing a "specimen from D.S. #347." Unfortunately, the cargo manifest has since disappeared and is believed to be nothing more than a conspiracy theory.

Nevertheless, the economic treaty was broken, and Hale immediately rallied its forces to defend against the invasion. Though the primary focus of the attack was the country's breadbasket, the Fairelands, citizens from all over the country enlisted in the Halen Armed Forces (HAF).

The war lasted for six years, costing approximately 750,000 Halen lives. The deadly battles brought the front lines from the western coast of Hale right up to the edge of Newfaire. Productive harvests and other natural resources allowed the people of the Fairelands to sustain themselves throughout the grueling war. But it was a mixture of national pride, a resurgence of religious orthodoxy, and a fierce determination to reject tyranny that led citizens to sacrifice everything in the name of their loved ones, liberty, and the right to self-determination.

The discovery and harnessing of electricity, first in Newfaire and then across all of Hale, allowed the HAF to push back the colonizing forces of Otherwhere.

In the dead of night on Mid Autumn 13, 1904, the Halen government deployed a highly classified experimental weapon, powered by volatile electricity, on the battlefields of Westwreck. The weapon generated a violent electrical storm that ravaged Otherwhere's forces as lighting bolts and wild electrical detonations rampaged across the battlefield. The next morning, citizens were horrified to find nothing but the charred skeletal remains of tens of thousands of Otherwhere's military forces scattered across the countryside. All of the Halen soldiers involved in this operation died during the event and there is no evidence to suggest the strange weapon survived the blast—only rumors. Within 48 hours, Premier Mallingson received a telegram from the Prime Minister of Hale stating that Otherwhere signed an armistice to end the war. This operation is now known to the public as the Electric Event.

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Following their victory, Newfaire, always a hub of immigration, suddenly flooded with war refugees, particularly those from the now-ravaged western countryside. Though the population boom was daunting for post-war infrastructure, the cultural adaptations born from this time transformed Newfaire into one of the most vibrant cities in Hale. In the three years following the war, the country has restored itself—but, like the wastes of Westwreck, the collective psyche is permanently changed. While some have adopted an electric, "live while you can" attitude, others desperately seek restitution for the loss of an entire generation to the forces of Otherwhere.

In an effort to raise spirits, encourage economic growth, and brand a reelection campaign, Premier Mallingson commemorated the lives lost and the brightening future by renaming this conflict to "the Last Great War." This now widely accepted title stands in direct opposition to the increasing fear among Halen citizens that Otherwhere will develop electricity and sail across the sea to take the Fairelands with more modern combat weaponry. Still, the people of Hale are beginning to live less fearfully, travel more widely, and adapt to a world transformed by war, and transformed yet again by peace.





Cortnye Queen Transaction: CRIT1014003

Government

The nation of Hale is a federation of 12 regions, one of which is the Fairelands. Hale's federal government communicates with its 12 regional governments via a sophisticated and encrypted telegraph system—most citizens of the Fairelands will never live to see a Halen government official visit the valley in person.

The Halen central government has a five-branched system of power. The major powers within Hale are the President (elected by the Halen Assembly), the Halen Assembly (composed of Premiers and overseen by the Prime Minister), the Judiciary (led by the Grand Magistrate), the Ascendancy (led by the Divine Herald), and the Halen Armed Forces, including the Army, Navy, Marine Corps, and Air Force (led by the Armed Forces Chief of Staff.)

Within the government, the Halen Assembly is the most unique and politically influential administrative branch. The Prime Minister and the 12 Premiers serve as the sole legislative members within the Halen Assembly and, unlike other branches of government, the Assembly wields vast legislative and de facto executive powers. In this branch, the Prime Minister oversees the committee of 12 Premiers, each of whom governs one of the 12 regions of Hale and are directly elected by the citizens of those regions once every five years for a maximum of two terms. The Assembly is responsible for electing a President every four years by casting votes in a closed special session overseen by the Grand Magistrate.

The Prime Minister holds a particularly powerful role within Hale. They serve a maximum of eight years in office and must have previously carried out two terms as a Premier. Every eight years, the President, the outgoing Prime Minister, the Grand Magistrate, the Divine Herald, and the Armed Forces Chief of Staff meet in secret to select the next head of the Halen Assembly, imbuing this figure with unrivaled legal authority within the government.

LANGUAGE

Many of the words found within this text are English translations of the Halen language. This is particularly apparent in the names of places. You'll notice that many regions and districts are called exactly what they are—for example, Westwreck is the land to the west of Newfaire that was ravaged during the Last Great War. Because the Fairelands were conquered so often and remain so diversely populated, over time, Halen citizens found it easier to speak frankly. Simpler names ease translation in cities filled with speakers of diverse languages. To some, the directness of Halen speech is considered rude, while others find it trustworthy.

Within the archeological community of the Fairelands, and particularly among the Lightkeepers of Candela Obscura, Ancient Fairen is both studied and utilized in communications. This alphabetic language translates fairly easily into modern Halen, and is a foundational part of spellwork. The ancient alchemists of Oldfaire developed a specific system for channeling magick through writing by combining their language with charts, figures, and alchemical symbols to create works known as "sigils." This process cannot mitigate bleed, and to say that it controls magick would be a gross misrepresentation, but the careful scholar of the occult would do well to learn to read and write in Ancient Fairen.

ON LANGUAGE

GMs are welcome to establish their own Halen words. If you choose to go this route, we recommend that you draw from your own language and the history and experiences that shaped it. When developing your own vocabulary, remember that respect for real-world languages and their speakers builds a safer playing space and encourages bolder exploration of the topics that your group wishes to investigate.

Cortnye Queen Transaction: CRIT1014003

TECHNOLOGY

Over the last decade in particular, Halen citizens have made incredible technological advancements. With the added influx of wealth from agriculture during the Shiver, and the desperate need for increasingly powerful tools of war, Hale was on the forefront of developing electricity within the Northern Alliance.

In a remarkable achievement accomplished five years ago by a team of distinguished scientists led by celebrated chemist Tendai Moyo (she/her), the Halen Armed Forces succeeded in imbuing their weaponry with the power of electricity, thereby decisively repelling Otherwhere's forces. However, with other countries investing into research in the field, it's only a matter of time before Otherwhere's military develops similar (and similarly deadly) technology.

Unfortunately, electricity's immediate implementation into the Halen war machine tainted what should otherwise have been a miracle of modern science. Even so, it ushered in a new era of technological advancement.

This period of innovation gave rise to magnificent inventions—appliances that aid domestic labor, communication via telegraph, and the first Fairelands radio programs, which are being broadcast directly into homes.

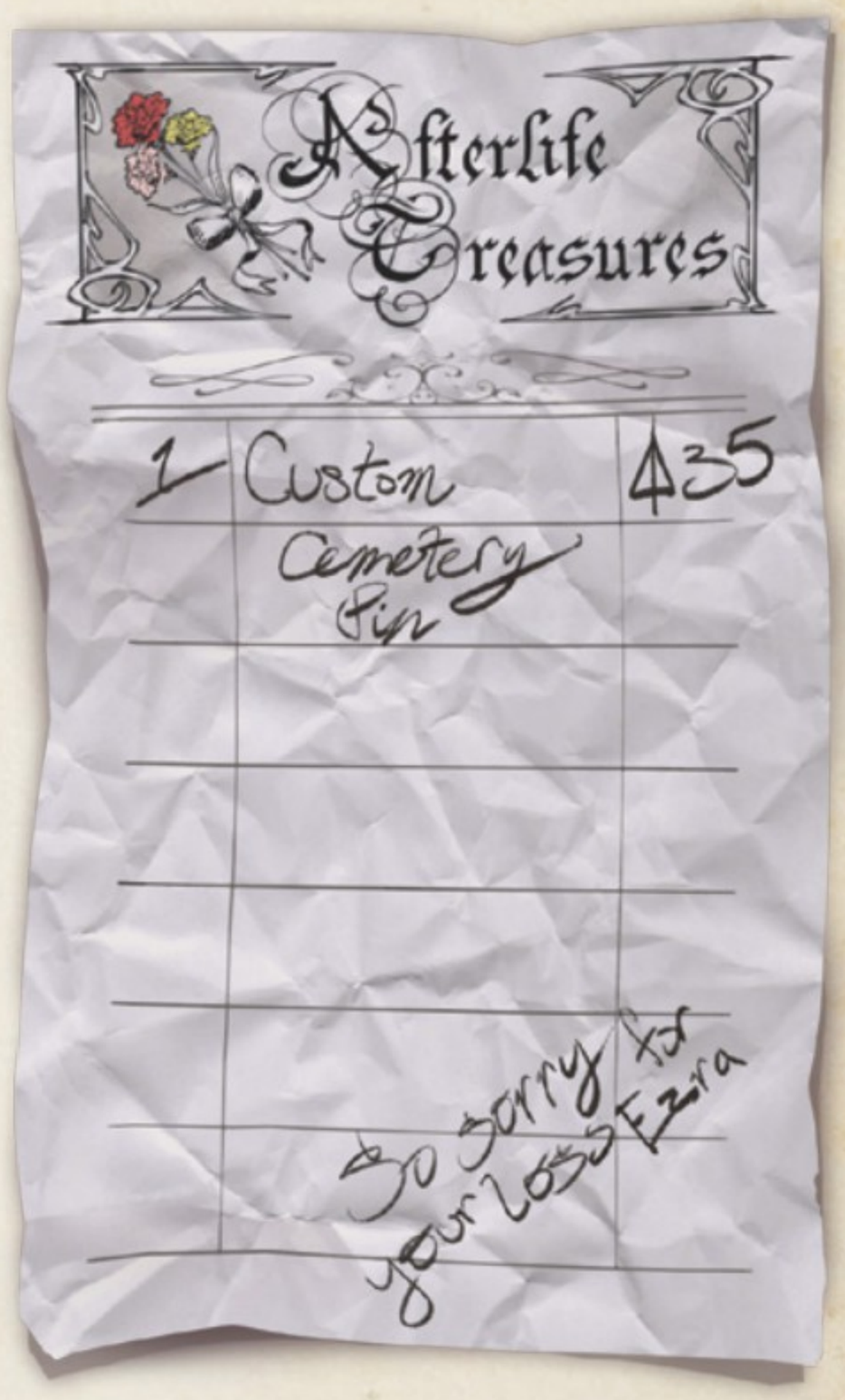
ECONOMY

Due to the onset of the Shiver roughly 13 years ago, the Fairelands became the majority food exporter within the Northern Alliance. During this time, surrounding nations of the Faraway faced increasing poverty in the chilling climate, and now look to the Fairelands for agricultural support. This brought an influx of wealth to Hale, allowing the country's infrastructure to flourish and people to thrive.

Money is exchanged within the region as both paper notes and coins. One US dollar equates to one Halen "bill" and one US cent equals one Halen "piece." Halen bills are easily identified by their bright red color, and a piece's value is indicated by the metal used in its crafting (gold, silver, or copper toned, with values listed highest to lowest). Currency is noted by a triangle with a vertical line through it.

All money is regulated by the Treasury Department of Hale, headed by Treasurer Halston Cabral (he/him). There are both public and private banks throughout the city serving all levels of society. However, the private banks traditionally serve wealthier customers, while the public banks are accessible to those with fewer funds.

There is a wide distribution of wealth in the Fairelands, with some citizens struggling to make ends meet while others enjoy incredible affluence. The prosperity following the Last Great War has allowed for more mobility in the social stratification, but this certainly hasn't helped every citizen of the region.



Cortnye Queen Transaction: CRIT1014003

TRANSPORTATION

The advent of steam power and the implementation of electricity ushered in a profound change in the transportation landscape of the Fairelands.

Within Newfaire, the bustling streets—once navigated only by horses and pedestrians—are increasingly filled with new motor vehicles. Recent times have witnessed the operation of automobiles alongside traditional horse-drawn carriages, and the Transportation Bureau spent an incredible amount of money to establish cable car lines that seamlessly crisscross the city. Moreover, a new underground subway line plumbs the depths of the metropolis. When finished, it will provide unrestricted access to almost every corner of Newfaire.

Railway lines are the predominant means of travel throughout the wider region of the Fairelands. Main lines run out from Newfaire to the Bridleborne Mountains, to the fields of Tottergrass, and to the Haven Hills. These three routes are the pillars of shipping within the valley, and were quickly expanded to aid the war effort during Otherwhere's invasion.

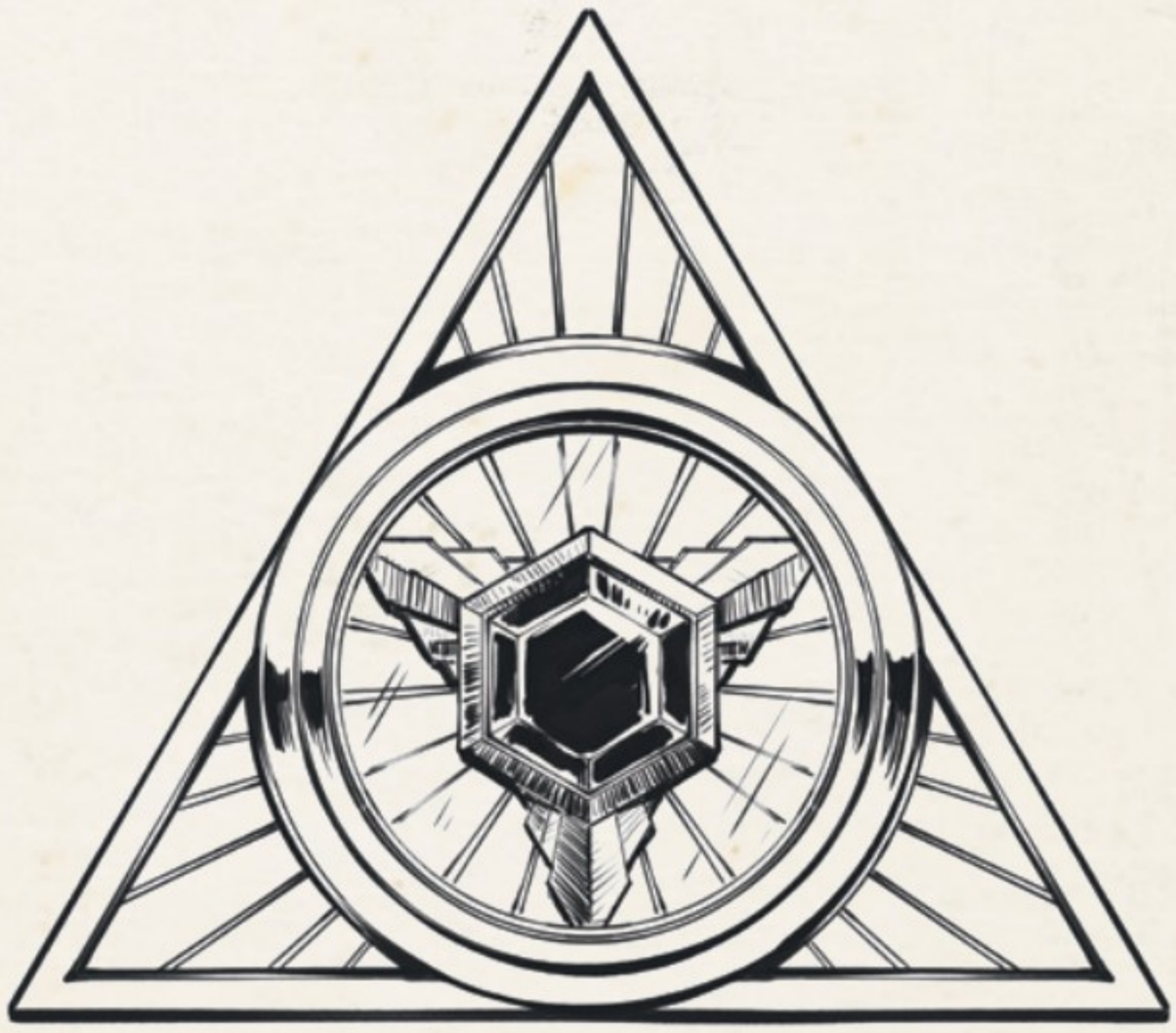
In the sky above the Fairelands, large dirigible airships carry those brave enough to travel thousands of feet above the ground. Though they were once filled with flammable gasses, the Halen Armed Forces used these aircraft heavily during the Last Great War, leading to the quick development of non-flammable (but more expensive) alternatives. Many of the newer crafts, and some of the older ones, now serve as modes of transportation for people and goods across great distances, with docks in the Bridleborne Mountains, Tottergrass, and the Verge, among other places.

Five years ago, in the land now referred to as Westwreck, Newfaire's main docking station was destroyed in an airstrike by Otherwhere. Plans for a new dock remain caught up in the bureaucracy of the Primacy, even three years post-war. Like the more agile dirigibles used by the military, smaller experimental aircraft have also become more prominent in the skies after the war. They offer a more personal (and significantly more dangerous) method of transportation for those willing to brave the skies.

Even with the new developments, a large number of Fairens rely on traditional modes of transportation such as horses and carts. Those who raise and sell draft animals continue to have lucrative businesses, especially in more rural areas such as the Haven Hills or Tottergrass.

THE TRIUMVIRATE

The Primacy, Ascendancy, and Periphery are the three major powers within the Fairelands and are collectively referred to as the Triumvirate. On their face, they operate independently from one another, though it's common knowledge that they conspire together on numerous decisions, even if they may not agree on any given issue publicly.



Cortnye Queen Transaction: CRIT1014003

Ascendancy

The Ascendancy is the official religion of Hale. Those who follow this religion worship the triad of the Father, Mother, and Child, and call themselves the Ascendants. Anyone called to join the Ascendancy in any official capacity begins as an apprentice within their local church, and through hard work and dedication, can rise up through the ranks of the religious institution.



Each region within Hale is assigned a cardinal, a religious official appointed from within the faith by a conclave of Elders. The most powerful member of the Ascendancy is known as the Divine Herald, and is similarly appointed by the Cardinals of Hale. The Herald holds their position until they die or choose to step down. Local churches are led by priests who are also referred to as holy fathers, mothers, or guardians. The leaders within the Ascendancy have incredible influence and are highly corrupt.

The average Ascendant will attend worship once a week, typically on the weekend or outside their usual working hours. During a service, they will listen to a sermon performed by their local priest and engage with their local community. However, the more zealous devotees may attend services daily and form a strong ideological connection to their religious identity.

The Ascendancy is a religion that highlights "purity" as a key virtue, though worshippers are as likely to argue about the meaning of the word as they are to agree. There is a strong emphasis on penance and forgiveness, and the familial structure of their pantheon means that they highlight the importance of blood relatives over all other relationships. Traditional Ascendants fear the evil influence of "demons and devils," and it's not uncommon for the church to, knowingly or unknowingly, attribute the effects of magickal phenomena to these "evil adversaries" as a way to convert members of the public.

Notable Figures

- **Leslie Rahman (they/he):** An elder of the Ascendancy, they're known for their vast political influence. He is married to a chamberlain of the Fairelands.
- **Henrik Olsen (he/him):** The groundskeeper at Sacred Ascension Cemetery. Candela Obscura believes he is associated with Pyre.
- **Sato Ayumi (she/her):** The Holy Mother at the Chapel of the Child's Grace. She is known for her soft speaking voice and dedication to penance.

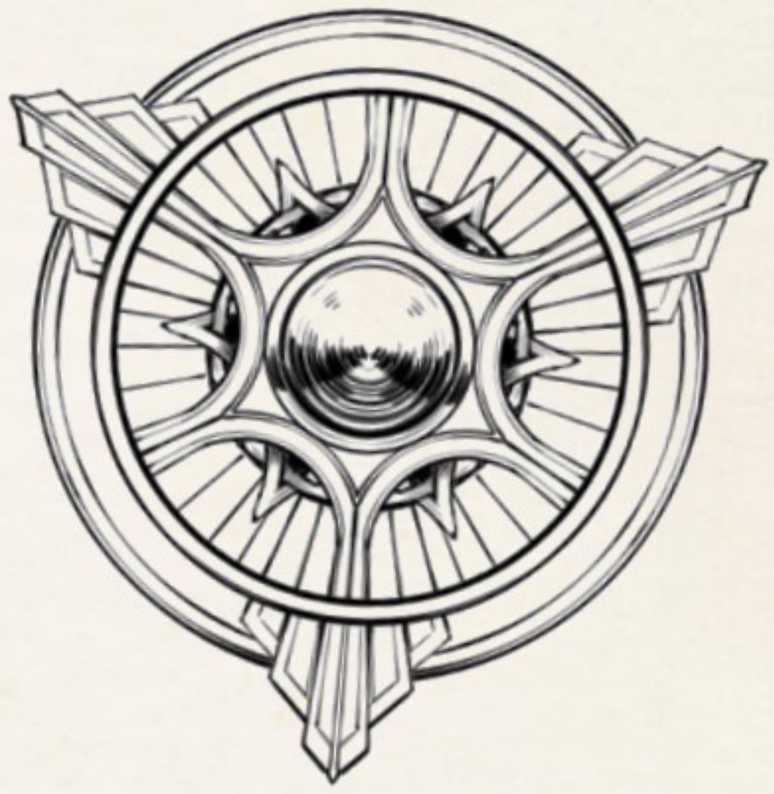
Notable Locations

- **The Constellation:** A well-tended network of small Ascendancy churches that dot the outlying regions of the Fairelands.
- **Sacred Child Orphanage:** An exceedingly strict school for orphaned children. Children raised here are often adopted quickly, and are known to fear adults.
- **Redemption Square:** The central area where Ascendants willingly put themselves in the public stocks to earn penance for their transgressions. It is the responsibility of other congregants to shame them.

Cortnye Queen Transaction: CRIT1014003

Primacy

The Primacy is the regional government of the Fairelands and is led by an elected official known as the Premier. Members of the Fairelands Chamber, known as chamberlains, work beneath the Premier to make decisions for the region. The Premier wields absolute executive authority within their territory. Unless otherwise directed by the Prime Minister of Hale, the Premier also acts as the commander in chief of regional military forces in times of war. Additionally, Premiers serve as legislative members within the Halen Assembly, coming together to make decisions for the country as a whole.



The current Premier, Remedy Mallingson, is in her second and last term of office. Though she is considered a tough leader who is hard on crime and even harder to negotiate with, she is widely loved for successfully leading the Fairelands through the end of the war and beginning the work of rebuilding the region.

The Primacy oversees both the Periphery and the Judiciary within the Fairelands. While the Commissioner of the Periphery and trial judges are supposedly elected by the people, insidious political maneuvering means that candidates are regularly hand-selected by chamberlains to effectively rig elections by providing only Primacy-aligned options.

Notable Figures

- **Lucas Secco (he/him):** A mousy secretary known for secreting the objectives of lobbyists into the Chamber agenda.
- **Alex Mbeki (they/them):** A politician planning to run in the next Premier election. They have openly opposed the construction of the subway line in order to protect Oldfaire archeology.
- **Aisha Mallingson (she/her):** The daughter of the Premier, she is famous for her work advocating for the arts, though she often collaborates with the Red Hand.

Notable Locations

- **Newfaire Capitol:** A beautiful Art Nouveau building, its vibrant teal dome is considered an icon of Halen architecture. This building serves as the main seat of the Primacy.
- **Court of Common Pleas:** Known for a lack of leniency, this court hears both civil and criminal cases.
- **Postal Service Center:** The post office within Newfaire. Deliveries in the region are famously prompt. Certain mail carriers will act as smugglers, for a price.

There are two leading political parties in the Fairelands, each vying for control of the office of the Premier and the majority within the Regional Chamber: the Patriotic League and the National Progress Party. In the years following the Last Great War, with no foreign enemy to unite against, the political landscape is marked by increased antagonism and polarization.

Cortnye Queen Transaction: CRIT1014003

The Patriotic League

Premier Remedy Mallingson is the regional leader of the Patriotic League, which is a nationalist political party that emphasizes love of country and loyalty to Hale above all else. Members of this party believe that national identity should take priority over individual interests, and they showcase this belief by supporting policies that protect the ruins of Oldfaire. They also believe that a strong government must involve itself in the daily lives of its citizens in order to ensure safety, security, and economic growth. Mallingson is in her final term in office, and there is a considerable amount of infighting to choose the next Patriotic League Premier candidate.

National Progress Party

In opposition to the Patriotic League, the National Progress Party believes that the government should focus on individual freedom and personal responsibility. Members of this party feel that the best way to achieve progress is through a strong free market economy, and that government interference in that economy should be limited. They are committed to social progress and increased access to education and healthcare, though members of the party disagree on the best route to pursue these advancements. The current regional leader of the National Progress Party is a former scholar turned political activist named Nathaniel Lemaire (he/him).

ON SYSTEMS OF POWER

The systems of power within the Fairelands are designed to provide a scaffolding for the corruption that has long been a facet of the horror genre. This is especially evident in the Criminal specialty. This character type is the foundation of a person who, for one reason or another, finds themselves on the wrong side of an unjust policing system. Making the Criminal a playable member of a Candela Obscura circle establishes that the official law of the land is not a representation of morality.

While individuals and institutions can be worthy adversaries just as much as any monster, both players and the GM have the ability to modify any part of the game to suit their needs and affect the story they wish to tell.

Candela Obscura's fight against the corruption of supernatural forces is an allegory for the fight of good, everyday people against the corruption of the world. When you play within Hale, craft both a hero and a world that best supports the monsters you wish to defeat.

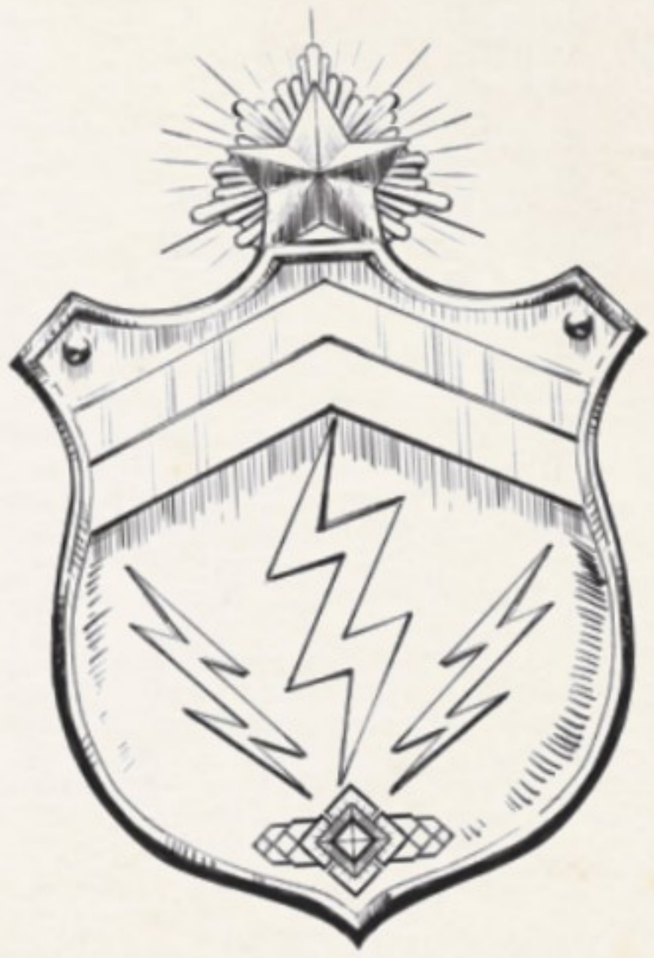


Premier Mallingson

Cortnye Queen Transaction: CRIT1014003

Periphery

The police force within the Fairelands is known as the Periphery. In the wake of the Last Great War, the Periphery inherited military technology incongruous with the proclaimed goal of interfacing peacefully with Halen citizens. The Commissioner of the Periphery is appointed by the Premier, just as the region's judiciary is appointed by members of the Chamber. This means that the justice system in this portion of Hale is created and enforced through the influence of politicians.



Coming out of the Last Great War, the Fairelands are gaining a reputation for having a violent, militarized police force—a reality that many former soldiers who fought to protect civilians openly oppose. Officers in the Periphery have been known to overzealously police citizens and use almost any excuse to arrest and lock them away in jail cells around the city.

There is a growing resentment between those who fought in the Last Great War and the up-and-coming members of the Newfairen police force. This results in clashes with the Periphery, who are known to prioritize protecting one another over protecting the citizens of Newfaire and the Fairelands region.

Notable Figures

- **Gabriel Olivier (he/him):** The Commissioner of the Periphery. He's held the position for a decade and has no plans to vacate, despite opposition.
- **The Executioner (unknown):** The mysterious, hooded figure who runs the gallows. Their identity is purposefully secret, though some Candela Obscura members have a hunch who they might be.
- **Malaika Das (they/them):** A veteran officer known to work closely with Candela Obscura members in times of need.

Notable Locations

- **The Pit:** One of the small jails used to hold scarlet drunks and those awaiting trial. Fairens who can afford to bribe the jailer can receive one visitation from a loved one.
- **The Stonehold Outpost:** The largest Periphery outpost in the Bridleborne Mountains. It is particularly well supplied with munitions to combat the scourge of redrunners.
- **The Newfaire Morgue:** The morgue used by the Periphery to showcase unclaimed bodies. Anyone in Newfaire can visit this viewing theater, and the spectacle of death has become more of a political tool than an effort of goodwill.

Cortnye Queen Transaction: CRIT1014003

LIFE IN THE FAIRELANDS

Time & Calendar

Time in this world works the same as it does in yours—it runs on 60-minute hours, 24-hour days, and 7-day weeks. The calendar, on the other hand, is divided into four months—Spring, Summer, Autumn, and Winter. Each month is further broken down into three categories: Early, Mid, and Late, comprising four weeks apiece.

Since the pre-war implementation of gas lighting in Newfaire, businesses have begun to regulate their workers' time more strictly, and citizens are more likely to travel throughout the city at night under gas, or more recently, electric lamps. Though time has passed since the earliest adoption of artificial light, there remains some discrepancy between those who work under urban industrialized schedules and those whose work in agriculture, with a schedule that is dictated by the rising and setting of the sun. Referred to as the "time war" within the parlors of manufacturing barons, more than anything, this is a cultural dichotomy that offers an opportunity for banter between farmers and urbanites.



Calinus Market

Work & Play

Industrialization boomed after the Last Great War and created a thriving economy in the Fairelands. Citizens' jobs are as diverse as the people themselves. Within Newfaire, laborers, factory employees, and electricians work from sunup to sundown in the district of the Steel. In the Red Lamp district, legal brothels and gambling houses operate at all hours, serving clientele from across the country. In the rich and fertile lands of Tottergrass, farmers tend to the crops, selling what they can and living off what they must. In the Bridleborne Mountains, redrunners transport the illegal hallucinogenic known as scarlet, skillfully avoiding or paying off Periphery officers.

What time Fairens have to dedicate to leisure is often spent in dichotomy. Those who survived the invasion of Otherwhere either spend their time carousing, now that they have a visceral understanding of the fragility of life, or desperately search for a way to honor, or even contact, those who died. To this day, communities continue to band together to repair portions of the valley that were devastated during bombing and battles. Meanwhile, others choose to fill their nights visiting restaurants, attending parties, and generally kicking up their heels in a perpetual celebration of survival.

Cortnye Queen Transaction: CRIT1014003

Holidays & Celebrations

The holidays of the Fairelands are either long-standing (traditionally celebrating birth, death, or the changing of seasons) or relatively new (celebrating exceptional achievements, either national or individual).

The Belltower Chorus: An Ascendancy celebration during which Newfaire's church bells ring in unison, signifying harmony throughout the region. Participants engage in communal prayers, share meals, and listen to the cardinal give a rousing speech to all Ascendants.

The Gauntlet: A race that runs through every district of Newfaire. Anyone may participate in an attempt to win the Champion's Medallion. In this race, participants may not touch street level at any time; instead, they must run over buildings, bridges, and ruins in order to arrive first at the finish line. This race is not without its dangers, and contestants have been known to fall grievously injured or die in their attempts to win at any cost.

The Great Airship Regatta: A thrilling airship race in which the winner gets their name and airship number listed in a grand display inside the Newfaire Capitol building. Most participants train for years in order to qualify for entry into this famous competition.

The Festival of Illumination: This is a festival meant to honor the fallen soldiers lost in the Last Great War. Citizens throughout the Fairelands gather with candles and small lamps in order to honor the spirits of fallen soldiers and guide them home.

The Newfaire World Exhibition: An annual gathering during which the brightest scientific minds present and discuss their latest inventions and discoveries. The symposium is accompanied by exhibitions and public demonstrations in which grand (and, at times, unbelievable) displays are presented to all citizens.

Food & Drink

Thanks to the wide variety of cultures that have found a home within the valley, an abundance of diverse food and drink can be found throughout the Fairelands.

One common Halen meal is known as the Farmer's Feast: a pilaf with meat, carrots, onions, and fluffy rice, traditionally cooked in one pot over an open fire. Every citizen has a different opinion on the proper way to prepare this dish—which meats are best, if it should be served with or without the broth, or even the nuances of its robust spice blend. Thus there are as many variations of the Farmer's Feast as there are cooks in the valley.

The typical drink of choice in the Fairelands is a wheat-based beer sourced in Tottergrass. The Primacy is particularly proud of this drink, considering it patriotic to consume a beverage that is locally sourced, and thus encourages all adult citizens to partake.

Though illegal, the alcoholic drinks, smoking resin, and snuff known as scarlet are also found prominently throughout the region. Sourced from the sap of the trees in the Scarlet Wood, this substance is best known for producing a light hallucinogenic response. Though it has generations-long religious and recreational significance, the Triumvirate regulates scarlet as a tool to debase and imprison the lower classes, painting them as immoral and hedonistic. Scarlet bars can be found across all portions of the valley, and illegal operations that produce this substance are both common and profitable within the Fairelands.

Weather & Climate

The atmosphere of the Fairelands resembles parts of the British Isles, areas in the Pacific Northwest, and the coastal regions of southern Chile, to name a few. The valley is cool and rainy with little variance between seasons, and the bordering mountains feature shorter summers and more extreme cold weather. Though Hale seems to grow colder each year, the land here is fertile and allows farmers to tend their crops and livestock to great success.

Cortnye Queen Transaction: CRIT1014003

Health & Wellness

Though emergency services do exist in Newfaire, the quality of care depends heavily on where a person resides in the region. For example, those in the Eaves have access to faster and more reliable medical and rescue services than the citizens of the Haven Hills.

As such, medicine within the valley comes in a variety of forms. While some areas have a local folk practitioner or doctor that cares for the entire community, other areas utilize regionally operated hospitals. The medical system within the Fairelands, and Hale at large, is known for its advanced healthcare services. Within Newfaire, the Grand Halen Hospital became famous for spearheading the effort for using antimicrobial copper alloys in operating theaters.

Death & Mourning

The modern funerary tradition of the Fairelands involves arranging the dead with their hands cupped over their nose and mouth before burial. Though the Ascendancy takes ownership of this practice, known as "breath-binding," it actually dates back to the time of Oldfaire.

The Ancient Fairen people believed that souls must remain with their bodies to find their eternal rest, and that a soulless body became an empty vessel that could be taken over by another entity. Souls that left their bodies would wander the earth in grief and anger, forever looking for their corporeal form. Ancient Fairens thought that, one day, the dead could awaken and live again so long as their souls were properly preserved within their remains.

To avoid this separation, and believing that the human soul was linked to breath, the Ancient Fairen people buried their dead with their mouths and noses covered or sealed shut. The average citizen would use ceremonial fabric tied around the lower half of the face; the poor, those caught unaware, or those at war would bury the dead with their hands covering their mouths; and the wealthy would use elaborate gold masks.

To dishonor an enemy, punish criminals, or ensure that someone would not rise in the Awakening, they would bury bodies with their mouths forced open, often utilizing a special contraption that held the jaw in place. Historians refer to this ritual as the "rictus rite."

Those who follow the tradition in modern times will cover a deceased loved one's nose and mouth as soon as possible upon death, even disrupting crime scene evidence or facing enemy fire if the situation demands.

There is also a tradition across Hale that involves "pinning" a person's spirit to the cemetery in which they're buried. By pushing a sewing pin, hat pin, or needle bearing the deceased's name into the graveyard fence, mourners hope to catch the wandering souls of those who were not properly breath-bound for burial.

Pre-war, this tradition was rarely observed, and the sight of a fence-pin was unusual. However, many Fairens who lost their children, siblings, and spouses to the Last Great War have taken strongly to this practice. For the bodies of soldiers who were buried without breath-binding, people will attempt to pin the spirit to the graveyard so the dead know where to find rest and do not wander, tortured and forever looking for their body.

While some have taken to arguing that spirits lost in distant war zones cannot possibly find the graveyard where they are interred, the tradition has merely adapted to encompass a name-marked pin operating as a signal flare for wandering souls.

With this great national loss, a new and highly profitable market was born. Merchants host carts along the streets outside of cemeteries selling decorated pins for grieving customers at a steep price. There is also a passionate spiritualist movement, with local mediums, spirit photographers, and burgeoning cults offering ways for people to try to contact their loved ones. While some mediums offer genuine connection to those in the spirit world, the majority are simply charlatans looking for a profit.

Cortnye Queen Transaction: CRIT1014003

TOKENS OF FAIRNESS

The Triumvirate within the Fairelands is built upon complex bureaucratic systems filled with individual actors of varying moralities that work together to conceal corruption. The Fairelands regional government has codified exceptions to policy in the form of silver coins called "Tokens of Fairness." From this, the term "paying the fair" was born, as these coins grant those who obtain them the power to bypass complex bureaucratic processes with ease. These coins bear the symbol of the Triumvirate and are handed out by members of each branch as gifts and gestures of appreciation to upstanding members of society. When a Faiven citizen receives a token, they can turn it in to any government agency to legally bypass any institutional procedures and receive special benefits otherwise unavailable to them. Over many centuries, the Triumvirate successfully codified this powerful system of patronage to the extent that the majority of Fairens now see it as a keystone of the region's political culture.

However, Triumvirate bureaucrats soon saw a new value to these tokens and, with each passing generation, they have worked to make the government increasingly inept, ensuring public dependence on the tokens, thus cementing their positions of power. These tokens now operate as subtle tools used by political elites to manipulate and leverage compliance and favors from citizens. The Triumvirate grants Tokens of Fairness to citizens under the guise of reward when, in actuality, each coin serves as a meticulously recorded debt the receiver then owes their political patron. The debts are always collected; their interest is always tenfold.

For example, the Cardinal of the Fairelands is known to occasionally grant Tokens of Fairness to devoted churchgoers during weekly religious services. It is also common for the Commissioner of the Periphery to give a token to the highest donor at charity events dedicated to supporting officers and families of the Periphery. However, in return, they may ask these patrons to look the other way on falsified accounting records or ask them to keep an eye on certain political rivals in a separate government agency.

n the distant past, there were efforts to abolish this system of fav
but in the modern era, these tokens are widely acce
airelands. For many, they are the only
vices, such as: acces

ON THE WORLD

When delving into the locations of the game, it is important to note that, while this world may bear similarities to your own, it is not the same. Take, for instance, the Red Lamp district of Newfaire, where sex work is lawful, profitable, safe, and socially acceptable. There may be individuals who look down upon this industry, but that is not the standard belief in the Fairelands.

Similarly, while institutions such as prisons or asylums may present formidable adversaries, remember that these locations exist for players to confront and resist, rather than to glorify mistreatment. Monsters can take on many forms—choose your foes wisely and in vanquishing them, find comfort.

Cortnye Queen Transaction: CRIT1014003

NEWFAIRE DISTRICTS

Newfaire is the capital city of the Fairelands, accounting for about 40% of the population of the valley. Due to its position on the coast, this metropolis is a prominent trade and travel hub, with a bustling economy and diverse population.

The city itself is on a slight slope toward the Glass Sea, with the southernmost districts, such as Nine Irons and the Steel, residing at higher elevations than northern districts, like Hallowharbor and Groundswell. This gradation results in more integration with Oldfaire as the city approaches the ocean. To account for this varied geography, as well as the presence of the ancient city, Newfaire is covered in hilly streets, wide stairways, and arched bridges.

The majority of the buildings of Newfaire highlight the organic style of Art Nouveau, with the look present in the most extravagant shops, mansions, and political buildings, as well as middle-class homes and humble stores. The restoration following the post-war bombings has shifted construction sensibilities to the more angular design of Art Deco—a style that the new titans of industry and electricity are keen to adopt.

The following pages highlight key aspects of each district and provide insight into life in Newfaire.



Cortnye Queen Transaction: CRIT1014003



BRIAR GREEN

The most verdant district in the city, Briar Green, surrounds the local hub of academia, Briarbank College. Home to the majority of the city's parks, it's filled with flowering trees, gardens, and affluent homes. Many politicians consider "the Green" a pinnacle of Newfairen ideals—delivering long speeches about the way the academia, architecture, and open space act as a testament to the values of the people of the Fairelands.

Though Briarbank College attracts a young crowd to the area, the population of the school accounts for only a portion of the area's occupants. Many graduates who receive academic or artistic grants choose to live "on the green," and more than a few wealthy families have palatial homes and luxury townhouses that overlook the Splendid Reach—the largest park in the district.

Points of Interest

Briarbank College: The foremost private college in Hale. Briarbank receives an exorbitant amount of money from the parents of the wealthy students who attend, making its archeology and physics departments the most well funded and well known in the north. Students of Briarbank have the opportunity to incorporate actual archeological digs of Oldfaire into their education—a thrilling, though dangerous, way to gain firsthand experience.

Revenant Park: One of the many parks in Briar Green, Revenant Park has a dark history. Decades ago, the land was cleared and planted by the Green City Commission. After a particularly rainy spring, citizens of Newfaire were horrified to discover human remains floating to the surface of the muddy land. Though it officially bears the name Regent Park, locals use its new, darker moniker.

Mara Winfield Botanical Conservatory: Constructed in 1870, this opulent greenhouse is considered an architectural gem within Newfaire. Boasting living specimens of rare and unusual creatures and botanicals from around the world, it hosts scientific, political, and cultural events throughout the year.

Example Assignment

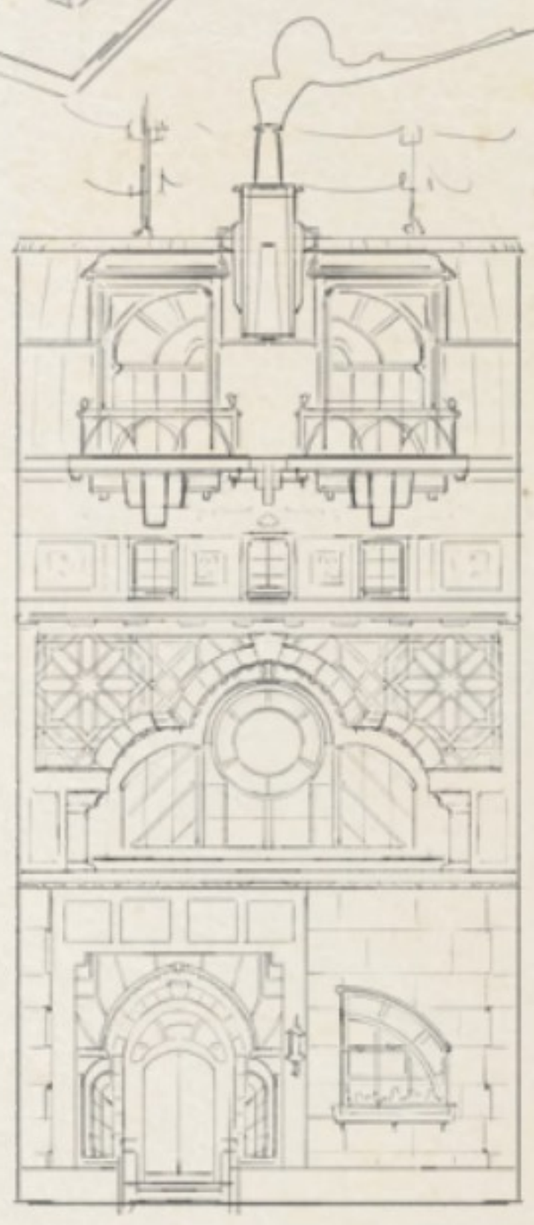
A student from Briarbank College stumbled upon a large, dead creature in one of the greenhouses on campus, its neck gashed open and one massive, clawed hand severed and missing. The dean of the school calls in your circle to figure out what this creature is and, more importantly, what terrifying beast was powerful enough to harm it.

Cortnye Queen Transaction: CRIT1014003

Briar Green with the city of Oldfaire looming below.







Many of the houses and businesses here are built vertically to leave room for the verdant landscape of this district.



Briarbank College

Cortnye Queen Transaction: CRIT1014003

THE EAVES

A highly manicured neighborhood perched on the top of a massive Oldfairen archway and the nearby Oldfairen rooftops that surround it. Surrounded by spectacular views on all sides, this incredibly exclusive district hosts the mansions and follies of the elite. For those old money families that live upon the Eaves, the rules of common society rarely apply. The presence of the Periphery is to "keep out the riff-raff" rather than to police the citizens that live above them.

Throughout the years, the Eaves have expanded to include not only homes, but luxury shops, restaurants, theaters, cinemas, and all manner of entertainment available exclusively to those with identification proving they officially reside in the district. All outside carriages and motor vehicles must be registered with the district Periphery in order to travel on its streets.

Points of Interest

The Conveyor: There are only three routes up to the Eaves: the ancient, ramped stairway known as the High Steps, covertly scaling the ruins of Oldfaire, or the Conveyor. The Conveyor is a massive platform guarded and controlled by the Periphery, and the majority of those who live, work, or deliver to the Eaves use this route. Visitors must have special papers or a neighborhood pass to use the lift.

The High Terrace: The gated community that makes up the bulk of the homes perched on the roofs of Oldfaire. The staff that work in these homes generally live directly underneath each building in South Soffit. It's not uncommon for homeowners to also have "ground rights," meaning that they own the lower-class homes in the portion of South Soffit beneath their manors. Staff are often forced to pay rent to the very people who pay their wages.

Eternal Heart Spa: Famous across all of Hale, this spa tends to only the wealthiest of clientele. Since the Last Great War, they have offered a "regenerative treatment" that actually seems to make people younger, though the mechanism of this transformation is a secret.

Example Assignment

Someone is stalking and murdering citizens within the High Terrace, leaving behind twisted and broken bodies emanating bleed. The coroner performing the autopsies became ill and passed away shortly after inspecting the corpses, showing signs of magickal corruption as well. The OUP contacts your circle to investigate what happened to the coroner and who (or what) is responsible for the murders.



Cortnye Queen Transaction: CRIT1014003



GROUNDSWELL

In Groundswell, the coastal wetlands frequently reveal previously buried portions of Oldfaire. Because of this, numerous zones are off-limits to the public for preservation purposes. It is also home to a nationally renowned outdoor marketplace that hosts goods from around the world. The presence of historical landmarks, such as a still functional Oldfairen well, makes this district a popular tourist destination.

Within Groundswell, there is an ever-present battle for control of the district. There are those who believe the entire area should be closed down and cleared out for archeological assessment, with no regard for the people who reside there. Locals point out that the market is in the same square where Oldfaire had its own, and believe that it is the birthright of modern Fairens to maintain the tradition uninterrupted.

Points of Interest

Calinus Market: Groundswell contains the largest marketplace in Newfaire, occupying both indoor and outdoor space. More function than tourist attraction, people come here to buy and sell everything from art to livestock. An ancient communal well sits at the end of the main thoroughfare, still producing fresh spring water.

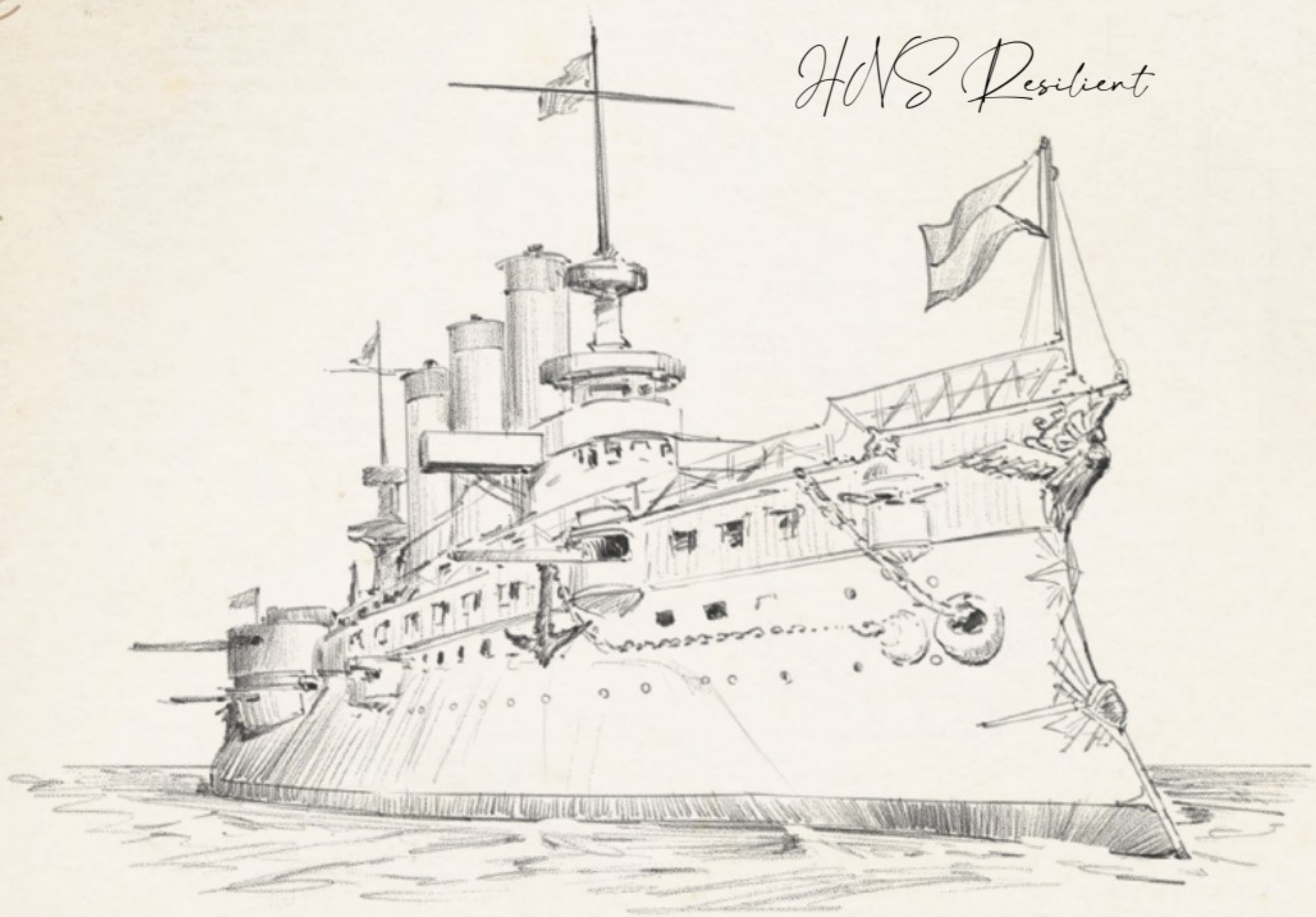
The Counter Offer: A small pawnshop a few blocks from Calinus Market. The owner of the shop, Idina Reinfeld (she/her), is originally from the Haven Hills, and an expert in counterfeit paperwork. There is no identification, ticket, or signature she cannot recreate.

The Heritage Center: A gaudy tourist trap where people live out reenactments of life in Oldfaire. Though some elements of the park are kitschy, it's considered by anthropologists to be fairly accurate in its historical representations. The "Park after Dark" haunted tours are famous, and there are numerous tales of real bodies rising from the ancient graves.

Example Assignment

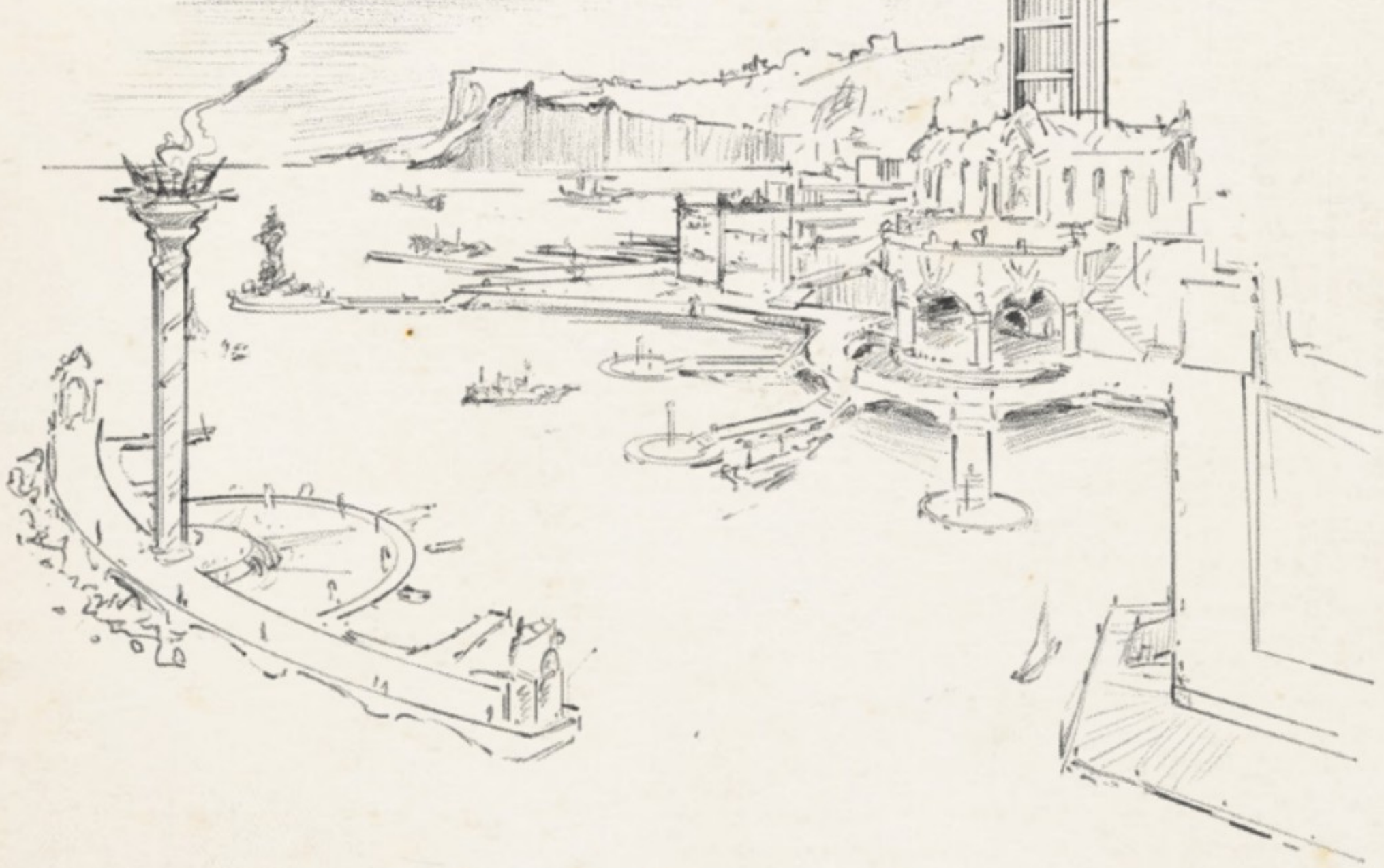
During the recreation of an Ancient Fairen ritual, a few actors at the Heritage Center accidentally opened a new thinning, and strange phenomena have come through and devoured visitors. Your circle is brought in to stop the slaughter and seal the opening in the Flare.

Cortnye Queen Transaction: CRIT1014003



Originally, the harbor had a large torch simply referred to as "the beacon" to light the path for ships. It's been replaced by a single tower that uses electricity instead of fire. The city still keeps the old beacon flame lit as as a tourist landmark.





Cortnye Queen Transaction: CRIT1014003

HALLOWHARBOR

The harbor of Newfaire is a keystone of trade and commerce for the entire country of Hale, and accounts for a major portion of the valley's incoming wealth. This district boasts a combination of luxury tourism, with Halen citizens taking exorbitant cruises, as well as more traditional mercantile and holding corporations that ferry goods throughout the region.

During the Last Great War, Hallowharbor was well protected by the formidable geographic shield of the Vastchasm. While the narrow pass between the continent and the falls was under blockade by Otherwhere, the citizens of Newfaire found a rich food source, fishing in the once-crowded commercial port. Post-war, enjoying seafood has become a unique symbol of regional pride, a concept embraced by many of the high-end dining establishments across the valley.

Points of Interest

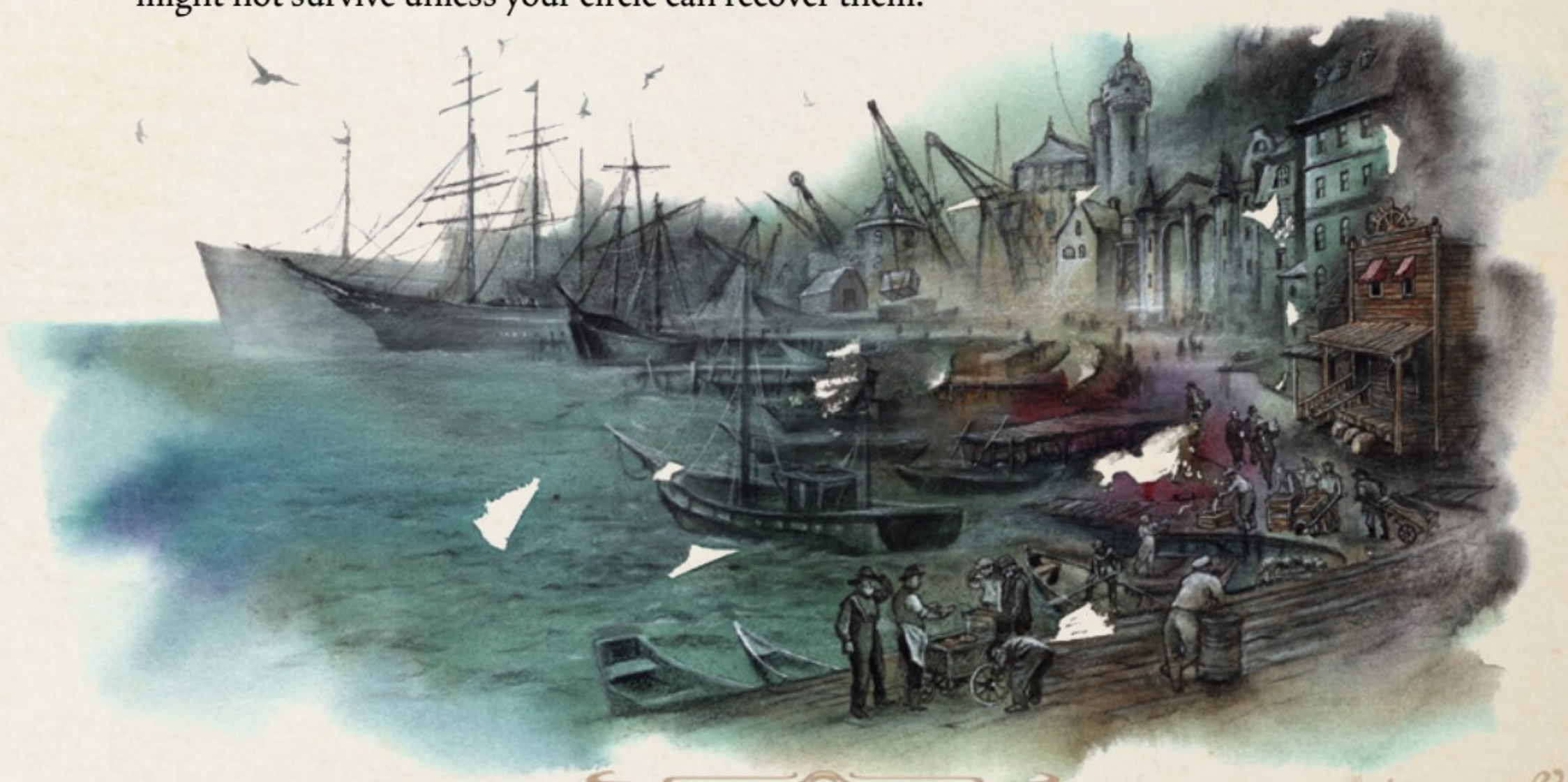
Halen Navy Shipyard: After the Last Great War, Hale has maintained its military infrastructure, if to a lesser degree. Here, the Halen Armed Forces care for naval vessels, positioned to defend the coast at a moment's notice. This has also become a popular party location—the Primacy charges exorbitant sums to rent out the ships to "raise money for the defense of the Fairelands."

Glass Sea Docks: Regarded as the gate to the entire region, Hallowharbor's docks serve as a representation of the hard workers of the region. They are controlled by Grint Barrows (they/them), a harbormaster with an iron fist who's known for taking bribes, though their rate is high and ever-climbing. The dry docks of Newfaire are famous for exceptional ship repair, though numerous laborers have died in industrial accidents.

Brinewash Warehouses: The storage facilities where every import is inspected, cataloged, and held. The owners of the warehouse have a close relationship with the Halen West Railroad Company, and there are rumors of one of these facilities being used to hold artifacts the Red Hand is smuggling out of Hale.

Example Assignment

The Brinewash Warehouses were broken into last night and a number of expensive, imported medicines were stolen. Those who were there during the heist say that the warehouse went inexplicably and unnaturally silent. Indrani Pandey (she/they), a Candela Obscura member who was injured on an assignment, needs those medications, and your Lightkeeper fears they might not survive unless your circle can recover them.



Cortnye Queen Transaction: CRIT1014003

NINE IRONS

The home base of the Periphery within Newfaire, Nine Irons includes relatively few buildings: the Periphery headquarters, prison, gallows, city landfill, and a police bar known as the Layabout. Perhaps the most ominous feature in all of Newfaire, the Brinkley penitentiary sits high on a manufactured plateau. Sheer cliffs create a nigh-impenetrable fortress and a terrifying fall for anyone hoping to get into and out of the penitentiary undetected.

The long road between the prison and the gallows is known as the Silent Mile. While crowds will gather to witness hangings, particularly those that are considered to be unjust, the stretch of land between incarceration and the crowd is filled with a reverent quiet. Guardians from the Ascendancy will frequently join prisoners in the cart ride to the gallows, both to offer comfort and silence the jeering guards accompanying them.

Points of Interest

Eastreek: The impoverished shantytown on the outskirts of Newfaire that's built alongside the landfill of the same name. Here, one man's trash is another man's home. Its citizens don't have electric power, causing the area to flicker with candlelight each night. What possessions they do have are regularly destroyed by Periphery raids that come with little to no warning.

Brinkley Penitentiary: Known colloquially as "the Brink," this terrifying prison is famous for its mistreatment of prisoners. The corruption of the Periphery is on full display within the panopticon of the Brink. Prisoners—many of whom were wrongly convicted—are deprived of food, sleep, and human interaction, while living under the threat of constant violence. There have only been two known escapes from this facility.

Gallowgate: Down a lonely road to the northeast of Brinkley Penitentiary lies the gallows. Those who are sentenced to death in Newfaire have two choices: execution by firing squad or hanging by the neck until dead. The gallows are generally considered the more favorable option, if only to offer the incarcerated one last opportunity to plead their innocence in front of the crowds that gather for hangings.

Example Assignment

An inmate from the Brink recently escaped from his cell in an impossible way. The OUP is searching for him, but he has reached out to Candela Obscura to blow the whistle on a dangerous Red Hand operation that's using the prison as cover. Your circle is charged with protecting the prisoner and exposing the corruption.



Cortnye Queen Transaction: CRIT1014003



RED LAMP

Newfaire is known far and wide for its legalization of sex work, and sex workers are afforded numerous rights and protections under the law. The majority of these establishments are found in Red Lamp, drawing people of all genders and sexualities as both patrons and employees. Along with their legal business, the majority of theaters, brothels, and gambling houses serve scarlet—the illegal hallucinogenic substance that gives the district its name. Periphery officers that patrol these streets have close relationships with purveyors of vice, and accept bribes to look the other way.

This area is also known as the arts district within the city. Red Lamp is home to small performance theaters, towering murals, and all-night coffee bars. It's not uncommon for scientific and artistic innovators to come together over a bottle of scarlet or host a friendly debate over a recent publication in the Halen Star.

Points of Interest

Faire Play: A scarlet bar, or speakeasy, famous for playing host to wealthy locals and foreigners alike. The staff includes sex workers of all kinds and famously caters to politicians looking to impress one another before a deal.

Seven Five Six: Named for the address above the entrance door, this warehouse is used to hold imported scarlet. It's famously controlled by the Red Hand, and they're known to host incredibly exclusive parties on the upper floors of the building. Some say so much scarlet is drunk, smoked, and snorted in the facility that the walls are tinted red—a popular story also used to account for the entire district's name.

The Library: A loud burlesque club and casino with the tagline "Come In and Check Out." Famous for its large size and maze-like rooms, their stages display all manner of performances, including "Banned & Censored," "Critical Lit," and "There's the Rub." During the day, the Library runs a coffee shop known for attracting artists.

Example Assignment

Cabaret Revelry, a burlesque show in Red Lamp, is famous for its aerial silk acts. Last night, in a terrifying accident, Alden Electra (he/him) fell to his death. Members of the audience described a doppelganger of Alden himself, with large black eyes and an inhuman smile, holding a pair of shears. Candela Obscura calls your circle to investigate the mysterious death before the next show puts another aerialist in danger.

Cortnye Queen Transaction: CRIT1014003



THE SHRIVELINE

This district is the home of the Ascendancy within the Fairelands, where religious figures and zealous Ascendants have established their homes to live alongside the Church. The Shriveline features elevated bridges crossing over bustling streets, connecting houses of worship, cemeteries, parks, and charitable institutions. The residential homes in this district are primarily owned and rented out by the Ascendancy, providing a massive source of taxless revenue for the Church.

Though most buildings here are older and display Gothic architectural design, many of the interiors of the Ascendancy's most prestigious churches are renovated with an Art Nouveau sensibility. Some members of the church are working to bring the church into the new century, but the Cardinal of the Fairelands is a staunch advocate of tradition.

Points of Interest

Church of the Holy Mother: The famous tower cathedral within the city that attracts visitors, both religious and secular. During the time of Oldfaire, the people of the Fairelands held particular regard for Empress Iomene. In an effort to convert those within the region that still practiced alchemy, the Ascendancy highlighted the importance of their mother goddess.

Shriveline Catacombs: This network of catacombs snakes through the upper layers of Oldfaire ruins, forming a maze of hideaways that Pyre uses for many of their secret rituals. Filled with graves, smuggling caches, and illicit meeting places, the catacombs are as haunted by occultists as they are by the spirits of the undead.

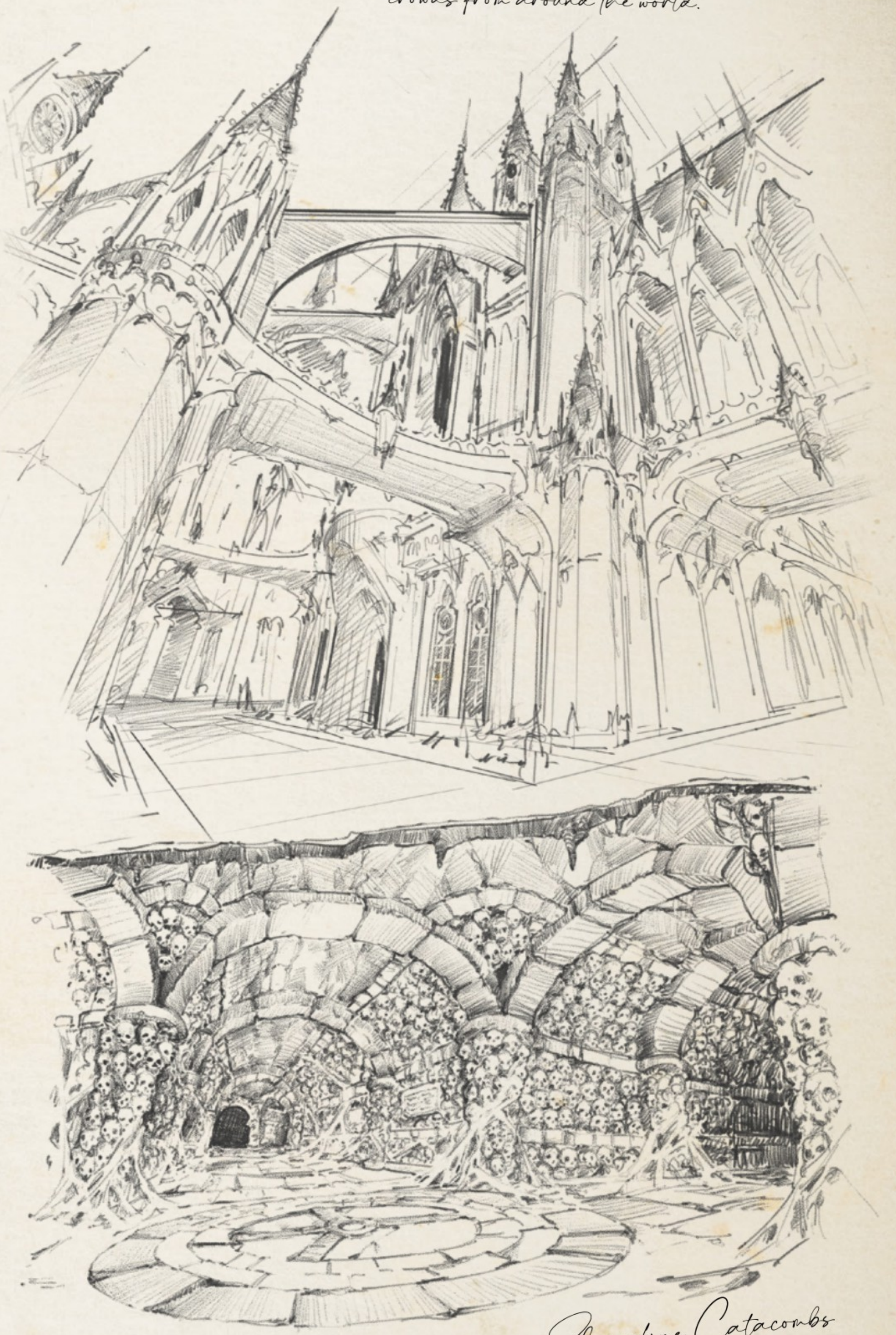
Sacred Ascension Cemetery: This cemetery is filled with new burials and graves so old there are no longer markers to denote them. There was an influx of internments during the war, requiring groundskeepers to dig up and dispose of a vast number of unattributed corpses. The wooden fences around this burial ground are covered in straight pins, hat pins, and needles.

Example Assignment

Within the Sacred Ascension Cemetery, the bodies of several people appear to have been dug up, with the deceased showing up in their old homes, awake and possessing no memory of having died. They complain of a terrible cold, and have torn apart numerous innocent civilians to find warmth. Your circle must uncover what brought these people back to life.

Cortnye Queen Transaction: CRIT1014003

The architecture of the Shriveline attracts crowds from around the world.



Shriveline Catacombs

Cortnye Queen Transaction: CRIT1014003

THE SIDLE

Home to up-and-coming residential neighborhoods and family-operated shops, this district is the middle-class sprawl of Newfaire. Newly installed electric lights illuminate streets, affording the Sidle a reputation for being incredibly safe at night. This area of the city was nearest to the fighting of the Last Great War in Westwreck, but post-victory it was revitalized into the modern residential landscape it is today.

Most neighborhoods are under constant development, with construction now pushing further and further west. Though the wealth that comes from the incredible population devastation of a hard-won war is most apparent in the middle-class expansion of the Sidle, there is a darkness and a great mourning that comes from success built in the wake of death.

Points of Interest

Temper Boulevard: One of the larger thoroughfares that runs through the Sidle. This street has lanes for cars as well as a cable car line. The Department of Transportation can't figure out why the pavement along Temper Blvd. continues to shift and crack, making portions of the road impassable. Locals describe small earthquakes that rumble in the night, but no scientists have been able to verify these claims.

Kline & Daughters Typewriter Shop: With the tagline "Get Your Writer Right," the Kline family runs a small, charming shop that attracts professors, students, and layfolk alike. At one point, the OUP cordoned off the store and would not allow anyone in or out for three months. After this incident, Mr. Kline never seemed the same.

Grayslate Sanatorium: In early 1816, this asylum was constructed outside the boundaries of Newfaire so that wealthy citizens could hide away relatives suffering from mental illness—or those who were in fine health but embarrassing the family. The OUP also uses the facility to silence officers and civilians who have suffered from too much bleed, creating the moniker "going gray." It's a notoriously horrific and deadly place to live. Those who are sent to Grayslate are rarely released—and if so, are certainly changed.

Example Assignment

The Grayslate Sanatorium is housing a patient who describes his terrifying dreams to the staff: visions that parallel real, supernatural events killing innocent victims throughout the city. Your circle is called in to uncover what is happening across Newfaire and how the patient is predicting these incidents.



Cortnye Queen Transaction: CRIT1014003



SILVERSLIP

An opulent district that serves as the seat of the Primacy in the city. Those who visit Silverslip will find courthouses, law offices, and some of the most prestigious businesses in the region. It's not uncommon to see wealthy individuals walking around this district in formal attire, while shoeshiners offer their services, and young paperboys shout out the latest news on street corners for tips.

Silverslip maintains a veneer of order and control, but just under the surface is a corrupt morass of politicians, judges, lobbyists, and corporate executives serving their own agendas. Beneath this district is a network of modern, underground tunnels, many of which pass through portions of Oldfaire. They provide a secret way for government officials to move between buildings during emergencies or political protests.

Points of Interest

Grand Halen Hospital: Newfaire's central hospital is famous for its groundbreaking work integrating medicine with electricity, thus its operating theaters are always filled with visiting physicians. Led by Dr. Nadia Tekin (she/her), a team of doctors from Grand Halen is developing a host of vaccines to protect the citizens of Hale and beyond.

The Offices of the Civil Tribune: The Civil Tribune is the unofficial propaganda machine of the Primacy. As a well-established paper, they're perfectly positioned to accept bribes from politicians who need favorable press, and they certainly do. Owing to a tenuous relationship with facts, other nations rarely use the Civil Tribune as an accurate source for information on Halen affairs.

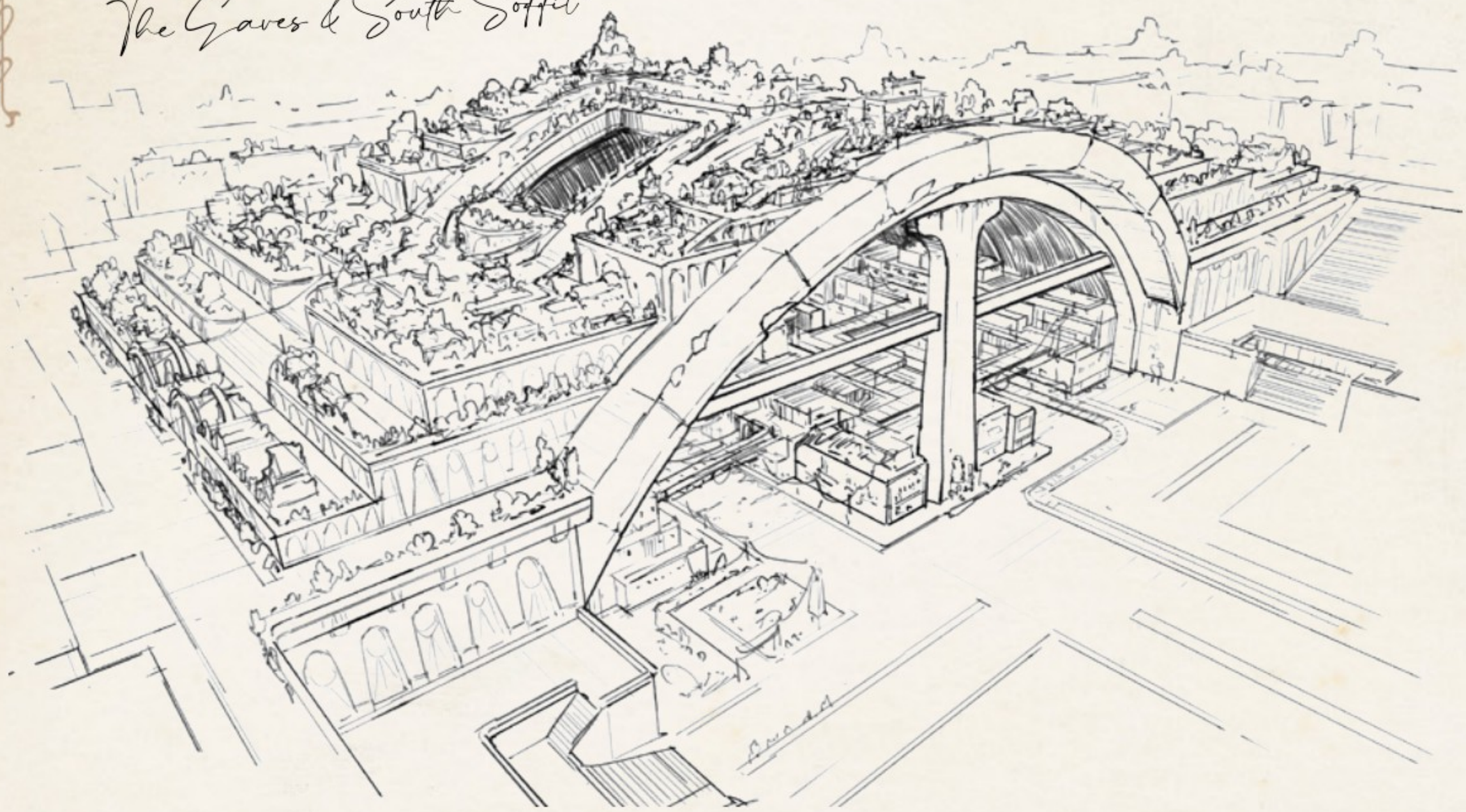
The Great War Memorial: The triangular walls of this memorial are constructed from salvaged Oldfairen stone, "in celebration of our rich history and strong foundation." The golden sculpture at the center features a bolt of shimmering lightning, transformed into a sylph to symbolize electricity propelling the country to victory.

Example Assignment

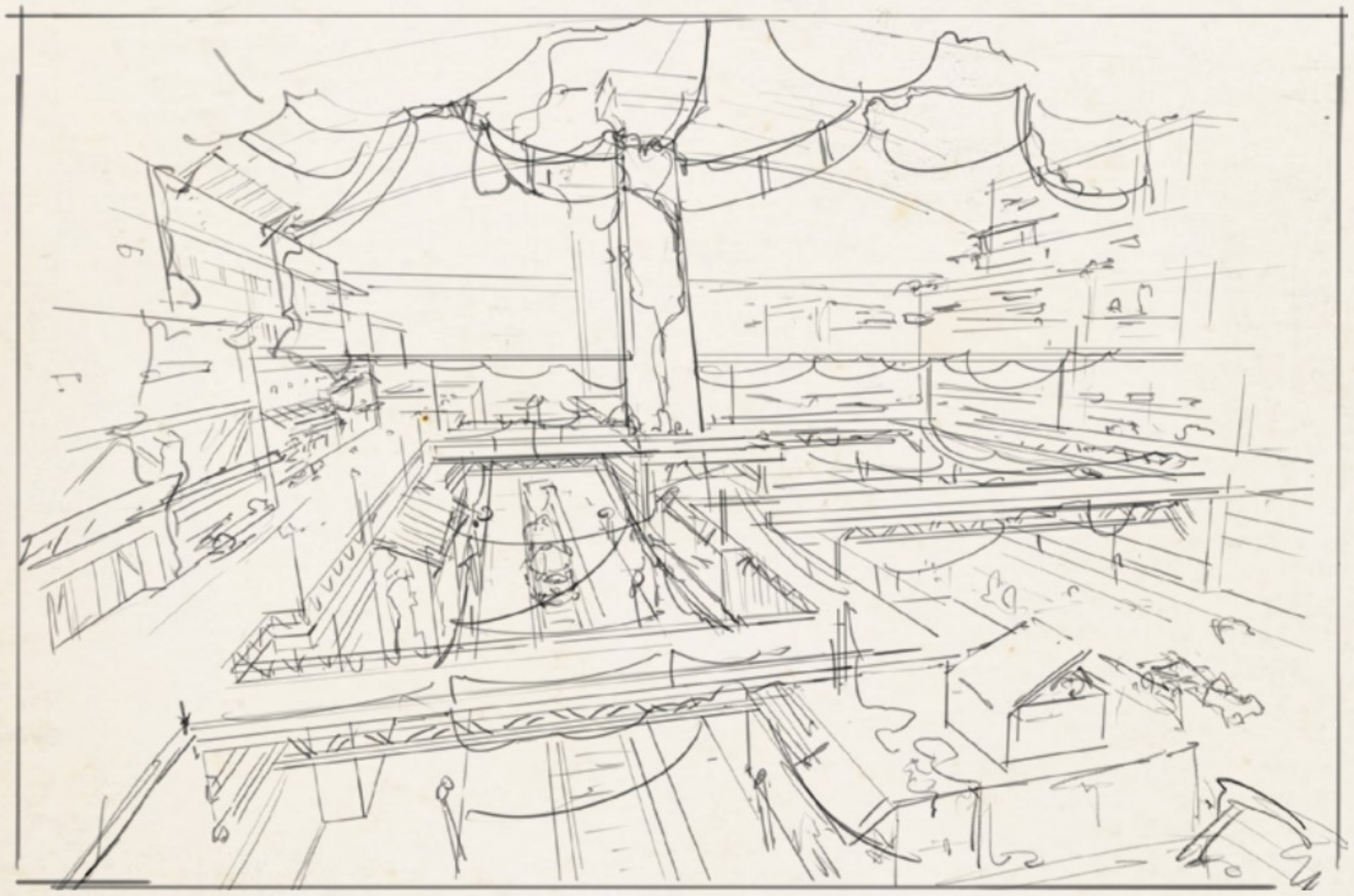
The Grand Halen Hospital was overrun by patients all exhibiting the same symptom—the inability to sleep. The victims are exhausted and their bodies are starting to shut down, but they cannot rest. A doctor with close ties to Candela Obscura has run a test and determined they have all been touched by bleed, so your circle is tasked with finding out what is causing the illness.

Cortnye Queen Transaction: CRIT1014003

The Eaves & South Soffit



The Oldfairen archway that stretches across the main entrance of South Soffit is regarded as one of the most sophisticated feats of architecture still in use from the ancient city.



Cortnye Queen Transaction: CRIT1014003

SOUTH SOFFIT

The lower-class district built into the Oldfairen ruins beneath the Eaves. The electric wires that feed the district above run haphazardly through South Soffit, making it a dangerous place to live and work. Those that live in "the Soffit" often work in the homes of the wealthy Newfairens above.

The district is built in layers, with the bottom level providing homes for those who are the most well-off. Here, the houses and roads are safely located on the ground floor, the rest of the city is easily accessible, and the air is cleanest. The topmost levels are the hardest to maintain—and the most dangerous. Residents must navigate the unrailed walkways and dodge the open electric wires crackling overhead, all while suffering severe smoke pollution from the homes below. The upper Soffit is no place for the faint of heart or the clumsy of foot.

Points of Interest

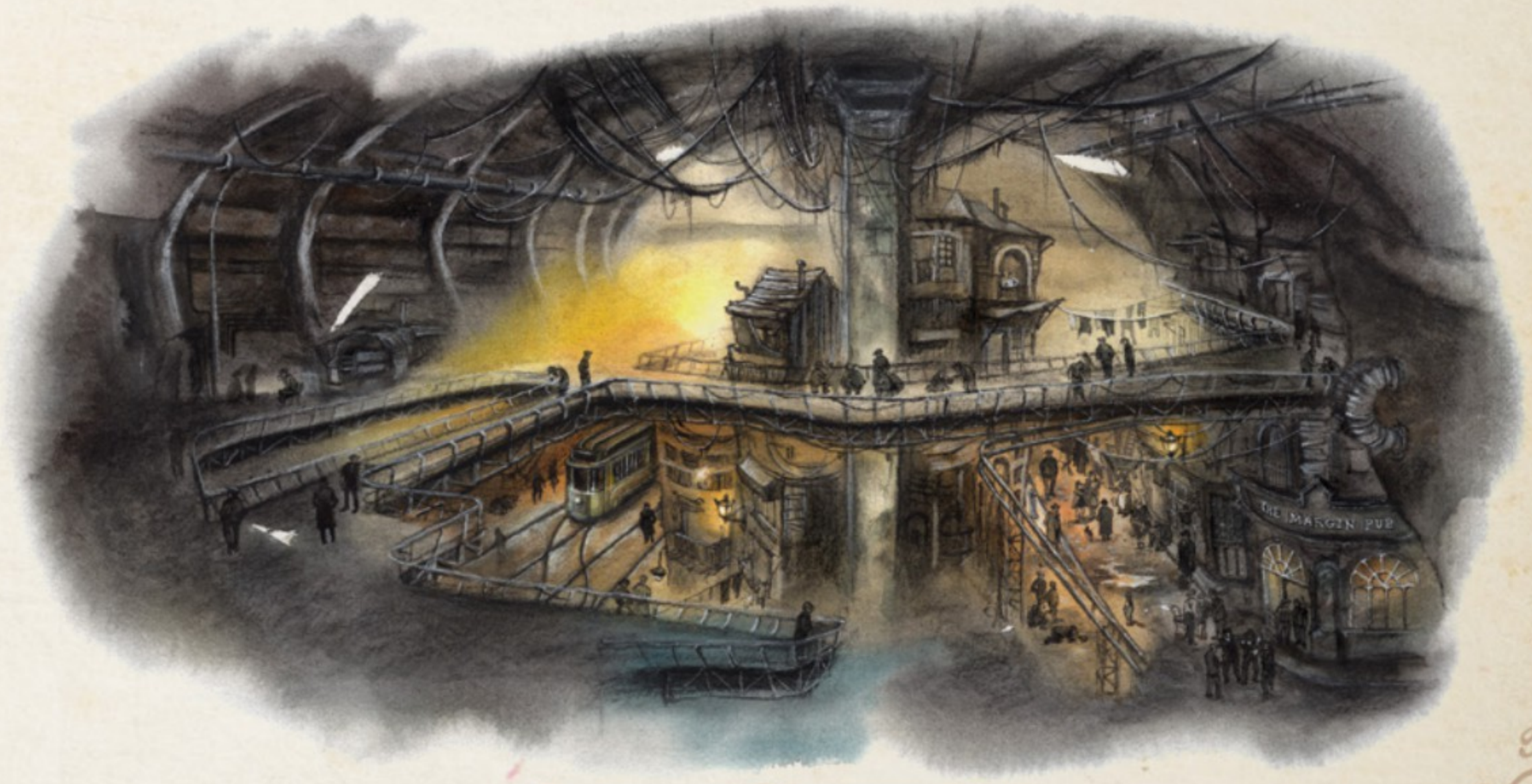
The Clara House: A shelter and soup kitchen run by and for the people of South Soffit. The manager, Clara Bellecourt (she/her), is known for never turning away those in need and for specifically keeping the Ascendancy out of her charity work.

Thread & Fur Taxidermy: This taxidermy shop can't get a storefront in any other district, and the owner has certainly tried. Perhaps it's the unblinking faces of hundreds of animals perched in the windows, the smell of singed fur and iron-rich blood, or the way that Professor Oliver Berrada (he/him) is often inside, insisting he has the body of a real Krakidon for the shop to buy.

The Margin Pub: One of the most popular pubs in South Soffit, the Margin offers unexpected fare. It has a shockingly affordable selection of wine (on top of the usual beer and hard liquor) and attracts visitors from all over the city. The owner, Kailey Zhang (she/they), also runs a library of banned books out of the back of the bar.

Example Assignment

The owner of the Margin Pub lent out an ancient book from their secret library to a number of different patrons, who each ended up dead a few days after returning it. There is talk that the book is cursed, and a local Lighkeeper believes it may be linked to magickal inscriptions found within Oldfaire. Your circle must track down the latest person to check out the text and keep them alive while you uncover the mysterious forces behind the deaths.



Cortnye Queen Transaction: CRIT1014003

THE STEAM

This district is the first stop for the Halen West Railway out of the Bridleborne Mountains and into Newfaire. It's a small sector that started out as the city's freight yard. Increased reliance on ground transportation during the Last Great War caused the Primacy to invest in infrastructure. However, in peacetime, they've aimed their efforts at increasing tourism, making the Central Railway Station the jewel of the district.

Meanwhile, around-the-clock construction workers are placing the latest subway technology beneath the district, enabling citizens to traverse the city with ease. The subway is a hotbed issue at the podium and in the press, with naysayers concerned about the danger it poses to people and to the ruins of Oldfaire.

Points of Interest

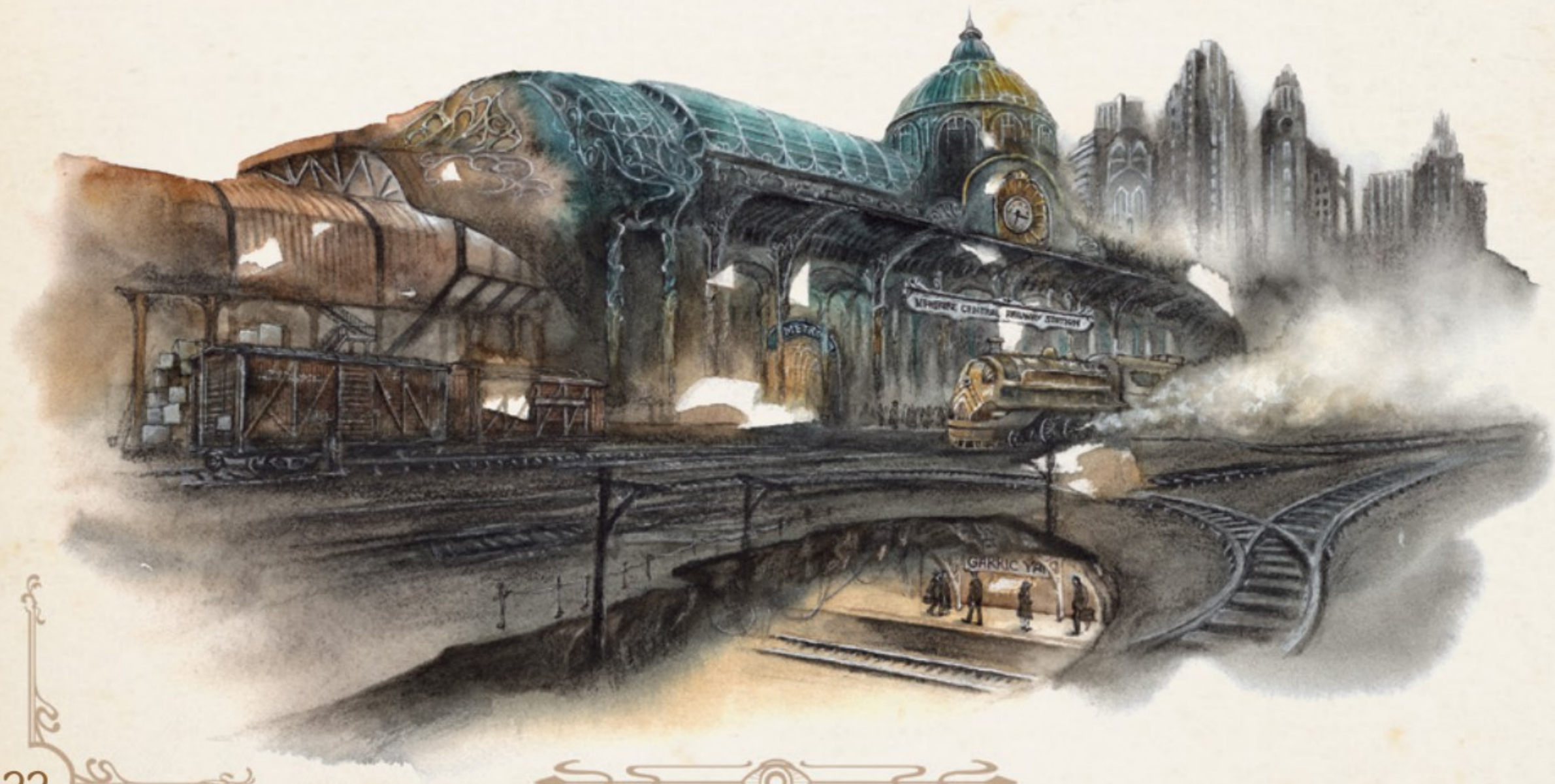
Newfaire Central Railway Station: The central hub for travelers and commuters. The interior ceiling of the station is painted with a map of the stars, but the discerning traveler will notice extra constellations that seem to form alchemical symbols.

Gattick Yard Subway Station: Groundbreaking took place almost immediately after the formal announcement of the end of the Last Great War. Though it currently only has lines to Silverslip and the Varnish, they're establishing a commuter train that runs to the Sidle. Construction workers tell stories of discovering tunnels that were not dug by the crew.

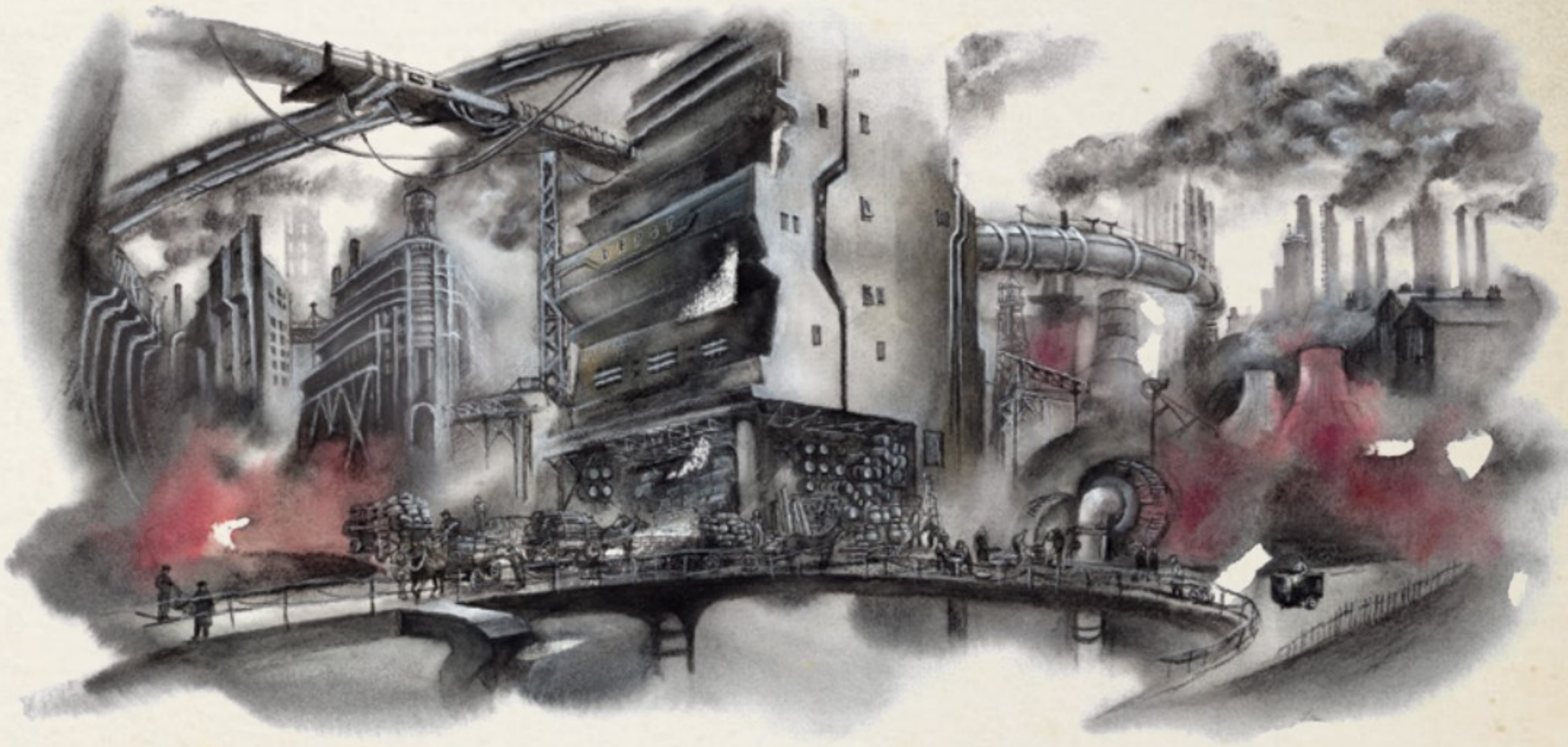
The Offices of the Halen Star: The only progressive paper with enough money and establishment support to feasibly compete with the Civil Tribune. Known for its wide array of international journalists, this publication is often at odds with the Periphery. The current managing editor, Zyair Adisa (they/them), is fast-moving, fast-talking, and wields a rapier wit. Mx. Adisa has an in with the OUP, making the Halen Star the most likely to report on magickal phenomena with any degree of truth.

Example Assignment

A bleed-infested train with nobody on board crashes into the Newfaire Central Railway Station. Investigators from the OUP describe the sounds of people talking, dining, and working on the train, but find no evidence of any riders. Your Lightkeeper calls your circle when it appears something supernatural might have caused the disappearance of the passengers and crew.



Cortnye Queen Transaction: CRIT1014003



THE STEEL

As Newfaire grapples with the new century of technological advancement, the city's borders have expanded with the addition of towering industrial buildings. Here, the greatest minds and strongest laborers are hard at work modernizing Newfaire. Stretching between the Stentorian River and the Steam, this massive district was especially vital during the war effort. Ever since the innovation of electricity, an incredible amount of wealth has been invested in the many factories that dominate the district.

During the day, the space is heavily populated with blue-collar workers. At night, the streets that twist around the factories are deserted by both citizens and Periphery officers, making it the perfect place for nefarious activity.

Points of Interest

The Depot: The Depot is Newfaire's southernmost stop on the Stentorian River, and is used to ferry goods and supplies into and out of the Steel. It is a labyrinth, with boxes and barrels of all kinds that form walls many stories high. The yard provides a privacy that would normally lend itself to all manner of criminal ventures—but it's locked up tight under the watchful eye of the Foreman (they/them) and their private patrols.

Scrimpney Market: The local market for industrial parts, strange inventions, and items that "fell off the cart," Scrimpney is a place for wheelers and dealers, con artists, and innovators on the cusp of grand invention. On the surface-level streets is an assemblage of stalls and stores, with workers and impoverished scientists living overhead in the intersecting metal framework the Steel is famous for. Though navigating the market is hazardous due to its industrial structure, the general atmosphere of the place is one of integrity and fairness—the people who live and work in this area protect their own.

Foundry Station: The railroad stop in the Steel where raw materials from the region come into Newfaire, and products are sent out. During the war, the city's factories created weapons that went immediately to the front lines of the Haven Hills and what is now Westwreck. Now, this acts as EONS's primary hub for importing and exporting inventions.

Example Assignment

Night-shift employees are telling stories of a glowing, humanoid creature stalking the Salazar Power Plant. Meanwhile, those who work in the morning find carcasses of dead animals, inexplicably tangled high up in the power lines. Your circle is brought in to investigate what this entity is and uncover why it's harming local livestock.

Cortnye Queen Transaction: CRIT1014003



THE VARNISH

The Varnish is the bustling downtown of Newfaire. Filled with towering Art Deco buildings and criss-crossed by the lines that power the city's trolley cars, this district has become a nighttime staple for the citizens of Newfaire with cash to burn. As the hub of restaurants, theaters, bars, and other social venues of the city, it serves as the cultural proving ground for anyone who wants to be in the limelight.

The westernmost part of the Varnish, on the banks of the Stentorian River, is built into Oldfaire ruins. Previously, the streets in this portion of the district ran at ground level, but the area sank, likely due to damage from bombings during the Last Great War. When people discovered that the cave-in was due to the shattering of a massive, Oldfairen roof, they simply rebuilt their homes and businesses within the ancient structure's bounds.

Points of Interest

The Meridian Theater: A movie theater that shows only the latest silent pictures. Moving picture stars from across Hale come to Newfaire to make opening night appearances at the Meridian, offering the Halen Star and Civil Tribune opportunities to capture exclusive interviews.

Revisionary: The award-winning restaurant founded by Rasa Petrova (she/her). During the height of the war, it closed down due to a lack of available imports. Since its grand reopening, the place is always filled with excellent food and laughter.

Seren Street Station: The primary cable car stop for downtown Newfaire. First opened in 1888, the city's trolley system is coming up on its twentieth anniversary. The Seren Street Station is one of the three major hubs of the railway, and is opulently decorated—both to attract tourists and glorify Newfaire's wealth.

Example Assignment

The Varnish's most exclusive nightclub, Larceny, is beset by whispers of violence in the night. Most recently, a bartender found the lower half of a well-known patron severed and bloody on the bathroom floor. Following this discovery, numerous terrified guests have come forward, describing figures in mirrors who seem to reach out and pull people through the glass. Your circle is contacted after a local Lightkeeper learns of possible EONS involvement.

Cortnye Queen Transaction: CRIT1014003

IL TRIBUNE

MIDSPRING 39, 1907

MACHINES REPLACING [illegible] WORKERS

Machines that look and act like humans have been spotted at the Galvanica Engineering Works factory by sources close to the Tribune. Is this a miracle of technology—or the world's worst nightmare?

Though these reports are, as yet, unverified, several independent anonymous sources have confirmed with this reporter that Galvanica Engineering Works is currently developing machines that can do the work of up to five humans at a time with their superior speed and strength.

It appears these automata's intended usage is for the battlefield, as replacement soldiers, with the potential to greatly lower the number of human casualties Hale and the Fairelands would experience in a time of war. Is this advancement coming at the perfect moment to combat Otherwhere's electrical advancements?

But that begs the question: How long until these metal monstrosities come for the rest of our jobs? How long until they are in our homes, cooking our meals? Raising our children?

What then?

For those fearing for their safety at the hands of Galvanica Engineering Works, fear not; turn to Page Twelve for the latest in our quicksilver tonics, designed specifically to protect against chromatic [illegible] with no adverse [illegible] ensationalist

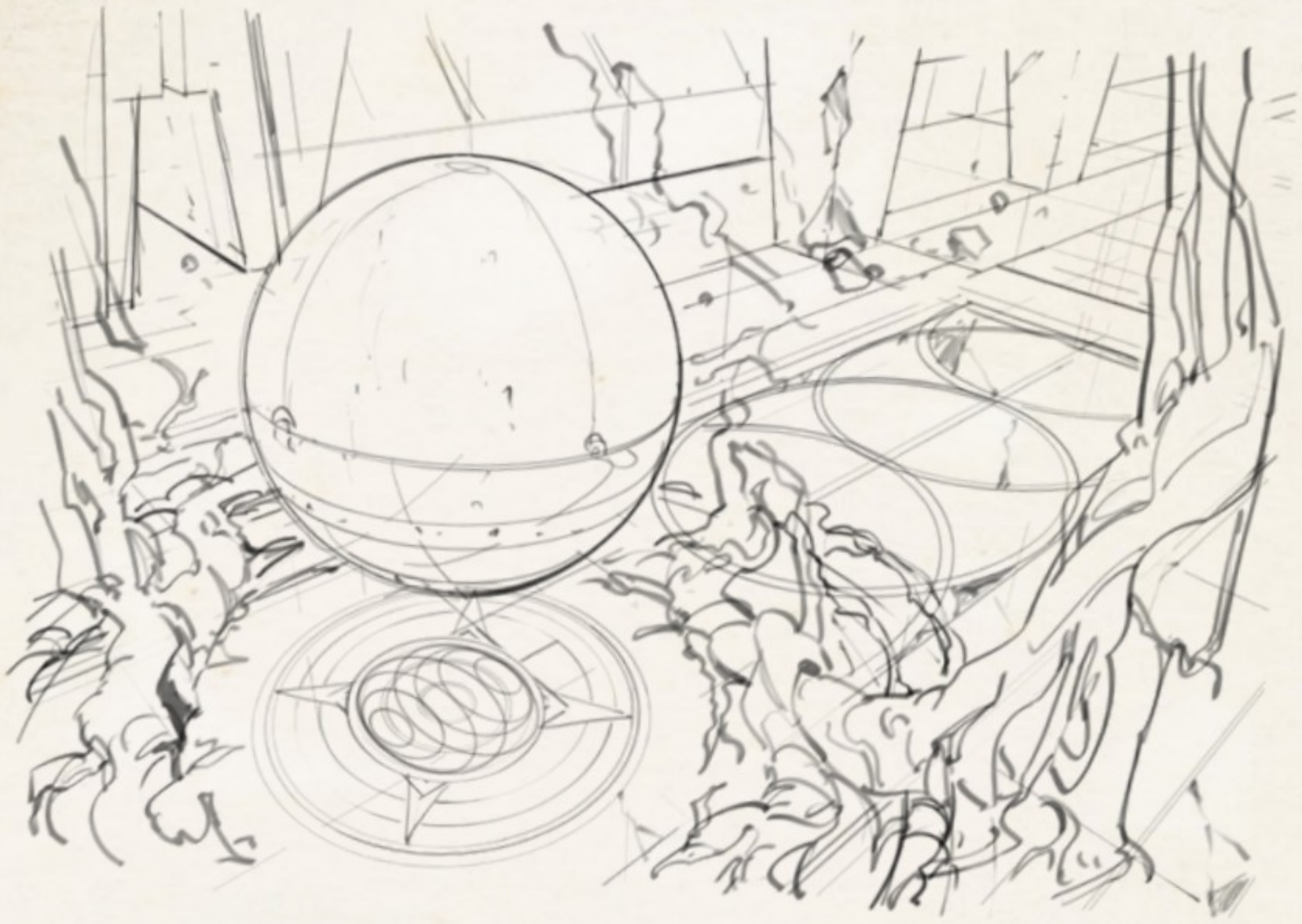
This has EOS's fingerprints all over it. I am both horrified and impressed.

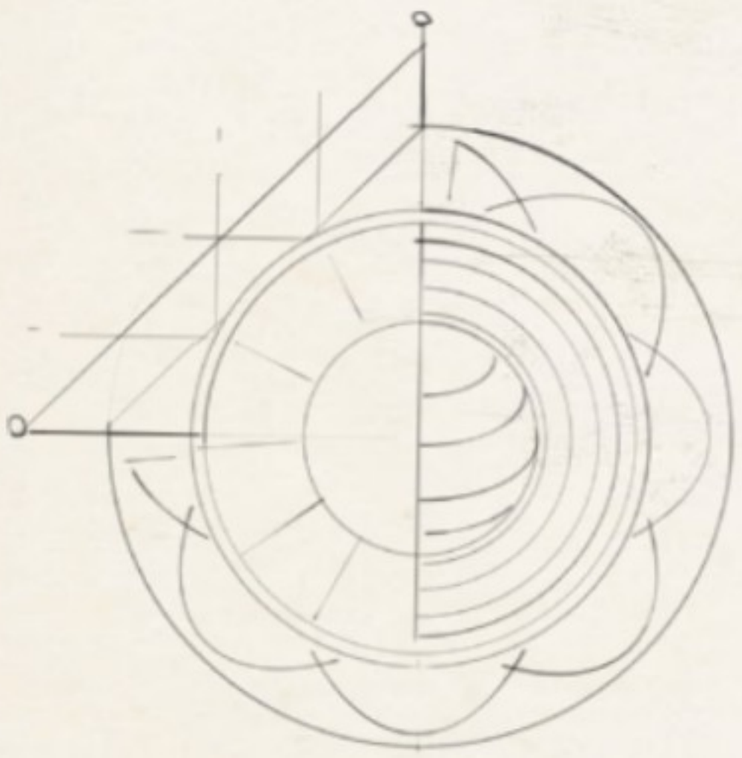
But to imagine, no more lives lost to war...

I shall inquire more at the exhibition this week.

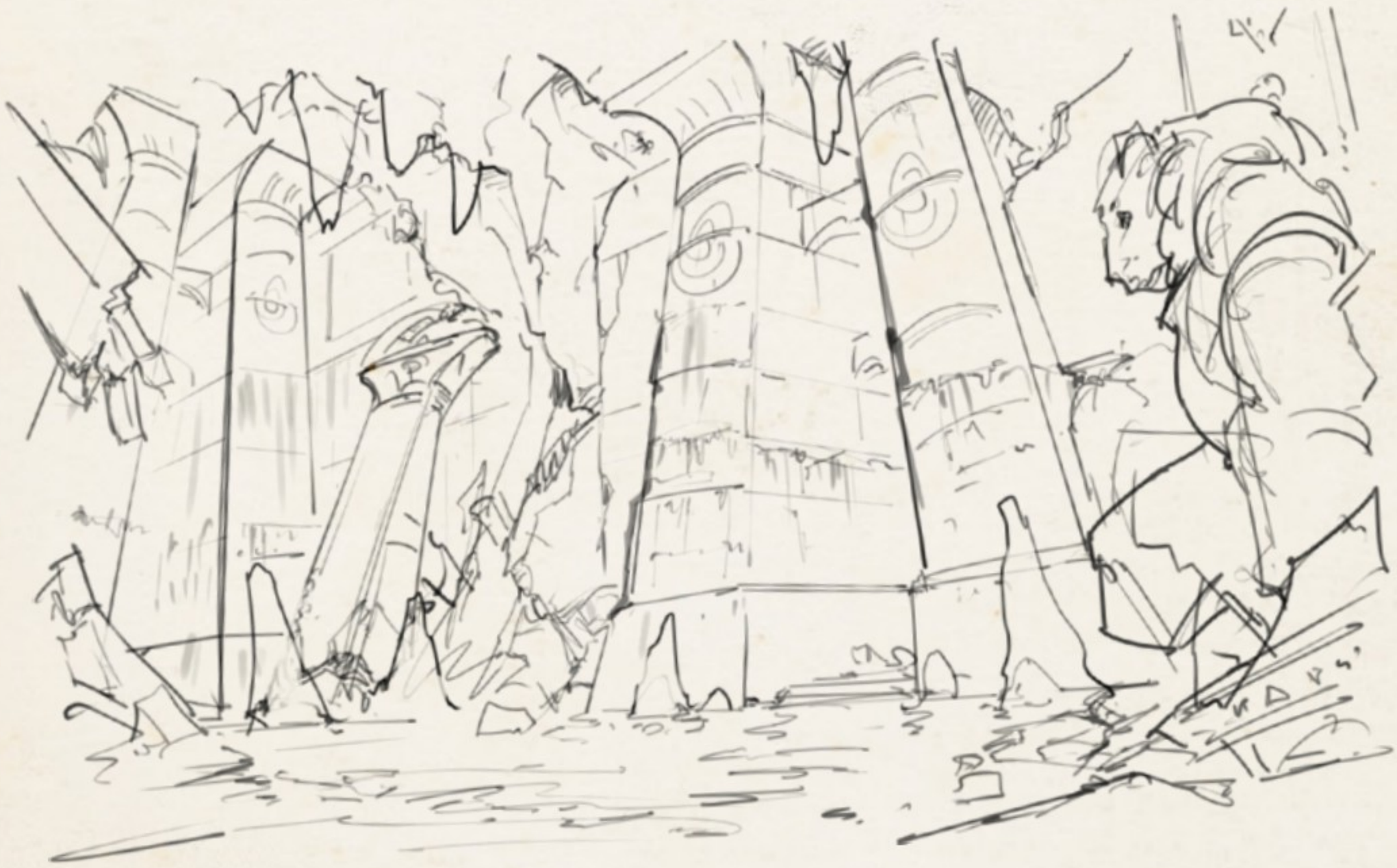


Cortnye Queen Transaction: CRIT1014003





Like many of my colleagues on the Council, I suspect Tomere was Unabridged. Gradual decline into violence and paranoia points to the corruption of Bleed. If so—perhaps she's still living? I shudder to think how she could have sustained herself. If so—where?



Cortnye Queen Transaction: CRIT1014003

OLDFAIRE SITES

Beneath the city of Newfaire lies the mysterious ruins of Oldfaire—a place that was once a thriving civilization, but suffered a catastrophic collapse about 2,000 years ago. Perfectly positioned within the safety of Hallowharbor and protected by the treacherous Bridleborne Mountains, Oldfaire operated with relative impunity in the ancient world. Led by an individual empress or emperor, as well as a council of powerful alchemists, the entire city attempted to harness magick in the way Newfaire now uses electricity.

At the center of the ancient city stands a central tower-vault, the Ziggurat, where the government of Oldfaire attempted to house and utilize magickal phenomena. But the alchemists were ill-equipped to manage bleed, and the citizens were affected by the horrors that come from prolonged exposure to the corruptive energy.

Halen lore suggests that human minds and bodies mutated and society collapsed. The once powerful city of stone fell when a local thinning was torn asunder. This cataclysmic event cleaved a rift into the sea, and from this seismic shift, a wall of water swept forth and first drowned, then buried Oldfaire, wiping its technology from the face of the world.

Today, beneath the modern metropolis of Newfaire, within the tombs of its predecessor, magickal monsters, alchemical discoveries, and bleed-corrupted Oldfairen citizens still lurk.

Within this book, there is no map of Oldfaire. We encourage you to place archeological sites beneath the districts and landmarks of the Fairelands in the way that best facilitates your circle's exploration—and through this, build your own map of Oldfaire together in play.

The Mythology of Empress Iomene

The Ancient Fairens, with their so-called alchemical council, were experts in wartime propaganda. Greatest among their feats was successfully convincing the entirety of the ancient world that their empire was governed by a woman who could not die and, instead, ruled for five generations, conquering the surrounding territories until the majority of the North came under Ancient Fairen rule.

Empress Iomene the First, referred to as Empress Iomene the Everlasting in most surviving records, was the first monarch descended from commoners. Little is known about her upbringing or her rise to power, as the majority of inscriptions depict a woman blessed by powerful magic. It is unknown if Empress Iomene took a spouse, but given the unbroken line of empresses, it is apparent that she did sire a daughter, also named Iomene.

The Ancient Fairens went to great efforts to support the mythology of Empress Iomene the Everlasting continuing to live long past the bounds of the human lifespan, and they accomplished this by passing down the name Iomene along with the title. After Iomene the Everlasting successfully fortified the city of Oldfaire and its surrounding territories, her daughter, the second Empress Iomene (the Lady of Light), continued her legacy by bringing prosperity to the people in the form of widespread agricultural advancement. Amidst a flourishing empire, the third Empress Iomene (the Bane of Empires) set out to conquer increasingly distant lands, effectively doubling the geographic size of the Ancient Fairen Empire in just a handful of years.

But the rule of the fourth Empress Iomene (the Unblinking) marks a turn in the Empire's depiction of their ruler. While the facade of a queen undying remained, it appears that both this Iomene and her successor (the Vengeful) were feared more than they were worshiped, due to their widespread warmongering and disregard for the lives of their citizens. During this time, the Empire suffered

Cortnye Queen Transaction: CRIT1014003



THE ANATITHENAI

Scholars believe that this site was built on the outskirts of Oldfaire to keep future residents of the land away. Ancient records suggest they constructed this monument just before the fall of the city, hoping to warn away anyone who came after them. Few who have entered the site have ever returned, and skeletons lie like breadcrumbs around the spiked mouth of the cave. The words over the entrance translate to "When one enters, all are cursed."

Features

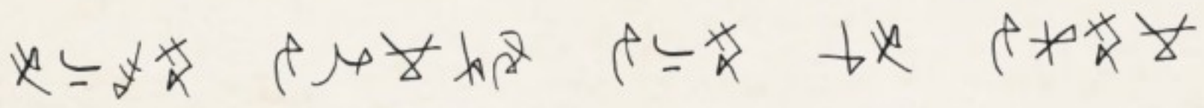
Outer Rings: The entrance to the cave of the Anatithenai is blocked by massive black spikes carved from stone. This gives the structure the appearance of an open-mouthed monster. Inside the cave, there is a large, domed space filled with a miniature reproduction of the city of Oldfaire, carved in a similar fashion, covered in writing that describes the horrible magickal incidents that plagued the portion of the city they represent.

Inner Veil: Past the black model city, deeper into the caves, numerous traps and dangers keep people from continuing into the vault. Throughout the passage are walls that release arrows, pressure plates that seal doors, portions of floor that have fallen into a swift underground river, and all manner of deadly hindrances.

Deathbed: Deep inside the Anatithenai lies a black sarcophagus carved from a single stone. No one has been able to move or open it (though many have tried), and there doesn't appear to be a lid. Some historians believe this is the final resting place of Empress Iomene. Others cite recently uncovered ancient texts that describe her body going missing, with no funeral rites performed.

Example Phenomenon

Sylph's Fire: Within a room of the Anatithenai is a large glass vase. It rests uncorked and fills the air with a gaseous fire that burns anything it touches. Those who encounter it suffer violent chemical burns, and the only way to stop its spread is to close the vase. The glass is painted with a line that reads: "Your Flesh for my Fire." Some suspect the thick smoke is sentient.



Cortnye Queen Transaction: CRIT1014003

DIG SITE #347

In 1872, amateur archeologist Henry Fleishman (he/him) privately funded an expedition to Oldfaire to excavate an area that has yet to be fully cataloged. This operation included over 50 scientists, historians, and laborers who either died or vanished at the site. To this day, the site remains largely undisturbed, with both equipment and bodies left behind. The dig site is denoted by signs and roped-off areas from the original team's excavations.

Features

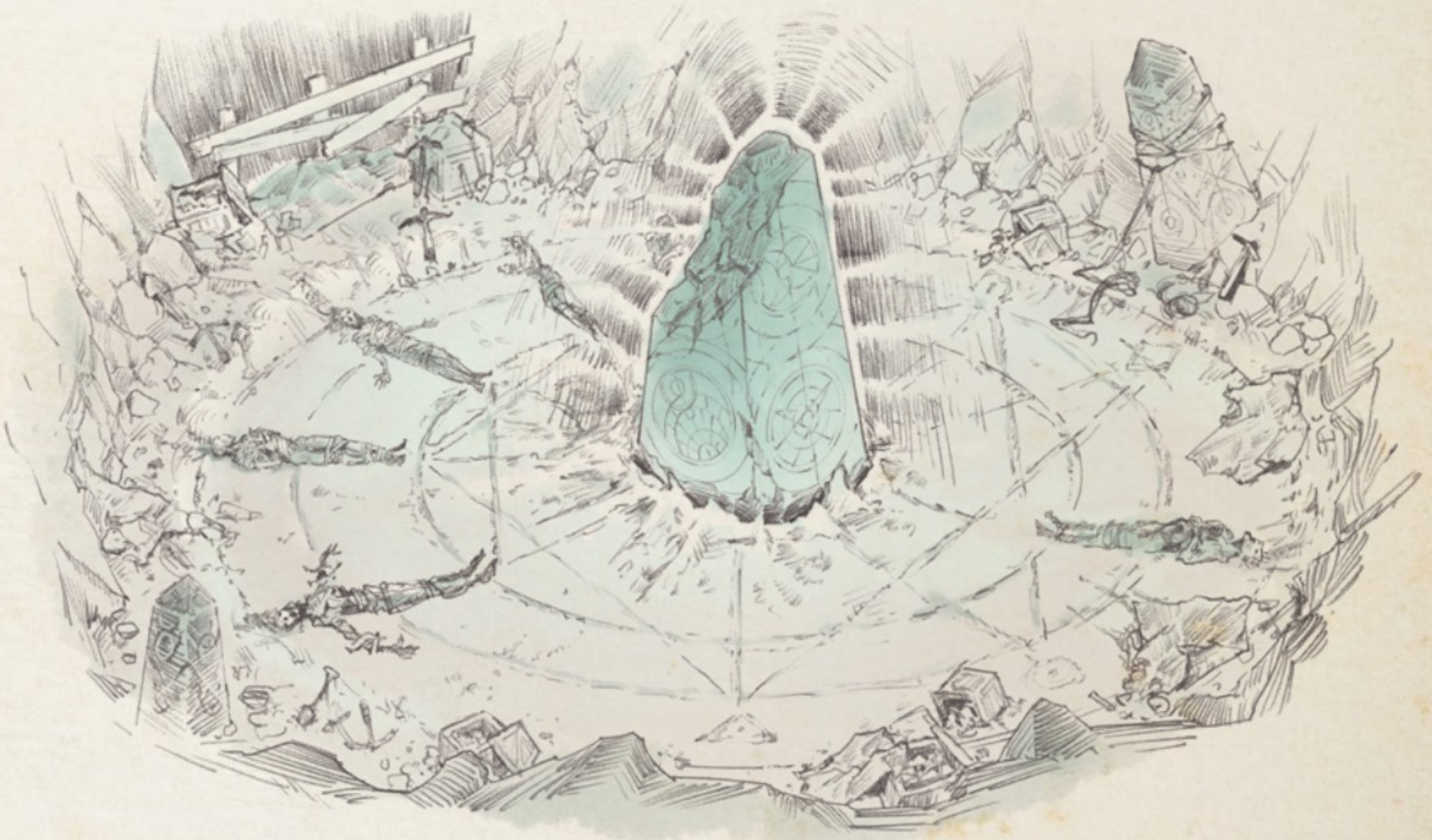
Remnants: No members of the original team hired to dig at this location are known to have survived. Most of their bodies remain at the site, bound with rope in a shape that suggests some sort of ritual was performed. The bodies were visibly exsanguinated, and each skeleton's jaw was snapped open while they were still alive.

Pulsing Heart: At the center of the dig site stands a massive stone that thrums with a steady pulse. Those who go near the heart have been reported to violently claw the skin from their faces, going so far as to pluck their eyes from their skulls, digging their fingers deep into their sockets until death.

Tablets of the Undying: Boxes of ancient tablets were uncovered during the initial dig, which depict grotesque creatures in vivid detail. The boxes also contain notes written in Ancient Fairen. No explorer has succeeded in recovering these archeological finds from Oldfaire, and there are numerous human remains nearby.

Example Phenomenon

The Radiance: At the same time each day, a bright flash from an unknown source blinds those who are caught unprepared. Many enthralled by this glow have wandered off and never return, but those few who have survived claim to have seen the faces of loved ones they've lost.



Cortnye Queen Transaction: CRIT1014003

Day 1: Tracking the Iomenes' (Iomene's?) journeys through Oldfaire begins today! Of course, the circle is starting with the Endless Descent, and we're hoping to map it further than anyone has to date. It's enormous, all of it, dimensions surpassing any structure I've ever heard of, let alone seen. It gives me a pounding headache to even consider the amount of time and labor it took to craft a staircase like this. They must have possessed technological advancements beyond even our own, but that seems impossible. What does that say about Oldfaire? Or about us?

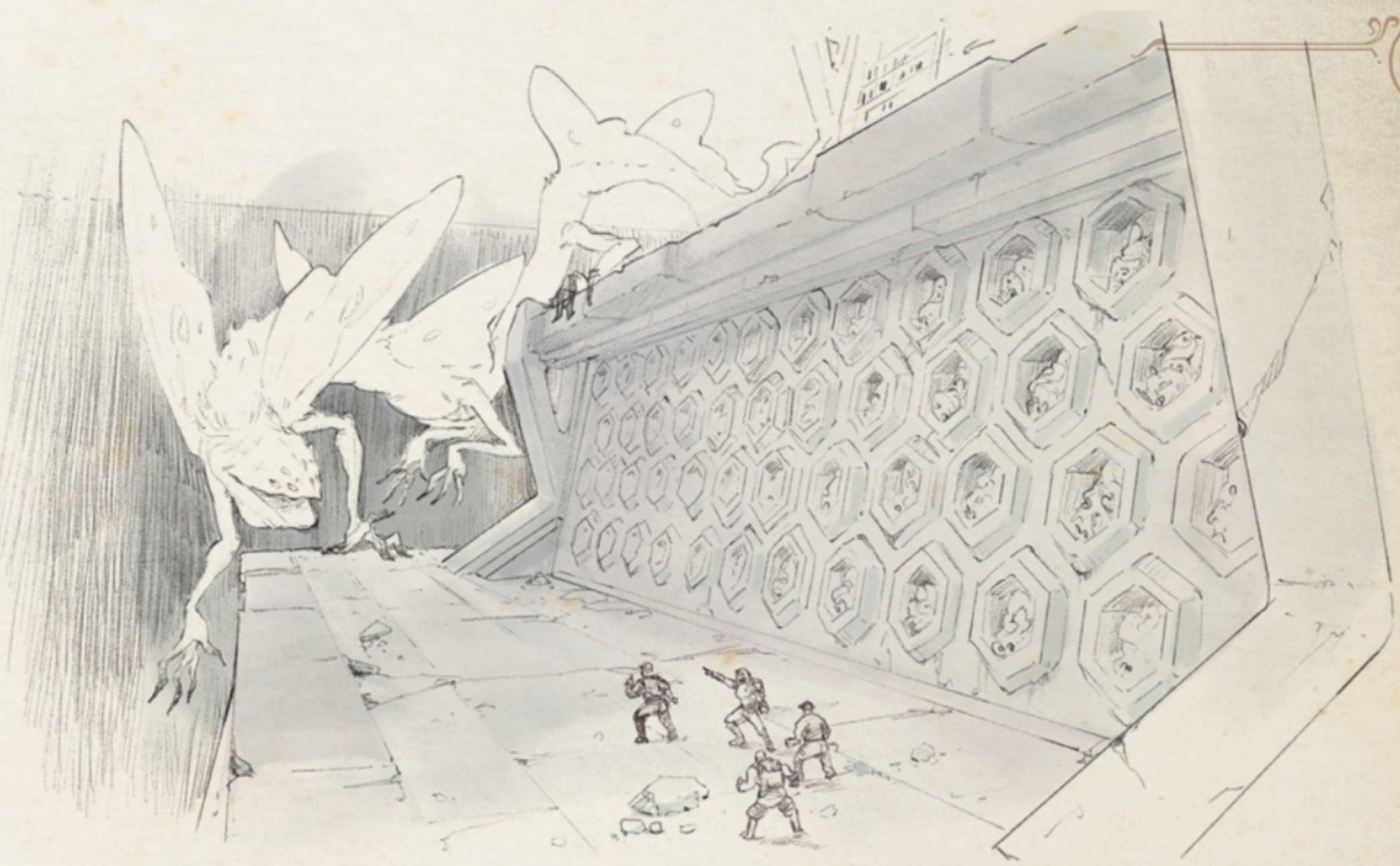
Day 4: Maybe this expedition was a mistake.

Day 6: We're hearing scuttering sounds at night, but I think it might just be the darkness playing tricks on us. We're not sleeping much, which certainly doesn't help. Ruthie says she saw a creature that appeared to be a bulbous amalgam of hundreds of human bodies. She described countless human arms and legs operating as independent limbs that carried the beast scurrying over the walls above us. The faces were mangled, yet the mouths still snapped hungrily, the dull human teeth clicking in the night. But, she had also been on watch for six straight hours [illegible] my utomost to reassure her [illegible]



I'm staunchly committed to documenting my process as Lightkeeper, but I must also keep my thoughts on our "find" close to the vest for now; thus, my notes on the subject will be ciphered moving forward. It's not that I think Candela Obscura would object to my further research into the subject, it's simply that I think they might, in a panic, annihilate the phenomena before attempting to commune with it—at the expense of us all. I'm doing what's best for Hale, even if they don't yet understand.

[illegible]



THE ENDLESS DESCENT

A massive, ornate staircase that descends into blackness. It is located at the end of a brick square surrounded by a series of arches, and seems to have some political or religious significance. The stone at the top of the staircase is heavily damaged, but becomes more pristine the further down one travels. Each individual stair is 72 feet wide by 108 feet long and 24 feet high, making any attempt at descent exceedingly treacherous. No explorer has yet made it to the bottom of this structure, and many have disappeared in the attempt. It is currently mapped to 118 stairs down.

Features

Sixth Step: Also called the Hive, the vertical wall of this stair is patterned like the honeycombs of bees. Those who look closely inside each hexagon can see miniature buildings that aren't in the classic Oldfairen style. No one is certain what lives in each dwelling, though various parties attempting to make the descent complained about hearing voices in the night while camping on the sixth step.

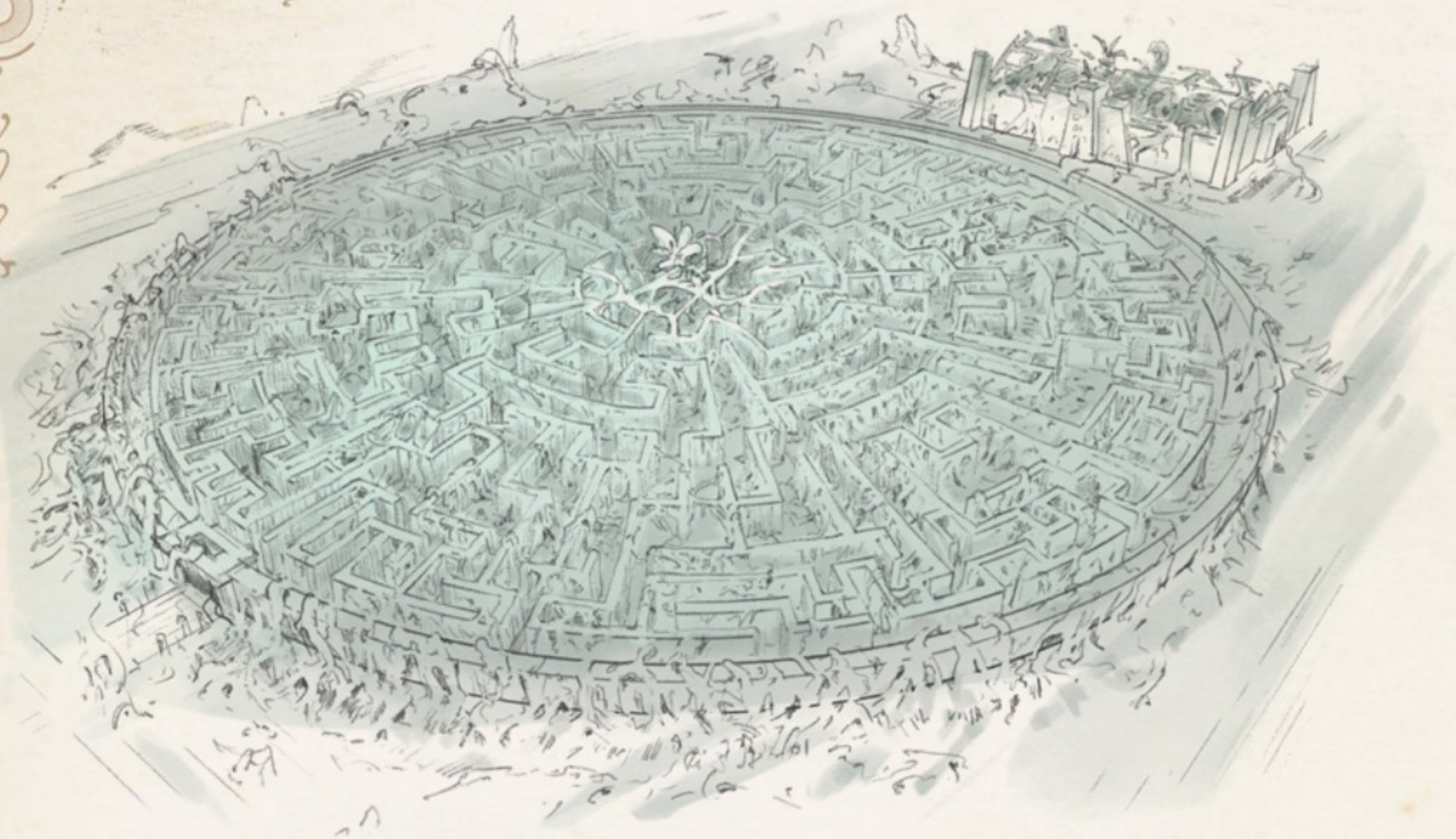
Thirty-Sixth Step: On this stair lie the remnants of a large archeological encampment. The front of each tent is still tied shut, though each bears slash marks through the sides. Items such as lanterns, coats, and food are strewn about, but there are no bodies here. On close inspection, a set of six bullets are embedded in the stone wall of the previous stair, and it appears that the intended target was at least double the height of a person.

Seventy-Second Step: This step is sometimes referred to as the First Landing. It's six times larger than any other mapped stair, and was originally thought to be the bottom of the staircase. Growing as healthily as if they were underneath the summer sun, an entire forest flourishes within the bounds of step 72. Those who enter seem to be in a moonlit portion of the Scarlet Wood.

Example Phenomenon

Sklireel: Seemingly a blend of a moth and an eel, these large creatures hang from the cave ceiling over the Endless Descent and pick off anyone who tries to venture down. Though they glide quietly, their cries are said to shatter the soul. Because they have no teeth, these beasts rip their victims apart with their hands, and are known to store the viscera in their gullet until they're hungry.

Cortnye Queen Transaction: CRIT1014003



THE GARDEN OF THE GODS

A garden conceived both horizontally and vertically, with plants that thrive with a veracity that defies biologists' understanding of flora. Flower blooms know no season, vines cling where none should grow, and the lack of sunlight seems not to affect this area's opulence. Some believe that the plants here might contribute to modern medicine, but they are resistant to harvest. Those who have tried to secure cuttings of the greenery from the garden have been killed and consumed—roots are tangled around the remains of their corpses even today.

Features

Lilyspire Labyrinth: A tall maze within the southern portion of the gardens, the majority of which remains perfectly intact. Explorer Mariam Takashi (she/her) is credited with first mapping the labyrinth, but her work is no longer accurate. Some believe she lied to keep the center of the maze a secret—claiming there is hidden treasure—but Candela Obscura believes the terrain has shifted because the maze changes layout on its own.

Alchemist's Greenhouse: Along the western edge of the garden lies the smashed remains of a greenhouse. Scholars were dumbstruck to discover this building—a simple structure of clay bricks that once had a roof of transparent mica panes to trap heat within. Now, the mica lies in shattered pieces along the floor, but large sections of alchemical writings remain on the ruined walls. Around the exterior is a moat filled with ash, suggesting fires were used to maintain a specific heat within the space.

Promenade of Teeth: A walkway that ambles throughout the garden, this path is composed of thousands upon thousands of human teeth. Some historians suggest these are the teeth of those buried with the rictus rite. At the end of the promenade is a unique and gruesome display: skeletal arms spring from the ground, each desiccated hand holding a bouquet of flowers growing out from the palm as if in offering.

Example Phenomenon

The Walking Wilts: Humanoids formed from living plants, these creatures wander the garden, trying to find a way out to the world above. They seem most interested in replicating human movement, and will attack by pushing their way underneath a person's skin to take control of their body. Some ancient texts refer to these creatures as the embodiments of gods walking on the earth.

Cortnye Queen Transaction: CRIT1014003

THE HOLLOW BODIES

Massive sculptures of humanoid forms are stationed in groups, like battalions, along the borders of the city. Each has a different creature's face, and they blend the characteristics of many animals. These towering stone beings stand at the ready within the caverns of Oldfaire, shockingly intact after the city's fall. While most mundane archeologists claim that these statues were intended for use in worship or designed to terrify enemies, many Lightkeepers postulate that alchemists used them as vessels to house magickal beings that defended Oldfaire.

Features

Golden Colossus: The largest among these figures is known as the Golden Colossus. It bears the body of a man and a face that appears to be a mix of a snake's eyes and the mouth of a mountain cat with massive teeth.

Six Sentinels: These six standing figures are smaller and leaner than the rest. They are almost pristine, with very specific signs of wear around their joints. They do not hold weapons, though their hands and feet look as if they may be articulated. Archeologists can't uncover the technique Oldfaire sculptors used to connect the stones that form their joints.

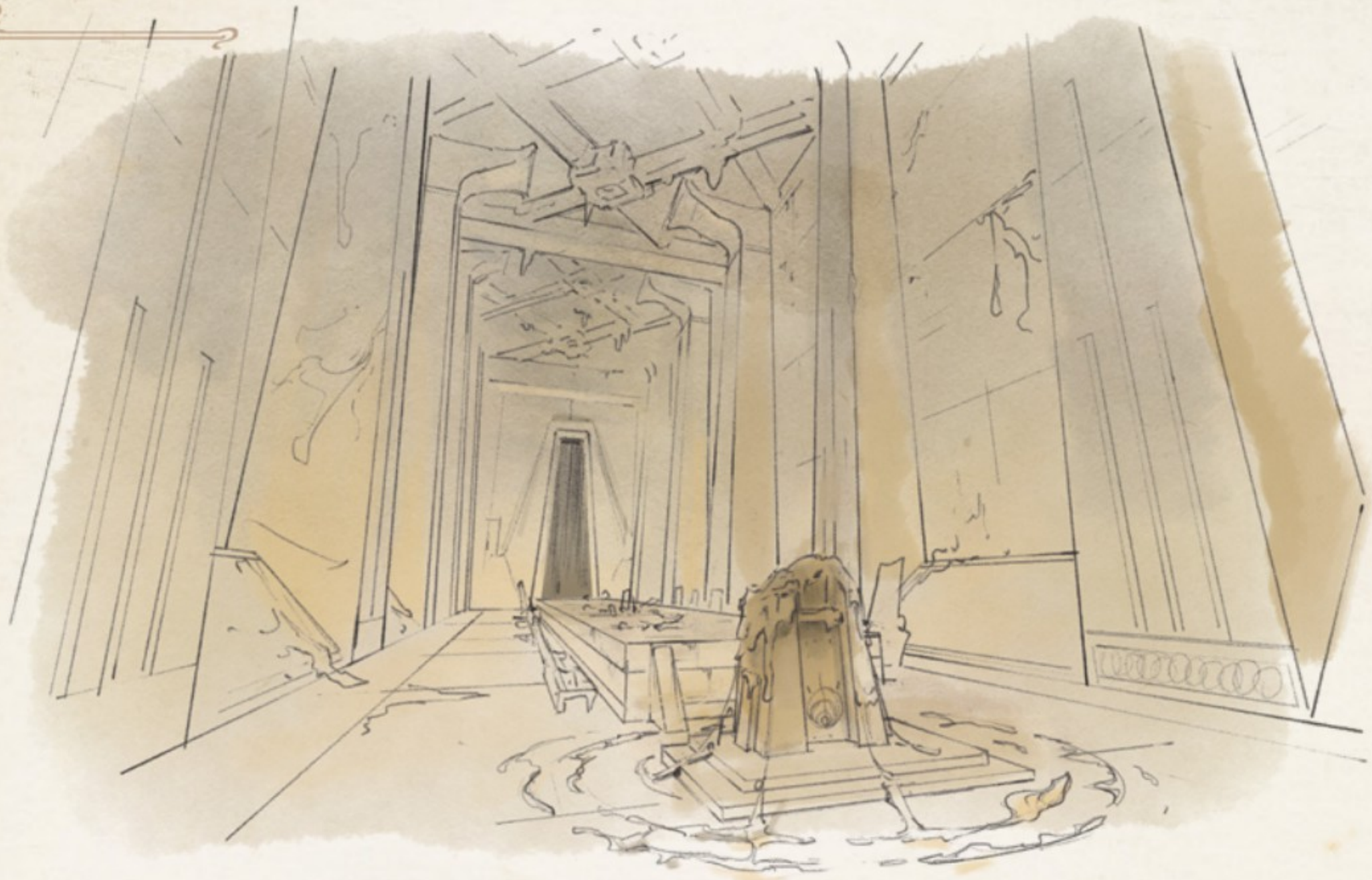
Carved Sheaths: In the remains of the city's stone wall are a number of empty spaces, each the size and shape of the Hollow Bodies, suggesting more figures once filled Oldfaire. No one has uncovered additional statues, but numerous carvings from the period depict the figures.

Example Phenomenon

Krakidon: One of the Hollow Bodies resembles the long-fabled mythical creature known as "the dreaded Krakidon." Said to lure prey during the early morning hours, this massive beast has a wide comb down its back, and a terrible shriek so loud it can wake the dead. Modern stories of this beast are most common in Tottergrass, the Bridleborne Mountains, and the Haven Hills, where people spin tales to keep children from getting out of bed too early in the morning. Ancient writings describe the Krakidon fighting the enemies of Oldfaire alongside the Hollow Bodies.



Cortnye Queen Transaction: CRIT1014003



THE HOUSE OF GOLD

The interior of this palatial building—every wall, floor, and ceiling—is enshrouded in a paper-thin layer of gold. Some Lightkeepers believe that an ancient alchemist was using the gold as a barrier to contain the bleed caused by their magickal experiments, and numerous writings discovered around the city corroborate this theory. Others believe a wealthy (and perhaps rightly superstitious) civilian used the gold to protect the interior of their home as the magickal corruption in the city increased.

Features

Room of Delicacies: The main dining room of the home, this space is still set for a large dinner party. Due to the presence of hawthorn berry cakes, honey wine, and an athame with blood residue, some historians speculate that this meal was set to honor a death in which the body was unable to receive classic funeral rites.

Locked Storeroom: A small pantry off the kitchen shows evidence that a person was once trapped inside. Amidst a mess of shattered pottery, thousands of tally marks ring the lower third of the walls, stopping near a jagged hole that appears as though someone—or something—tried to dig their way out.

Lucent Courtyard: The private courtyard in the center of the home. Explorers have uncovered polished brass plates within the rubble of the space, and it is thought that servants would use the reflective surfaces to aim additional light at sunbathers. There are scorch marks along many portions of the walls and floor, suggesting that these polished plates had another, more violent, purpose.

Example Phenomenon

Golden Ring of Senitarus: A magickal artifact found between the floorboards in the Room of Delicacies, with the preserved finger of a man still contained within. In Ancient Fairen, the inscription on the inside of the ring reads: "May any who do not bear the name of Senitarus live in poor health lest they return this ring to the House of the Houndsman." Any who wear the ring feel invigorated and confident, but within a few hours, their skin slowly deteriorates and the blood vessels all over their body begin to burst.

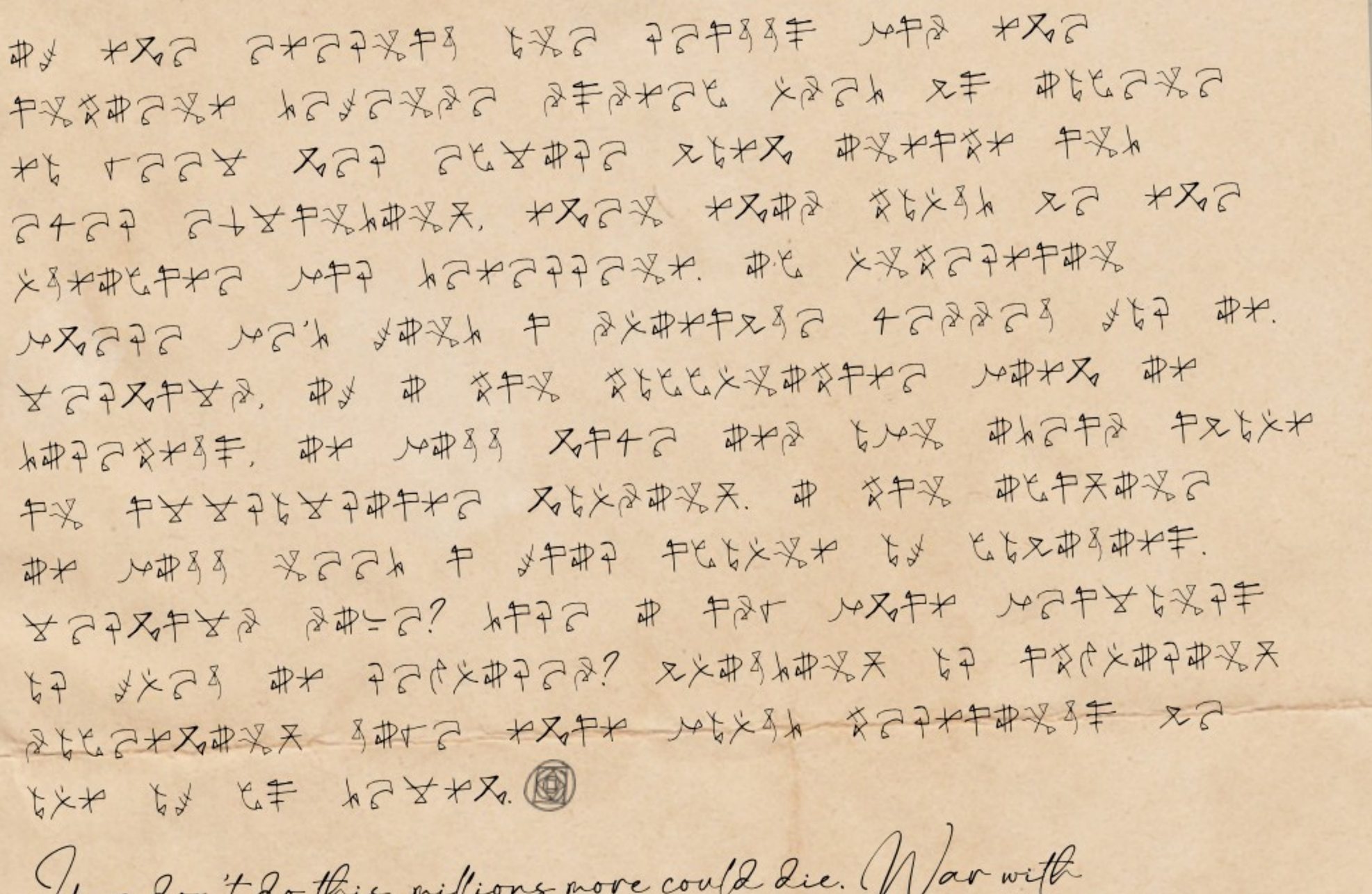
Cortnye Queen Transaction: CRIT1014003

Well, any undamaged shoes I had left have gone by the wayside, but we're all doing our best.

Today we made it to the House of Gold in what I thought at first was just an empty cavern! It's like time has completely stood still here—which sounds beautiful, but let me tell you: it's eerie. We "found" (had to break into) a room that turned out to be an alchemist's lab. Much of it had been destroyed; there were shards of glass vials and burnt papers strewn about the room—it looked to me like someone may have done it on purpose before the fall of the city.



My suspicions were proven right when we found the skeleton, knife still buried between their ribs, and a shred of paper crumpled in their grasp. I collected it for further examination, and look forward to translating the text later this evening. From the short examination I did of the note before placing it in a bleed containment vial (just in case)



If we don't do this, millions more could die. War with Otherwhere will come, and those deaths will be on Candela Obscura's hands. If we willingly choose not to act, I don't know if I can live with that.

Cortnye Queen Transaction: CRIT1014003

Candela Obscura refuses to grant me access to the Unbroken Band that would protect me if I ventured into Oldfaire. With the injuries I've sustained, I'm too fragile without it. And they would never, ever agree even to hearing out

Morgan is different. He lost so much in the war, he knows what it costs—and the lives we could save. We may have to do the rest of this on our own.

will never

The cracking sounds they're making are nearly scarier

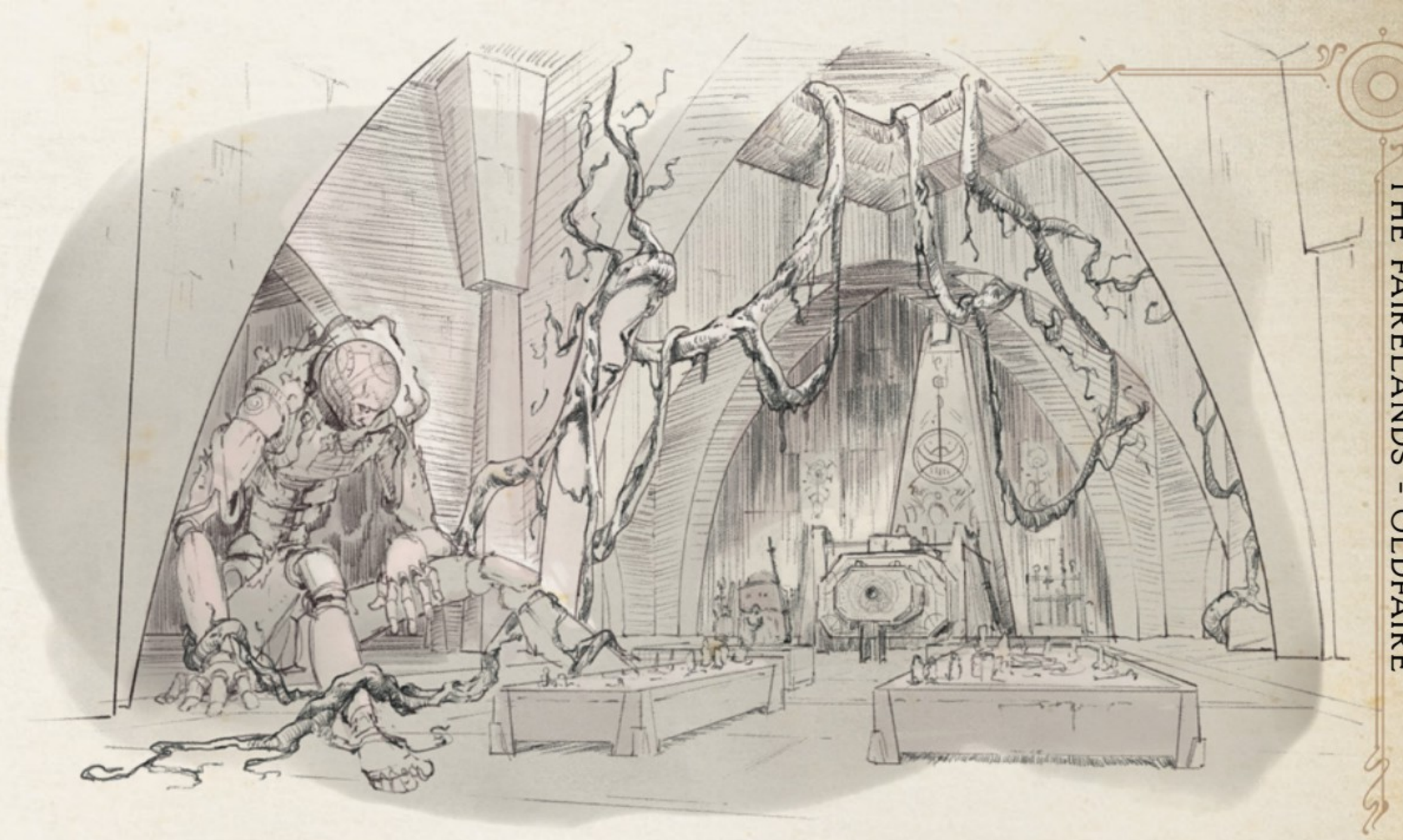
continue to hear in the dark. Terrell is still certain we're being watched, and I can't bring myself to attempt to calm him anymore.



I think we're being watched, too.

The House itself was obviously one of the most interesting buildings I've ever ventured into, but it was upon exiting the House that we saw them—four automata that seemed to be made of tarnished bronze. As we approached, we were stunned to discover that the creatures were made jointed, to move. And they certainly did—toward us. Despite their poor condition, their rusted blades glinted ominously in the flickering light of our lanterns and we were forced to flee to a more protected area. But they're not what's been watching us. I can't seem to get a clear look at whoever, or whatever, is stalking our expedition. I'm beginning to think there's something more to its pursuit than animal hunger.

Cortnye Queen Transaction: CRIT1014003



THE HOUSE OF IOMENE

This site is the personal home of Empress Iomene. Though she ruled from the palace for the five generations of her reign, it's widely believed that she chose to secretly reside in this house at various points throughout her lifetime. Rather simple in juxtaposition to the palace, this space contains a wealth of personal writings and artifacts. Among these discoveries, there is evidence to suggest that the Empress was using her own body for magickal experimentation—most notably the metal branding implements in the shape of alchemical symbols found near the laboratory forge.

Features

Bedchambers: A standard-sized bedchamber for wealthy Oldfaire citizens, the space is fairly small compared to the bedchambers the Empress would have enjoyed at the palace. Additionally, there are no connected servants' quarters for either of the two maids that would have typically accompanied the monarch. There is a portion of the floor that appears newer than the surrounding stone. Archeologist Kim Jae-Hoon (he/him) believes that, if the floor is excavated, they will find an underground passage leading to the Palace of the Watcher.

Nursery: Off the primary bedchambers, there is a room with all of the trappings Oldfairen citizens utilized to care for babies and young children. The presence of this nursery supports the accepted belief that each Empress Iomene was a daughter of the previous, as no one woman could rule for five generations. However, writing in the Tome of Lumos describes ancient members of Candela Obscura working to prove that she was, in fact, Unabridged.

Laboratory: A large open room within the center of the home, this space is located where many wealthy Oldfairen estates would have a central courtyard, implying that it was adapted after the building's original construction. The laboratory features a wealth of artifacts, most notably a collection of yellow glass vessels that contain a high amount of lead content in their manufacture. Alchemists may have attempted to use leaded glass to contain bleed.

Example Phenomenon

Automaton Guards: Primarily composed of bronze, these four automata guard the House of Iomene. Explorers who have encountered them can't account for the way they move, but they are fast despite their deteriorating state. The figures are equipped with corroding blades, pinned joints, and heads that allow them to see in all directions.

Cortnye Queen Transaction: CRIT1014003

THE NASCENT SPRINGS

A grand and expansive bathhouse deep within Oldfaire. The structure is well preserved, save for the portions of its roof destroyed in the fall of the city. Despite virulent plants creeping into the springs from all angles, the waters themselves remain shockingly clear. There are horrific stories of excavators working nearby digs that drink from the pools and return to their crew, exhibiting superhuman strength and ravenous for human flesh.

Features

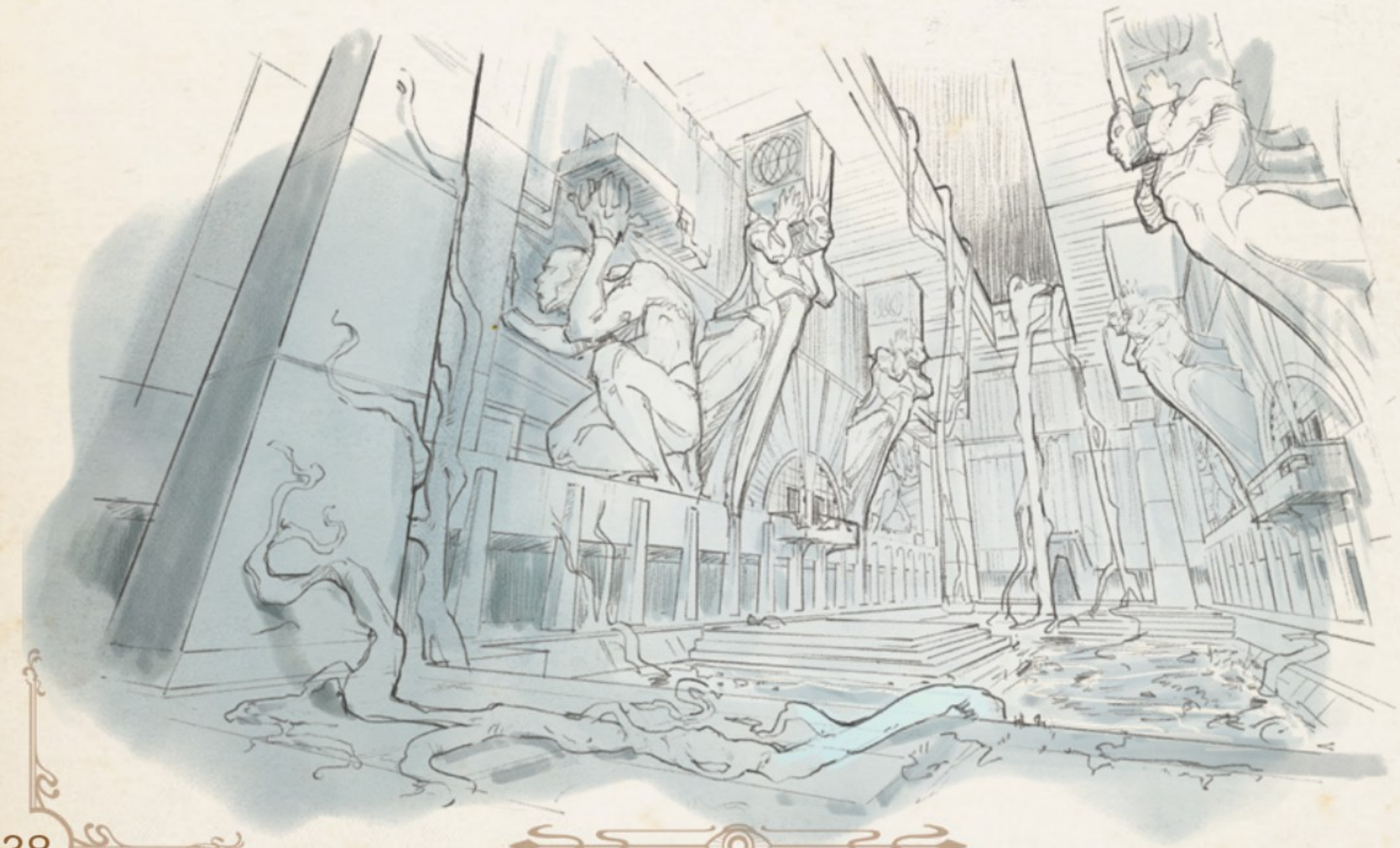
Unveiled Waters: One of the pools in the springs extends out from beneath the building's roof to a vanishing edge that looks out over the city. In Oldfaire, citizens of all social classes would visit the bathhouse, but to bathe out on the terrace during the heat of the day was considered the height of luxury—anyone who could enjoy the afternoon sun was wealthy enough to have others doing the day's labor while they relaxed.

Boiling Pools: The hottest of the pools in the springs, with channels that lead to pipes in other areas of the city. Though archeologists have not fully mapped the plumbing of Oldfaire, it's clear that these pipes lead to the palace and the homes of other wealthy members of the Oldfairen social elite. Some of these pipes and the corresponding sewers are large enough for a human, or beast, to move through.

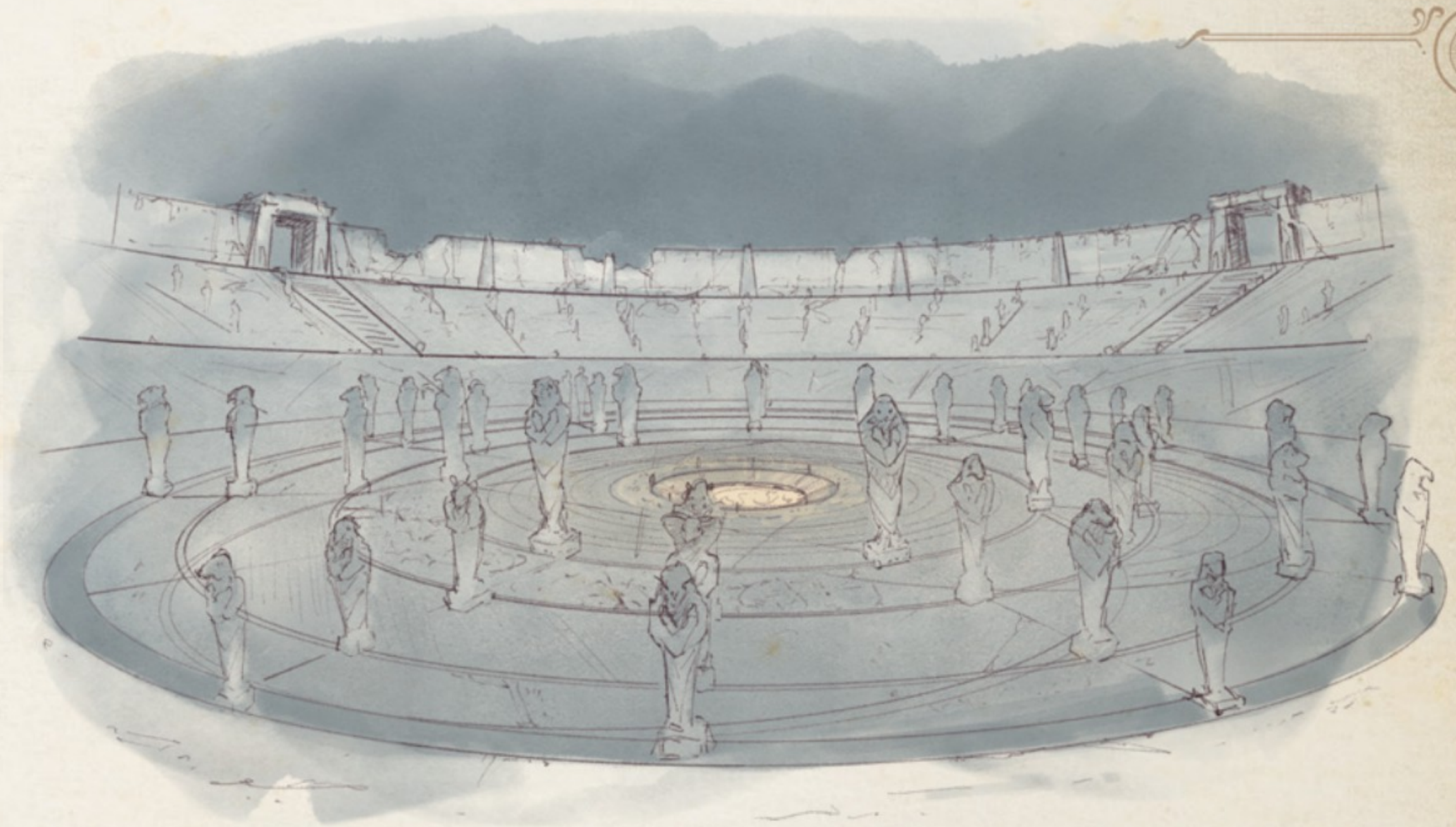
Shattered Terrace: The second floor of the bathhouse has an extravagant terrace that runs the length of the central bathing room and leads out onto a balcony. Some think this was an area for people of importance to gather in the Nascent Springs. Though much of the bathhouse's interior is well preserved, the terrace itself has not fared as well, with large chunks of it now sunken into the waters below. Scholars speculate that the damage came from some kind of targeted explosion within the building before the fall of the city.

Example Phenomenon

The Water Dragon: It's rumored that a great beast lies dormant beneath the springs, heating the water that flows into the chambers above. Records suggest that alchemists were convinced they could awaken the dragon to help save the city during the fall of Oldfaire.



Cortnye Queen Transaction: CRIT1014003



THE NEKROPOLIS

A meticulously crafted grave site. This enclosed park is laid out in concentric rings of humanoid statues. They all face out to the arches that border the cemetery and feature a variety of misshapen and animalistic characteristics. Upon excavation, archeologists discovered human remains buried under each sculpture, the bones standing upright and seeming to resemble the figure crafted above. Each corpse wears a toothed shackle around its neck that is connected, via thick chains, to large weights that rest below the bodies.

Features

Forge: A massive vat of gold at the center of the rings of the Nekropolis. The metal remained molten through the centuries due to its position over a hot spring. Archeologists believe the city's primary cemetery was built around a geothermal vent because it was common for the preparation of bodies to include pouring molten gold over the lower half of a corpse's face to complete the breath-binding.

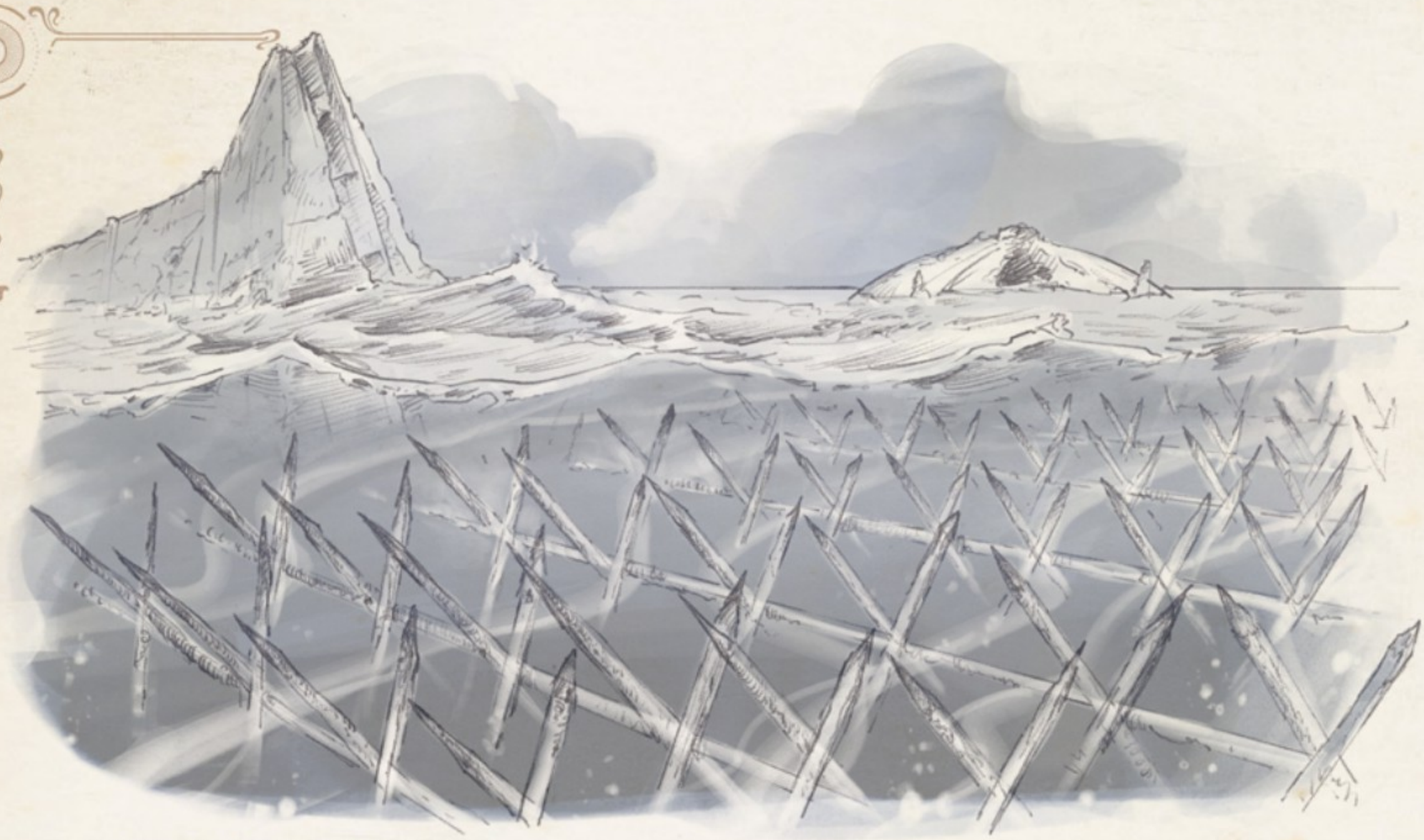
Guardian of the Last Dream: In the western corner of the cemetery, there is a massive statue watching over the dead. It has a human body and the face of an owl. There are many stories from explorers that describe its head turning in all directions to follow the path of anyone who enters the burial grounds. Underneath the stone figure of the site are hundreds of bones piled atop one another.

Wanderers: Now uncovered, a pane of yellow, leaded glass is embedded in the dirt. This is the lid of a massive box that contains dozens of bodies. Inside, each skeleton wears a bronze contraption used in the rictus rite. This holds the jaw open, beyond the point of cracking bone. The bodies are piled, revealing that people tried to crawl over one another toward the glass to escape.

Example Phenomenon

Shadow Hounds: The Nekropolis is patrolled by a pack of black hounds that look like no beast known to the world above. They appear to have risen from the ground in various states of decay, with eyes that burn with a golden fire and claws that are so long and sharp they could cut stone.

Cortnye Queen Transaction: CRIT1014003



OCEAN'S END

In the Glass Sea, just outside Hallowharbor, lie the sunken remains of the wall that defined the port of Oldfaire. This wall fell during the creation of the Vastchasm, but portions remain, especially beneath the surface. Of all the sites in the ancient city, this is one of the most regularly explored. It is not uncommon to find a ship, paid for by Briarbank College with its renowned archeological department, hosting bell dives for students and historians from around the world.

Features

Iron Seagate: The original gate that controlled the flow of ships into and out of Oldfaire. Ancient architects sank massive iron stakes into thick cement, leaving the sharpened ends just beneath the wave's surface. Though a ship's entrance into the harbor seemed unimpeded, captains needed special instruction to know where to pass safely between the deadly barbs. Today, many of these stakes still stand, and larger vessels must be careful to avoid them.

Solarium: Just outside Oldfaire's harbor wall is a massive domed structure that once operated as a military outpost. When the Empress wanted to meet with foreign dignitaries without inviting them into the city, she would host summits in the Solarium. Though the sanctuary sank beneath the sea during the fall of Oldfaire, its low entrances and high ceiling created a pocket of air protecting the space inside. Those who dive deep enough can swim in to discover war rooms, training facilities, barracks, and a score of undamaged ballistae.

Oldport: During the time of Oldfaire, the coast of Hale extended further out into the sea, and the city's bounds extended to the edge of that coast. When the city flooded, its harbor sank, and became what is now a wild wreckage of docks and ships. Preserved in the brine, the bodies and masts of these ancient ships still pose danger to those who sail into Newfaire, and it's not uncommon for new wrecks to sink into the depths of Oldport.

Example Phenomenon

Seasilks: Making their home within the shipwrecks of Oldport, these terrifying sea creatures resemble humans, but only in the most generous sense. They have wide frills around humanoid faces, complete with massive, flat eyes and gaping mouths of needle teeth. Seasilks' incredibly long arms and wicked claws will snare unsuspecting sailors—they drown their prey, then store the bodies to consume slowly.

Cortnye Queen Transaction: CRIT1014003

THE PALACE OF THE WATCHER

The seat of the Empress, and briefly the Emperor, within Oldfaire. The palace is designed as a political office, as well as the living quarters for the ruling monarch, their esteemed guests, and staff. Carved into the stone of the eastern palace wall are thousands of unblinking eyes of various sizes, which some archeologists speculate correspond with the positions of planetary bodies. Candela Obscura believes these eyes were infused with magick and used to warn the Empress of invasion from the east. Evidence suggests that Emperor Calinus had much of the art of Iomene that adorned the palace destroyed after he took the throne.

Features

War Room: A council room within the western wing of the palace. This space has a sunken floor that was once painted. Archeologists are attempting to use available remnants of pigment to decipher the image, but most historians believe it depicted the region and was used to plan attacks against enemy nations and invaders.

Hidden Wing: This hall runs underneath the throne room and central wing of the palace. Though much of the underground space is destroyed, explorers have discovered secret spy holes into areas commonly used to receive foreign dignitaries. Empress Iomene was said to have the power to read minds, and some archeologists believe it was through the use of this hidden portion of the palace that she was able to gather secret information.

Office of the Ossuary: In this room, rows upon rows of human skulls are arranged in neat stacks. The air is thick with the scent of death and decay, and the silence is only punctuated by the occasional whisper of an entity that seems to haunt the space. The few brave souls who dare to enter this macabre chamber are said to experience strange visions and eerie sensations that linger long after they leave.

Example Phenomenon

The Whispering Sentinels: A papyrus uncovered in the palace library describes the steps an alchemist must take to "awaken the eyes of the watcher." This will transform the carved eyes on the exterior of the palace into the real thing. The myriad of mouths that line the inner halls will then whisper the stories of what the eyes see in the land to the east. Once awakened, the eyes weep tears of blood, granting the eastern wall its red hue.



Cortnye Queen Transaction: CRIT1014003

One of my favorite finds so far has been a small storefront with the phrase "Fine Fabrics" etched above the door. Inside, there were ancient cloths draped from rope lines, and the walls were covered with intricate carvings of asphodel flowers! I've found them in so many places down here, though there is no evidence of the flowers being native to the region at this time. Forever more mysteries!



Nothing in the shop was moth-eaten the way you would expect—nor did any nearby location exhibit signs of age. I wonder what protection magick they implemented to preserve these portions of Oldfaire... and if bleed from such an effort is affecting us, even as we speak. And how does each site still have fresh archeological finds after all these years? I can't understand how this might be true, over two millennia later.

It's incredible imagining what life would have been like here all those years ago. This place in particular reminds me how much the people of Oldfaire were just like us. Footprints still in the dirt, coins glittering in the fountain, tools left [illegible] the houses here, it feels as if this place [illegible]
It still [illegible]

Ezra,

How are you holding up? I haven't heard from you in weeks, and figured it was about time I invited myself over for dinner.

The rest of the Council is concerned for you, I will admit, and I've heard whispers that Malik has been asking about the current focus of your work. That's never a good sign.

You must show up to the Council meeting next week, unless you want more of us pestering you—I can only hold them off for so long. I know the anniversary of her passing is just around the corner, but please do not withdraw from those of us who love you so dearly.

Are you getting enough sleep?

xx,

Alexandra

Cortnye Queen Transaction: CRIT1014003



UNSCATHED ALLEY

Perhaps diminutively named, this portion of Oldfaire is actually about six blocks in size and is perfectly preserved underground. No one knows why it remains entirely undamaged even to this day. It is a site of incredible interest to both Candela Obscura and the archeologists of the Fairelands because entering its bounds feels like stepping into history. The fabrics hung in doorways are as fresh as the day they were spun, the stone does not exhibit age, and it seems as if a living person might come around the corner at any moment. At various times, mysterious sounds are heard coming from this site, and no one has ever been able to bring artifacts from the Unscathed Alley up to the surface without them crumbling to dust.

Features

Twelve Fountain Square: At the far end of this portion of Oldfaire is a square, likely used as a marketplace. In the center stands a fountain carved with 12 severe human faces, each with water spouting from their open mouths. This fountain is fed by gravity and still runs clean though the city has fallen beneath the earth. The plaza has an odd similarity to the Calinus Market in Groundswell.

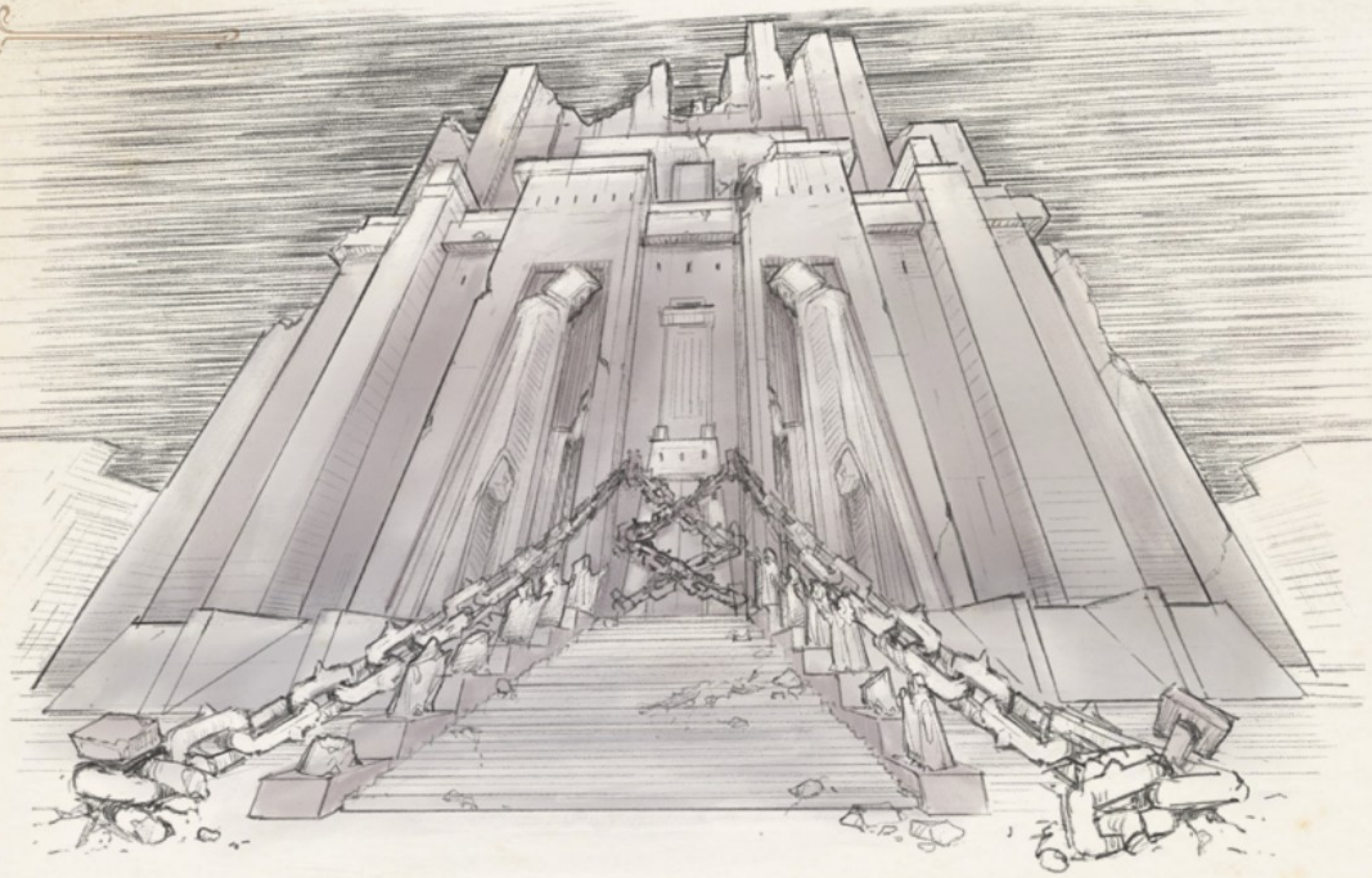
Foul House: A butcher shop within the Unscathed Alley that emits the iron scent of freshly prepared meats. When archeologists attempt to remove food from the bounds of the alley, it immediately putrefies into rot.

Apothecarium: A haunting and eerie sight, with shattered glass bottles and dried herbs scattered across the floor. The shelves are empty and the walls are crumbling, but the strong scent of herbs still lingers in the air, hinting at the long-lost secrets of the apothecary's trade. No one knows why this shop, unlike those surrounding it, shows signs of ruin, but its destruction may have occurred before the fall of Oldfaire. Asphodel flowers are carved into the wall, but no one knows why.

Example Phenomenon

The Wraiths: These residents of Oldfaire don't know they died thousands of years ago. They go about their business in the Unscathed Alley, purchasing items for their homes and meeting with their neighbors, caught in a perpetual loop. When disturbed, they become incredibly violent, attempting to enter the bodies of the living through their mouth and nose.

Cortnye Queen Transaction: CRIT1014003



ZIGGURAT

The Ziggurat is the central tower of Oldfaire—the foundation beneath the construction suggests a different structure once stood where alchemists built this vault. The Oldfairens used this fortress to contain the phenomena and bleed that ran rampant throughout the city, and the wider empire, due to their misuse of magick. Relief carvings show that it once towered over every building in Oldfaire, but only a portion of the structure remains. The entrance to the Ziggurat is guarded by looming carvings of robed figures, and the locked doors are chained shut.

Features

Cellblock: Within the Ziggurat are multiple corridors of cells. One in particular, located below ground, contains numerous layers of cages with the bars bent outward—as if a large creature ripped their way out.

Atlas Athenaeum: A library within the central tower that once contained hundreds of arcane scrolls. The majority of these scrolls were destroyed (there is evidence of a large fire), but a few small portions of text survived. While Candela Obscura made an effort to salvage some information, much remains to be learned within the Athenaeum. Explorers who made it to this library report an otherworldly, all-encompassing silence within its halls.

Bleeding Altar: Behind the locked doors of the Ziggurat is a large receiving room that resembles a throne room or place of worship. There is a central altar at the far end of the room, carved with symbols. Candela Obscura has found that it radiates an incredible amount of bleed.

Example Phenomenon

Akrisis: Prowling the top of the crumbling Ziggurat and watching for intruders below, the Akrisis is part human, part owl, part mountain cat. It slinks down the tower with careful precision, and will waste no time in dispatching anyone who attempts to enter the locked citadel. There is much dissent among Lightkeepers, as some believe this beast is actually a vessel, either animal or stone, that preserves the soul of Empress Iomene after death.

Cortnye Queen Transaction: CRIT1014003

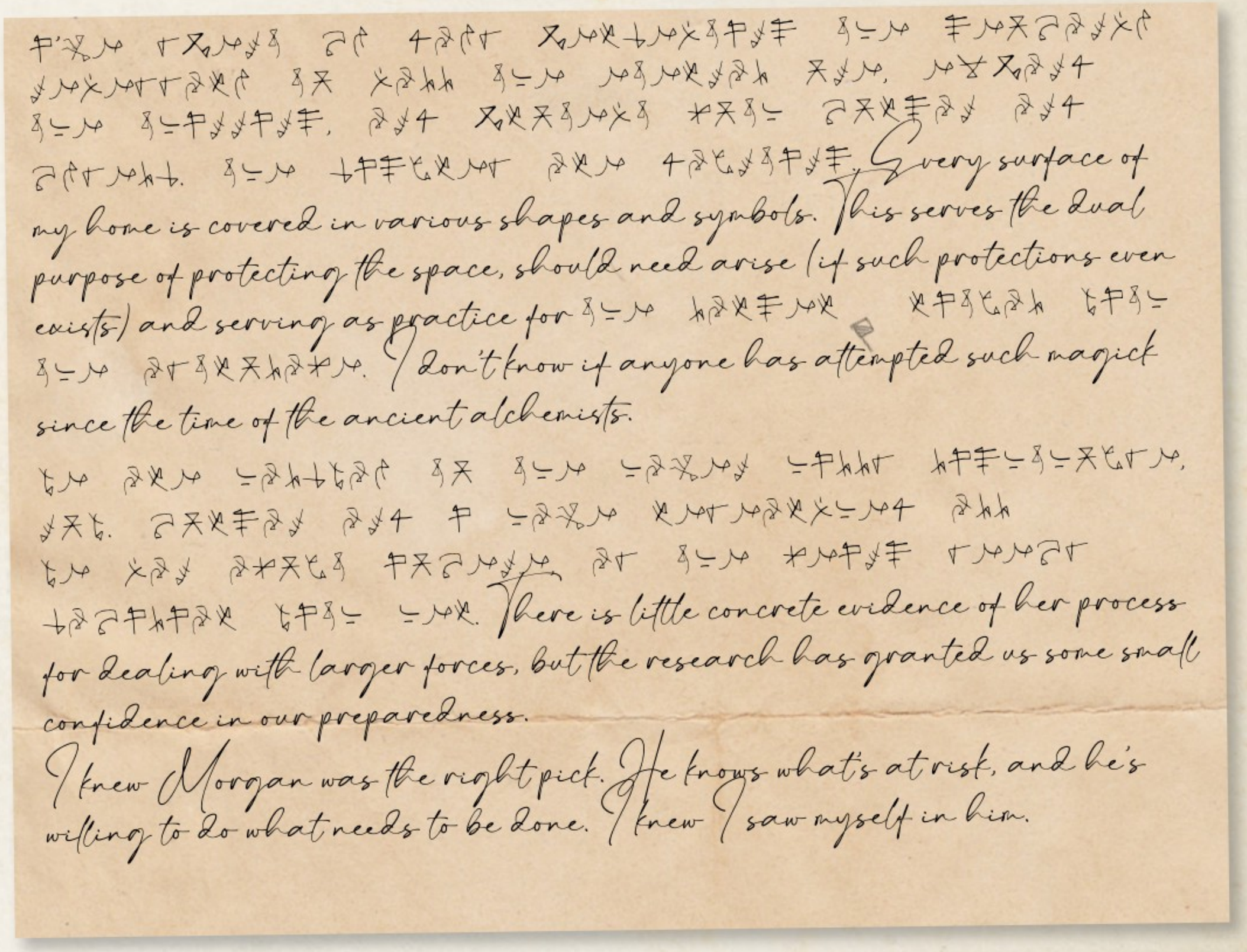
FAIRELANDS LANDMARKS

Outside the metropolis of Newfaire, the Fairelands valley is incredibly varied in its geography and climate. From jagged mountains to vast farms, war-torn hills to misty sandbanks, no corner of this region is the same as the next. Though there are roads east to the Scarlet Wood, south toward Tottergrass, and west toward the Verge, outside the confines of the city, these routes are less frequently maintained and are traversed most often by older automobiles and horse-drawn carriages. Long-distance travel is also available by railway and, in special instances, by airship.

Making broad generalizations about the valley as a whole is exceedingly difficult. While citizens of Tottergrass are known for their devotion to the Ascendancy, residents of the Bridleborne Mountains are more likely to shun the church's influence. While most workers in the Haven Hills spend their years in dark coal mines, the villagers of Seasway grow up fishing the cold waters of the Glass Sea. It is this diversity that makes the Fairelands valley a particularly difficult place to govern, but a profoundly vibrant place to call home.

As Candela Obscura lighthouses are more common outside the bounds of the city, the folklore surrounding them is more widely known among the population. The mythology established to keep people away from thinnings has evolved over the centuries, nestled within the bedtime stories and songs of the Fairelands, to create a strong fear of the illuminated towers that pepper the Fairelands. While citizens of Newfaire would likely interpret this as foolish superstition, the people of the wider valley approach the lighthouses practically: venturing near these towers invites trouble. Because of this, Candela Obscura circles may be met with a variety of responses to their investigations.

The following pages highlight the variety of locales found in the Fairelands and provide insights into the unique aspects of each.



Cortnye Queen Transaction: CRIT1014003



THE BRIDLEBORNE MOUNTAINS

East of Newfaire lies a towering mountain range famous for its powerful cohort of redrunners. Though scarlet is illegal, those who live within the mountains control one of the region's most popular exports, making this dangerous job incredibly lucrative. Here, citizens are vehemently anti-Periphery due to their enforcement of the scarlet prohibition. They are also an incredibly insular community that spurns the influence of the Ascendancy. A popular practice among the people in Bridleborne is to hang bottles from the trees, which is said to be a way to capture spirits. Whether this is true is up for debate, even among those in Bridleborne, but it certainly serves as a brilliant way of flaunting how many bottles of scarlet one has gotten past the Periphery officers.

Points of Interest

The Dead Route: Within the twisting mountains of Bridleborne is one stretch of road that is particularly precarious for redrunners. Periphery officers create choke points to capture or kill speeding drivers smuggling scarlet. At night, drivers will turn off their engines and coast down the road in an effort to sneak by dozing guards.

Bridge's Peak: The highest point of the Bridleborne range is considered the most treacherous summit in Hale. This peak exhibits deadly whiteouts, ice storms, and crumbling crevasses. Explorers have been known to wander off the mountain's edge following mysterious blue lights others cannot see.

Oleson Air Station: Representing incredible technological advancement, this research outpost functions as both a way to study the ecology of the mountains and a testing ground for air travel. Many airship pilots in the Fairelands aspire to study and work with the outpost team. As the station hangs on the sharp edge of a cliff, newcomers are sent out on the gangway on their first day to "lose their lunch before dinner."

Example Assignment

A new dirigible is sent out for its first official run, but the team at Oleson Air Station loses communication with the crew soon after departure. With no help from those inside, the station pulls the airship back to safety, but otherworldly sounds and horrific screams can be heard coming from within. Candela Obscura sends your circle to unlock the doors and discover what happened to the crew.

Cortnye Queen Transaction: CRIT1014003

THE GLASS SEA

The sea off the northern coast of Hale, this vast body of water is known for its cold and stormy waters, as well as ice floes that block off the wider ocean and complicate navigation in the winter months. The most notable feature, known as the Vastchasm, is a fissure in the Glass Sea, created during the fall of Oldfaire, that separates Hale from Otherwhere across the water. Water now pours over all sides in a perpetual, deadly cascade. The terrifying currents around the chasm destroy ships, and it takes a particularly skilled captain to navigate a vessel around the fissure's edge.

Points of Interest

Vastchasm Lighthouse: At the bottom of the Vastchasam, where the ocean floor is covered in shipwrecks from all centuries, a tall lighthouse stands, still illuminated. Those who are desperate to cling to mundane logic will attribute its illumination to the light of the moon reflecting off the waterfalls surrounding it, but Candela Obscura keeps this tower perpetually staffed. Like all lighthouses in the region, there is a considerable amount of lore linking this to supernatural happenings, and sailors regularly return from the Glass Sea with haunted tales.

Serenity: A small island off the coast of the Fairelands. The land is barely big enough to support the people or humble infrastructure of the one small village that exists there. As wealth increases in Newfaire and people have started to travel post-war, the people of Serenity are struggling to support the resources consumed by frivolous tourists looking to relax on the grassy coast.

Obsidian Caves: Underwater caves of black obsidian that were once used by alchemists in Oldfaire to test experiments. Within the caves, records are carved in stone that describe these magickal practitioners coming to the caverns in secret and leaving their discoveries unguarded, with only the terrifying mythology of the black stone walls to keep people away. These caverns were flooded when the ocean rushed in during the fall of Oldfaire, but industrious bell divers can still access them.

Example Assignment

A ship delivering an ancient artifact from a distant chapter of Candela Obscura was set to arrive in Hallowharbor. After its mysterious disappearance off the coast of Newfaire, your circle is sent to figure out what happened and recover the artifact yourselves. Your Lightkeeper has reason to believe the ship was pulled into the Vastchasm.



Cortnye Queen Transaction: CRIT1014003

THE HAVEN HILLS

Communities within this rocky land are famous for the freedom fighters that fought in the Last Great War when Otherwhere came up the Verge and through this western mountain range in their invasion. After the war, many resistance fighters received civilian medals for their bravery, but despite this honor, the area still experiences the devastation of the war to this day. Locals have transformed the tunnels and military outposts used to fight invading soldiers into tools for their daily lives. They commute through the underground passages, host markets in old military outposts, and scratch a living out through grueling coal mining and railroad construction. It's difficult to navigate without a map or experienced guide, and travelers are told to be wary of the smugglers in this area, who are known to be clever and ruthless.

Points of Interest

Tunnels of the Forgotten: Much of the freedom fighting that kept the forces of Otherwhere from immediately capturing Newfaire during their invasion took place within the Haven Hills. Locals used the trees and streams to launch attacks, and also built a vast network of underground tunnels, most of which still exist. This transformed the Haven Hills into a web of routes now used to smuggle goods from Newfaire to the western coast. Recently, archeologists discovered ancient cave paintings in one of these tunnels depicting monstrous creatures unlike anything seen in the world today.

Soldier's Sanctuary: Formerly an outpost for the Halen Armed Forces, this fortress has evolved into a market for many of the goods and services that pass between Newfaire and the western sea. There was demand for the illegal papers used by war refugees during the Last Great War, and people from outside Hale who were unable to travel across the war-torn landscape of Westwreck ended up settling in the Haven Hills.

The Recoil: There is a place in the Haven Hills, high among the craggy peaks, where no sound enters or leaves. One could stand in the center of this rocky clearing and scream until their voice was hoarse, but no person or animal would hear. "If a tree falls in the forest and no one is there to hear, does it make a sound?" Not in the Haven Hills.

Example Assignment

When a Halen soldier, radiating bleed and still believing the war is on, wanders out of the Recoil with no recollection of the past three years, your circle is called in to figure out what happened to them.



Cortnye Queen Transaction: CRIT10014003



THE SCARLET WOOD

The Scarlet Wood is known, as its name implies, for the massive red-leaved trees that populate this sprawling forest at the base of the Bridleborne Mountains. These trees, *arctobetula rubrifolia*, are known for their knots, which look like human eyes and produce a rich, red, hallucinogenic sap. The sap that comes from these trees is commonly collected and used to make outlawed liquors, resins, and powders known as scarlet. The Scarlet Wood is the source of the most durable lumber in the Fairelands, and the companies who run logging operations in this region are required by law to collect and dispose of any sap they collect in the process. Redrunners offer bribes, steal, or reclaim this sap from the logging companies to use for scarlet production. The closer to the mountainside you get, the denser the forest becomes, and those who brave the woods at night tell tales of feeling watched and stalked by the creatures who live within.

Points of Interest

Timberway Camp: Eager to get away from the crowding of other logging operations, Timberway sent a small team to begin work clearcutting a new section of the Scarlet Wood. The group never returned. Today, when loggers hear the sounds of sawing trees at night, they will gather by the fire and tell ghost stories about the Timberway team, speared and murdered by the very trees they sought to fell.

Whilewill: The small settlement of a group of Fairens who live in the woods and shun the recent invention of electricity. Though the town itself is not new, a near-fanatical hatred of electrical development has changed the way they interface with the outside world. Citizens of Whilewill are fiercely protective of their land and some believe they're responsible for the destruction of logging equipment.

Trust's Clearing: There is a large section in the middle of the forest where nothing but poisonous red flowers grow. This species of flower, known locally as the Timely Iris, is found nowhere else in Hale, and is famously difficult to cultivate by even the most practiced floriculturist. Many folk practitioners in the area harvest the flowers for local remedies, and Candela Obscura has a current project to test the bloom's ability to soak bleed.

Example Assignment

In the small lumber town of Rivet, there are stories of trees that cut down people. When the foreman of the logging operation, Wilson Ford Wayne (he/him), stumbles into the train station with both arms hacked away, the OUP calls Candela Obscura for help addressing his wild stories.

Cortnye Queen Transaction: CRIT1014003

We are lucky to be alive.

Against my better judgment, I will record what happened in the Hills.

The Candela Obscura member who maintains the lighthouse, Nels, was perfectly willing to allow us up to the astrolabe—benefits of being a Lightkeeper. It took nearly three hours to draw out the complex sigil and accompanying figures. Morgan was helpful, he's much better than I am with the chalk.

[illegible]

Almost immediately, a tear appeared in the fabric of reality before us. The world suddenly seemed two-dimensional, as if my familiar world had become a photograph. There was no time to marvel, because almost instantly, [illegible]

There was a moment I could have sworn I saw Nels's soul leave his body, though the image grows stronger in my recollection. So, it must be imagined. Morgan released his hold on the astrolabe, hoping to help the poor man, and I was forced to continue shouting over the din, lest the entire effort be lost:

Cortnye Queen Transaction: CRIT1014003



Nothing could have prepared me for the voice I heard. It resounded from all sides, neither deep nor high, and though I am entirely certain the language was not Halen, I understood the words.

I've never doubted my understanding of magick until this moment.

Cortnye Queen Transaction: CRIT1014003



SEASWAY

Half a day's travel from the outer reaches of eastern Newfaire lies the eerie village of Seasway. Here, tatters of old nets continuously wash up from fishing operations, catching on jagged rocks to create a spiderweb-like appearance all along the beach. This has given the shoreline its name, "the Threadbare Coast." The small homes and businesses here were once brightly painted, but are now grayed and worn, lining the paths between stony field and sandy shore. In this area, the wind off the sea is so strong that structures truly sway with the force—and they are built with the flexibility to withstand such movement. A tourist might find the constant creaking of wood unsettling, but locals call it the "windsong." Citizens of Seasway are known to exhibit a strong sense of community and resilience amidst modest economic circumstances, and while they tolerate tourists, the effort is begrudging.

Points of Interest

Everhollow Lighthouse: In the center of Seasway looms a decrepit central lighthouse. Much taller than any other structures dare to reach in the persistent winds, the tower is known to groan during violent storms. There is one person who maintains the building and its constant light, but the locals don't know they are a Lightkeeper of Candela Obscura.

Canny House: Both the village doctor and the local folk practitioner, Maeve Canny (she/her) represents the wider distrust of the Ascendancy within the area. Providing care to Seasway and the nearby smaller villages, Maeve holds an incredible amount of power, despite her age and lack of interest in "mucky politics."

Reverie Farm: A newly built wind farm stretching down the southern edge of Seasway, these turbines use the region's unique tidal winds to generate significant amounts of electricity for the city of Newfaire. When fighting ceased, this land was used as a burial ground for many of the unidentifiable bodies from the Last Great War.

Example Assignment

When a local finds the nets of the Threadbare Coast have ensnared a strange sea creature, your circle is brought in to investigate the phenomenon: where it came from, and why EONS is racing you to uncover its origins.

Cortnye Queen Transaction: CRIT1014003

THE STENTORIAN RIVER

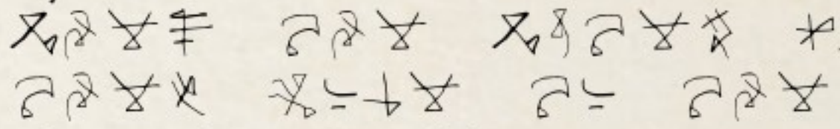
The primary river that runs through the Fairelands valley toward the Glass Sea. For centuries, this fast-flowing body of water has been used for the transportation of both people and goods. Though the river is used for shipping a wide variety of commodities from the region into the city of Newfaire, as well as to import items from Hallowharbor upstream, the majority of villages along the banks receive very little of the shipping industry's wealth. It's only the post-war economic boom that's bringing tourism to the various enclaves along the water that has allowed the people of the Stentorian to achieve economic growth.

Points of Interest

Withercreek: Nearly 50 years ago, the discovery of gold along the banks of the Stentorian drove a crowd of Halen citizens to mine the land and pan the waters. The vein of gold was fairly small, but that didn't stop people from desperately searching for many years to come. Now this town is known as a vacation destination for the middle and upper class of Newfaire.

Matilda's Bridge: The railroad bridge across the Stentorian is officially named Liberty Crossing, but locals who live along the river call it Matilda's Bridge in memory of the young woman who tragically died during its creation. Matilda was one of the workers hired to build the railway, famous for driving an incredible amount of steel in one day. Another worker challenged her to a stake-driving competition, and Matilda drove nails so hard and fast that she built most of the bridge as she went. Unfortunately, the man's stakes weren't as secure. As Matilda crossed back to the start of the bridge, his portion gave way, and she fell to her death.

The Sputter: A rocky, whitewater portion of the Stentorian River popularly used for fishing. Here, people go missing and never return. It's rumored that creatures will pull a person under the water, smashing them against the rocks until their meat is tender enough to devour. When drought causes the river to dry, a line of rocks is revealed with the Ancient Fairen words: "When the water is low, they come to the shore. Beware."



Example Assignment

When a small fishing camp along the southern run of the river reports a plague-like illness causing voracious cannibalism in their dock workers, Candela Obscura tasks your circle with finding the phenomenon responsible for the strange event.



Cortnye Queen Transaction: CRIT1014003

TOTTERGRASS

South of Newfaire lies the vast grassland that makes the Fairelands valley particularly valuable. Tottergrass produces over half of the food for all of Hale and is a majority exporter of agriculture within the countries of the northern region, as farmers here cultivate livestock, grain, and a variety of root vegetables to great success despite lengthening winters. The majority of people in Tottergrass are conservative Ascendants who believe in "family values and hard work." They are resistant to the cultural effects of industrialization and don't appreciate the politicians of Newfaire interfering with their way of life.

Points of Interest

Wheat 'n While Brewery: A particular point of pride within the Fairelands, Wheat 'n While's beer is not only a major export, but was considered a necessary portion of rations for soldiers during the Last Great War. The company that owns the brewery, the Integrity Corporation, spent the last few years purchasing failing family farms, and locals are concerned with the monopoly they are gaining in the agricultural market. Candela Obscura believes, but cannot prove, that EONS runs Integrity Corp.

Silos: Towering grain and corn silos can be found jutting up from the landscape throughout Tottergrass. Recently, these have become a common place for dead bodies to show up in this region. While many locals believe there is a killer who travels the valley searching for easy targets and a quick disposal method, evidence points Candela Obscura to a magickal explanation: where the maimed and partially consumed corpses are discovered, the contents of the silos have aged into withered dust.

Old Holt's Farmacy: Within the small town of Auriel, Old Tom Holt's family has maintained their pharmacy and soda fountain for generations. Here locals can get medicines and custom compounds, sodas and candy, as well as the latest news from Newfaire. There is a rumor that Elijah Holt (he/they) also hosts a scarlet speakeasy in town, but the local branch of the Periphery either cannot, or will not, charge him for the crime.

Example Assignment

When a farmer is devoured in the night by an unknown phenomenon, your circle is called in to investigate the strange methods he was using to cultivate an unnatural abundance of crops, and what the mysterious creature that consumed him had to do with it.



Cortnye Queen Transaction: CRIT1014003



THE VERGE

These high cliffs stand on the westernmost edge of Hale, overlooking the Glass Sea. On a misty day, it appears as if this place marks the edge of the very world, and it's not surprising for strangers to wander off the cliffs, lost in the thick fog. The western coast is the primary sea route for smuggling goods into and out of the country—as a way to bypass the strict regulations on commodities that typically come in through Hallowharbor. This means those who "work the Verge" stand to make incredible sums of money in a very dangerous line of work.

Points of Interest

The Hidewell: Within the western cliffs of the Verge lie the winding wartime tunnels of the Hidewell. Once utilized to house the artillery used against Otherwhere's navy, these caverns now operate as hideouts for smugglers transporting their stockpile of illegal wares. Locals use the cave entrances to hang nets that trap the seagulls they eat.

Stones of the Veil: A massive ring of megaliths looming on the flats on the Verge, reaching up in jagged shards. They are carved with symbols that predate even the earliest form of the Ancient Fairen language, and archeologists believe the Stones of the Veil were built to calculate or celebrate the passage of time. Locals and tourists alike travel to this area to see the ancient monument.

Westport: Below the high cliffs, down the sloping edge to the southwest, lies a small private port. Unlike Hallowharbor, which is highly controlled by Primacy regulation and Periphery oversight, this anchorage is an independent merchant's dream. Controlled by the Hillhounds, a gang of smugglers with a network through the Haven Hills and down into the Glass Sea, this may be one of the few ways into and out of the Fairelands unhindered by law enforcement—but in the debt of a criminal network.

Example Assignment

There have been reports of floating lights in the night sky out beyond the edge of the Verge. When a few young children from Newfaire are found motionless and hypnotized by the Stones of the Veil, your circle must find the connection between these two recent events, and figure out a way to save the children.

Cortnye Queen Transaction: CRIT1014003



WESTWRECK

The portion of the Fairelands once known as Westecklyn is now called Westwreck—as this land has remained infertile and undeveloped since the Electric Event. The area was previously filled with storehouses that held goods, predominantly agricultural exports, before they passed through Hallowharbor. But today, the countryside is well known for the trenches and proliferation of landmines that still pose a threat to locals and travelers, and visitors must hire a local guide to lead them through. Though the Primacy claims a restoration is underway, no actual progress seems to be made and the people of this land have either been displaced or forced to live in dilapidated homes on ravaged earth.

Points of Interest

Weary: This dilapidated town is known for its "antiquated" views on religion and politics, and its citizens hold the Ascendancy closer than many Halen people within urban areas. Many young people of the village were killed in the Last Great War, and the older population that lives here is particularly vocal about their fears that Otherwhere will return from their retreat. Some of the small homes here still possess thatched roofs, and this is the perfect place for a traveler to find a folk practitioner, herbalist, or country medium.

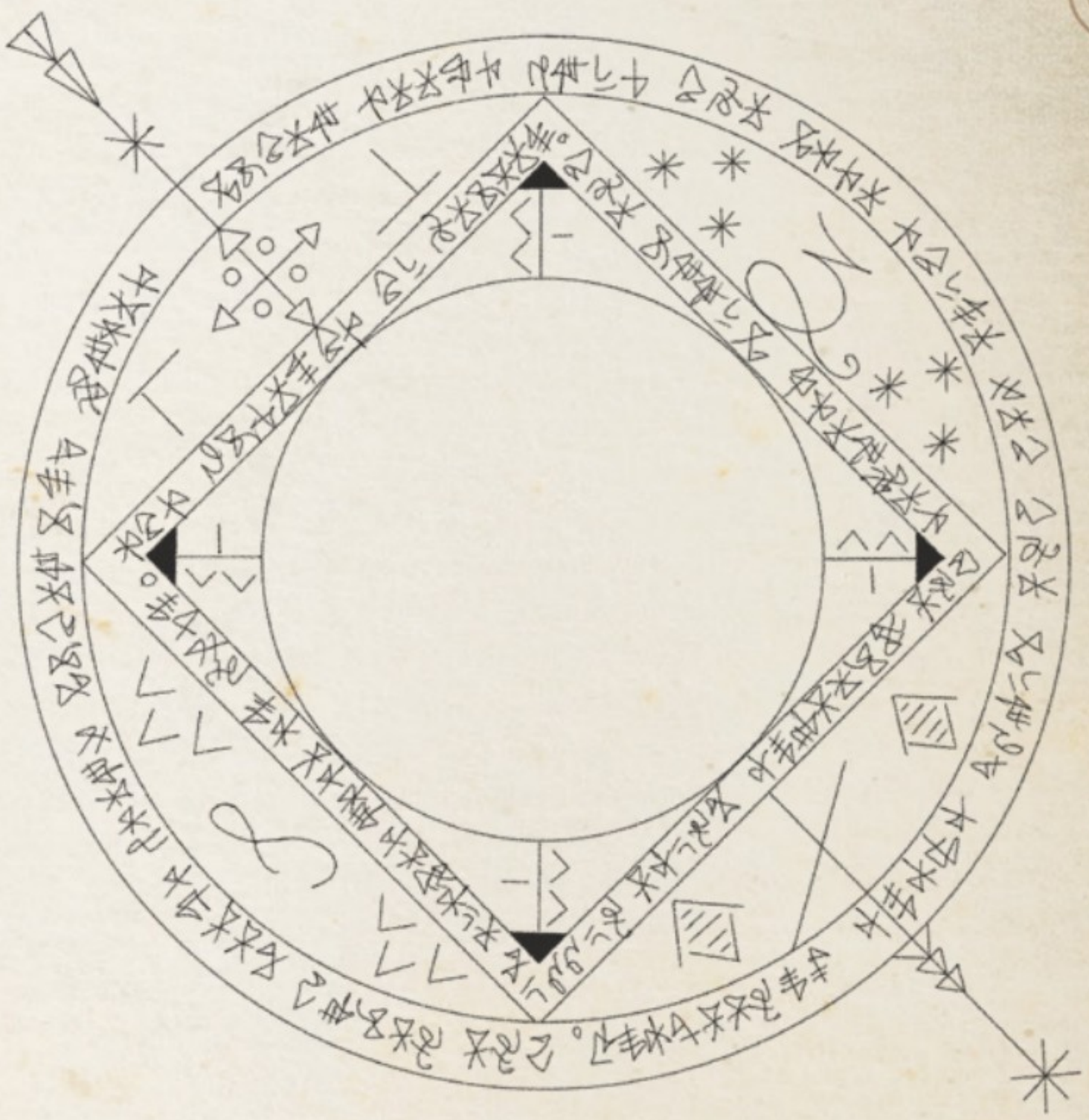
Vulture's Paradise: One of the many names for the minefield that makes up the war zone of Westwreck. Some travel through for the riches of war—like scrap metal and ammo—while others simply want to reach the people and land on the other side. No matter the purpose, the best way to cross safely is to hire a member of the Owlers—a group who closely guards their personal maps of the mines and facilitates safe passage across.

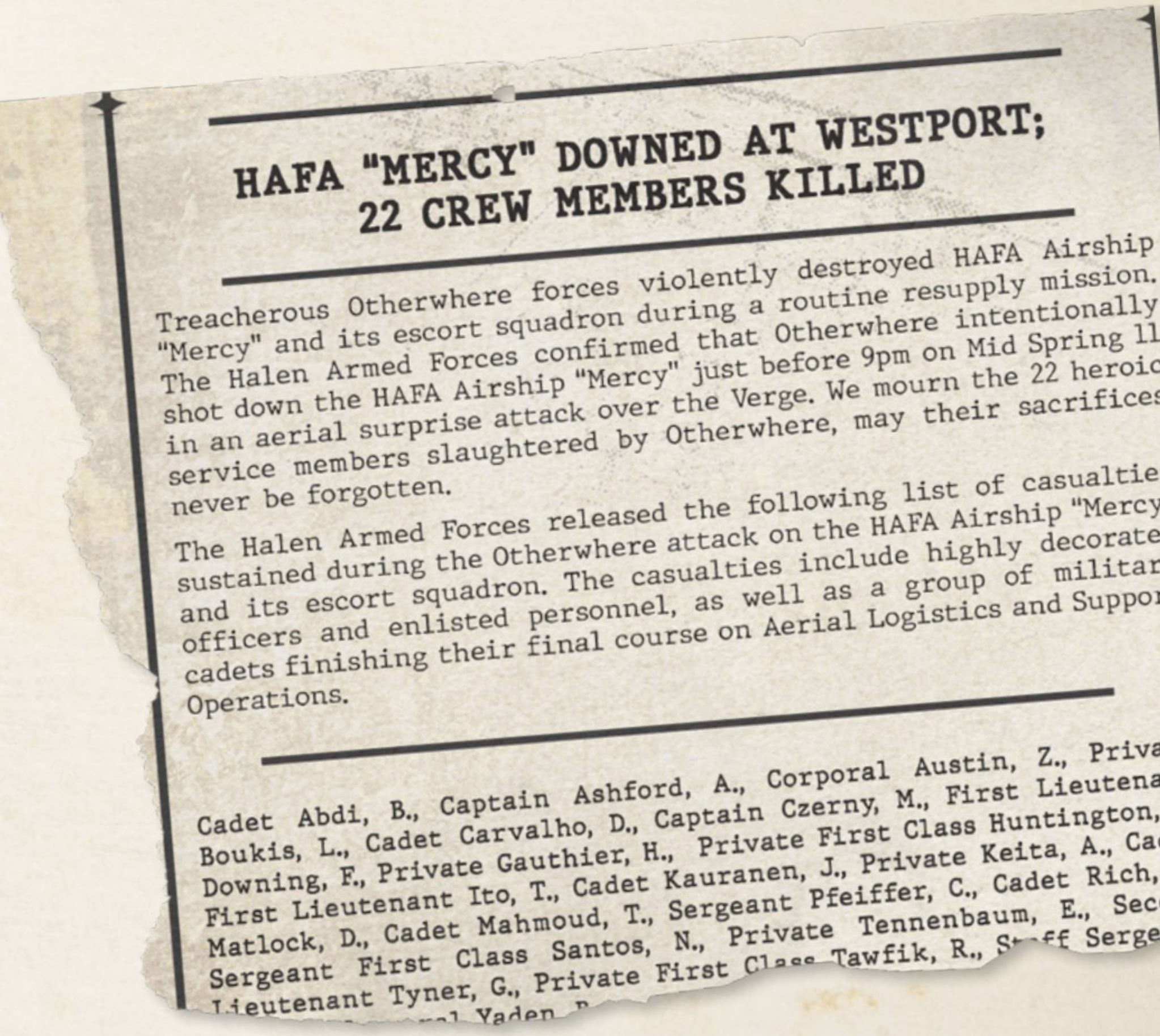
Halitaux Vault: Beneath the wastes of the Wreck lurks a hidden vault. There are no particular signs that point toward its location, but the Halen Armed Forces won't fully withdraw from the area. Some suspect it holds treasure, others assume weapons, still more believe it is a bunker for politicians to use in times of conflict. Only Candela Obscura knows that the Primacy is working with the OUP in an attempt to bury a magickal phenomenon in this tomb.

Example Assignment

Candela Obscura has heard whispers of the Red Hand uncovering a portion of the device used in the Electric Event, with the intention of selling it to EONS. The organization has tasked your circle with recovering the invention from Vulture's Paradise and destroying it before either organization can use it to destroy more lives.

Cortnye Queen Transaction: CRIT1014003





HAFA "MERCY" DOWNED AT WESTPORT; 22 CREW MEMBERS KILLED

Treacherous Otherwhere forces violently destroyed HAFA Airship "Mercy" and its escort squadron during a routine resupply mission. The Halen Armed Forces confirmed that Otherwhere intentionally shot down the HAFA Airship "Mercy" just before 9pm on Mid Spring 11 in an aerial surprise attack over the Verge. We mourn the 22 heroic service members slaughtered by Otherwhere, may their sacrifices never be forgotten.

The Halen Armed Forces released the following list of casualties sustained during the Otherwhere attack on the HAFA Airship "Mercy" and its escort squadron. The casualties include highly decorated officers and enlisted personnel, as well as a group of military cadets finishing their final course on Aerial Logistics and Support Operations.

Cadet Abdi, B., Captain Ashford, A., Corporal Austin, Z., Private Boukis, L., Cadet Carvalho, D., Captain Czerny, M., First Lieutenant Downing, F., Private Gauthier, H., Private First Class Huntington, D., First Lieutenant Ito, T., Cadet Kauranen, J., Private Keita, A., Cadet Matlock, D., Cadet Mahmoud, T., Sergeant Pfeiffer, C., Cadet Rich, K., Sergeant First Class Santos, N., Private Tennenbaum, E., Second Lieutenant Tyner, G., Private First Class Tawfik, R., Staff Sergeant

Cortnye Queen Transaction: CRIT1014003



Cortnye Queen Transaction: CRIT1014003

RUNNING THE GAME

This section of the book is specifically for GMs planning to run their own sessions of *Candela Obscura*. If you're joining your table as a PC, you don't need to know the information included within this chapter to successfully play the game. That being said, there are no secrets here.

The first thing to know is, as a GM, you are not typically rolling any dice. Your primary focus during each session is to provide the framework that supports you and your player's collaborative exploration of the Fairelands. Think of yourself as a director: focusing the camera on certain moments in the narrative and using that lens to showcase the NPCs, set pieces, props, and conflict needed to create an impactful story.

Depending on your level of experience with narrative-focused TTRPGs, this may seem like a daunting task. Use the following principles as your guide and always remember: this is a communal story game. Follow the fiction, trust your players, and always do what feels best for the story you're all telling.

GM PRINCIPLES

- **Make the world grounded, dangerous, and terrifying,** both in a magickal and mundane way.
- **Paint the world in darkness and in light.** Show the humanity in the horror and the horror in humanity.
- **Think like a director.** Frame scenes, describe shots, move the spotlight, and keep the story rolling. Set the pace and tone, and adjust based on the needs of the table.
- **Say "yes," unless you must say "no."** Saying "yes" fosters a collaborative, creative environment for players to contribute to. Saying "no" sets boundaries on the game world that establish its rules and support its verisimilitude. You can also use "yes, but..." to reinforce the cost of players getting what they want.
- **Listen and incorporate.** Ask the players questions about their characters and the world, then incorporate their answers into the story you're telling.
- **Only call for a roll if the consequences are interesting.** If they aren't, either it happens or it doesn't.
- **Drive the story forward.** Every action a player takes and roll a player makes should have an impact on the narrative. When a player fails a roll, that shouldn't mean the story doesn't progress.
- **Cut to the action.** Open a scene that's already in progress and close a scene before it loses its momentum. When players make a decision about the plan they want to take, cut to them executing that plan, rather than wading through low-stakes exposition.
- **Always make a move when the fiction demands it,** but especially on a mixed success or a miss. This means the moves you make don't always need to come as the result of a roll, they can emerge organically out of the consequences of the narrative.

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MAKING MOVES

Any time the fiction demands, but especially when players roll a mixed success or a miss on an action roll, you have the opportunity to make a GM move. This is your chance to advance the narrative in exciting and dangerous ways. When making a move, consider the following options, and act in the manner that best aligns with the narrative your table is weaving.

Indicate What's Coming

One of the most important moves you can make as a GM is to give your table clear hints about impending threats, or a coming narrative shift, as a means of building anticipation. This could manifest as footsteps approaching in the hallway behind them, the growling of a monster from within a cavern, remnants of bodies or bleed left behind by a phenomenon, etc. This is a way for you to both ramp up the tension for your players and also give them clues about the mystery they are pursuing. This is the antidote to an over-reliance on jump scares—while shock may be a useful tool in certain moments, the true power of the horror genre lies in the period between anticipation and actualization. This is the move you make to create that anticipation.

> *Kat makes a Survey roll to find out which way the creature they are pursuing might have gone. They get a mixed success, so the GM says they can tell the direction it went because, in its escape, it left behind large, poisonous spines embedded in the wall of the alley. The PCs now know this creature has dangerous spikes that could potentially harm them.*

Ask Them to Choose

When you ask your players to choose, you present a hard choice to the PC and let them choose what they would prefer. You might say, "You know you can push the barkeep to get an answer, but she probably won't take any more of your questions after that. What do you want to do?" This is a great move when you have two different options for ways the story could progress in the scene and you want to know what direction would be more satisfying for your player. Equally, these moments put power into the player's hands. Asking which limb they break in a fall, for example, can help a player to feel like they have some narrative control even when bad things are happening to them.

> *Dani is trapped alone in the corner of a room by a snake-like creature. As it rears up to strike, she makes a Move roll in an attempt to dodge out of the way. She rolls a miss and the GM asks her how the creature injures her. After she describes what happens, the GM tells her to take 2 marks that reflect her description.*

Show Them the Danger

When you want to show PCs the type of danger they are up against, you can make a move that doesn't necessarily deal them harm, but warns them of the severity of potential consequences. This move is easiest to implement when a PC narrowly avoids a powerful blow that illustrates what makes an enemy they are fighting particularly dangerous. Where "Indicate What's Coming" ramps up the tension indirectly, this move puts the power of an adversary on full display.

> *Carlos is facing off against a massive, living statue in the ruins of Oldfaire. He rolls Survey to figure out how he can climb atop the creature, and gets a mixed success as his result. The GM describes the best path up, and then brings the statue's fist down just inches away from Carlos. The force sends him stumbling backward, leaving a massive crater in the ground and displaying this creature's unnatural strength.*

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Limit the Scope or Effect

When you limit the scope or effect of a roll, you are only giving the player part of their intended result. This is most effective during a mixed success—you might grant them limited information, let them only get so far down a dangerous path, decrease the impact of an attack, etc. You have the opportunity to ramp up the tension by giving the PC part of what they wanted, while also showing them what they must accomplish to get the rest (and the possible consequences of a mixed success or failure).

> *Kailey leads her circle through the smuggling caves of the Verge, trying to avoid detection from the creature she seeks within. The GM asks Kailey for a Hide roll to remain inconspicuous as she delves ever deeper. Kailey rolls a mixed success, so the GM asks her how she attempts to ensure the group goes unnoticed. Then the GM picks up the narration to describe how a wall of the cave begins to twitch—Kailey barely makes it to cover as a massive eye opens on the wall, looking around frantically. She hears the creature's loud breathing quicken as the eye closes again and the twitching subsides. The group is still hidden, but the creature is on high alert.*

Introduce Consequences

When you introduce consequences, you're giving the PCs immediate repercussions for their actions. On a mixed success, this could mean you give them what they want, but it costs something to do it. On a miss, you can explore the larger fallout of an unsuccessful action. This could show up in play as the PC losing something important, taking one or more marks, being caught sneaking, etc. This is your opportunity to show the players why this world is so dangerous.

> *While fighting to steer the wheel of a crashing dirigible, Dani makes a Control roll to navigate the ship out of freefall. She rolls a miss, and the GM describes how she tries to pull the craft up to slow its descent, but the hull of the airship slams into the jagged rocks of the Verge, throwing her violently back. The pain and stress of the situation cause her to take a Body and a Brain mark.*

Give Them What Was Promised

When you give players what was promised, you are following through on a previously established consequence. This pairs well with the moves "Indicate What's Coming" and "Show Them the Danger"—you can hint at the coming threat, then activate the enemy on a miss or mixed result. This applies to more than monsters or damage; it can be quite impactful to play out a moment of the narrative that was set up earlier in your session or campaign. An NPC the circle slighted three sessions ago could return for revenge, or an adversary chasing the investigators in a previous scene might catch up to them.

Carlos fails a Read roll while attempting to identify anyone within the library his circle is exploring. The GM tells him that he does recognize someone—it's Carlos' rival, who sent him a letter telling him to stay out of this case. The woman sees them enter and makes her way toward the group.

Think Off-Screen

When you think off-screen, you make a move behind the curtains that will impact the narrative down the line. This can be incredibly useful in a session or campaign that has many different factions in play, or when you're utilizing a countdown die (see page 166). You can also fall back on this move if you can't come up with a consequence for a mixed success or a missed roll in the moment. Instead, tell the table that everything is okay for now, but there will be repercussions down the road.

> *While attempting to escape out the window of a reporter's office, Kat gets a mixed success. The GM tells them they made it out successfully, and makes a note to themselves that the reporter is going to find something Kat left behind.*

Cortnye Queen Transaction: CRIT1014003

SESSION ZERO

Before beginning a campaign of *Candela Obscura*, we recommend getting the whole table together for a session zero. During this session, you should help your players make characters, teach them the game, and most importantly, ask them lots of questions. The following are some guidelines for running a successful session zero.

Introduce the World

To introduce your players to the world of *Candela Obscura*, read the Setting Introduction in Chapter 8 (see page 87). This will help familiarize your table with the place you'll explore together, and allow them to build a character that fits into it.

Establish Table Culture

As the GM, part of your job is to establish the culture of your table. Introduce safety tools, ensure everyone has their time to speak, encourage players to build on each other's ideas, and foster an atmosphere of collaborative storytelling. Guaranteeing everyone feels safe, comfortable, and aligned on the goals of the story is key to running a successful horror game.

Teach the Game

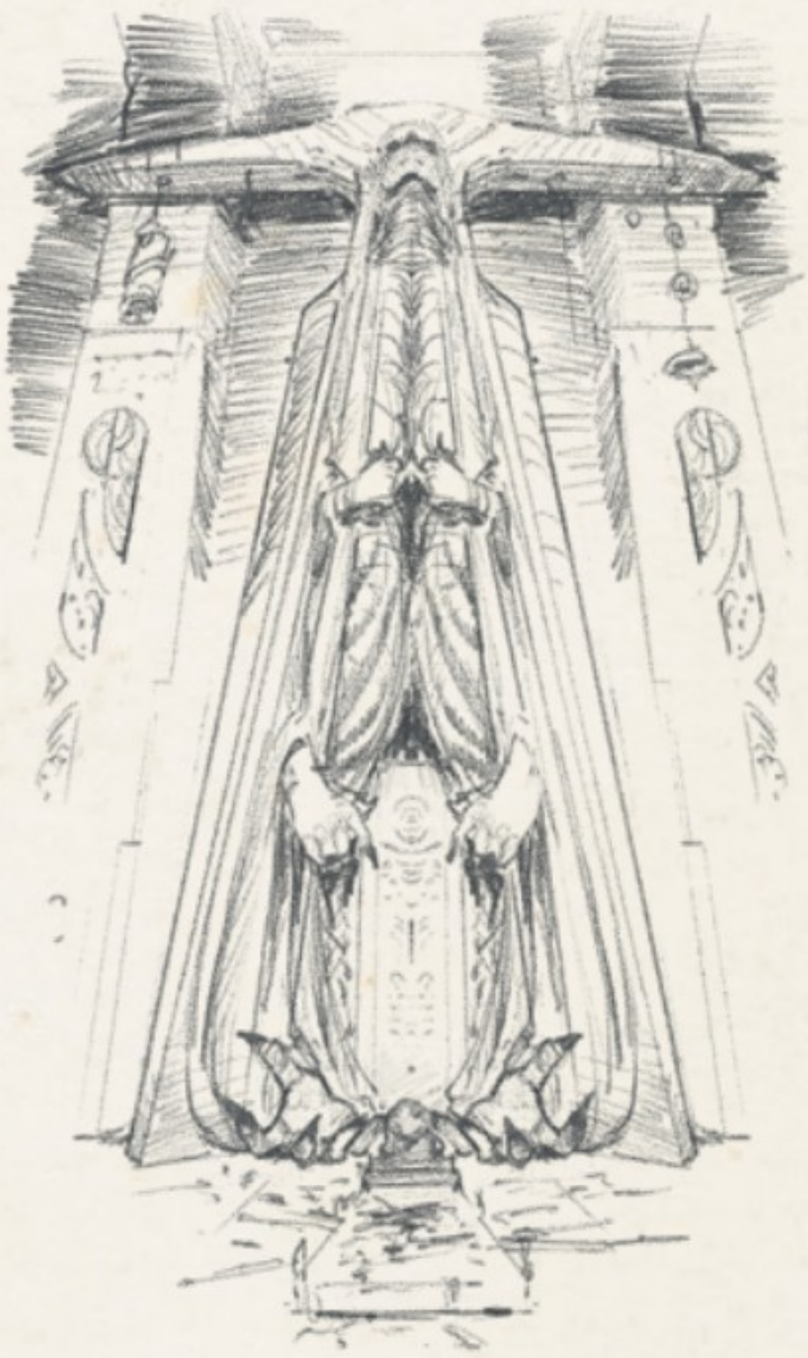
After everyone has selected a character sheet, but before establishing a circle, it's best practice to explain the system and answer any questions players have about how mechanics impact the choices they will need to make. You don't need to know all the answers; feel free to make a decision in the moment and then look up the answer in the rulebook before the first session begins.

Lead Character and Circle Creation

Facilitating players building their characters and forming their circle is a great way to get players comfortable with each other. Encourage them to interweave their characters' backstories, and use this time to get a sense of the group's dynamic before you begin to build your campaign. Though you may work in any order you'd like, we've found it most effective to complete character creation before circle creation.

Listen and Ask Questions

It's very likely that your players will ask numerous questions about the world and the system during your session zero. Remember this is also your time to ask questions of your players so that you can build a campaign that is customized to their goals. When a player says something intriguing or makes a strong decision, ask them questions and make notes on what they say. When players introduce their characters, ask at least one question in return—every detail they add gives you more inspiration to use when preparing a session. This discussion also reinforces your interest in their ideas, and shows you what themes or story elements they feel are important. The details that excite your players are strong indicators of the types of stories they will find most engaging in your campaign.



Cortnye Queen Transaction: CRIT1014003

PREPARING FOR PLAY



Connecting Backstory

Once you've asked questions, use the PCs' answers to help you craft your game sessions. Weaving their backstories into the assignments helps create a more engaging, shared experience at the table and can help players feel more grounded in the story you're telling together. You are encouraged to explore multi-session arcs that dive into each investigator's backstory. Investing in their character's history provides the PCs with an incredible amount of agency and eases some of the burden of building a storyline from scratch.

> *Dani is playing a Soldier and using her character's backstory to explore the theme of grief. During their investigations, the circle will encounter symbols of the war: Halen flags, memorials, and veterans. This will afford Dani the opportunity to play out character memories. The GM has created a corrupt government official whose folly put soldiers in peril, giving her the chance to confront that grief directly.*

Establishing Themes

Drawing on your session zero and the story elements and interests in play, craft a short list of guideposts so you'll always have inspiration in time of need. By establishing major themes in both an investigation and your larger campaign, you create a scaffolding that will ease the work you do at the table. Examples can be found on page 197.

> *The players are in the Varnish searching for an artifact, but the GM hasn't planned out the exact location of their next clue. One of the major themes of their investigation is corruption, so drawing on that, the GM decides to lead them to an expensive barbershop frequented by Primacy chamberlains. The owner of this shop overhears important conversations every day, and tells the investigators that one of the politicians was bragging about buying the artifact with government money.*

Thinking Big, Thinking Small

While it's important to imagine the world in broad strokes (the effects of the ruling powers, or the violence of the grand villain, to name a few), consider the way that the smallest details can enhance your play. Take the big themes and think about how you might represent them within the narrative through metaphor.

> *Kat is playing an Occultist who grew up within Pyre. Because their character is reshaping their identity outside the cult, the GM is incorporating the theme of identity. A large number of spaces they enter, such as the barbershop, have mirrors. This invites Kat to describe internal moments they experience when they face their own reflection.*

Cortnye Queen Transaction: CRIT1014003

CREATING A LIGHTKEEPER

Most Lightkeepers are Candela Obscura members who have taken three scars and would find themselves in mortal danger if they continued fieldwork. Thus, they have chosen to remain in the organization to lead a circle of their own. Ask yourself: What is this person's personality? What are they trying to achieve? What scars made them who they are today? Mix and match anything you see in this section, or come up with someone entirely new.

LEILANI AZIZI (they/them)

Specialty: Soldier

Style: Confident with a serious and no-nonsense approach.

Question: How can we permanently close thinnings?

Scars: Wears gloves to cover a skeleton hand, has a long scar along their thigh, refuses to go underwater.

ANAIS BAINBRIDGE (she/her)

Specialty: Magician

Style: Charismatic and charming, has a way with words.

Question: Where is my sister and why did she disappear?

Scars: Blind in both eyes, has jagged scars interlacing her whole body.

SELENA NGUYEN (she/they)

Specialty: Detective

Style: Hot-tempered and impulsive, tends to act before thinking.

Question: Where is the one who betrayed my circle?

Scars: Only sleeps when the sun is up, has a scar above her left eyebrow, is deaf in their left ear.

KEREM KAPLAN (he/they)

Specialty: Occultist

Style: Sarcastic and quick-witted, uses humor as a defense mechanism.

Question: Is there a controlling force beyond the Flare?

Scars: Hands can only touch the metaphysical, has a black scar on his lip, refuses to become emotionally intimate with anyone.

QUINTEN DAALMANS (he/him)

Specialty: Professor

Style: A newly appointed Lightkeeper, very nervous.

Question: What was the purpose of the Endless Descent?

Scars: Missing his right leg and the tip of his right pointer finger, perpetually hovering an inch above the ground.

Cortnye Queen Transaction: CRIT1014003

COMBAT & MARKS

During combat scenes in *Candela Obscura*, there is no order in which players must act and no initiative to be rolled. Play continues as it would with any other scene, though the stakes may be higher because of the threat of violence or injury. When players roll a miss or a mixed success, you have an opportunity to make enemies in the scene act. It is intentional that NPCs in this book don't include specific moves or marks they deal out when they make attacks; the severity of their damage should come as a result of the rolls made against them.

Dealing Out Marks

On a miss, you might inflict a few Body marks when a creature successfully catches one of the players and flings them against a wall. On a mixed success, you might describe a player getting out of the way of a creature just in time, but give them a Brain mark as a result of the stress from their narrow escape. In action scenes, don't be afraid to inflict multiple marks on failed, high-stakes rolls. PCs are protected against immediate death by the scars mechanic, so hit them hard and ask them what they do in response. You can also inflict more than one type of mark at a time; against particularly dangerous adversaries, you might give out 1 Body and 2 Bleed marks, or 2 Brain and 2 Body marks, as a single consequence.

Spotlighting Players

During high-intensity scenes, stay vigilant of the spotlight to ensure that everyone at the table has a turn to act. You might need to keep the focus on one character (or a few characters) for an extended period of time to play out a narrative beat appropriately—but after that moment concludes, make sure you turn the focus to the characters who weren't involved. Part of your job is to advocate for the quieter and more reserved players at your table and get them engaged in the scene.

Running a Fight

When your circle is facing off against combatants, whether magickal or mundane, think about the battle's purpose and use that to guide the way the fight evolves, and ultimately what it would take for players to bring it to an end. Small enemies might go down from a single strike by a PC, while larger enemies might require more than one successful attack to defeat. Consider the natural way an adversary would behave under pressure. Base this on the NPC's objective, and use that to drive what they do. A snake-like creature could coil around its target in an attempt to strangle them, whereas a thief might avoid the fight and slip out of the closest window instead. Always look for opportunities to implement puzzle elements into the enemies your players face, this way, encounters are not solely focused on doing harm, but allow PCs to discover creative ways to overcome their foes.

You don't need to know exactly how many hits an adversary can take before they go down—following the narrative will often tell you when a fight is over, even if the enemy isn't dead. In cinematic, story-focused play, you don't want encounters to go on for longer than they are exciting. Let the combat scene unfold organically and when it feels like the battle has come to an end, end it. This means that the PCs may not be required to kill the target for an encounter to come to a close; they may contain their enemy, strike a deal, or their opponent could escape, leaving behind a clue to its weakness for the next time players face off against it. This is not a game where GMs play against their friends at the table; facing an adversary is an opportunity to provide the table a challenge to overcome while showing them the consequences of the choices they make.

If you would prefer to track the harm players inflict on an enemy, or monitor the progress of a multi-phase goal, you can use countdown dice, covered on the next page.

Cortnye Queen Transaction: CRIT1014003

COUNTDOWN DICE

Any time you want to mechanically track either the progress of a task that will take more than one success to achieve or an impending event on the horizon, you can utilize *countdown dice*. These are d6s that start at a certain value and count down until they reach 0, at which time something important occurs within the narrative. They create tension at the table by mechanizing the anticipation of a goal, consequence, or grand event coming to fruition.

When you use countdown dice, the first decision to make is the value of the countdown. This is generally between 3–6, but can be higher or lower as the situation demands.

The first thing to consider is *why* you are using a countdown die. Is this task particularly difficult or complex? Does it have multiple components that all need to function together? Does the behavior of the PCs affect how quickly an event might occur? When the choice is made to introduce a countdown die, it means the obstacle is different than one a PC would make a standard dice roll to overcome. Because of that, you'll usually set the value of a countdown die to 3 or greater so that it's not likely to be completed in a single roll.

Completion Countdown

You can use a *completion countdown* in situations where the PCs make progress on a task over the course of many rolls. If it's helpful, you can think of this like the standard concept of hit points, but for any goal, rather than an adversary. Set the die to **3 for a light challenge, 4–5 for a moderate challenge,** or **6 for a major challenge.** On any rolls aimed at making progress toward this countdown, you'll usually reduce the die's value by a certain amount based on the result.

- **On a critical success** (**multiple 6s**), reduce the value by 3.
- **On a full success** (6), reduce the value by 2.
- **On a mixed success** (4–5), reduce the value by 1.
- **On a miss** (1–3), reduce the value by 0.

  Kailey is trying to lose the OUP investigators tailing her through the Calinus Market in Groundswell, and rolls Hide to duck into a shop unseen. She gets a 6 as her result, so the GM reduces the "Escape OUP investigators" countdown die from 4 to 2, and describes some of the officers passing by the shop on their hunt—while a few still linger outside the doors.

Consequence Countdown

You can use a *consequence countdown* in situations where you would like the results of the PCs' rolls to trigger the introduction of an obstacle in the scene. Set the die to **3 for something that should happen quickly, 4–5 for a little more buildup,** or **6 for a longer-term event.** On any rolls that would contribute toward this countdown, you'll usually reduce the die's value by a certain amount based on the result.

- **On a critical success** (**multiple 6s**) **or full success** (6), reduce the value by 0.
  The fiction moves forward, but the consequence does not draw closer because of their action.
- **On a mixed success** (4–5), reduce the value by 1.
- **On a miss** (1–3), reduce the value by 2.

  At the end of the Premier's Ball, Dani is trying to keep Baron, a rich socialite, from returning to his hotel room because she knows that Carlos is there looking for a clue. The GM starts an "I'm going to bed" clock for Baron and sets it to 3 as Dani asks him to stay just a bit longer. She makes a Sway roll: "Join me in the moonlight?" She gets a mixed success, and the GM ticks the die down to 2, replying: "I can't stay for long, but I suppose a few more minutes can't hurt."

Cortnye Queen Transaction: CRIT1014003

Phased Countdown

With a phased countdown, you can link multiple countdown dice together to create an event that occurs in phases. This is useful when you have a larger-scale event that needs to unfold in stages or an adversary who is particularly difficult to defeat. Each phase die usually has a value between 2–5, and when the current die in the sequence drops to 0, the scene should shift in an impactful way to reflect what is happening in the next phase.

> *Carlos faces a supernatural beast. The GM set up phased countdown dice for this creature's health—with a value of 2 on the first die and 5 on the second. In the first phase, it will intimidate enemies; in the second phase, it will use its targets' own fears against them.*
>
> *Carlos rolls Control to shoot at the creature with his pistol in an attempt to slow its forward charge. He gets a full success, and the GM describes the bullets ripping through its thick hide, then reduces the current completion countdown die for this creature by 2. This takes the first die to 0, so the GM clears that die and describes the beast transforming into a doppelganger of Carlos's brother, begging for help.*

Remember: when utilizing phased countdowns, but especially when they are being used to increase a countdown past a value of 6, the phases should feel distinct and interesting—otherwise, play can become stale for PCs when they're asked to continuously hack away at the same objective using the same tactics.

Adjusting Values & Customizing Countdowns

When a tactic is particularly effective or ineffective, if a PC is using a piece of gear that gives them an advantage or would hinder them in their efforts, or any time the situation demands, you may always adjust the value applied to lowering a countdown die. It might reduce the value by 1 instead of 2, or 4 instead of 3—whatever reflects the situation best. Countdown dice should be thought of as a tool to track the fiction, not a mechanic that is driving it—meaning: your countdown should reflect the narrative that is unfolding, and you should adjust as needed if it doesn't.

The examples provided here are only a few suggestions of ways to make countdowns work for you. Your table is encouraged to utilize them in whatever way makes your game easier to run. Customize them based on the game you're running—make them open information at the table or keep them behind your GM screen, have them count up instead of down, roll the dice to determine their value, or simply don't use them at all.

ADJUDICATING STAKES & EXPECTATIONS

Stakes and expectations are two of the most powerful tools you have to guide the fiction. Establishing these factors before a roll lets PCs know the severity of danger they're in, and gauge how much drive they should spend.

Low Stakes: Use this when you want the PC to know that, although their action could go wrong, it will not put them in a dire position if it does. Remember: you shouldn't call for a roll when the result won't have any consequences at all.

High Stakes: Raise the stakes when danger is imminent and the results of an action could be severe. If a high-stakes roll goes poorly, ensure you follow through on your promise of consequences, shifting the fiction and doling out marks as necessary.

Expectations: Setting proper expectations before a roll tells the PCs what they can and can't accomplish. Use this to help ground the fiction—a PC can never jump 50 feet by rolling Move, but a Sway roll might become more effective if they slip the target some money. You can also establish consequences that come from the result of the roll. A PC rolling Strike to stab an enemy who has a gun aimed at them is likely to take marks, even on a mixed success.

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ASSIGNMENT STRUCTURE

Each assignment is structured in phases. While you shouldn't (and can't) predict exactly what the players will do, you can use the assignment structure to design a framework of potential player actions and major narrative beats. Not every assignment will follow the same format. You'll find the example assignments starting on page 171 that exhibit various pacing, structure, and themes.

Hook

Plan to start the session with something exciting. Try to cut directly into the action: craft the setting, the event, and the characters, then open it up to your players. A hook doesn't need to be action-packed, but should highlight a pivotal, high-stakes moment. Avoid the "You all meet in the house, what do you do?" method of setting a scene. Instead, think of something that players must immediately address or an event that calls them together. Consider framing this introduction like the start of a TV show or movie—we are getting a preview of the events that occur before our protagonists get involved. In-world, this intro represents the briefing the players receive from Candela Obscura before arriving at the scene.

Optional: Call

By allowing your players to develop their character's life outside Candela Obscura, you provide them the opportunity to reveal personal details that can appear in future storylines. Consider beginning your first session (or any subsequent sessions) by asking your players where their investigator is when their Lightkeeper calls them in for an assignment. Encourage your players to take ownership of these moments, and use this as a chance to learn more about their character through play.

Arrival

In the Arrival phase, you introduce your players to the start of the mystery by allowing them to explore the aftermath of the hook. In this phase, their Lightkeeper gives them additional information, NPCs can offer their knowledge or perspective, and clues should reveal themselves, pointing the team in the right direction. As your circle investigates, remember: the singular piece of critical information, known as the *reveal*, is the most important clue you must convey to the players, no matter what approach they take.

By focusing your efforts on only one piece of information you must impart, you liberate yourself from attempting to weave the entirety of the mystery into each scene. You can convey a reveal in numerous ways, using a variety of details in any given scene. By deciding what information they will learn, you ensure that you are not withholding too much for the players to follow the adventure.

Exploration I

In the first Exploration phase, you'll show the players they are on the right track with their investigation as they follow the first reveal to a new location. Often, this new place is more dangerous than the Arrival and should present evidence that points toward the bigger mystery at hand. The Exploration phase opens up the scope of the mystery, but also (like each subsequent phase) should utilize a reveal to provide a strong indication of where the players should go next to uncover the truth.

Exploration II

By your second Exploration phase, players should know enough about the path of the mystery to pursue it directly. The reveal from the last Exploration phase will guide them toward an answer, but also toward greater danger. By this point, the rising tension should remind the investigators of the terrible consequences of failure.

Cortnye Queen Transaction: CRIT1014003

Escalation I

In the first Escalation phase, the story should introduce a twist of some kind—something here isn't what it seems. That twist should push the players into further danger and direct them toward the climax of the adventure. If things were not already scary, now is the time to start increasing the tension. Put the players in real peril, show them the power of bleed, and remind them of the magickal forces they're up against.

Escalation II

In the second Escalation phase, the players can use all of the knowledge and tools they have at their disposal to push directly toward the finale of the mystery. They might not know all the answers yet, but this phase should take them to where they need to be for the final showdown of the adventure. Throughout the second Escalation phase, danger should feel imminent as the tension continues to rise.

Climax

In the Climax phase, the drama of the story should reach a crescendo. This is the period of highest tension, where players can experience the most visceral moments of horror. Sometimes, there is a final reveal or twist—something that answers the dramatic question of the mystery in an unexpected or exciting way. Usually, this is the place with the most opportunity for action. During the climax, players sprint for cover, fight the monster, secure the artifact, etc. Think of this as the big ending sequence of a horror movie. Don't be afraid to introduce the dramatic consequences of failure.

Epilogue

We encourage you to include an epilogue in your adventure. Like the hook, this is a peek into the world when your circle is not around—in this case, after they've completed their investigation. This is your opportunity to hint at elements of your next adventure, or include a detail that may become relevant many sessions from now.

Ask yourself specific questions about the way your players tackled this investigation. You may use these as inspiration:

- Did the circle find every clue you laid for them? If not, why?
- Did they bond with any NPCs in particular?
- Did the themes in your adventure resonate with the group?
- If your party didn't defeat the adversary in this session, how does this affect the circle and their future?
- Did your players reveal any elements of their character's backstory that you can engage with in future sessions?
- How do your players interact with one another at the table, outside of gameplay?

The purpose of the epilogue is to wrap up any loose ends and set you up for success in future sessions of *Candela Obscura*.

EXAMPLE ASSIGNMENTS

In the following pages, you'll find the case files from four Candela Obscura assignments. We recommend you examine these closely before undertaking any fieldwork. They offer examples you may draw from when running your own assignments. *The example sessions represent the way an assignment could go, not the way it should. Instead of using them as a beat-by-beat guide you must play out at your table, use them as inspiration for concept, pacing, and structure.*

Cortnye Queen Transaction: CRIT1014003



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THE LIGHT EATER OF BRIDLEBORNE

Content Warning: Body Horror

Premise

The small company-owned logging town of Overmount is the first in the region to receive electricity, but every night the lights in the homes on the edge of the settlement are shattered and the occupants are found electrocuted and dead. Hackley & Wilde Timber Company, the company that owns the town, is in a panic, as new workers are refusing to move in.

What is actually going on here?

A nocturnal creature known as the Light Eater feeds off the town's electricity, growing in size and strength as it does. Covered in a thick mat of black hide, with its limbs protruding from a humanoid body that stands over 30 feet tall, it sends horrifying Night Terrors into Overmount at dusk, ensuring its citizens leave their lights on out of fear of the dark.

Details

Themes: Light and darkness, electricity, growth, isolation, corporate corruption.

Atmosphere: Dense forest, towering mountains, logging camps, axes stuck in trees, ramshackle wooden homes, filament bulbs, horse tracks in the mud, the hum of electric wires.

Adversary: The Light Eater is a shadowy entity that feeds off of electricity, allowing it to expand in size. For centuries, it relied solely on lightning strikes for its power, but the proliferation of electricity has allowed it to expand its consumption and its size.

- *Body:* This beast can electrocute its enemies with merely a touch.
- *Brain:* When the Light Eater attempts to make a human electric wire of fused flesh, witnesses will experience incredible stress.
- *Bleed:* Magick radiates from the body of the beast in the form of crackling electricity.

Threats

- **Civilians (Body):** People here are not afraid to commit violence to protect their land or their neighbors.
- **Corpse Conduit (Brain):** The twisted, warped, and fused body chain is horrifying to behold.
- **Night Terrors (Bleed):** Smaller, more chaotic versions of their parent that feed off the electricity the Light Eater gathers.

Notable Figures

- **Tang Yuna (they/them):** The foreman for the logging company, Hackley & Wilde, is desperate to get the situation under control.
- **Nigel Munro (he/him):** The owner of the only bar in town, the Bridle Bar.
- **Alice Shelley (she/her):** A widow who prefers traditional candlelight instead of modern electricity.
- **Lucia Rodriguez (she/her):** A logger who's worked for the Hackley & Wilde Timber Co. for nearly a decade. She has seen it all and then some.

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EXAMPLE SESSION

Hook

The Bridleborne Mountains were the one place a person could go to get away from the hum of the city—but no more. Overmount's recently illuminated streets now buzz with the light of infinite potential. What was once a small logging encampment is now a bustling company town with electric lights. The first in the region, in fact. Hackley & Wilde Timber, the logging company that birthed and sustains this town, has been none too quiet about how proud they are of this distinction. For the citizens, however, it's a dubious honor they may be all too eager to relinquish. Despite the ever-present hum of electric currents, this sleepy little hamlet, where very little occurs, is quiet. Peaceful. Complacent.

A thunderous boom shatters the night's silence. A grizzled, pale-skinned man stands at the front door of a ramshackle company home, one of several lines of houses radiating out from the town center like the spokes of a wheel. The man reloads his shotgun, sweeping the darkness for whatever made noise, and retreats to the protective glow of the small cottage light.

Sweat beads on his forehead, dripping into his eyes. His vision blurs, and as he wipes his face, he hears the sounds that scared him... now coming from inside the house. In a flash, the lightbulb beside him bursts. The man raises his gun up to meet something blacker than the night itself. The stench of ozone precedes an electric crackling and a massive pop, after which the house is left in only silence and darkness.

Arrival

The investigators are briefed at the chapter house: just this morning, townsfolk found the man's body covered with strange markings—a crimson web that's spread in a fractal pattern across his torso. His hair is singed and his frozen face a shocked rictus. These appear to be the injuries that come from electrocution.

Upon investigating the site, Candela Obscura learns that an entire row of houses lost light in the incident. The electric lines are laid out like wheel spokes, with each row of houses on a separate current. Only this row was affected, but who knows what could happen in the nights to come if something isn't done. Nigel Munro, the proprietor of the Bridle Bar, turns out to be a rich source of information on the townsfolk and the local gossip.

The foreman, Tang Yuna, is stressed but relatively tight-lipped. They're toeing the company line and trying not to say anything that will get them in trouble. But they are genuinely worried for their workers, and for their own job. If this keeps up, there won't be anyone to log the mountain or work the mills. Yuna gives the investigators access to the company houses, saying they didn't report this incident because it would likely end up in the papers of Newfaire.

When the circle checks inside each house, they find a few commonalities: shockingly inadequate company housing, cheap construction and wiring, shattered light bulbs, and dead occupants—all killed by electric shock and sporting the same fractal-patterned mark as the first victim—all except for the Widow Shelley, who lives at the end of the row. According to Nigel: "She's an early to bed, late to rise sort of dame, ever since her husband died. When the town made the proposal to switch to electric, she was the only one who fought against the wires. Still uses candles and gas lamps exclusively." If pried about Mrs. Shelly's husband's death, Yuna will get nervous and curt, saying, "It wasn't the company's fault," and leave it at that.

Reveal: Only people who left electric lights on at night were killed.

Cortnye Queen Transaction: CRIT1014003

Exploration

The investigators talk with Mrs. Shelley to check up on her. Upon seeing the "Faire Faced" (a quaintly outdated but still derogatory term for city folk) investigators, Mrs. Shelly is initially reluctant to give a statement. It takes some finesse, but eventually, the circle is able to win her trust, and upon realizing they might be able to help with the attacks, she lets them in.

Over tea, Mrs. Shelley tells them stories of her husband—a veteran of the Last Great War. She often references "the incident," but is otherwise oblique about how her husband met his end. Only that it was "the company's fault." But she won't say more. She adds, pointedly, that she has a roof over her head for the rest of her life, after all is said and done. When the focus turns to the investigation, she tells them that every night since the electric cables were laid, she's heard digging outside in the dark. But as soon as she goes out with a light, it stops. The other day, she noticed something was pulling up her garden, but eating none of the plants.

The investigators take the tip and decide to check out the small garden behind her home. As they proceed to exhume the garden, they reveal something disturbing: a man's arm. Further digging uncovers a full corpse, belonging to a different body, fused to the arm with molten flesh. In a short time, they uncover a chain of warped bodies that leads to the nearest power line; mangled flesh climbs up the pole, swallowing the transformer. Reaching out toward the bodies causes the hairs on an investigator's hand to raise, as if they're charged with static electricity.

Reveal: The chain of fused bodies leads out of the town, deep into the woods.

Escalation

The new moon provides little light as the party ventures into the wilderness, with only the flickering illumination of gas lamps to guide them along the chain of fused corpses. As they follow deeper into the woods, the soft lapping of a nearby creek can be heard in the distance.

The farther they go, the darker the night becomes, with Night Terrors flitting at the edge of the lamplight, attacking any who dare venture out of its radiance. It's a harrowing experience as these creatures take on shadowy facsimiles of ominous beasts—more bark than bite, truly—but existentially terrifying. When people talk about being afraid of the dark, this is the darkness they speak of.

The chain of corpses terminates at a massive nest in the woods, a charnel lair formed of flesh and bone where small Night Terrors feed on the electricity carried through the conduit of bodies. As the investigators attempt to relight their waning lamps, the Night Terrors take notice and give chase. The circle flees the creatures, splashing across a nearby creek. The larger horrors refuse to pursue the party over the water, but a couple of smaller ones, presumably younger and inexperienced, do not show the same caution. As they touch the water, they instantly short-circuit and die, giving off a foul smell of ozone and burnt hair.

Reveal: These creatures will short-circuit when they come into contact with water.

Climax

Everyone's hair stands on end as a static charge crackles through the corpse chain. Suddenly, the lights in the town begin to blink out, sending the party running back. Warped bodies in the road lead to a massive beast with a crackling, electrified mouth. It surges with power and sucks on the electric line like a straw. As the current charges the beast, it expands in size, doubling its height and girth. It's now bigger than the house it stands on as it continues to grow—and it will continue growing until someone shuts off its food supply. Just beyond the monstrosity lies the fire station, where a hand tub fire truck sits in the garage. The investigators just need to make it past the beast.

Cortnye Queen Transaction: CRIT1014003



Cortnye Queen Transaction: CRIT1014003

STILL LIFE

Content Warning: Death of a Spouse, Animal Violence

Premise

A post-mortem photographer reports the strange disappearance of the body of his latest subject, whose shadow mysteriously remains.

What is actually going on here?

Oscar Enfield, a death photographer, unknowingly purchased a camera infused with magick. Anything dead Oscar photographs will not stay that way for long—he's been accidentally manifesting terrifying, soulless, reanimated "shutters" within Newfaire without knowing it.

Details

Themes: Life and death, time, entropy and decay.

Atmosphere: Lavish homes, lifeless bodies dressed in formal attire, gears and mechanisms, the sound of ringing bells, fresh graves, chemical flashes, vats of silver, the clicking of bones.

Adversary: The Eye of Emrys is a camera artifact that awakens the bodies of the deceased. When the photos are taken, bodies are reanimated by a supernatural power, then kill the living to take their souls. The amount of time this reanimation takes is varied and unknowable.

- *Body:* The Eye of Emrys seems to sap the life from those who use it, and perhaps that's the force it uses to awaken the dead.
- *Brain:* Seeing bodies rise from the camera's effects will take a mental toll on anyone, especially those who are grieving.
- *Bleed:* Interacting with this camera has a slow, life-draining effect.

Threats

- **Putrescence** (**Body**): If you touch any beings reanimated by the camera, the maggots and rot will infect your body.
- **Bodies Rise** (**Brain**): The bleed of the Eye of Emrys is causing the hundreds of bodies buried beneath Newfaire to rise to the surface. Animals, livestock, and all matter of undead crawl through the night.
- **The Shutters** (**Bleed**): The bodies of the people the camera reanimated. They hunt for the souls of living people to steal and fill their hollow bodies.

Notable Figures

- **Oscar Enfield** (**he/him**): A recently widowed death photographer who has unknowingly been using the Eye of Emrys.
- **Sara Khalil** (**she/they**): The owner of The Cracked Lens, a Groundswell camera repair shop that last handled the artifact.
- **Jacob Finsky** (**they/he**): The owner of a bodega in Groundswell near Mx. Khalil's camera shop, whose cat was recently photographed by Oscar.
- **Chen Kai** (**he/him**): A priest tasked with tending to those who visit the Sacred Ascension Cemetery, who's been receiving alarming reports from groundkeepers.

Cortnye Queen Transaction: CRIT1014003

EXAMPLE SESSION

Hook

A pallid, feminine hand hangs slack and unmoving until, ever so gently, a man weaves a near-invisible length of thread between the fingers. Each touch between them is one of deep love. The threads pull the hand into a forced pose. A quill is gingerly placed between the fingers. Another length of thread is pulled taught. The woman's face, seemingly tranquil, is devoid of life. The man's hands tip her head ever so slightly, then add an ornate hairpin to her dark curls. He flexes his hands, open and closed, open and closed. She's perfect.

Postmortem Photographer Oscar Enfield takes a step back from his subject. Tearfully, he says, "You're as beautiful as the day I married you, Nora." The cadaver says nothing in return. He stares through the frame at Nora, frozen in her favorite pastime: writing poetry. She is perfectly situated, staring intently and forever at a poem she'll never complete. He snaps the picture—FLASH.

The front door jingles, reluctantly drawing him out of the room. When Oscar returns about 25 minutes later, he's holding a large box. But he drops it when he spots the empty chair where his dead wife once sat. Cast onto the seat, as if her corpse were still in place, lies her ink-black shadow. As Oscar runs from the empty chair, a small spatter of blood sprays onto the back window.

Arrival

Candela Obscura arrives in Briar Green to speak with the distraught Mr. Enfield. He shows them the now-developed photograph that reveals the woman staring hungrily down the barrel of the lens. Then, he reveals the unmoving shadow left on the chair—they're able to wave their hands through the ink-black cast. He tells them about Nora and her untimely death. "She was so young... still." He goes on to explain that she'd heroically outrun a terminal heart condition since childhood and death had finally caught up. She was always busy, Oscar explains, as he darkly jokes, "I guess even death couldn't make her stand still."

The circle finds that the camera Oscar is using to take the photographs is resonating heavily with bleed. The camera in question is old and weathered, but its casing is gilded with an ornate filigree. Oscar gives them the address for The Cracked Lens, the repair shop where he made the purchase, but insists that he accompany them. His wife is out there somewhere and "I want, no, *need* to see this through." He grabs a record book containing a list of all his recent work. On their way out, one investigator notices a partially consumed rabbit in the yard, recently massacred—curious.

Reveal: The camera is emanating with bleed and was purchased from The Cracked Lens.

Exploration I

The team makes their way to Groundswell, home of The Cracked Lens; a diminutive camera repair and supply shop belonging to Sara Khalil. It's filled to the brim but neatly organized. There are cameras of every stripe, assorted chemicals, and lenses galore. Mx. Khalil looks up with massive eyes enlarged by magnifying loupes. "You're back." They are straight and to the point, with no guff. As Sara inspects the camera, she wonders how it made it back to her. Chattering idly, she goes on to explain that she found this camera, unusable, in a box of her grandfather's possessions. "Something still wrong with it? Thought I fixed it. Guts were a mess when I opened her up, but I had some old parts and a prime lens that fit." After some questioning, the circle discovers she still has the box she found it in.

Reveal: She still has the box she found her grandfather's camera in.

Cortnye Queen Transaction: CRIT1014003

Exploration II

Leading the circle into an even more densely packed back room, Sara shows them the box. It still contains remnants of bleed, and the investigators must take extreme care as they inspect it. Inside, the circle uncovers the blueprint for the Eye of Emrys and the writings and drawings for a ritual under a false bottom. The text contains both research and a warning.

The party learns that Sara's grandfather purposefully broke the camera. In his notes on the device, he details the harrowing experience of the time he tried to use it. The body he photographed belonged to a recently deceased father named Joseph Vienno (he/him). "In a blink, the priest awakened from the dead and grabbed hold of me. Father Vienno pressed his face up against mine, his teeth clicking hungrily. He let out a rasp, then began to inhale. I felt my very essence being torn asunder, pulled into the nightmarish maw of this animated corpse. To this day, I still feel a piece of myself missing. My sense of self-preservation outstripped my sense of dread and I threw him off me. In our scuffle, we knocked into the Eye of Emrys. Falling caused the camera to go off, and the body went limp in my arms. This device can awaken the dead, but it seems that it can also send them back. It's too dangerous, and must be destroyed. The consequences of cavalier misuse cannot be overstated." The circle's research is interrupted by screams outside.

Reveal: Not only can the camera return the dead to a terrifying facsimile of life, it can return them to their natural state.

Escalation

A chilling howl and the screams of citizens draw the group's attention outside. People flee in a panic. "The dead are rising!" The crowd clears to reveal a pack of ravenous undead racing hounds. Mr. Enfield nervously comments that he photographed a group of racing hounds, killed in a terrible accident, just the other day. They were buried in a nearby pet cemetery here in the Groundswell. They look up at the circle with cold, dead eyes, mouths dripping with blood and viscera from a fresh kill. Before the investigators can react, the hounds bear down on them.

It takes Mr. Enfield and the group some time to figure out how to use the camera offensively, and fighting off an angry dog is no easy task when they're alive, much less undead. When they escape to safety, the investigators check Mr. Enfield's records. The majority of his work is buried in the Sacred Ascension Cemetery where Nora was set to be buried.

Reveal: The dead are rising en masse from the Sacred Ascension Cemetery. They must be stopped.

Climax

Despite some gashes and bruises, the circle makes it to the cemetery just in time to hear the bell of a freshly buried safety coffin begin to ring. The name on the headstone matches a name on the photographer's list. More bells ring out in the dark fog, accompanied by moaning and the sound of nails digging through the earth.

The Shutters rise from their fresh graves, moving in jerking jitters as they attack, as if each motion is caught in the flash of a camera's still frame. The circle must defend Mr. Enfield as he uses the Eye of Emrys like a slow-loading cannon, pulling plates and preparing the next image capture while they escape. With each flash, another corpse is returned to its natural state. But they have only so many plates, and there are so, so many Shutters. As they load their final plate into the camera, a familiar face comes into view, wearing an ornate hairpin. Oscar suddenly goes slack. "Stop!" he cries. "I can't... I can't say goodbye to her again." Before them, the undead form of Nora Enfield shambles forward out of the fog.

Mr. Enfield, distraught, steps away from the camera and toward Nora's outstretched arms. The circle must decide what to do: keep him safe or let him go.

Cortnye Queen Transaction: CRIT1014003



THE DEVIL'S WELL

Content Warning: Harm to Children

Premise

An airship pilot goes missing in a remote region off the coast of Hale. This portion of the Glass Sea is known for numerous strange disappearances.

What is actually going on here?

Deep below the Glass Sea is a vault named the Devil's Well. Created (and quickly abandoned) a decade ago by the founders of the Exoteric Order of New Sciences (EONS), this marks their first failed attempt to contain dangerous artifacts. Along with objects of power and other perilous curiosities, EONS locked away a failed experiment: a child who is herself a phenomenon, empowered by energies from beyond the Flare. Known only as "the Reliquary," they're the source of the powerful magick that keeps downing craft that traverse this region.

Details

Themes: Decomposition, metamorphosis, scientific experimentation, innocence.

Atmosphere: Dark ocean, winding stairs, old libraries, artifacts locked behind glass, twitching walls, grasping floors, blood-stained laboratories.

Adversary: The Reliquary is a child who was corrupted by bleed and locked in a vault within the Devil's Well to keep her unstable power contained. She was experimented on by EONS and developed deadly supernatural abilities.

- *Body:* If investigators try to grab the Reliquary, she'll lash out with tooth and nail.
- *Brain:* Finding a child locked deep in the sea is unsettling, especially deep within the caverns of the laboratories.
- *Bleed:* This child is so infused with magick that her mere presence inflicts massive bleed.

Threats

- **Alta Aqua (Body):** A flesh-eating orange phosphorescent fungus that clings to the walls of the underwater vault.
- **Revenants (Brain):** Figures of people who once worked within the Devil's Well appear, like ghosts, still working and protecting artifacts.
- **Corrupt Artifacts (Bleed):** EONS hid powerful artifacts twisted by bleed.

Notable Figures

- **Emerson Walsh (they/them):** The radio operator who received the distress signals from the dirigible before its crash.
- **Bradley Devir (he/him):** The daring ship captain taking the team out into the mist.
- **Emilia Kowalska (she/her):** An EONS scientist whose notes and audio recordings can be found throughout the Devil's Well.
- **Tarek Abbas (he/they):** A former member of EONS charged with caring for the Reliquary. He hid a journal within the walls of the facility.

Cortnye Queen Transaction: CRIT1014003

EXAMPLE SESSION

Hook

A steam gauge hisses in the bowels of a pristine but crowded airship. Functional but lacking aesthetic choices, it has the look of an unfinished prototype. Networks of pipes cover nearly every surface with gauges, meters, and knobs everywhere. The pressure on the gauge is pushing the hand past the red line. A pipe buckles, then bursts, shooting steam as klaxons blare and red warning lights flash.

Shouting is heard through the whistling steam, but the words are muffled. A lone pilot stands at the helm closing out a mayday transmission. He leans over and looks out the window. The moon is full over the ocean, casting the waters in silver light. But not far ahead is an inky mist that seems to pull in everything around it, including the light.

The pilot is flying a small military aircraft. It's so new, the patina of dead bugs and dust hasn't had a chance to take hold. Inside, the pilot grips the wheel, attempting to turn it. His muscles bulge, and the vein in his forehead looks about to pop; he cannot seem to adjust course. There's a shattering sound and he looks to his side at a mug of coffee, broken on the ground, the brown liquid moving quickly toward him. The airship is going down. In a cold panic, he flips every switch, pulls every knob, and cranks every wheel.

As the dirigible careens down toward the ocean, through the mist, a nest of wreckage rises to meet it like a maw full of shattered teeth. There's the scream of metal, and then... nothing.

Arrival

A radio transmission, warped and distorted, comes in piecemeal: "Instrument malfunctions... compass... for hours... running out... fuel... abandon—" The circle's Lightkeeper turns off the recording, explaining to the investigators that a young military test pilot disappeared without a trace over the Glass Sea in an area where the organization has detected an incredible amount of bleed.

Captain Devir is contracted by Candela Obscura to take the circle on their dangerous nautical venture. Rough waters and malfunctioning equipment make for a difficult journey, resulting in a few bumps and scrapes. As the ship pierces the mist surrounding the site, the inky fog envelopes them for a short period before the vessel crashes into something. The mist thins, revealing a menagerie of interlocking shipwrecks, smashed together and shattered against and on top of a massive stone platform. A grim monument of rubble and death. Captain Devir agrees to stay with the boat while the rest of the group investigates the site.

Reveal: The airship is only the most recent disappearance. There are ships and bodies in this graveyard dating back a decade.

Exploration I

Traversing the sodden network of shipwrecks, mired seaweed, and the scavenging animals of air and sea is a harrowing journey. It's not long before one of the investigators is trapped in a sinking mire, forcing the others to salvage materials from nearby ships in order to rescue them. Bodies come in various stages of decay—some are waterlogged and bloated, others are desiccated by the sun, the rest are skeletons picked over by crabs and sea birds. The varying states of decomposition and exposure have left these corpses surrounded by a foul-smelling miasma that chokes and disturbs even the hardiest and most jaded of investigators. Eventually, the circle stumbles upon a sealed door surrounded by a vicious mutated swarm of crustaceans. In order to get inside, they'll have to somehow move the creatures.

Reveal: Amongst the graveyard of machines and men, there is a sealed door that reads "The Devil's Well." They only have what tools and materials they can scavenge to open it.

Cortnye Queen Transaction: CRIT1014003

Exploration II

As they travel down the steps into the inverted spire inside the door, it becomes clear to the circle what the purpose of this place is, or was. Records reveal that this is a hermetic vault, created 10 years ago by EONS to contain dangerous artifacts and experiments. The files end abruptly—the site was unceremoniously abandoned just two years ago.

Throughout the many floors, behind walls of thick, fogged glass, there are a myriad of artifacts locked away. Everywhere investigators go, they find bodies of former vault workers—having all died here roughly around the same time. Their bodies, including the bones, have been partially consumed by an orange, flesh-eating fungus that grows on the walls. Any time members of the circle take bleed readings, the detector nearly breaks trying to register levels beyond what it's capable of.

Many records and archival entries reference a powerful and destructive artifact known as "the Reliquary," a phenomenon so powerful it warps reality for miles around. It was brought here for containment shortly after construction was finished.

Reveal: The Reliquary is locked seven floors down—this is the force that continues to destroy ships.

Escalation

When the investigators cross the threshold that denotes the deeper recesses of the inverted spire, they discover living quarters. The typical rules governing physics lose much of their meaning this deep down. Space simultaneously exists and doesn't. People seem to exist in multiple locations and also not at all. Here, the bleed from the Reliquary has warped reality, making the space incredibly dangerous and confusing to traverse. It's entirely possible the investigators encountered a flooded room, with no water, through which they are forced to swim. Simultaneously, all were trapped in an endless library containing only infinite copies of a popular children's book written a decade ago. They might have even spent six months in a room full of lounging cats, all missing their heads, but otherwise inexplicably healthy and in good spirits. Or maybe none of that happened, it's incredibly hard to tell.

Reveal: The only constant is a tiny feminine voice, singing a song. Barely audible. The only gauge for how close they are from their goal is how distant the song sounds; it grows louder and clearer as they travel deeper into the vault.

Climax

As the investigators enter the inner sanctum of the vault, they discover the magickal source of the Devil's Well is within the beacon of an inverted, underwater lighthouse. A human-like figure stands at the epicenter and being close to it causes an incredible amount of bleed damage (for example: take a Bleed scar, but remain standing). This is the Reliquary, a little girl imprisoned within the vault. She reveals to the circle that she's endured harrowing abuse and neglect, and simply seeks connection. It's this isolation and loneliness that has caused such emotional instability in her, which in turn caused her to lash out with fluctuations in gravity that wrecked ships and pulled dirigibles from the sky. But just as her emotional walls begin to drop, so too does her concentration—the only force holding this vault together. The walls around the investigators begin to rumble and quake as the girl begs the investigators to free her from this prison. If they linger here for too long, they may all be trapped, but who knows what will be unleashed if they bring the Reliquary to the surface.

Cortnye Queen Transaction: CRIT1014003



Cortnye Queen Transaction: CRIT1014003

STAGE FRIGHT

Content Warning: Spiders, Death of a Spouse

Premise

A private detective hired to search for a missing person ends up dead in an alleyway with his face completely bare—all of his features have disappeared.

What is actually going on here?

A giant spider, with the ability to steal the faces of its prey, roams the streets at night, luring innocent victims to appease its endless hunger and mysterious agenda. The OUP is in over their heads, so they've called Candela Obscura to solve the mystery and contain the beast. With its latest victim connected to a member of the Primacy, it's imperative that Candela Obscura succeed—or some truly horrifying changes could be in store for Newfaire.

Details

Themes: Deception, identity, ensnarement, desire, obscurity.

Atmosphere: Faces in half shadow, trench coats, cigarette smoke, wet streets, dark alleys, a dilapidated theater, spiders of all sizes.

Adversary: The Recluse is a massive spider-creature with an appendage shaped like a human, which it puppets to attract its prey. It steals the faces and mimics the voices of its victims.

- *Body:* This creature has eight sharp legs that can pierce human flesh with ease.
- *Brain:* The sight of a friend's stolen face and voice puppeted by a gruesome monstrosity is enough to shake any investigator to their core.
- *Bleed:* The touch of this beast infects victims with a paralyzing, bleed-rich venom.

Threats

- **Mick Aguilar (he/him):** Mick is the jealous husband of Andres, the man the private detective is investigating. He is a chamberlain of the Primacy.
- **Faceless Bodies:** The bodies left behind by the Recluse are so unnerving that merely looking at them is dangerous to a person's well-being.
- **Recluse Minions:** Small spider-like creatures have infested areas that the Recluse frequents. They will attempt to burrow under a PC's skin and lay eggs.

Notable Figures

- **Luis Roe (they/them):** OUP officer who calls in Candela Obscura. Luis has no qualms about doing what needs to be done to solve the case.
- **Rosie Sinclair (she/her):** Coworker of the victim, Andres Aguilar. She and Andres are long-time friends and she is worried about his well-being.
- **Rokas Novak (they/them):** Food cart operator who worked outside Andres's office. They know everyone who works in the area and have a keen eye for detail.
- **Usman Saba (he/him):** Former crew member of the Eden Theater who still works in the area. His memory isn't what it used to be.

Cortnye Queen Transaction: CRIT1014003

EXAMPLE SESSION

Hook

It's a late rainswept Newfaire night, amid the smoke-choked network of elevated alleys and causeways of South Soffit. A pair of shoes splashes through a puddle, walking with an unnatural gait, as if the owner is not bound by gravity. Another splash as the first pair of shoes is followed by another in hot pursuit.

The second pair belongs to a hard-nosed detective holding a flashlight in one hand and a revolver in the other. He stops to catch his breath and get his bearings, peering out from under his hat; the sheets of rain make it hard to see anything. A distant shadow turns down an alleyway and he has his mark once again. As he trails the distant figure, their shadow seems to stay just one corner ahead at all times. Is he running in circles?

Instead of following directly, he climbs a set of stairs, leaping onto a fire exit above an alley. He touches down on the other side of the building and sees the shadow vanish into the pitch-darkness of an alley. The detective calls out. "Andres? I don't want to hurt you. Mick just wants to know if you're alright." In a sentence that sounds strung together from a dozen separate voices, something speaks: "Designs... Interrupted... But... You... Will Be... Useful... In the future." Something behind the detective blots out the streetlight.

A gunshot rings out, and there's the flash of a muzzle and a wet squelch. The detective's hand falls to the ground, just at the edge of the inky blackness. Within moments, hundreds of spiders swarm out of every nook and cranny and envelop the body.

Arrival

The circle is summoned directly to the scene without a briefing. Time is of the essence, and they don't have much time to inspect the body before the Periphery arrives. Turns out, the OUP called Candela Obscura to get help with the incident. Officer Luis Roe is frustrated that the Periphery always takes credit for their work. When they bring the team to the body, they're shocked to find that the man has no face—as if he never had any features to begin with.

A deeper inspection of the body reveals a trace amount of spider silk, basic identification, and a key to his office.

Reveal: The circle finds the business card of Miles Crane, Private Investigator. On the back, in a quick scrawl, it reads: "Florence Brighton - Eden?"

Exploration I

After traveling to Miles's office, the investigators are struck by how neat and organized everything is. Two things in particular feel out of place: an open window and a file folder on the floor by the sill. It has trace amounts of spider silk clinging to the papers. The case file is for Andres Aguilar, husband of Miles Aguilar, a chamberlain of the Primacy. It includes a detailed description and sketch of Andres's face, a few dark photos of his silhouette, and stories about him from his coworkers.

The phone rings. When one of the investigators picks up, discordant voices rasp out of the receiver. "You... Will... Be... Useful... In the future."

After hanging up, the investigator notices something out the window. A figure in a fedora and trench coat stands on the fire escape across the alley. When they lock eyes, the figure seemingly floats back into the darkness of the window. The circle is being followed.

Reveal: Miles Crane was hired by Andres's husband to investigate him for infidelity. Andres was frequently seen with a woman, entering her home in the Sidle.

Cortnye Queen Transaction: CRIT1014003

Escalation I

The circle goes to the address they got from Miles Crane. When they arrive outside her home in the Sidle, they can hear shouting inside. Through the window they find Andres's husband, Mick, waving a gun at a woman, Rosie Sinclair, who he believes is sleeping with his husband. "Do you know who I am? I could shoot you right here and the Periphery wouldn't bat an eye. Tell me what were you doing with Andres!" As if to make his point, previously unseen officers from the Periphery step out of the house to share a cigarette. The circle members are forced to conceal themselves or risk arrest.

Tears stream down Rosie's face, but she keeps her voice level as she explains: she is a dance teacher. Andres, who Mick knows to have two left feet, was taking lessons from Rosie in secret in preparation for his and Mick's fifth anniversary.

Heartbroken and disturbed by the extent of his rage, Mick apologizes. Hoping to get this man out of her house, Rosie tells him where she last saw Andres.

Reveal: Rosie rents a small dance studio near the Eden Theater on Florence and Brighton, in the Red Lamp. Rosie last saw him there after one of their secret lessons.

Escalation II

Across from the padlocked studio Rosie rents, there looms an abandoned playhouse formerly known as the Eden Theater. As they inspect the area one of the investigators notices Mick, holding his revolver, slip into the theater lobby. The party quietly pursues Mick, closing the door behind them.

Inside the crumbling Art Deco lobby, everything is covered in massive, sticky spiderwebs. There are sacks of mysterious bundles that burst into a rain of spiders when the circle draws close, forcing the investigators to fight back thousands of virulent, magickal arachnids. A massive creature seems to have shredded the wallpaper, and the large gashes are sticky with paralytic venom. Mick is nowhere to be seen, and every door is sealed shut with layers of rope-like webbing—except one.

Reveal: The webs were cleared from one door: the left entrance to the theater's auditorium.

Climax

Upon entering the theater, the circle is greeted by a disturbing sight. Rows of people sit in the audience, unmoving. When the investigators check the bodies, they discover that none of them have faces, just like the detective's body at the crime scene.

On the stage, there are two men, arms encircling one another. As the circle approaches, they can see this is a violent struggle rather than a warm embrace. Mick beat them inside, and is held by a figure that seems to be Andres. He struggles to get away. Andres speaks, but with the detective's voice. "I don't want to hurt you!" Then, again in the cacophony of voices: "You... Will... Be... Useful... In the future." From behind the curtain, a behemoth spider takes the stage. It wields an appendage, dangling a humanoid shape at the end of its nimble limb. This is the "body" of Andres Aguilar.

Instead of a traditional spider's collection of eyes, this monster sees through the faces of its victims, each staring and blinking in unison. Skewering Mick through the chest, it slowly peels off his face, adding it to its foul collection. The recluse's masks all give a simultaneous and satisfied smile before turning to the investigators. This is the lair of the Recluse and it is very hungry.

Cortnye Queen Transaction: CRIT1014003

"MONSTROSITIES" TERRORIZE TOWNSFOLK

HORRORS IN HALE

Increasingly unbelievable reports of "malevolent spirits" and "violent monstrosities" have appeared in record numbers across Hale, sources close to the Fairelands Periphery have told the Civil Tribune.

Though many firsthand accounts are claiming to have seen supernatural and mystical phenomena that would otherwise read as fictional, here at the Tribune, we would be remiss not to mention that there must be a mundane human explanation behind these mysterious events—perhaps, even, a killer on the loose.

We urge citizens across the valley to [illegible] precautions

"There was a figure like a man, but with additional limbs. He was covered in blood," said Phyllis Clarke, of the Haven Hills. "I'll never forget it for as long as I live. The man was standing over a body, grinning widely in the darkness. I ran."

Other "supernatural" claims are potentially chemical in nature. Parin Whiles, also of the Haven Hills, corroborated Clarke's story, and described an equally mysterious incident. He said, "a gas lamp turned a vibrant blue, then exploded into a shower of glass," and added that he's been in the hospital for the last twenty-four hours from his wounds. Whiles claims that his associate, Leonel Torres, was also gravely injured, but declined to comment.

If you, too, are concerned about the potential appearance of malevolent spirits in your neighborhood, turn to Page Twelve, where you can support our paper with the purchase of Greaves' Modern Poltergeist Repellent, formulated with [illegible] and all

Ezra,

Perhaps it is cowardly of me to write this note instead of speaking to you in person, but after what happened in the Haven Hills, I am beginning to suspect that I am, indeed, a coward. Still, I could not live with myself if I did not say this to you:

We were wrong. This idea was wrong. It's not too late to stop.

If my wounds are representative of even a fraction of what's to come, people are going to die if we continue this misguided effort. There may already be casualties.

Our intentions were pure, and while there is the possibility of saving lives on the other side, I can't in good conscience make the moral decision to risk lives in order for us to get there.

For the sake of not only yourself, but all of the Fairelands, please reconsider your path. I beg you to find a new way to move forward.

If you do not stop, I'm afraid I will have to take the necessary action to stop you myself.

With respect,

-M

Cortnye Queen Transaction: CRIT1014003

ADDITIONAL ASSIGNMENTS

Champagne Problems

Below an abandoned drugstore lies a speakeasy hosting the wildest party in town. After a body is found in front of the abandoned drugstore, unnaturally aged and crumbling to dust, Candela Obscura investigates. They find a New Year's party that's raged on for decades; guests hypnotized by a looping record player. The supernatural entity known as "the Host" is using the partygoers' life force to maintain his form in the physical world. But now that they've joined the party, the Host sees to it that the investigators have no reason to leave ever again.

Fool's Gold

A sudden gold rush along the banks of the Stentorian River draws people from around the country to collect the fortunes hidden in the dirt. When the miners strike a massive vein of gold in a deep cavern, they also unearth a thinning. The bleed that emanates from this rift contaminates the town's water supply, resulting in bodily transformations. The circle races to find the source of the bleed before it consumes innocent citizens, or worse—the bleed makes its way downriver and into Newfaire's plumbing, infecting thousands.

The Icebox

Since the onset of the Shiver in the region 13 years ago, ice floes that were once treacherous have now frozen solid and are safer to traverse, or so people say. Sailors are leaving for adventures with a spring in their step and returning cold and haunted. One sailor from the HMS Horace comes back raving about a mysterious arctic prison and the horrors within. When Candela Obscura investigates, they find an ancient vault with pillars of dead bodies, signs written in Ancient Fairen warning them to stay away, and a deadly artifact within.

Lifeblood

Candela Obscura receives a call about a cult in the Haven Hills that is using magick. The practitioners are some of the most powerful politicians in Hale, and their blood sacrifices are allowing them to connect with real powers beyond through a thinning. They plan to live forever, but do not understand the cost of becoming Unabridged. Candela Obscura must purloin the Seven Stakes of Ire the cult is using to perform these rituals, and must do so without exposing themselves. If these prominent figures knew their identities, life could suddenly become very difficult for any members of this circle.

Sleep Tight

Content Warning: Parental Abuse

In the Haven Hills, a miner is gruesomely killed in his home during the night. No one knows what caused the deep claw marks that run along his body. Candela Obscura investigates the death and discovers a creature living under the bed of the victim's son. This monster, displaced by the newest coal mine, now hides under the child's bed and fiercely protects him from anyone who would do him harm—including his father. The investigators are tasked with figuring out a way to contain or relocate this creature before it hurts anyone else.

Under the Big Top

When passing through Newfaire, a traveling circus unveils its newest attraction: an otherworldly and threatening creature sure to draw in crowds. When its handler loses control during the performance, it goes on a rampage through the audience, spreading bleed throughout. With innumerable people affected, it's a race against time for Candela Obscura to contain the creature before it does more damage, while also bringing in affected audience members for treatment before they become a danger to themselves or others.

Cortnye Queen Transaction: CRIT1014003

GM RESOURCES

Please feel free to mix and match the resources provided here to enrich the story you build with your players. You can pull examples directly from this book or use them as jumping-off points to create something new.

Chapter Houses

Antiquarian Estate: A large mansion in the Eaves owned by Lightkeeper Quinton Lee.

Harvest Cabin: A cabin on the outskirts of Tottergrass, bordering the Stentorian River.

Haven Hills House: A run-down but structurally sound cottage near the entrance to one of the mines in the Haven Hills.

Levy House: A small townhouse tucked away on a side street near the Kline & Daughters Typewriter Shop in the Sidle.

Rust Pine Reach: A log cabin situated high in the Bridleborne Mountains, accessible only by a long hike or travel by airship.

Shriveline Sanctuary: A small chapter house for Candela members to use, provided they pay a small fee to the Church in exchange.

Newfaire Locations

The Capitol Bank: A government-run bank that serves any citizen of Newfaire—for a fee, of course.

The Empress Exchange: A store that specializes in luxury goods, including fine jewelry and high-end apparel. Their loyal customers include numerous members of Newfaire's elite society.

Finch's Farmacy: A dimly lit store that smells of chemicals and herbs. Shelves filled with glass bottles line the walls, and the sound of a mortar and pestle can be heard as the pharmacist works to prepare tinctures and ointments for ailing customers.

The Mercantile: A department store that caters to a more practical clientele. The Mercantile offers a wide variety of goods at reasonable prices.

The Magnificent Myriad: A circus that travels across the entire northern region. They make their way through Hale each year, putting up a variety of tents filled with wonders.

The Parlor Cafe: Located on a bustling street, this intimate and inviting space has plush velvet seating, delicate floral wallpapers, and a warm fireplace. It's the perfect spot to enjoy a cup of tea and indulge in some freshly baked pastries.

The Restful Arms: A small, run-down, and crowded soup kitchen that also operates as a shelter. This location is open day and night for those in need.

The Rosewood Hotel: A charming establishment with a rustic and eclectic ambiance. With its mismatched furniture and antique decor, it feels more like a cozy home than a hotel.

Salt & Sea: This small nautical-themed restaurant is loved by locals, and it features fresh seafood caught daily.

Tin Street Diner: A small diner tucked in a narrow alley, this establishment is known for its hearty breakfast and robust coffee served day and night.

The Velvet Curtain: A smoking lounge that exclusively offers illegal scarlet. They're known for their wide variety of flavors of the resin, and servers prepare the herbal mixtures with the same care and showmanship exhibited at a fine cocktail bar.

Cortnye Queen Transaction: CRIT1014003

NPCs

Avery Choi (she/her): A brilliant scientist who works for EONS, and often provides information about the organization's inside dealings to Candela Obscura.

Caerwyn Stone (they/them): A young, newly enlisted soldier in the Halen Armed Forces.

Chaska Deloria (he/they): Runs a well-known stand at the Calinus Market in Groundswell. They sell a wide variety of goods and can track down almost anything for the right price.

Dr. Michele Lappin (she/her): A serious doctor with a booming voice who works at the Grayslate Sanatorium in the Sidle.

Elder Kenneth Krause (he/him): An elder in the Ascendancy with a suspected connection to the Red Hand.

Ember Rose (she/they): A burlesque performer at the Library in Red Lamp. She is known for her impressive acrobatics performance during the "Banned & Censored" show.

Father Timothy Singh (he/him): A priest with possible ties to EONS who works out of a small church still standing on the edge of Westwreck.

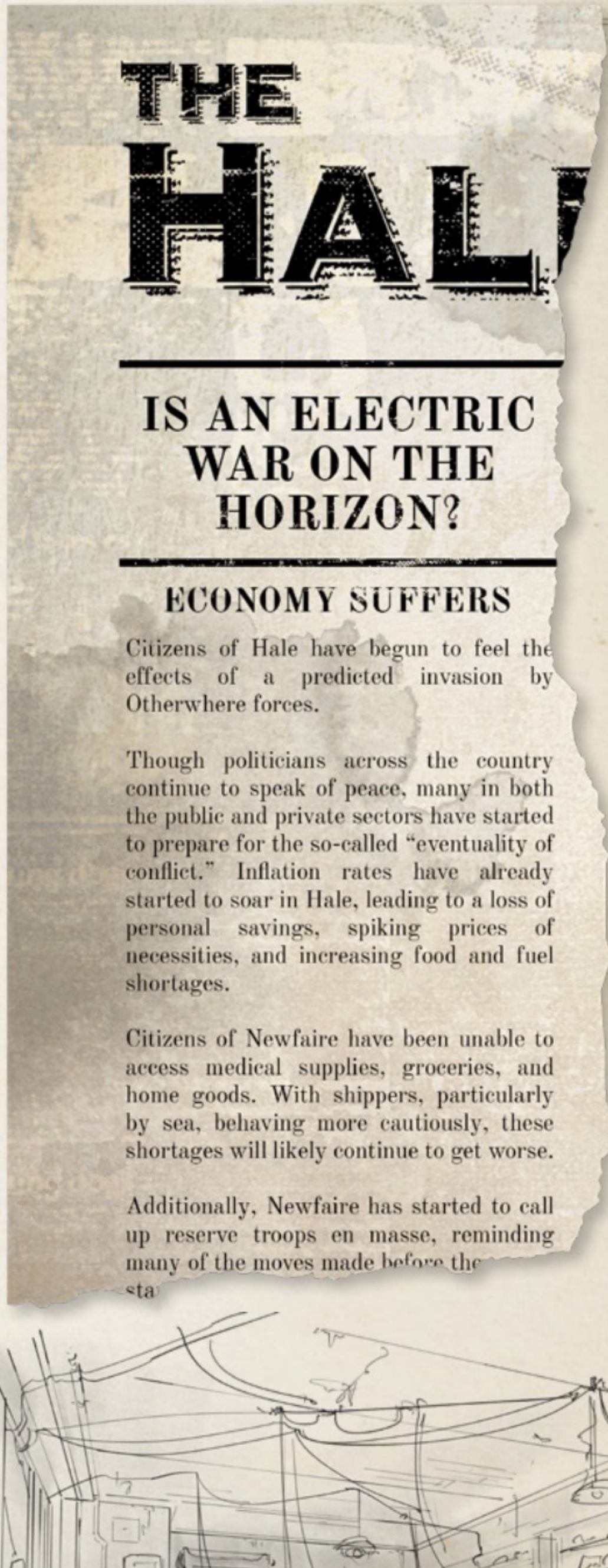
Joseph Abdi (he/they): A surprisingly chipper metro worker at the Seren Street Station in the Varnish.

Kiana Tumata (she/they): A run-down dock worker employed in Hallowharbor.

Oksana Blum (she/her): A well-known medium who claims to connect with spirits and relay messages from beyond the grave.

Richard Satanta (they/them): A disgruntled employee at the famous Eternal Heart Spa in the Eaves.

Alma Baquiran (they/them): A guard at the Brinkley Penitentiary who secretly delivers messages into and out of the prison for the inmates.



THE HAL

IS AN ELECTRIC WAR ON THE HORIZON?

ECONOMY SUFFERS

Citizens of Hale have begun to feel the effects of a predicted invasion by Otherwhere forces.

Though politicians across the country continue to speak of peace, many in both the public and private sectors have started to prepare for the so-called "eventuality of conflict." Inflation rates have already started to soar in Hale, leading to a loss of personal savings, spiking prices of necessities, and increasing food and fuel shortages.

Citizens of Newfaire have been unable to access medical supplies, groceries, and home goods. With shippers, particularly by sea, behaving more cautiously, these shortages will likely continue to get worse.

Additionally, Newfaire has started to call up reserve troops en masse, reminding many of the moves made before the sta



Laboratory of Declan Taylor

Cortnye Queen Transaction: CRIT1014003

Additional Gear

Atomizer	*Fancy Pocket Watch*	*Membership Card*
Basic First Aid Kit	*Flammable Material*	*Motion Picture Camera*
Binoculars	*Flashlight*	*Needle & Thread*
City Guide	*Flint & Steel*	*Padlock & Key*
Compass	*Gas Lantern*	*Pocket Microscope*
Construction Tools	*Lighter*	*Precision Tools*
Crowbar	*Loyal Hound*	*Rope*
Dictaphone	*Magnifying Glass*	*Shears*
Disguise Kit	*Map*	*Whistle*

Special Gear

Cassandra's Enchanting Perfume: +1 Sway, -1 Hide for next 6 hours. 5 uses.

Dr. Malcolm's Alchemical Reference Guide: +1 Focus on rolls that have to do with alchemy or magick.

Elio's Brass Knuckles: When rolling Strike, take a Body mark to add +1d.

Esther's Spy Glass: Can roll Survey from much farther away.

Mechanical Glove: When rolling Control, take a Brain mark to add +1d.

Morphine Vial: Soak 1 Body. 1 use.

Obsidian Ward: Soak 1 Bleed. 1 use.

Otto & Son's Herbal Tea: +1 Focus on next roll. 3 uses.

Phosphenes' Lights: Handheld illuminators that produce a glow only the holder can see.

Porcelain Pills: Take 1 Body mark to soak 1 Bleed mark. 3 uses.

Smelling Salts: Soak 1 Brain. 1 use.

Taylor House Coffee: +1 Move, -1 Control for next 6 hours. 3 uses.

To our esteemed acquaintance, Mx. Ezra Ashford,

We are delighted to have you as our newest member. As you know, we are staunchly dedicated to the advancement of technology for the betterment of the Halen people. You've come to the right place to continue your work.

Please note that your monthly stipend will be paid out beginning today, and will more than cover your living expenses for the duration of your time with us.

We look forward to further discussing potential designs for the vessel you discussed. We have numerous automata in the works that might fit the bill.

Congratulations on taking a bold step toward reason,

Declan Taylor

Cortnye Queen Transaction: CRIT1014003

Artifacts

Ascendant's Assistant: A holy symbol of the Divine Herald that is worn proudly by the highest-ranking Ascendants.
+1 Sway and +1 Sense, take 1 Bleed for every roll with a 3 or less as its result.

Chains of Protection: A pair of bracelets that allow the wearers to take any marks meant for the person wearing the other.

Copper Spirit Board: Though some portions are hard to read due to the patina, this ancient board creates a connection beyond the veil.
Take 1 Bleed and roll Sense to use. Mixed success gives one question, full success gives three.

Ellington's Rifle: Designed by the haunted gun maker Samuel Ellington, this rifle has less recoil, allowing for a famously smooth shot. This one belonged to Ellington himself.
When rolling Control to shoot this gun, you may take a Bleed mark to get +2d.

The Grim Radio: When plugged into a dead body, users can tune the device to hear the voice of the dead. Afterward, the corpse is visibly exsanguinated.
Roll Sense to use. Mixed success grants one question, full success three questions. Can only be used on bodies once.

Lady Grace's Amethyst Pendant: An enchanting necklace with a deep purple stone at the center. It's said to draw the eyes away from one's faults.
When rolling Sway, you may take a Bleed mark to get +2d.

Masks of the Recluse: Recovered from the spider-creature known as the Recluse, these are the faces and identities stolen from its victims.
User can assume the face and voice of a different person. Take a Bleed mark when put on and a Bleed mark when removed.

The Petrified Pendulum: A pendulum made out of a mysterious amber substance, this object amplifies the user's connection to spirits. If hung off an object, it swings of its own accord.
When rolling Sense, you may take a Bleed mark to get +2d.

Scales of Justice: Lightkeepers use this ancient device to safely weigh the amount of bleed that has saturated an item.
Roll Sense to use. Partial success gives the user a general idea, full success gives them a precise answer. Cannot take Bleed marks from a miss or mixed success.

Shadow Soap: Scrubs the shadow off of anyone who uses it to wash. Like any soap, the effect wears off the dirtier a person becomes. It will last no longer than one day.

Spectacles of True Sight: These glasses allow you to see a person's true intentions with more clarity. They are considered universally unfashionable in almost any social circle.
When rolling Read, you may take a Bleed mark to get +2d.

The Unbroken Band: An ancient ring of protection.
Any time the wearer should take 1 or more marks, they can choose to soak all of the marks instead. If they do, they roll 1d6. On a 4-, the wearer takes 1 Bleed mark. On a 1, the wearer immediately drops incapacitated and takes a scar.

The Whisper Point: A needle that allows the user to physically stitch a piece of their own body onto another person's skin. Once the stitching is complete, they can communicate with one another across any distance until the stitching is removed.
Both people take 1 Body and 1 Bleed during the stitching and removal process.



Cortnye Queen Transaction: CRIT1014003

Creatures

Androphage: These small blue worms have razor-sharp teeth that help them attach to skin. They release a venom that paralyzes their victims while leaving them in an utterly euphoric state. If left to its own devices, an androphage will burrow inside and slowly eat away at the victim's internal organs, growing larger and larger until the body bursts. The Red Hand has been known to traffic these tiny creatures for recreational use. There are numerous "phage dens" hidden in the Varnish.

Bedroot: Not every creature has nefarious motivations, as is the case with the bedroot—but its methods can be extreme. This wooden creature bonds with a child, protecting it from harm and feeding symbiotically off of its innocence. It will emerge from its under-the-bed lair to defend its ward, relentlessly brutalizing anyone who mistreats the child. There is a house in the Sidle that still lies abandoned after the whole family, except the youngest son, was killed by the bedroot that made a home within.

Bookwyrm: A small serpentine abomination that feasts on knowledge. They infest libraries or other places that house text, then devour the intent or meaning infused in the writing. While the books remain intact, the knowledge is gone forever and anyone that attempts to read a consumed book will walk away confused. To defeat them, one must reclaim a piece of lost knowledge to weaponize against them. It is a particular job of the Conservator of the Fourth Pharos to protect the library from these vermin.

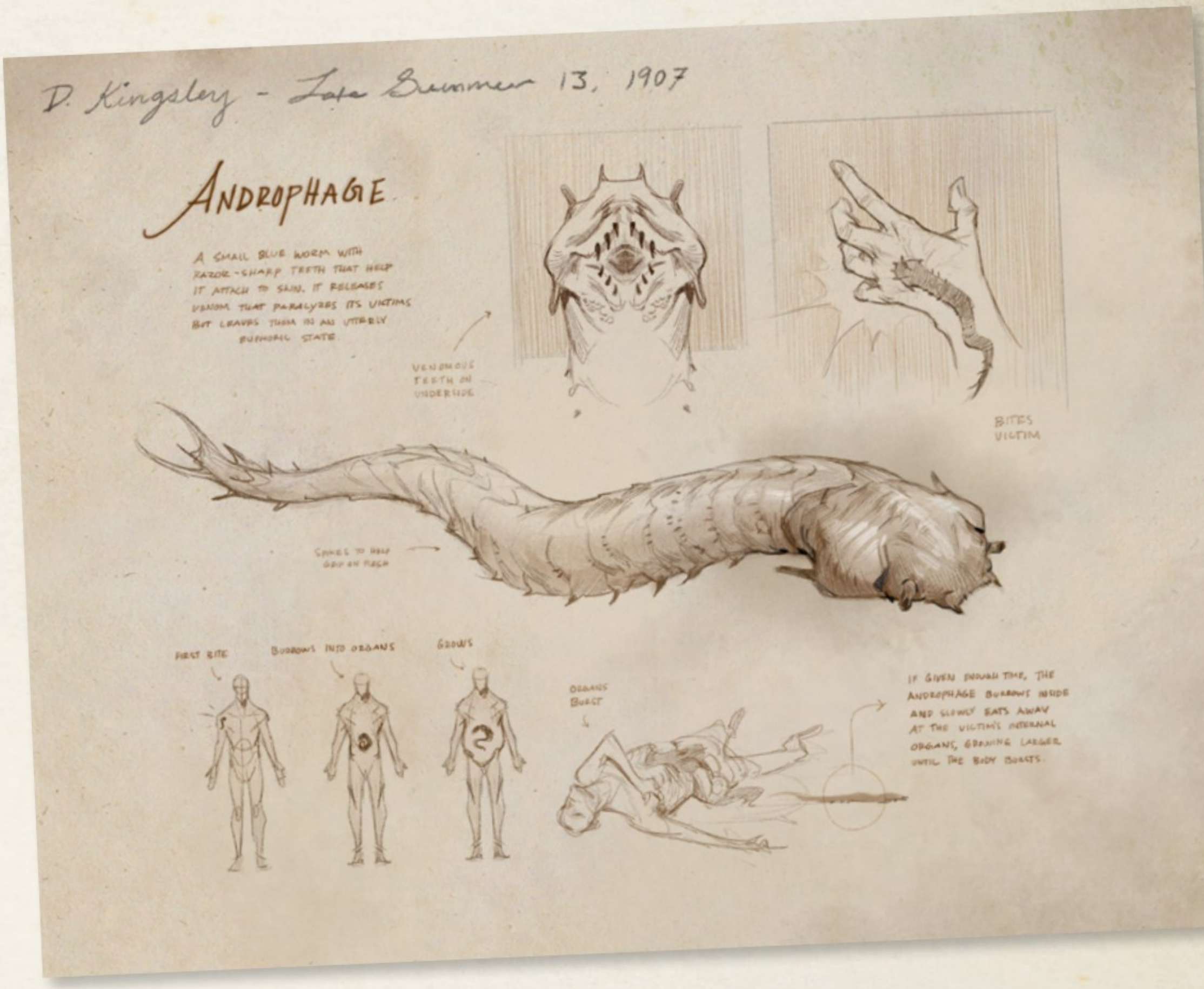
Bullhelm: Decades ago, when a group of archeologists cracked open an Ancient Fairen tomb, they came into contact with several cursed, golden, bull-shaped helms. After foolishly placing them upon their own heads, the explorers now wander the ruins of Oldfaire as horrifying amalgams of man and bull. Nigh invulnerable and entirely blind, few who meet this foe walk away unscathed. Investigators have reported sightings of these creatures within the Lilyspire Labyrinth.

Edaxani: Grey humanoid creatures that attempt to blend into normal society while feeding on the shadows of the living, siphoning away their very existence. Edaxani typically attack prey when they are asleep or unaware, but will also attack waking victims if their shadows are weak (at night or high noon). Targets will become less substantial as attacks continue, until they cease to exist altogether. As their physical form wanes, others' knowledge and memories of them fade as well. Unless stopped, this will continue until it is as if the victim never existed. Candela has two case files dealing with the edaxani, though the circle that dealt with the monster has no recollection of the assignment.

Ink Stalker: Living in wallpaper, newspapers, and paintings, this phantom blends itself into patterns and designs in order to spring upon a chosen target and feed on their creativity. Manifesting as a voice of dissatisfaction, the Ink Stalker will convince an artist of their creation's inadequacies, feeding on the expended energies required to produce more and more artwork. As a victim's obsession heightens, they will forget to feed and care for themselves—the sign that an Ink Stalker must find a new artist to prey upon. These creatures are said to use the Red Lamp district as their primary hunting ground, but find meals wherever creative minds frequent.

Mortenebran: This terrifying creature is only the facsimile of a human, with a too-large mouth and eyes that bulge out from its head. It will stalk and terrorize its prey for days, appearing in mirrored surfaces before finally emerging to attack. It has a strong, though peculiar sense of justice, and it only victimizes those that relish the harm they cause others. Not long ago, a father from the Church of the Holy Mother contacted Candela Obscura, believing a mortenebran was hunting him.

Cortnye Queen Transaction: CRIT1014003



Mr. Nightfall: A well-dressed figure, often adorned in all black, that moves about during foggy nights and is thought to be a sign of impending death. Those who see him are told to cover their mouths and hold their breath until he passes, lest he steal their soul. Dark purple blossoms flutter in his wake as he walks. Apothecaries pay top dollar for Nightfall petals, as a skilled herbalist can extract a deadly poison.

Phobivore: Amorphous shadow entities who only exist intangibly, these monsters feed off fear and induce sleep paralysis. Phobivores will stay with a victim for the entire course of the person's life if they enjoy the taste of their thoughts, developing tricks to drive their host's fears. In lieu of a particular target, these creatures may also choose a hunting ground rife with pain or terror. It is well known that a nest of phobivores feed at Grayslate Sanatorium.

The Polesare: This featureless, spherical being appears to be the size of a train engine. It's considered a mobile "thinning" and can warp space around it, as it exerts an intense gravitational pull. Everything around the Polesare, up to and including buildings, can be pulled in and crushed by its incredible force. Project Racquet is the HAF's top secret project attempting to utilize this being for defensive operations against Otherwhere.

Regenisen: A writhing mass of misshapen flesh. Opening its toothy maw reveals a swirling vortex of temporal energy. Its inhalations and exhalations warp the fabric of time around it—with every intake rapidly aging anything within its sphere. Even stranger, its exhalations have been known to return years of a person's life—a fact EONS has attempted not only to utilize, but to market. There is a rumor that a regenisen is currently trapped and held in a private home within the Eaves.

Cortnye Queen Transaction: CRIT1014003

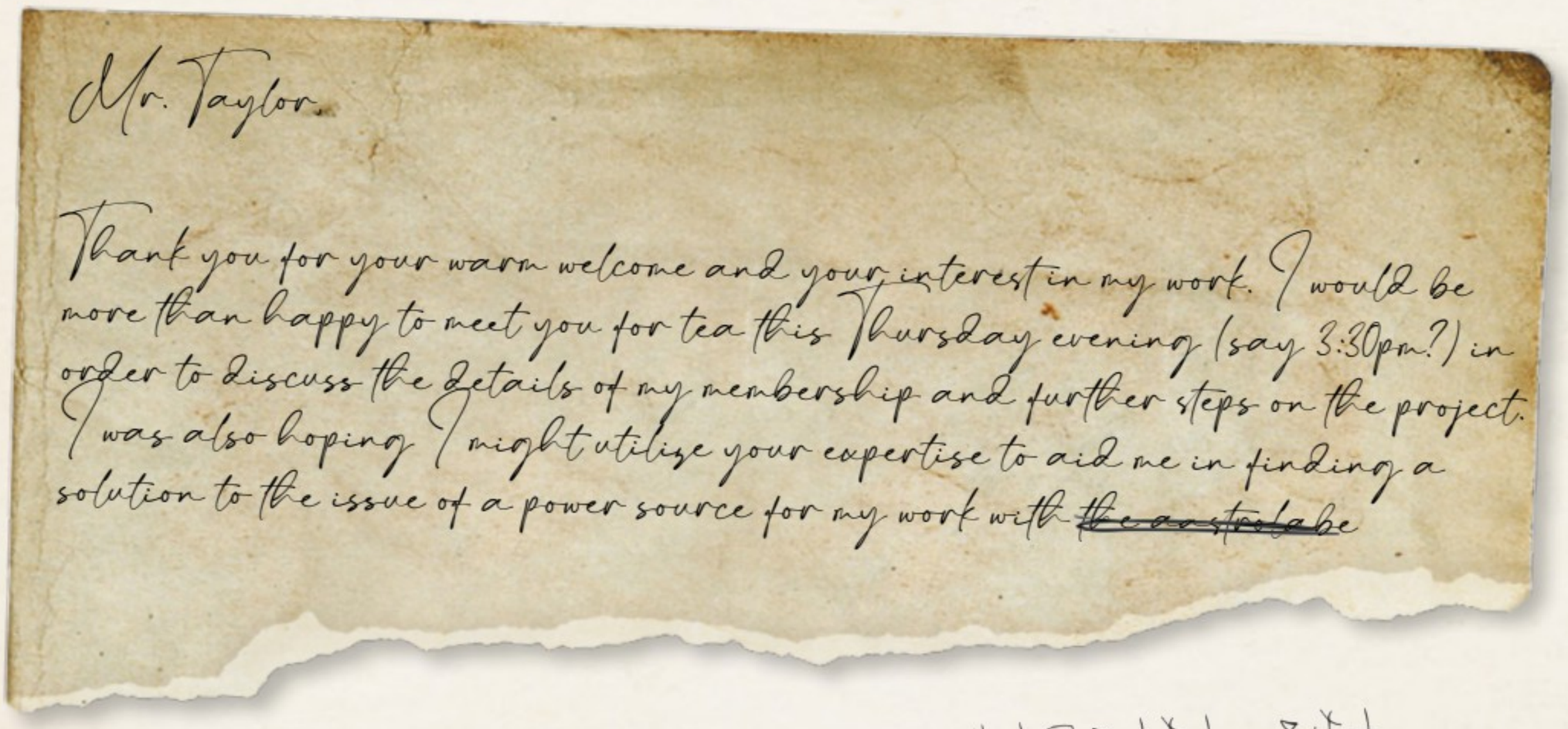
Revenants: Some souls return after they have perished, propelled by a powerful will to right something that was wronged, often through vengeance. It seems that these restless souls are imbued with characteristics that relate to the horrific nature of their death. They can inhabit their old bodies, possess new ones, or use spectral forces to control objects and weapons. They will never stop until their revenge is exacted. A recent maritime accident in Hallowharbor created dozens of revenants, though Candela Obscura is unsure why.

Shakareen: This phenomenon is constantly shifting and unstable, as if it cannot choose a form. No matter what shape it takes, the Shakareen always has glowing yellow eyes that pierce through the darkness. It's a creature of contracts, making grand promises to desperate mortals in return for prices they could never pay. Though Candela Obscura has captured the Shakareen on numerous occasions, it continues to escape its confines with the help of members of the organization it beguiled.

Sombral Jape: This dark, shadowy figure only exists in people's peripheral vision, appearing just outside their victim's field of view, a constant source of paranoia and anxiety. Rarely deadly, sombral japes are nefarious pranksters bent on causing mayhem for their own amusement. It's not uncommon for Lightkeepers to use these creatures as a trial run for their circle, though the wise member of Candela Obscura would not underestimate this foe.

Sonneater: This creature has a sleek, black, bat-like body covered in iridescent scales that refract the light around it, rendering the beast effectively invisible. (A slight bending of light is the only evidence of its presence.) It devours sound, causing an eerie silence to follow it everywhere it goes. Those that speak in its presence will quickly lose their voice. A small subset of Pyre believes that the Sonneater will bring about an incident they refer to as "the Great Whisper."

Wiltimps: Small mischievous creatures with round bodies and warty skin. They produce a noxious gas that kills all plant life around them. Though the gas sickens humans and animals, it rarely kills them. A single wiltimp can ruin a garden, while a swarm can destroy a season's harvest. Humans and animals that inhale the gas develop painful lesions in their nose and throat that heal after a few weeks.


Mr. Taylor,

Thank you for your warm welcome and your interest in my work. I would be more than happy to meet you for tea this Thursday evening (say 3:30pm?) in order to discuss the details of my membership and further steps on the project. I was also hoping I might utilise your expertise to aid me in finding a solution to the issue of a power source for my work with ~~the aostolabe~~

Cortnye Queen Transaction: CRIT1014003



Jora beats your
heart born in base lead.
Iron is your
resolve, unbreakable;
Grace and suppleness
gifted by tin,
Bright glow your
all-seeing copper eyes

Cortnye Queen Transaction: CRIT1014003

Organizations

The Assemblage: Rebellious students who aim to topple the political status quo. Founded in Briarbank College, they are known for large, loud demonstrations.

Association of Arts and Science: Wealthy contributors to the arts (gardens, museums, theaters, etc.) of Newfaire. The majority of members live within the Eaves, and the association throws a large festival every Mid Spring to showcase the work of the artists they are patrons of.

Company of Ages: A consortium of unethical manufacturing and distribution companies allied in their effort to quash the unionization of blue-collar workers.

District Boots: A group of South Soffit vigilantes formed to protect civilians from the violence of the Periphery within the district.

Dry Herons: An affiliation of independent smugglers that ship merchandise throughout the region using the Stentorian River.

Faire and Flower: An artisan guild of botanists and herbalists who are rumored to practice ancient witchcraft. They have an unusual amount of power among the wealthy elite.

Free Horizon Coalition: Revolutionaries that are trying to stop the expansion of towns and cities into the Scarlet Wood.

Guild of Trades and Craft: A large-scale guild that advocates for workers' rights. Their headquarters in the Steel is protected at all hours by intimidating guards.

Institute of Psychical Studies: An eclectic group of researchers looking to unlock the hidden power of the mind.

Iron Nail: A crime syndicate that takes contracts to assassinate political targets. Many believe this group is an invention of the fringe media.

Martyrs of the Eclipse: Cultists that want to obliterate the sun and plunge the world into eternal darkness.

Mechanicum: Scientists, many within EONS, working to advance the development of electricity and machine technology. They're currently focused on building automata.

The Moonwatchers: A band of thieves that terrorize Newfaire. They move across rooftops at night, using windows and chimneys to sneak into buildings.

New Century Dramatic Society: The organization behind the Varnish's largest and most well-funded theater, the Grand Halen Theater. It's rumored their funding comes from an Unabridged who has lived since the time of Oldfaire.

Order of the Golden Lance: A small group that protects artifacts it deems to be of a religious nature. They are consistently at odds with Pyre.

Order of the Iridium Elixir: A group of Fairens who believe they can recreate the alchemy of Oldfaire. They have a limited knowledge and understanding of the true effects of bleed.

Owlers: The unofficial organization of people who navigate the minefields of Westwreck, leading travelers and transporting goods for a steep commission. Their maps are highly sought-after and considered invaluable. The most prolific owlers cypher their cartography so that only they can understand the routes.

Soul Speakers: Led by an enigmatic figure, this small but powerful group of mediums hosts regular seances to contact the spirits of famous deceased figures. They are known for their very public attempts to legitimize spiritualism.

Cortnye Queen Transaction: CRIT1014003

ADDITIONAL INSPIRATION

Themes

Aging	Forgiveness	Loyalty
Ambition	Grief	Prejudice
Betrayal	Identity	Redemption
Community	Isolation	Revenge
Corruption	Justice	Sacrifice
Courage	Knowledge	Transformation

Names

Alejandro Castillo	Hugo Garcia	Quanita Daniels
Andrei Popescu	Jade Jimenez	Kwon Seung-hoon
Duncan Walters	Kira Zebrowska	Soren Jensen
Enzo Tarris	Mika Kangas	Tala Abu-Bakr
Farrah Morales	Nadia Bakri	Theo Martinez
Gideon Cohen	Natalie Blanc	Bello Zainabu

Locations

Anchorfall Shops	Glass Veil Cafe	Rook Station
Ashbury Diner	Highstone Institute	Silvergate Cemetery
Bradford Library	Ivy Bridge	Stonecross Restaurant
Brambleton Tea House	The Macinaeum	Thistle Farm
Crownwick Emporium	Mistfield Park	Wesley Hospital
Fiddler's Theatre	Palace Theater	Whitestair Chapel

Streets

Burial Lane	Foundry Way	Pearl Avenue
Candlelit Drive	Hartley Lane	Sebastian Circle
Coal Street	Laurel Avenue	Titan Street
Copper Court	Lighthouse Way	Valley Court
Fable Avenue	Luxum Drive	Watercress Circle
Ferrier Lane	Michele Street	Wharf Street

Cortnye Queen Transaction: CRIT1014003

RULES & ROLLS REFERENCE

Action Rolls

All action rolls are made with a d6 dice pool. A player can never roll more than 6 dice.

On a 1–3 result, the roll is a failure. Usually, the PC won't accomplish what they wanted, and there are consequences.

On a 4–5 result, the roll is a mixed success. The PC accomplishes what they wanted, but it comes at a cost.

On a 6 result, the roll is a full success. The PC gets what they wanted without complication.

On multiple 6s, the roll is a critical success. The PC gets what they wanted, and something extra.

Drives

Players can spend a drive point to add dice to the rolls of an action that the drive encompasses, and may spend as many points per roll as they have available.

Actions

Each action can have a rating between 0–3, denoting the number of dice a player rolls when performing that action. If they have a rating of zero in an action and no drive they want to spend, they roll two dice and take the lower result. They cannot get a critical success on an action with a rating of zero.

Resistances

These are a character's way of pushing back against a consequence. Any time a player doesn't like the result of their roll, they may choose to burn a resistance from the pertaining drive (Nerve, Cunning, or Intuition) to reroll a number of dice equal to the previous roll's action rating. They do not reroll any spent drive or dice they received from assistance. Players have 1 resistance per 3 maximum drive. Because resistance is based on their maximum, spending current drive does not reduce resistance.

Gilded Actions

If an action is marked as gilded (represented by a filled diamond to the left of an action), a player will always replace a standard die with a gilded die when rolling. After rolling, if they choose the result on that die, they recover 1 point of drive associated with the action they rolled.

Marks

Marks are made up of three different categories:

- Body represents physical harm.
- Brain represents mental strain or stress.
- Bleed represents harm caused by magick.

Instead of taking a fourth mark in any category, a PC drops incapacitated in the scene and takes a scar. If they should take any marks beyond the fourth, those marks are carried over.

Cortnye Queen Transaction: CRIT1014003

Scars

A scar represents a permanent change to the PC, both mechanically and narratively. They erase all marks in the category they overfilled, then come up with a scar that best reflects the lasting effect of the damage and write it in an available scar slot. Lastly, they shift a point from one action rating to another to reflect how the scar changes the way their character interacts with the world. They will be able to return to play when their circle gets them to somewhere safe.

Scars can only ever be healed in two ways: by the Doctor's Lifesaver ability, or the character leaving Candela Obscura for an extended period of time.

Roles & Specialties

- **Face:** Journalist & Magician
- **Muscle:** Explorer & Soldier
- **Scholar:** Doctor & Professor
- **Slink:** Criminal & Detective
- **Weird:** Medium & Occultist

Illumination & Advancement

After each assignment, ask the three Illumination Questions on the players' circle sheet, and for each answer in the affirmative, the circle earns 1 Illumination. If nobody fulfilled any, no more Illumination is earned. If only part of the circle fulfilled theirs, they earn 2 Illumination. If everybody fulfilled at least one Illumination Key, they earn 4 Illumination.

When the Illumination track is full, the circle advances:

Clear the Illumination track. Any leftover Illumination counts toward their next advancement cycle.

Choose a new circle ability.

Each player can choose two different options for their characters:

- Add 1 action point.
- Add 2 drive points.
- Take a new ability. *This can be from either the player's role or specialty.*
- Gild an additional action.

BEYOND THIS BOOK

While the Fairelands and the investigators of Candela Obscura are perpetually locked in a cycle of mystery, conflict, and horror, that does not mean your table is bound by a specific narrative. There's nothing you've read here that is immutable or sacrosanct. If you'd rather your campaign occur in a time and place other than the one provided here, we encourage you to explore new lands. If you'd rather invent a new history and culture for Candela Obscura, the organization is yours to modify as you wish.

We encourage you to take anything you read within this book and make it your own. Adjust and expand upon areas of this game in any way that fulfills the needs of your table. Trust yourself, trust your players, and trust the story you are building together. This world is now yours as much as it is ours, and we look forward to seeing the stories you tell with it.

Cortnye Queen Transaction: CRIT1014003

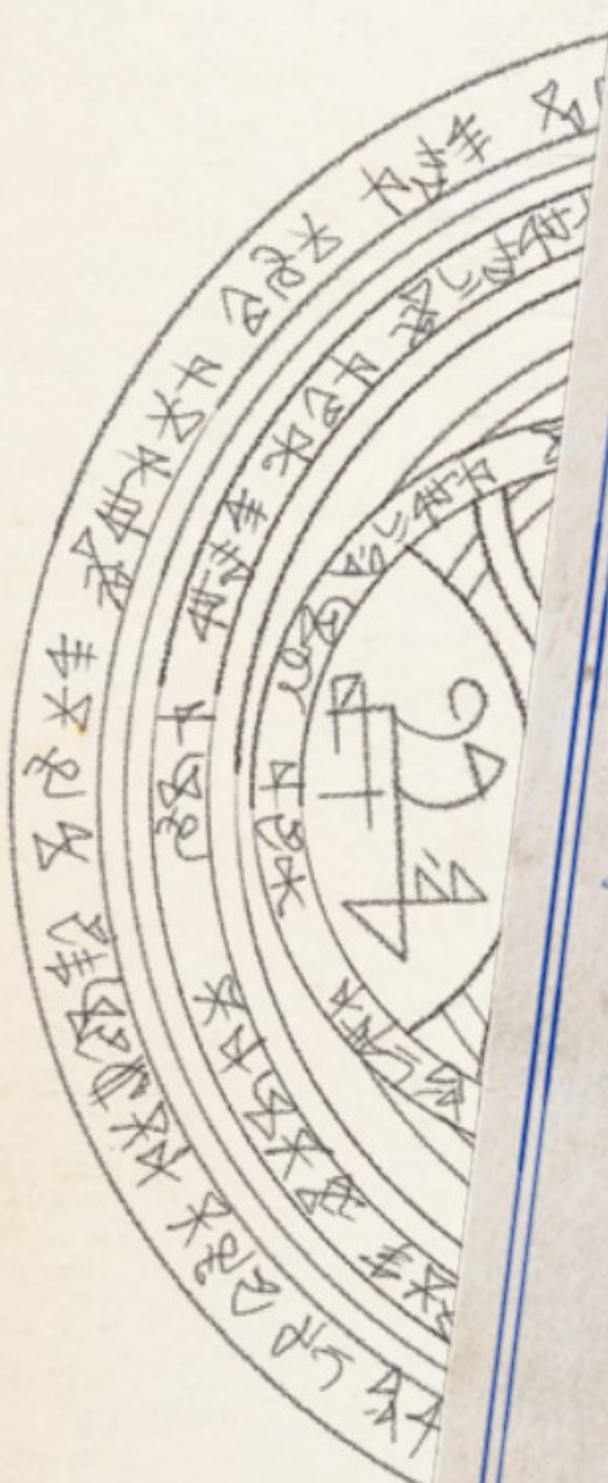
OBITUARY

Capt. Amelia E. Ashford

Wartime hero succumbs to injuries. Captain Amelia Ashford passed away this Sunday on the battlefield at the Verge. Her aircraft was downed by Otherwhere forces while escorting the HAFA "Mercy," which also met its untimely demise. Prior to wartime, Capt. Ashford was an accomplished aeronaut, explorer, and linguist, and during the Second Great War, had taken a position as a pilot in order to assist her countryfellows in the war effort.

She leaves to mourn a loving fiancée, Gabriella Altieri, and a doting father, Prof. Ezra Ashford. Services will be held on Mid-Spring 13 at 11am in the Church of the Holy Mother. We extend our sincerest sympathies to any and all whose life was brightened by Ashford's dazzling personality an







Cortnye Queen Transaction: CRIT1014003

Duckiest of dads, kindest of men, Candela's Cat's Meow,

How are you? I hope this letter finds you very well. I miss you all the time, but you know that already.

This may shock you, but you would be delighted by some of the things I've seen. Amidst the grueling hours, terrible food, and hail of gunfire, there are wonderful people doing their utmost to protect our beautiful valley.

Who haven't I told you about yet? ...A young Lieutenant Colonel McLeod would be of particular interest. He's one of the engineers working on the latest prototypes for the smaller dirigibles. You would like him, he's got a very dry sense of humor. I don't like him much, but you would.

Still, I can't be too hard on the man, he did request me for the next test run. I think I've garnered quite the reputation for myself! All the time and money you spent on my aeronautics training was well worth it—did you ever imagine I would fly for something as important as this? You wouldn't believe how much faster the military craft are than our civilian dirigibles. The increase in airspeed over the course of the war is astronomical, if you think about how much effort it takes to lighten the airships—even slightly.

My squadron has been on reconnaissance these last few days, I'm grateful that we have a small break from the action. A somewhat safer position (if you can call it that) allows us to rest up and sharpen our senses. I believe all my time hunting through Oldfaire is paying off nearly as much as the flying lessons. And I'll never be allowed to give you grief for forcing me to do jigsaw puzzles as a little girl again. I swear I spot trenches with the best of them because of it! I hope you feel quite proud.

In a few hours, I take off as Captain of the escort squadron for the HATA "Mercy." I know you're going to react to this with extreme worry, as is your way, but I want you to know that I'm both incredibly proud of and honored by the opportunity to be here. Our country is in such a desperate time of need, and I want to help in any way I'm best able. So be happy for me! I'm excited for this one! It will all be okay! Remember to take your anxiety medication, enjoy a bit of sunshine, and sleep. No fretting!

I know you read the news constantly, and I don't want you to think it's all bad out here. I'll write to you again just as soon as I land. If I'm lucky, the next letter will already be there to reassure you as soon as this one arrives.

Tell Alexandra I miss her. And make sure you invite Gabriella to the house for dinner soon. You two both have a tendency toward isolation and I'm not there to pester either of you! You tell her I love her and I'll make sure she does the same for you. And, once I'm back, we can finally start working together on investigations. We will be such a team. Everyone in Candela Obscura will talk about us like we are the best pair they've ever seen.

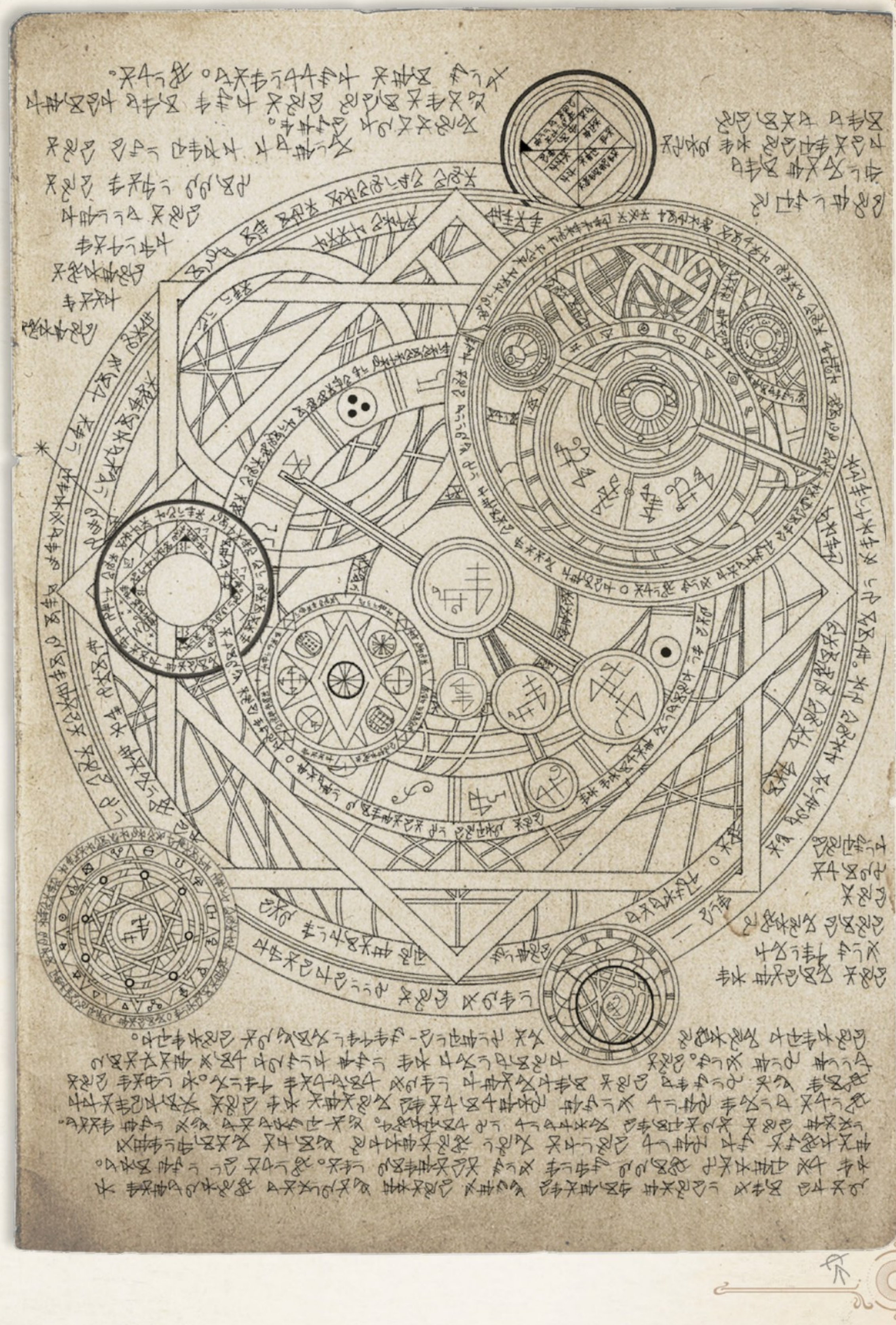
And it will be completely true.

I love you very much. Write back soon!

Your silly goose,

Amelia

Cortnye Queen Transaction: CRIT1014003



Index

GAME TERMS

Actions 8, 50, 198
- Action Rating 10, 11, 25
- Action Roll 11, 198
- Control 25, 50
- Focus 25, 51
- Hide 25, 51
- Move 25, 50
- Read 25, 50
- Sense 25, 51
- Strike 25, 50
- Survey 25, 51
- Sway 25, 50

Assignment Structure 43, 44, 168
Circle Abilities 41
- Interdisciplinary 41
- In This Together 41
- Nobody Left Behind 41
- One Last Run 41
- Resource Management 41
- Stamina Training 41

Circle Gear 53
Circle Sheet 39, 199
Countdown Dice 166
Dice Pool 8, 10
- 6-Sided Dice 10, 160, 167
- Standard Dice 2
- Gilded Dice 2, 8, 198
- Rule of Six, The 11

Drive(s) 2, 8, 26, 48, 198
- Cunning 2, 8, 26, 48
- Intuition 2, 8, 26, 49
- Nerve 2, 8, 26, 48

Gamemaster (GM) 2, 159, 188
Gild 8, 10, 11, 26, 198
Illumination 41, 45, 54, 55
- Illumination Keys 54, 62
- Illumination Questions 41, 54, 55
- Illumination Track 54, 62

Marks & Scars 14, 15, 165, 198, 199
Non-Player Characters (NPCs) 2, 44, 46, 189
Resistance(s) 13, 26, 48, 198
Resource Points 41
- Stitch 41
- Refresh 41
- Train 41

Rolls 1, 8, 10, 11, 47, 48, 49, 50, 51, 159, 160, 198
- Failure 1, 9, 10, 13, 198
- Mixed Success 1, 9, 10, 12, 198
- Full Success 10, 198
- Critical Success 10, 11, 198
- Action Roll 9, 10, 11, 198
- Group Roll 11

Stakes 2, 9, 10, 167
- Low Stakes 9, 167
- High Stakes 9, 167

CANDELA OBSCURA

Candela Obscura 1, 3, 4, 39, 73, 74, 75, 76, 77
- Astrolabe 3, 76
- Chapter House 40, 74, 77, 188
- Chapter House Archives 77
- Circle 3, 39, 40, 41, 43, 44, 54, 74, 162, 199
- Conclave of Luminosity, The 74, 75
- Conservator of the Fourth Pharos, The 73, 77, 192
- Council of Lightkeepers 3, 75
- Fourth Pharos, The 3, 76, 77
- Lighthouse(s) 76, 145, 147, 152
- Lightkeepers 73, 74, 75, 77, 164
- Radiant Order, The 75, 76
- Tome of Lumos, The 73, 75, 137

Other Organizations 196
Exoteric Order of New Sciences (EONS) 78
Office of Unexplained Phenomena (OUP) 79
Pyre 80
Red Hand, The 82
Unabridged 83

CHARACTERS

Abilities 27, 28
- Adrenaline Rush 27
- Anatomical Strike 30
- Back Against the Wall 31
- Basic Training 29
- Behind Me 27
- Bending Spoons 32
- Better Part of Valor 30
- Blood of the Covenant 32
- Born in the Shadows 31
- Chemical Concoction 30
- Cold Read 32
- Commune 32
- Compartmentalization 29
- Cool Under Pressure 27
- Death Defy 27
- Dissection 30
- Endurance 27
- Escape Artist 28
- Extend Your Senses 32
- Field Experience 29
- Flourish 28
- Forbidden Ritual 32
- Geared Up 29
- Ghostblade 32
- Great Wards 27
- Hardened 31
- I Know a Guy 27
- In the Trenches 28
- Insider Access 28
- Inspection 31
- Interrogation 31
- Last Moments 32
- Learn from My Mistakes 30
- Let Them In 27
- Leverage 31
- Lie Detector 28
- Lifesaver 30
- Meticulous Notes 27
- Miasma 32
- Mind Over Matter 29
- Mind Palace 31
- Misdirection 28
- Narrow Escape 29
- Non-Combatant 30
- Not Again 29
- Obscure Lexicon 29
- Occult Researcher 27
- One Step Ahead 31
- Open Book 28
- Patch Up 30
- Play the Bait 32
- Practiced Patter 28
- Premonitions 32
- Press Conference 28
- Prestige, The 28
- Resuscitation 30
- Ritual 27
- Saw This Coming 27
- Scout 27
- Sharpshooter 29
- Speak Their Language 32
- Stakeout 31
- Steel Mind 30
- Sticky Fingers 31
- Street Smarts 31
- Sweet Talk 27
- Tactician 29
- Tenacious 29
- Tricks of the Trade 31
- Uncanny Eye 28
- University Resources 30

Cortnye Queen Transaction: CRIT1014003

Verbose 30
Volunteer Duty 29
Well-Read 27
Well-Researched 28
Character Sheet 2, 19, 33, 54
Gear 14, 52, 53, 190
Relationships 33, 34, 37
Bully 34
Champion 34
Confidant 34
Coworker 34
Enemy 35
Family 35
Lover 35
Mentor 35
Muse 36
Old Friend 36
Rival 36
Sibling 36
Soulmate 37
Stranger 37
Ward 37
Roles 4, 19, 27, 199
Face 2, 20, 27
Muscle 2, 21, 27
Scholar 2, 22, 27
Slink 2, 23, 27
Weird 2, 24, 27
Specialties 19, 198
Face
Journalist 4, 20, 25, 26, 28, 54, 199
Magician 4, 20, 25, 26, 28, 54, 199
Muscle
Explorer 4, 21, 25, 26, 29, 54, 199
Soldier 4, 21, 25, 26, 29, 54, 199
Scholar
Doctor 4, 22, 25, 26, 30, 54, 199
Professor 4, 22, 25, 26, 30, 54, 199
Slink
Criminal 4, 23, 25, 26, 31, 54, 199
Detective 4, 23, 25, 26, 31, 54, 199
Weird
Medium 4, 24, 25, 26, 32, 54, 199
Occultist 4, 24, 25, 26, 32, 54, 199

THE FAIRELANDS

Breath-Binding 105, 139
Fairelands 1, 3, 4, 77, 87, 89, 90, 91, 92, 103, 104
Fairelands Valley, The 87, 92, 145
Regions 145
Brindleborne
Mountains, The 146
Glass Sea, The 147
Haven Hills, The 148
Scarlet Wood, The 149
Seasway 152
Stenorian River, The 153
Tottergrass 154
Verge, The 155
Westwreck 98, 156
Faraway, The 92, 97
Hale 4, 87, 92, 96
Economy 97, 103
Halen Bill 97
Halen Piece 97
Government 96
Armed Forces
Chief of Staff 96
Divine Herald, The 96, 99
Grand Magistrate, The 96
Halen Armed Forces (HAF) 94, 96, 97, 113, 156
Halen Assembly, The 96, 100
Judiciary, The 96
Premier 92, 95, 96, 100
President 96
Prime Minister 92, 95, 96, 100
Tokens of Fairness 106
Triumvirate, The 97, 93, 98
Ascendacy, The 98, 99, 116
Periphery, The 79, 98, 102, 114
Primacy, The 98, 100, 119
History 87, 90, 91, 92, 93, 94, 95
Electric Event, The 94, 156
Halen Civil War, The 92, 93
Halen Renaissance, The 93
Last Great War, The 92, 94
Northern Economic Alliance, The 94
Shiver, The 87, 94
Treaty of Salomere 94
War of Embers, The 92
Newfaire 1, 4, 87, 95, 98, 107, 188, 197
Briar Green 108
Eaves, The 110
Groundswell 111, 143
Hallowharbor 113, 127
Nine Irons 114
Red Lamp 115
Shriveline, The 116
Sidle, The 118
Silverslip, The 119
South Soffit 121
Steam, The 122
Steel, The 123
Oldfaire 1, 4, 70, 77, 87, 92, 127
Ancient Fairen (Language) 70, 96, 153, 155
Council of Alchemists 70, 127
Emperor Calinus 92, 141
Empress Iomene 70, 90, 91, 92, 127, 128, 137, 141, 144
Sites 127
Anatithenai 128
Dig Site #347 129
Endless Descent, The 131
Garden of the Gods, The 132
Hollow Bodies, The 133
House of Gold, The 134
House of Iomene, The 137
Nascent Springs, The 138
Nekropolis, The 139
Ocean's End 140
Palace of the Watcher, The 141
Unscathed Alley 143
Ziggurat, The 144
Otherwhere 92, 93, 94
Scarlet 87, 103, 104, 115, 146, 149, 188

SUPERNATURAL WORLD

Bleed 3, 14, 15, 65, 76, 96, 198
Flare, The 3, 65, 76
Magick 1, 3, 65, 70, 96
Thinnings 3, 65, 76, 127, 145
Phenomena 3, 65, 66, 69
Alchemy 70, 96
Artifacts 69, 191
Creatures 66, 192, 193, 194
Spirits 65, 69
Vastchasm 147

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