



ASSIGNMENTS



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INTRODUCTION

The Custodians are sent to investigate reports of unlicensed sacrifices taking place in a warehouse East of Glottage. It seems that some ambitious producer of psychotropic tea ingredients has managed to imprison a harvest god in an indoor growing facility. Using a combination of hydroponics, automated lighting, and experimental prayer marks, they have found a way to continuously cycle a harvest ritual and maximize their production to vastly outpace their government-regulated competitors.

But this god they have bound is accustomed to the domain of field and meadow, of rituals invoking the sun and moon instead of artificial lights and humidity-controlled rooms. It is growing rapidly and demanding greater sacrifices.

Direct the following to a Custodian of your choice: *How do you know that such an entity will eventually find a way to break free, and threaten the surrounding neighborhood?*

QUESTIONS & OPPORTUNITIES

How is the harvest god most vulnerable? (Complexity: 4)

Resolve the Assignment by destroying or neutralizing this dangerous entity so it cannot grow back.

What resources does this harvest god offer, if appeased? (Complexity: 6)

Resolve the Assignment by working with the growers to adapt their methods and establish a more sustainable operation that does not threaten the community.

Where can this harvest god be safely transplanted? (Complexity: 8)

Resolve the Assignment by breaking the god from its confines, allowing it to grow freely, and showing the local residents how to coexist with it. This approach unlocks the special move, The Mark of Quickening.

→ **Special Move: The Mark of Quickening**
When you write a prayer mark to invoke the cycles of birth and decay within living matter, describe what the mark looks like, and then your next associated roll is made with Vitality.

THE VERSE OF THE INEVITABLE HARVEST

- ☐ Each Custodian describes a hope or dream they have of some day living in abundance, with all their needs met.



THE HUNGERING ROOTS



THE HUNGERING ROOTS OF FRUITFUL PROMISE

The god which sprouts and strains within its artificial confines has countless relatives in every field, orchard, and garden. It has been called many names, in old harvest songs and in whispered prayers of gardeners begging a wilted flower or dormant seed to please grow. This particular god, however, has been born of desperation and fed by a greed for more, always, at whatever cost. The ancestors who once farmed the surrounding lands practiced their harvest rites with a respect for cycles—the time of feast and famine, the dormant furrows before the exaltation of spring. But those who trapped this god, drowning it in potent fertilizers and relentless artificial sunlight, sought to do away with all seasons but a continual harvest. As everyone knows, a god must feed, and its imprisonment has made this one ravenous.

As the Custodians investigate these strange circumstances, the god will make its presence known. A gnawing hunger, an almost gravitational pull towards the soil, the cycles of growth and decay quickening around them. At the same time, the nature of the plants it has been bound to produce—psychoactive flowers, leaves, and fungi—will have an effect on any Custodians who come into contact with them.

If the Custodians fail to resolve the Assignment in time, the Hungering Roots will soon overcome its captors. The ceaseless demands placed upon it have spurred its appetite to a frenzy. As it breaks free to reclaim its domain of sun and soil, it will consume everything in its path.

MOMENTS

- ◇ From the soil, sounds of rhythmic scratching and writhing.
- ◇ The sweet scent of ripening and decay triggers euphoric, sun-drenched memories.
- ◇ An audible crack of splitting concrete, followed by faint squelching, then silence.
- ◇ A haze of pollen and drifting spores like snowflakes, stirring dormant desires.
- ◇ A glimpse of passing clouds through a small warehouse window. The outside world feels less real and tangible than the bright, lush garden within.
- ◇ A scurrying rat drops dead at the roots of a tall, flowering bush. The soil shifts beneath, as the leaves quiver above.

DANGERS

Hungering roots

Restless feelers which stir beneath the soil and concrete, grasping at the furthest reaches of the god's territory, impatient for the next offering.

Mirror petals

Delicate flowers of shifting hues, highly sensitive to changes in their environment. They seek out sources of energetic nourishment by drawing in outsiders with their alluring patterns and scent, then matching their mood to distract them while the roots and vines latch on to draw blood.

Intoxicated followers

Those who work most directly with the god, feeding the soil and carefully harvesting its gifts, have become symbiotic extensions of its growing power. Some part of the god has taken root in them, whether of their own choice or by prolonged exposure. Driven by its hunger, and exulting in its blooming, they will react aggressively to any perceived threats.

LOCATIONS

Crumbling tenements. Teetering apartment buildings linked by rusty fire escapes and clotheslines. Abandoned vehicles and construction materials litter the alleyways. Weeds stretch tall from cracked sidewalks.

Paint the Scene: *What innovations of the locals help them to survive in this hostile environment?*

Warehouse exterior. Three stories of weathered concrete layered in graffiti and vines, surrounded by a chain-link fence. Notably, the gutters and windows have been repaired. Wildflowers peek from the layer of weeds along the roof.

Paint the Scene: *What was this building originally used for? What efforts have been made to conceal its current purpose?*

The compost heap. Still, humid air thick with fruitful decay. Sodden floorboards collapsed under a mountain of rotting vegetation and scattered soil. Spiraling tubes collect muddy green runoff in buckets for some unknown purpose. Paint the Scene: *What disturbing materials have been added to feed the soil?*

The growing room. Potted shrubs and flowering vines carpet the floor, tables, and shelves in a wall-to-wall explosion of greenery. Dazzling overhead bulbs, rigged to a chaotic web of repurposed wiring and electronics, bathe the room in artificial sunlight while rotating fans give the impression of a gentle breeze. Paint the Scene: *How does this space invoke a sense of euphoria and timelessness?*

LOCATIONS (CONTINUED)

Harvest altar. A massive earthenware pot, etched in prayer marks, split and cracked violently by an explosion of blood-red tendrils and pale shoots. Rich black soil cascades from cracks in the cement slab underfoot, cradled by glistening bone-white roots.

Paint the Scene: *How do the elements of this altar incorporate both ancient harvest rituals and innovations in modern sacrificial practices?*

Processing area. A dimly lit, windowless room, cluttered with sorting tables, withering troughs, mechanical roller, drying rack, sifting mesh, and packaging materials. Clearly, the owners of this warehouse were gearing up for a wider distribution of their product, before they lost control.

Paint the Scene: *What unusual claims does the producer make about the properties of this tea on their packaging?*

SIDE CHARACTERS

Avery Haddock, a warehouse guard.

Grey overalls, tight braids, combat boots. Recruited from a competitor's operation, they have become staunchly devoted to this new god after tasting its "gifts."

Quote: *"Since trying this tea, I quit drinking, and other things, too. There's nothing like it. It feels like floating downriver on a perfect moonlit night. Like wherever you're headed, things are going to be all right. Maybe you should try a sip, you look a little on edge!"*

Gayle Van Wyck, a plant tender.

Hippie dress with added pockets, starry-eyed, no protective equipment. Claiming to receive messages from the god directly, she has been pushing for a more radical approach of spreading the god's seedlings to grow wild.

Quote: *"Can you hear it? It whispers from the soil. It cries to break through the concrete. If you listen, it will share its secrets with you. It gives so freely—we should do the same. That's where all the problems of the world come from, pure selfishness."*

Leo Mescal, a harvester.

Long black hair, red bandana, concentrated scowl broken by easy laughter. A forager and outdoorsman for many years, he has become fascinated with the changing variety of "gifts" the god produces.

Quote: *"Have you ever seen anything like that? One season, it gave us these little berries, hot as chilies, got you real fired up. Then the ice flowers, those numbed you or put you right to sleep. Lately, it's mostly been these sort of fungal blooms, a bit more aggressive."*

Taj Siddiki, an errand runner.

Colorful scarf, messenger bag, shaved head. Knows all the shortcuts up and down the tenements, beloved by the neighborhood for their bright smile and quick deliveries. They grew up in the neighborhood but have never traveled far, which only fuels their curiosity for new discoveries.

Quote: *"I heard there's this new god in the outer cities, where they've had all the power outages. So the Saint Electric only delivers when you pay her tithes, or buy the new appliances with her mark, right? But this one siphons that power for people like us. When you hotwire a car or rig a satellite, this god helps."*

Patricia Morell, an elderly neighbor.

Bathrobe in all seasons, sunglasses, bottomless tea mug. The longest-dwelling resident of the tenements, she has adopted the position of unofficial granny and advisor to those without ties to any family abroad.

Quote: *"I really don't see what all the fuss is about. We look out for each other here. The garden below might require more than your usual flowerbed does, but it provides. That's not to say I don't worry sometimes about what will happen if they aren't able to feed it properly, but those lads seem to know what they're doing."*

Lucas Greene, an urchin.

Salvaged military jacket, trinket collection, adopted stray cat named Pickles. Mostly seen climbing or watching from a perch. Sometimes called Nine Lives by the residents after several close calls during her rooftop explorations.

Quote: *"They're always busy with the big garden in that building, but they don't know about all the little gardens everywhere. I guess things just grow where they want to. There's more sun on the rooftops, anyway."*

Haven, head of growing operations.

Inexplicably clean suit, fresh undercut, occult tattoos. In their previous corporate life, they worked for a company that "facilitated installation of emergent deities." Now spearheading a bold (many would say reckless) project, they are out to prove themselves as an entrepreneur.

Quote: *"What we're doing here is revolutionary—we're truly bridging worlds. I know how that sounds, but think about it: what if you could be a part of the same rituals your ancient ancestors practiced, while being among the first to pilot the rituals of the future? Instead of seasonal rituals, we're giving this god around-the-clock worship through automated prayer mark integration and a robust sacrificial program that adapts to changing conditions on the ground. In exchange, it grants us unprecedented results that actually evolve with our offerings, so the specs of each small-batch tea reflect the unique qualities of local sacrifices."*

CLUES

- ☐ Faint prayer-marks, painted in sweeping strokes on a brick wall, now sprout moss and tiny red flowers.
- ☐ A large ritual wreath hangs from a wall, formed of broken scythes, shovels, and other traditional farming equipment.
- ☐ Decorative flower pots, small offerings of animal bones visible among the stalks.
- ☐ Worn-out shears, grasped in place by the vine they have halfway severed
- ☐ A Side Character leaves a conversation abruptly, stating an urgent need to "feed the garden."
- ☐ Curious green shoots entwined with nearby cords and wires.
- ☐ A dizzying sensation of intensified gravity when standing in a certain area.
- ☐ Light bulbs flicker as flowers seem to grow brighter in hue.
- ☐ A dog-eared farmer's almanac, margins full of hurriedly scrawled notes.
- ☐ A Custodian's recent footprint in the dirt, already sprouting with weeds.
- ☐ Scattered series of paintings on salvaged cardboard and wood panels, all iterations of a vivid, glowing, rainbow tree.
- ☐ An antique bronze sundial, each hour etched with a prayer mark and trailing copper conductor wires off into various planters.
- ☐ Salvaged chemistry equipment—beakers, vials, tubing, instruments—stored haphazardly among gardening supplies.
- ☐ The charred remains of a row of shrubs in cracked pots, the surrounding floor blackened from a mostly-contained fire.
- ☐ A heavy compost bin, padlocked, spray painted with the words DO NOT OPEN, and the urgent addition, EVER.
- ☐ A pile of empty industrial fertilizer bags, featuring a colorful illustration of the Verdant Mother, blowing gently on a row of yawning seedling children stretching from their sleep.
- ☐ Hanging rows of goggles, facemasks, and other medical-grade protective equipment.
- ☐ Signs written in bold marker, reminding workers to LIMIT YOUR EXPOSURE CYCLES.
- ☐ Outside, starlings hop in inebriated circles around a pile of stolen berries and blossoms.
- ☐ A Side Character casually mentions the phrase "all things decay, but bring forth new life."

REWARDS

- ◆ A small stitchroot seedling, used for splicing and stabilization of other plants. Will grow and become affixed to anything it is planted near. Add it to your Altar.
- ◆ A jar of nutrient-rich compost water, able to quicken growing things or neutralize toxins. Add it to your Altar.
- ◆ A machete, grip wrapped in salvaged leather cord, hand-etched with the words SOW on one side and REAP on the other. Add it to your Altar.
- ◆ Midnight Reverie, a potent blend of loose leaf psychotropic tea. Add it to your Altar.
- ◆ A memento from the investigation—ask another Custodian to describe it, then add it to your Altar.
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INTRODUCTION

The Custodians are informed of a series of disturbances near the rural town of Weft, located just on the border of the Clutching Woods. Reports of strange attacks on livestock, and damage to power lines and vehicles, have been documented. Hopworth Industries, a nearby meat packing plant, claims that some kind of large predator has been raiding their compound at night. Law enforcement records show evidence of a stray angel making its haunt on the grounds of Skelton Ranch, though no conclusive action was taken, and local residents have not been forthcoming with previous investigators.

The Skelton family, thought to have abandoned production on their farm years ago, is rumored to harbor an angel which has caused trouble for other residents in the past. According to locals, the Skelton family simply refer to the entity as "Mother." It is unclear what their relationship is with the angel, but it has been known to haunt the woods around their property for several generations as part of some pact. Attempts to reach the Skeltons directly were unsuccessful, so the Custodians have been directed to contain or eliminate the angel before its territory encroaches on any nearby counties.

Direct the following to a Custodian of your choice: *You have heard of family gods and angels before, and how their influence keeps its hold over generations. What rumors of the Skelton family makes you suspect that this angel has dug its claws in too deep?*

QUESTIONS & OPPORTUNITIES

Where is the angel's nest located?

(Complexity: 2)

Unlock the remaining Questions.

How is the angel bound to the Skelton family? (Complexity: 4)

Resolve the Assignment by weakening, driving away, or destroying the angel, disrupting the cycle of dependency so that the Skelton family might survive on their own again.

What purpose drives the angel? (Complexity: 6)

Resolve the Assignment by freeing the angel from the Skelton family and showing it something else it can protect instead—a forest landmark, a group of wild creatures, a dangerous place or secret in need of a guardian. This unlocks the special move, The Dusk Mother's Embrace.[†]

THE VERSE OF THE DREAMING NEST

- ☐ Each Custodian recalls a time they insulated themselves from the cruel uncertainties of the outside world, and what gave them solace in the darkness.



THE DUSK MOTHER



THE DUSK MOTHER

The Twilight Mantle, Old Starry Eyes, The Cradler of Bones, Sheltering Shade

A looming shadow with wings of twilight and eyes like twin moons. The wrath of the heavens which crushes flesh and bone in silver talons, striking in the moment between heartbeats. When night comes, she blankets the forest in hushed silence, gliding from tree to tree, as whispering boughs stir in her wake. The Dusk Mother has kept watch over these lands since the first intruders came with axes and saws, and the forest cried out in alarm. She has watched her territory shrink as the seasons flicker by, dwindling with each felled tree and poisoned spring. Yet hers is the domain of softness and shadow, of the silent flight and the merciful death which feeds her growing brood. She will continue to protect her own, and descend in furious vengeance upon anything which threatens her children. This angel is but one of her emissaries, which claims this lonely corner of the land in her name.

If the Custodians fail to complete the Assignment in time, the surrounding region will fall under the Dusk Mother's domain, becoming increasingly overcast, until daylight no longer pierces the gloom. Livestock may sate the appetite of her angels for a time, but as she gathers more stray and trembling creatures under her wing, they too will need to be fed—and such a hunger will only drive further expansion of her domain.

MOMENTS

- ◆ A pickup truck, trailing thick exhaust, idles alongside, driver and passenger wearing sunglasses regardless of the time of day.
- ◆ A sculpture in the yard—deer skull perched upon a gangly scarecrow made of bent and broken harvest equipment. It's not the first you've seen, but it's more unsettling than the last.
- ◆ A spotty radio signal: a preacher from the Bonetree Chapel gives a sermon honoring the Elk of Birch and Bone and how "there's Them That Lead, and Them That Chase."
- ◆ Decorations: a handmade Shattered Porcupine flag; a cartoonish garden gnome holding a sign that reads ADJUDICATE THIS; an original emblem of The Impassable Lith (from a time before the deity of transport union strikers was co-opted by the military).
- ◆ A carpet of shadow, creeping from the woods, moving independent of any sunlight.
- ◆ A chorus of quavering, scarcely-human voices: "MOTHER! We hunger! MOTHER! We are empty!"

†Special Move: The Dusk Mother's Embrace

When you use a prayer mark to call upon the angel that watches over wild and lonely places, state the thing you seek protection from and roll with Communion. On a hit, a veil of twilight feathers envelopes you and obscures you from immediate danger. Then, on a 7-9, choose one; on a 10+, choose 2:

- ◆ You learn something useful about the Danger that threatens you; the Keeper will tell you what it is.
- ◆ You are soothed by the Mother's embrace; change an existing Condition to Embrace of the Mother, or add this Condition if you have no Conditions.
- ◆ Nothing is asked of you in return.

DANGERS

Local gossip

The few residents of Weft and its surrounding lands tend to be reclusive, eccentric, and while not outright hostile to visitors, will quickly compile their own theories as to the Custodians' real business in town. Decades of neglect and prejudiced attitudes by the major cities has bolstered local community ties, but also instilled a deep mistrust of outsiders. Any sign that the Custodians are working for an outside organization or inquiring about a local family (even one as estranged as the Skeltons) will be met with skepticism at best, but resistance or even sabotage of the investigation is possible if friends from neighboring counties catch wind of the Custodians' presence.

Writhes-Beneath-The-Loam

A small fungal god of decay and regeneration, largely unknown to the residents of Weft. Generally indifferent towards things that walk above ground, unless its work is disturbed—its sprawling domain of rot and bloom, bound by glistening mycelial threads, which hum with buried secrets and prophecies waiting to be born. Drawn towards stagnant things—fetid pools, rotting crops, minds curdling with old grudges and baseless fears.

The Skelton Family

Rumors run wild as to their dealings with their angel. Some of them are true. None of them understand the lengths they will go for their Mother. The Skeltons have grown increasingly paranoid and fearful of the outside world, and will make every effort to conceal the nest from discovery. If outsiders do find their way in, however, they will not want them to leave—perhaps they fear the wrath of Mother, or perhaps a part of them still craves human connection and is glad for the company.

LOCATIONS

Hopworth Industries processing plant.

Distant feedlots and warehouses behind barbed-wire fencing. Trucks adorned with commercial prayer-stamps of the Chitterling. Droning machinery interrupted by the occasional squeal. The visceral aroma of manure, blood, chemicals. Paint the Scene: *How is it obvious that this facility operates with little oversight?*

The Town of Weft. Main street full of potholes and weeds. Storefronts with cracked windows and faded signs. Abandoned cars with flat tires, a rusty bike chained to a tilting signpost. Distant sounds of a sputtering generator, hammering, a lone dog barking.

Paint the Scene: *By all appearances, this town is dying out. How can you tell that some residents still care for it fiercely?*

The Clutching Woods. Narrowing tunnels of sickly briars and fallen branches, buckling foot bridges dragged down by strangling roots, patches of oil-slick bog skewered by sun-starved trees.

Paint the Scene: *The land here is horribly polluted, but not truly dead. What menacing features make you most concerned for your safety?*

Abandoned lumber mill. Gravel roads, abandoned pickup trucks and hulking, rusted machinery. Log piles taller than cabins, sprouting with triumphant fungal blooms. The scent of mildew, sawdust, gasoline.

Paint the Scene: *How have the trees in this region grown strange, and what makes their lumber particularly unsafe for any practical use?*

Skelton Ranch. Withered orchards hemmed in by towering forest, a collapsed barn, stagnant pond, various sheds overgrown with vines and full of junk, a two-story lodge of stone and timber.

Paint the Scene: *The Skeltons have clearly left their farm to rot, but somehow manage to survive on the land. What surprising elements of the property have they maintained with care?*

The Nest (found after answering the first Question). A hollow shelter in a pile of wreckage, lined with old tarps, clothing, furniture cushions, insulation, moss and dead leaves, scraps of fur. A ragged opening gapes at the sky overhead.

Paint the Scene: *The Skeltons seem to have reverted to their most basic animal instincts. What fragments of their humanity have they managed to cling to?*

SIDE CHARACTERS

Dennis Rigsby, a Hopworth employee.

Bleary-eyed, week-old stubble and foul breath, reflective safety jacket and stained boots repaired with duct tape. Unaccustomed to speaking with outsiders.

Quote: *"Yeah, I heard something broke in once—out here, probably a wolf. I mean, we're in the fuckin' woods, right? Why, what are you, a cop? I ain't gotta tell you nothing—even if I wanted to, I'm under contract."*

Ridley Hemsworth, a hunter.

Watchful eyes, camo jacket and overalls, gray ponytail. Generally keeps to their cabin and trails, but sometimes heads into town for supplies. Comes across as aloof, but is the embodiment of "live and let live."

Quote: *"I'm mostly just out here to move my bones. Ain't seen a deer in months—ain't seen much of anything, tell the truth."*

Sister Quarrel, a traveling pox monk.

Windswept gray hair, white scarf and black leathers, travel bags prominently feature the Pox Martyr's crest. Rides an old motorcycle that looks like it runs purely on miracles. Has served her god in a hundred ways and has a scar or blemish to show for each one. Thrives on the contemplative passage of the open road, in between local visits.

Quote: *"Yes, even out here, dwell those poor souls in need of assistance, waiting for me to come and take away their sickness. Some would say it's especially in these places that the most... unique blessings take root. Is there some affliction you'd like to be free of, pilgrim?"*

Cletus Ford, an amateur mycologist.

Silver afro, exuberant grin, utility vest and belt bulging with pockets and pouches. One of the few locals who has begun to discover the true forest here—the forest underground, full of new miracles each day. He'll tell you all about it, whether or not you asked.

Quote: *"My, what a vision you are! Another miracle, reborn from the churning deep. Oh... hello, I didn't see you there. You've come at a most fortuitous time—behold this new blessing! To call it a mere mushroom would be almost an insult..."*

"Brother", a Skelton.

Wild beard, wilder eyes. Torn flannel that might have once been orange. Strong, calloused hands accustomed to building and nurturing. What to do with them now?

Quote: *"You... come from outside? Dangerous, outside. Better safe, in here."*

"Sister", a Skelton.

Deep, sad eyes which never blink. An overdressed doll, lace shawl poked with dried flowers and feathers. Croons snatches of song and parrots polite mannerisms which feel strangely antiquated.

Quote: *"Well why don't you come in? It must be dreadful out there, you poor thing. Let's get you warm. Mother will bring dinner soon. Don't worry darling, you're safe now."*

"Cousin", a Skelton.

Dressed in a trailing bundle of robes and sheets. Hides his hands. Croaking voice, piercing eyes. Appears reluctant to touch the ground; always perching or leaping between branches or furniture. It's hard to tell if he is hostile or aggressively curious.

Quote: *"Intruders! Mother won't like it. Mother will know. Why do you come here? You should leave... before it's dark."*

"Baby", a Skelton.

Always in motion, habitually crawls on all limbs. A nest of dirty blond hair obscures all of their face but a toothy maw. Doted on by the other Skeltons, quick to dart behind them when startled. Hoots and chirps softly to soothe themselves. Not actually a baby.

Quote: *"Baby?... Baby... Baaay-beee... BABY!"*

NOTES

- ## REWARDS

- ## NOTES

[illegible]

INTRODUCTION

Fragments of black-market divinities have been appearing among the goods sold at the Floating Market, a free-for-all bazaar that gathers at abandoned docks and fishing piers along the White Gull River. While such gatherings generally happen under the radar of the local authorities, the Custodians have been informed that the goods arriving along the river present an increasing danger to the inland population. The Bureau report flatly states that the nature of the divinely-afflicted wares being sold are not something that can be left to the Greater Glottage Police to handle alone, given a surge of recent corruption investigations.

Direct the following to a Custodian who has had the most run-ins with the authorities: *Why do you suspect that no one actually intends to shut down the Floating Market, but that several groups are vying for control of the market themselves?*

QUESTIONS & OPPORTUNITIES

Which illegal product presents the most serious danger to the public?

(Complexity: 2)

Learn where to focus the investigation, and unlock the remaining Questions.

How can the product be neutralized?

(Complexity: 4)

Resolve the Assignment by destroying or severing any divine influence from the product so that it no longer presents a threat.

How can the Custodians take advantage of the opportunities the Market presents?

(Complexity: 6)

Resolve the Assignment by negotiating an exclusive arrangement with the product vendor so that they will not endanger the public. The Custodians may now return to the Floating Market, triggering the Journey phase to pursue unique opportunities. Each time they do, the Keeper narrates a scene showing a vendor or customer of the Market. Then, mark the next box from the list below:

- ☐ Each Custodian clears a relevant Condition OR adds an item to their Altar—ask another Custodian what it is.
- ☐ A Side Character asks for your help—the Keeper will present a single task for the Custodians. If completed, each Custodian may add an item to their Altar—ask another Custodian what it is.
- ☐ The Market is being raided—salvage what you can. Each Custodian may add an item to their Altar—ask another Custodian what it is. If they do so, they also take the Condition: Pursued by the Glottage Police.



THE FLOATING MARKET



THE VERSE OF PROMISED DELIVERANCE

- ☐ Each Custodian recalls an advertisement for a divinely branded product, and the benefits it promised that seemed too good to be true.

FRAGMENTS OF OUTLAWED DIVINITY

Discontinued, disparaged before they had a chance to catch on, or outlawed from the start, these old relics and questionable products were thought to have been cast aside or forgotten long ago. Instead they have lain in darkness, growing restless and desperate to be united with something greater than themselves—to grasp what they can instinctively and shape the world in some way, however small. If these ill-conceived products were created as part of some greater scheme, it too has been forgotten. The unstable nature of these god-fragments, when placed in the hands of people who are equally desperate and hopeful for a change, is a volatile recipe for disastrous miracles up and down the Peninsula.

If the Custodians fail to resolve the Assignment in time, these dangerous products will spread through the population. Products that interact with each other could quickly birth new miracles and induce sainthood in those who become too attached to them. Miracles that spread to other regions will make future Assignments exponentially more difficult for the Custodians.

MOMENTS

- ◆ Shouts of alarm as a bound package hisses, cracks, emitting strange light, before being hurled into the water. The sounds of violent churning, gurgling. Strange steam rises from below.
- ◆ A bout of intense haggling escalates over a lumpy, oozing sack.
- ◆ A market shopper collapses on the pier in a moment of rapture, clutching a package to their chest.
- ◆ Gasps of wonder as the array of items in a merchant display begins to quiver, rattle together, and levitate.
- ◆ A child in rainbow facepaint and homemade costume begins to wail; a nearby guardian fervently hushes them with promises to find something else for their birthday.
- ◆ A salesman hawks a cure-all elixir while a rival pox monk grabs and gulps down bottle after bottle of the so-called cure, loudly declaring no change to her host of blessed afflictions.
- ◆ A soothsayer waves a yew wand over prospective wares, declaring them blessed or cursed in turn.

DANGERS

Greater Glottage Police

It's usually fresh recruits who come raiding, seeking an easy arrest or seizure of outlawed relics. Any trace of forbidden faith or unlicensed sacrifice will do. Try to resist, or simply try to convince them that you're on the right side of the law, and they might call in the assistance of a field auditor or confessor hound. Appealing to your position as a Custodian or requesting to speak with a supervisor won't do much good either, as the various precincts are splintered across the Peninsula, neither speaking nor cooperating with one another. Savvy market vendors know this, of course, and may try to deflect attention or blame to the Custodians to buy themselves time to slip away.

The Unsinkable Brood

A murderous flock of ducks, geese, cormorants, oystercatchers, shellsplitters, tidespears, hook snatchers, and other waterfowl patrol the surrounding waters. Hunting together, they feast on river angels, raid small fishing boats, and have been known to drag unwary market goers into the depths. Some say they are all offspring of the same forgotten tidal god. At night, their matriarch emerges, graceful and vicious, as long as a row boat and twice as swift. Feed them, and they'll leave you alone for a time—but they'll be back, hungrier than before.

Grasping and hungry gods

Contact with unknown and unstable entities always presents a risk—in this particular environment, surrounded by fragments of divinity and god-touched materials, any interactions among vendors, customers, or the wares on display has the potential to be especially volatile.

— VENDORS OF THE FLOATING MARKET —

SPEEDY SUPPLICATIONS
REVEL AMONG RUINS
GUTTLE AND CROKE, INC.
RELICS: REBORN
SALT AND SMOKE
JONES & Co.

— VENDORS OF THE FLOATING MARKET —

SPEEDY SUPPLICATIONS

An antique newspaper stall, mounted on an old shipping barge, crammed with mass-produced miracle cards—prayers and invocations from countless obscure faiths and near-forgotten gods. A sign cautions customers to speak softly, if at all, to avoid invoking any of the cards accidentally.

Paint the Scene: *One miracle card catches your eye in particular—what god does it invoke, and what blessing does it promise to bring into your life?*

Product: Paper Angels. Originally created for hospital patients and children who had taken ill, these densely folded cards come pre-stamped with generic well-wishes and supplications to a variety of saints and angels such as the Silver Lining, the Smiling Doctor with the Bottomless Briefcase, Think Positive, the Thoughts and Prayers twins, and so on. Each paper angel is carefully mounted on thick cardstock to prevent the wings from activating until opened. Commercial production was halted after it was discovered that several unlicensed deities were included in the represented pantheon—such as the Bleeding Witness or It Could Be Worse—which would simply feed on the suffering of their recipients rather than deliver the intended prayers.

SIDE CHARACTERS

Cineros Gleeson, a supplicant. Platinum blonde hair with an eerie glow. Vest plastered in small pockets, each containing an envelope. Speaks in soothing, placating tones, while maintaining uncomfortably prolonged eye contact.

Quote: *"I hear you. I can't imagine what you're going through, but your experience is so valid. I'm hopeful that there's a prayer here for you—in fact, I think it's been waiting for this moment, for you to arrive."*

Lemon Harmony, a hallowed assistant. Lace veil, white cotton archivist gloves, earmuffs. Sits cross legged in the center of the stall, reaching fluidly in all directions with their six-fingered four arms to retrieve cards for customers. Nods, sways, gestures to indicate sympathies and affirmations, but does not speak for fear of activating the prayer cards.

Quote: *"..." (Complex gesture symbolizing universal harmony and understanding).*

REVEL AMONG RUINS:

INSPIRED GIFTS FOR ALL OCCASIONS

A garish carnival booth, perched on a dilapidated tugboat. Grinning painted mouths encircle twin window stalls, though one is boarded up. A handwritten list of wares is nailed to the outer wall. Items include a range of gifts for children and adults alike, such as hallowed toy soldiers, collectable Saint Cards, Jolly Crunchtooth treats, Sainly Spark-Kits, a My First Ritual Knife set, Confessor costumes, prayer mark tracing books, Dreamweaver lollipops, a portable Madame Light radio-lantern, Forgotten Idols (packaged with a child-size hammer for smashing), and various mass-produced plastic icons of licensed deities.

Paint the Scene: *What makes you suspect that this shop is a vendor for illicit goods?*

Product: Gloam, the Gently Glowing Caterpillar with the Soothing Voice. "A Friend to Comfort You in Dark Times." These mass-produced "worry worms" were advertised as comforting dolls that soothe your anxieties and gently nibble away your sorrows. They were discontinued after a rather unfortunate sigil defect meant they did not stop nibbling when you began to feel better, but continued to drain away other emotions as well. Rumors of tragic infant deaths caused the Glowing Caterpillar to be banned outright, and all known copies were said to have been destroyed—but this dealer has acquired a large crate of the dolls, still in their original packaging, and is selling them at a premium.

SIDE CHARACTERS

Kaz Happyfeet, Jr., a salesman. Jaunty cap with two feathers, absurd mustache, garish tropical patterned shirt. Maniacally cheerful, wields worn-out clichés and tired aphorisms like a seasoned barkeep, sidestepping to change his approach at the first whiff of indifference from would-be customers.

Quote: *"Why so glum, chum? It can't be as bad as all that. I believe I've got just the thing to cheer you up. Let's turn that frown upside down, eh? Unless... you prefer it that way? I've also got a book of sad jokes, um, some bitter candies, or these gloom-tinted glasses. Don't let anyone tell you how to feel, am I right?"*

GUTTLE AND CROKE, INC.

"SPIRITUAL AFFLICTIONS REMOVED!"

A pair of pox monks operate a small clinic from their barge. Guttle always sits with their feet dangling in the water (to better tune in to the divine currents) and mainly performs theatrical rituals—blowing smoke, laying on of hands, and singing nonsensical rhymes. Croke utilizes more "tangible" methods—beating with rushes, applying foul-smelling poultices, bloodletting.

Paint the Scene: *What elements of the pox monks' operation still give it an air of legitimacy, if barely?*

Product: The Miracle Leech. "A Tiny Savior in a Bottle!" This near-translucent fleshy coil bobs gently in a green glass bottle. According to the instructions: simply ingest the leech, chase it with a shot of Croke's Invigorating Vinegar Tonic to fully awaken it, and allow five to seven days for the leech to fully absorb your illness. When your saliva begins to change color, it's time to take the contents of the small jar: Guttle's Purging Paste (mint-flavored). Be sure to prepare a deep hole for your purging, and bury the contents afterward. Avoid purging into water, as in rare cases the Miracle Leech has been known to continue growing in aquatic environments.

SIDE CHARACTERS

Guttle, an "aura cleanser." Hunched, shuffling on gangly limbs that seem a bit too long. Deep-wrinkled face and beady eyes, linen robes layered in fish nets, oyster-shell necklace. Frequently interrupts conversations to confer with invisible clients.

Quote: *"Ach! I can see yer surrounded by 'em—evil spirits. No, wait—a god's had a taste of you, that's what it is. It wants more—best to drive it away. It's gonna take a bit of smoke, a bit of chanting, a bit of dancing—of course, there's the offering, but there always is, isn't there?"*

Croke, a "vanquisher of ailments." Bulging, unblinking eyes and clammy skin. Bulky, wrinkled pea coat which always seems to be damp. Deep, gurgling voice. Crunches and gobbles things from a covered bucket when they don't think anyone's watching.

Quote: *"If it troubles you, we takes it away, guaranteed—no questions asked. Meanin', if you keep wastin' our time with questions, we ain't doin' business an' you'd best be on yer way."*

— VENDORS OF THE FLOATING MARKET —

SALT AND SMOKE FLOATING GRILL

An aging catamaran with a charcoal grill and various soup pots mounted between the hulls. Old flags from commercial farm deities hang loosely—the Chitterling, the Toothed Egg, the Butter Princess—but clearly, none of those brands are being served here.

Paint the Scene: *What modifications are in place that allow all food products to be rapidly disposed of in case of emergency?*

Product: Godflesh Bites. It comes in several varieties. Gleaming, pearlescent, and segmented, still writhing in a bowl of steaming broth. Sizzling and crackling with internal radiance on a cooling plate. Sprouting crunchy green shoots and tender fungal blooms in shades of pink and violet. Spinning in a mason jar of fragrant smoke like a miniature dust devil. The sources and effects of each are, according to their vendor, largely a matter of theological and biological interpretation.

SIDE CHARACTERS

Mogg Squamous, a chef. Stained apron, lank and thinning hair, greasy odor, toothy grin. A notable collection of wards and charms hang from her neck and from the rigging.

Quote: *"Don't settle for none of those branded restaurants. This is the real deal. Locally imported. I guess you could say it's an acquired taste, but once you try something that's so... full of life... you'll never go back to supermarket meat!"*

JONES & CO., THEOLOGICAL CONTAINMENT AND DISSOLUTION SERVICES

A large floating geodesic dome with prayer marks of sanctuary and containment on every surface, tethered at a distance to a repurposed Coast Warden rescue boat.

Paint the Scene: *Despite its humble appearance, how can you tell that the providers of this service are in fact quite experienced and competent in their work?*

Product: Pit in a Box. A heavy industrial chest with reinforced corners and padlocks on each side of the lid. It can completely dissolve any matter placed inside, using a series of precision-aligned, custom prayer marks of the Patient Void, the Equalizer, and the Endless Dream From Which We Are Born and Shall Return. Etched warnings on the exterior state that "simultaneously disposing of untested combinations of sanctified, hallowed, anointed, imbued, or otherwise divinely-affected materials, presences, or manifestations may lead to unlicensed transfiguration, irreversible environmental pollution, and rapid acceleration and/or degradation of spatiotemporal continuity."

SIDE CHARACTERS

Calamity Jones, an overseer. Leather trench coat, shaved head, constellation tattoos, bandolier of vials containing antidotes and emergency prayer scrolls. A former Custodian with more than a few burned bridges in her past, she's seen it all—or seen enough, as she'll put it, to know when something is better destroyed than allowed to fester and take root.

Quote: *"That's right, we can take ANYTHING off your hands, for the right price. No, of course we're not collectors. If you'd seen half the items we've exorcized so far today, you'd understand that our float couldn't maintain structural integrity if we kept everything on board. Trust me, you're better off letting the experts handle these sorts of things."*

Twinge Moulton, an inspector. Captain's hat, jeweler's monocle, mutters rapidfire notes into a small recorder clipped to his suspenders. A double amputee, he deftly rolls across the deck on the base of an office chair, transferring to visiting rafts with the grace of a trained gymnast to appraise their wares.

Quote: *"I'll stop you right there, it doesn't matter if it's authentic, where it came from, or what your story is. The only thing that I need to know is, what does it feed on—how is it going to try and kill us? We've got our methods to neutralize it, trust me. If we don't CURRENTLY have the means, sit tight—I know a guy who does."*

Redgill, a shoveler. Frighteningly tall, knotted forearms slick with oily filth, full face mask with tinted goggles. Wears a tool belt heavy with objects that look more like weapons or ritual implements. Does not speak, nor indicate much interest in passersby—but their senses and reflexes are keen, honed with years of practice in dealing with volatile materials and entities.

Quote: *"..." (grunts in exasperation)*

RELICS: REBORN

A shipping barge piled with a maze of old antiques, unwieldy stacks of crates and furniture which vaguely resembles a child's fort, or a nest. Pieces of salvaged machinery, office appliances, and abandoned idols peer from the clutter.

Paint the Scene: *How can you tell this vendor travels far and frequently?*

Product: Paintings of an Unknown River Prophet. Landscapes in drowning hues of violet and black, nomad-barnacles and grey lobsters creeping from polluted city canals, a human skeleton with an impossible number of bones being picked clean by carrion crabs, various portraits with unsettling patterns in the background like daubs of mud and the footprints of skittering river creatures. All of them are rumored to be cursed somehow, possibly containing experimental prayer marks hidden in the thick layers of paint.

SIDE CHARACTERS

Jibril Salesa, an antiques dealer. Sunglasses, hint of imported perfume, tailored suit in need of repair. Deflects distasteful questions with a sparkling smile, a meaningful silence, or a subtly veiled threat. No one who crosses Mr. Salesa is seen again.

Quote: *"Everything you see here is a genuine article, I can assure you. I must, of course, protect the confidentiality of my trusted partners—I'm sure you understand. Regrettably, all sales are final—unless you come back with something to trade..."*

MARKET VISITORS

Hob, a gardener. Clunky boots, covered in dirt. Trundles along with wildly swinging arms and nose to the ground. In search of something worth planting in his “angel pit.”

Quote: “*You know, everything takes its own time. Some plants grow faster than others. Gods grow slow—real slow. Well, some of ‘em seem to pop out of nowhere. Those ones are never good.*”

Richard Ward, an unwitting tourist. Rain-damp jacket and muddy trousers. Clutches a grocery bag and dog-eared Ignathain Peninsula guidebook.

Quote: “*I heard there were some unique shops to be found off the beaten path, but I don’t think this is what they had in mind.*”

Phinn Kearney, an artist. Layered jackets and scarves, windswept hair, pulling an assortment of buckets and bundles in a small wagon.

Quote: “*Whatever it is you’re doing, you gotta find the spark, you know? Find what speaks to you. I mean, as long as it’s got something to say. There’s no lack of noisy things trying to be heard, along the river.*”

Lily Strife, a musician. Defaced politico uniform, feathered mullet, hoisting a banjo that’s beat to hell but still hammers out chorus after defiant chorus.

Quote: “*Kill the old gods / Hammer a spike into their hearts / Carved with a prayer to a new god you brought forth through your own tears / Make them live on and starve in obscurity / Remembering your name / And the countless ones before you with no voice left of their own...*”

NOTES

CLUES

- ☐ Strange residue around an object (pick one: iridescent oil slick/purple mold/blue-gray ash/green salt/dried blood/something else).
- ☐ A vendor has no memory of a customer or their purchase after a transaction.
- ☐ An extensive waiver form to be signed before purchase; copied and recopied enough times to be barely legible.
- ☐ Coded communication between vendors and market goers (pick one: hand signals/blinking sequences/whistling or humming/shuffling step patterns/quaint idioms/something else).
- ☐ A vendor implies something is “reserved for another client.”
- ☐ A message in a bottle.
- ☐ A product seeks to expand and replicate itself.
- ☐ Someone is, quite literally, unable to part with an item.
- ☐ River currents behave differently in a specific area—repeated, symmetrical patterns.
- ☐ A missing child which market goers refuse to acknowledge.
- ☐ A small detail of some object changes when you look away.
- ☐ An overheard phrase: “Better to drown it than me.”
- ☐ Extra goods kept submerged in sealed chests, under weighted nets.
- ☐ A citation for “distribution of unlicensed goods of theologically unstable condition.”
- ☐ An invitation to the next Floating Market, at an undetermined location along the river.
- ☐ A buyer demanding to “see the real goods.”
- ☐ A carelessly contrived pamphlet for a “collectors’ exchange” of rare items.
- ☐ Mention of a new roadside museum somewhere along the coast: The Chapel of Lost and Abandoned Gods.
- ☐ A Side Character is unusually armed or equipped with anti-saint measures.
- ☐ A map of the White Gull River, covered in scrawled symbols and redrawn tide lines.

REWARDS

- ◆ A specific vendor becomes a recurring Side Character and may be consulted on matters of black market goods and materials. Once per Assignment, you can use this information to stumble on a Clue—tell the Keeper what it is.
- ◆ An abandoned motorboat; add it to your Altar.
- ◆ An item from the Market; ask another Custodian what it is and then add it to your Altar.
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SPECIAL REWARDS

If the Custodians resolved the Assignment by negotiating an arrangement with vendors, they may alternatively claim one of the illegal products on display in the Market. Rather than marking them to gain advantage on a roll, these items can be marked to use the following special effects:

- ◆ **A Paper Angel.** Set it free and it will track down a known Side Character to call on them for aid. The Keeper will introduce them at a later time and place.
- ◆ **The Gently Glowing Caterpillar with the Soothing Voice.** A Side Character will temporarily forget recent events, but remember your connection to them later.
- ◆ **Painting of an Unknown River Prophet.** Drown an area the size of a large room in murky water.
- ◆ **The Miracle Leech.** Ignore any effects of your Conditions for a single roll.
- ◆ **Godflesh.** Unmark a Verse of your choice, but gain the permanent Condition: A God Takes Root.
- ◆ **Pit in a Box.** Destroy any object placed inside, OR temporarily cause any person or entity that reaches into the box to disappear. The Keeper will introduce them at a later time and place.

INTRODUCTION

The distant town of Welkin's Vigil is perched on the Northeastern cliffs of the Peninsula, across the Nameless Channel from the distant Linger Straits. It once served as a military outpost in anticipation of a war that never reached the Peninsula directly. Local historians will tell you that, in centuries past, it was the site of a stone fort where chieftains kept watch along the coast for incoming raiders. Anyone who's vacationed in Welkin's Vigil will tell you it's a lovely town with scenic views and quaint locals who are proud of their history—so it's an unusual location for the Custodians to be sent on Assignment.

It seems that an iron cormorant—a decommissioned battle saint which, until recently, stood on display at a veteran's memorial in the town square—has been activated, and now patrols the outskirts of town; some folks call it the Sleepless Warden. Security briefings with the Peninsular Armed Forces confirm that the battle saint was fully disarmed years ago, and has no operational capacity. An expert from the Institute for Theological Research and Innovation has suggested that underlying divine influences may have played a role—it's a fact that the population of Welkin's Vigil is largely composed of veterans and families displaced by prior wars, all of them having served war gods in the past. If historical records can be trusted to remain unaltered by the slew of modern propaganda gods, it has also been claimed that Welkin's Vigil was once a premodern fort, built over countless burial mounds of distant warrior clans. Perhaps some ancient god has been stirred by an atmosphere of perceived threats and hostility to outsiders. Or perhaps the residents themselves, driven by a growing paranoia about attacks from abroad, have found a way to awaken it through acts of unsanctioned worship.

To complicate matters further, the town itself is recognized as a Site of Historic and Divine Significance by the Central Glottage government, which is monitoring recent events via the Welkin Historical Interest Preservation Society to ensure that no historically significant features of the town are damaged further. In particular, the Custodians have been informed that the town is sentimental to an important adjudicator who vacationed there as a child—this Assignment must be resolved with a more cautious approach.

Direct the following to a Custodian of your choice: *What details of the report make you certain that a god now animates the battle saint?*

THE VERSE OF THE ENDLESS VIGIL

- ☐ Each Custodian recalls something from their past which haunts them and leaves them unable to fully let their guard down.



THE SLEEPLESS WARDEN



QUESTIONS & OPPORTUNITIES

Has the Warden been awakened intentionally or accidentally?

(Complexity: 2)

Unlock the next appropriate question.

If the Warden was awakened intentionally, how can it be pacified? (Complexity: 4)

Resolve the Assignment by approaching the Warden and persuading it that there is no imminent threat.

If the Warden was awakened accidentally, what new purpose could it serve? (Complexity: 6)

Resolve the Assignment by working with the community to integrate the Warden into the modern world.

THE SLEEPLESS WARDEN

The Stalwart Defender, The Last Bulwark, Hold Fast

The god, stirred from ancient slumber, now animates its modern avatar—a rusted hulk with twisted legs and clawed limbs, half-resembling an ancient marsh bird. Even without equipped munitions, the battle saint is a terrifying force, capable of crushing vehicles with its bulk or severing limbs with its bladed appendages.

The Warden remembers a time when the town was just a fort, defending its walls from raiders. Now awakened and called to defend the town against attack, it perceives threats everywhere. The Warden is driven by the only purpose which gave it sustenance so many centuries ago—to stride forth in righteous fury against those who would dare threaten its kin. It holds the memories of all residents who came before, risking their lives on the long journey overseas, shivering in the cold rain, huddling around campfires while the distant wolves paced and howled. It rose to meet their fear in the darkness, standing watch while they felled the bones of the forest, dragging them back to form walls and forts. Its gaze pierces the void, watchful for the enemies in the shadows which creep ever closer to pounce on the helpless and unwary. The Warden exists purely in opposition to that which threatens—the fears and projections of its kin fuel its unending vigil.

If the Custodians fail to resolve the Assignment in time, the Warden will extend its patrol unhindered into the surrounding region, attacking any perceived threats, hunting for hidden enemies, and likely stirring up other gods and residents in the process.

Issue a Citation. When a Custodian trespasses upon or damages something deemed Historically or Divinely Significant, an official-looking envelope will be immediately delivered to one of the Custodians by courier in the next scene. The Keeper narrates a terse letter in vaguely threatening tones which summarizes the offending incident and warns the Custodians to comply with government regulations. Each time a Citation is issued, the Keeper may introduce one of the following consequences:

- ➔ Mark a Clue the Custodians have found as Reclaimed Evidence. That Clue can no longer be used to Answer a Question during this Assignment.
- ➔ Each Custodian gains the Condition: Suspect, as the town residents learn of the incident.
- ➔ Each Custodian must mark an item from their Altar in order to pay the fine included in the Citation.

MOMENTS

- ◇ A murmuration of seagulls drifts into fog, like a vanishing giant's shadow.
- ◇ A group of elderly women play cards at a cafe table, loudly accusing each other of cheating.
- ◇ The ground quivers. A slow, steady pounding of immense footsteps. A long pause, filled with dreadful anticipation. The steps resume, passing nearby.
- ◇ A grizzled retiree sips a pint of bitter, shaking his head resignedly as a distant crash and rumble shatters the afternoon tranquility.
- ◇ Pewter figurines of an ancient warrior rattle and topple in their window display as the ground shakes once again.
- ◇ An elder steers a puttering moped uphill with a trailer of grocery boxes in tow, spewing oily black smoke behind them.

DANGERS

Welkin Citizens' Militia

A fixture of the town, the militia now encompasses three generations, from silver-haired veterans to youngsters just old enough to carry a rifle—with the blessing of the Gunpowder Covenant, of course. While normally content to assemble for morning drills and weekly evening patrols, they are in an absolute fervor since the waking of the Warden, seeing its rampage as the call to arms they've all been waiting for.

Welkin Historical Interest Preservation Society (W.H.I.P.S.)

The town of Welkin's Vigil is recognized as a Site of Historic and Divine Significance by the Central Glottage government, and the Society takes this honor very seriously. Custodians poking around town will be subject to their scrutiny. Outright damaging or destroying local landmarks—or even giving someone reason to suspect that the Custodians would do such a thing—causes an uproar, and an inevitable storm of sigil-stamped paperwork.

For this Assignment, the Keeper has an additional reaction available: Issue a Citation.

LOCATIONS

Note: Each Location includes examples of historically significant features, which might have already been damaged by the Warden, or would cause problems for the Custodians if the damage is associated with them.

Town square. A small mound with a traffic roundabout, quaint cobblestone sidewalks and a few tourist shops. Orange traffic cones surround a massive stone plinth that lies toppled halfway across the road, with no battle saint in sight. Chunks of dirt and pavement are churned and scattered in a path leading away to the hills.

Historic features: original cobblestones, ornamental fountain, small rose garden, ornate lamp posts, painted shop facades.

Paint the Scene: *At a glance, the locals appear to be working around this obstacle without much difficulty. How can you tell they are actually quite agitated, but doing their best to avoid showing it?*

The Creeping Hills. A series of climbing steppes which end in sheer coastal cliffs. Flat homes, built into the rock, peer out over the abyss through narrow windows. Steep switchbacks and single-file staircases snake out of sight to hidden perches—empty lookout posts and cannon mountings which were never put to use.

Historic features: signal lights, military bunkers and walls, a small rusted airplane parked on an overgrown runway.

Paint the Scene: *What legends do the locals tell about the threats Welkin's Vigil faced from the hills long ago?*

The Third Watch. A refurbished old guard tower—small museum upstairs and pub on the ground floor and basement. Walls lined with monochrome prints, faded banners, and framed medals. Most afternoons, the clientele consists of retirees and veterans, playing cards or recounting the glory days. At night, the basement is often used for private meetings.

Historic features: a series of decommissioned military vehicles and artifacts line the yard, each bearing informational plaques.

Paint the Scene: *What perceived threats to their way of life do the locals discuss most heatedly?*

Chapel of the Fog Mantle. A small domed temple, a forest of flagpoles in the courtyard, colorful kites and prayer flags flutter in the wind. A faded, but still beautiful mural wraps around the outer stone wall. Notably, a mixture of licensed deities and more obscure gods from the coastal Territories seem to be represented.

Historic features: mural poetry and nearly-forgotten prayer marks, flags of former territories, antique rifles and uniforms of soldiers said to have volunteered to be hallowed in desperate times.

Paint the Scene: *What local variations of sky deities are represented here? What aspects of modern life does the chapel denounce? What tenets of these sky gods does the temple proclaim instead?*

Founder's Row. Low tiered roofs and heavy oak beams are balanced with masterful stonework and small stained glass windows. Thick hedges and sturdy saplings form wind barriers around private gardens. A winding, picturesque street of historic houses, each bearing a placard at street level which notes the year it was built and the adjudicator or military leader who first lived there. Only the road has been modernized, with smooth asphalt instead of the jarring cobblestones of the town square.

Historic features: each house is unique and significant because of its founder or original tenants. Rare botanical specimens are found in the gardens. Antique motorcars carefully parked in covered garages.

Paint the Scene: *Despite the appearance of comfort and antiquity here, what poorly-concealed elements of these homes show that the owners have invested heavily in security measures?*

The windmills. Towering windmill saints keep watch from the hills, their turbine arms and propeller faces creaking in the wind. Among the whirling appendages, fashioned from old airplane parts, their transfigured bodies are just visible. Painted abdomens swell and deflate like weather balloons, moaning softly with each labored breath as they struggle to keep their blades in motion when the wind lulls.

Historic features: antique plane parts, original power transformers and substation shrine featuring an older prayer stamp of the Saint Electric.

Paint the Scene: *How can you tell that these undying saints were not willing sacrifices?*

SIDE CHARACTERS

Astrid Fischer, a retired dam worker.

Piercing sea-glass eyes, gray streaked hair, branching fractal scars peek from rolled-up sleeves. Everyone knows the story of how she survived a blessing from the Saint Electric; most have learned to stop asking about it.

Quote: *"Our ancestors had more sense than we do now—they kept to the high ground, where you can keep watch over your lands. Keep closer to your gods. But look where they build their cities now, eh? In the middle of a sodding marsh? No thank you; I was born up here and I'll die here."*

Shae Kwan, a kite seller.

Goofy grin, colorful vest and gloves; nimble hands always untangling ribbons, repairing a kite, or gesturing dramatically to punctuate the latest tall tale. A ray of sunshine, no matter the weather. She can be found pushing her kite stand through the streets or running a spontaneous contest of battle-kites among the town's youngsters.

Quote: *"You look like you'd rather be flying a kite! Feel that breeze? That's old Gust and Gale wanting to play. I can tell by your appraising look that you're a connoisseur of classical hand-operated wind crafts. You've come to the right place, friend! Let's get you some wings!"*

Peter Mullock, a local historian.

Tweed jacket with elbow patches, beady eyes behind green-tinted spectacles, often chewing on an antique churchwarden pipe. Sickly pale, as if from a lifetime spent avoiding sunlight. Oddly unfazed with the declining tourist industry in the region, he seems content to recount historical trivia with the locals while his small booth of tourist pamphlets rots.

Quote: *"Aye, there's plenty about Welkin's Vigil most folks don't know. 'Twas a bit of a pilgrimage site, you see, way before it was a town, and of course before all the wars. Makes sense, doesn't it—I can't help but feel like the Sisters of Creeping Fog are watching over me, up here. Beautiful town, isn't it so?"*

█ If a Custodian is a follower of the Waxen Scrivener, ask them: *How can you tell that Peter Mullock is a fellow worshiper?*

Harlan Scythe, a birdwatcher.

Expensive-looking wool cloak, fine boots and gloves, windswept fiery hair. Walks slowly but steadily between Founder's Row and various scenic viewpoints around town with an antique lord's cane, a leather-bound birdwatching notebook, and two sets of binoculars. Former chair of the Welkin Historical Interest Preservation Society, before they were asked to step down for repeated complaints of "excessive fervor" and "abuse of Society privileges." Quote: *"Such lovely creatures, our birds. But they can be cruel. Did you know that Old Welkin—that's what we called it back in the day, before the rebranding—was the last known location of the iridescent-clawed sky dancer? A bird too dazzlingly beautiful to exist in this world. Some said it was a god. And those other birds, drab and dull and jealous of its beauty—they pecked and clawed its feathers out, one by one, until it couldn't fly."*

Angel Torres, a veteran.

Slicked back hair, earrings made from shell casings, prowls more than walks. A retired field medic and founding member of the Welkin Citizens' Militia, she also volunteers as a guide for weekly Hero's Walk history tours. Believes the town could really reinvent itself, under the right sort of leadership. Quote: *"There's nothing like that clean mountain air. I told my wife, enough tunnels and trenches for me—we're moving somewhere we can watch the sunrise!"*

Tommy Bollinger, a "patriot."

Chore jacket, black bandana and full beard, always chewing on something. Often circling around town on errands in his battered pickup truck with bumper stickers that include a Gunpowder Covenant membership stamp, a rebel flag of the Headless Porcupine, and "My Son Serves With the Cloak." Quote: *"These are dangerous times, you know what I mean? This town, it's always been a refuge from outside threats. A real community, for people like us. You're one of us, aren't you? It's best to stick together. We look out for our own, is all I'm saying."*

SIDE CHARACTERS (CONTINUED)

Leon Suleman, a sky-priest.

A shock of wispy silver hair, rich dark skin, pale clouded eyes. Clad in a cream-colored suit with tiny glass tassels like wind chimes. Strolls the town with a lightning-marked walking stick, followed by a stray dog he calls Koji.

Quote: *"All is forgiven, all is forgotten, like clouds over the horizon. That's what I try to tell them, at least. Some are too stubborn for their own good—they would rather cling to tarnished rock and barren soil than behold the majesty of a golden sunrise."*

Fitz Welkin, a belligerent youth.

Preposterous haircut, practiced scowl and overly affected swagger, fists thrust in the pockets of a military surplus jacket bearing insignia of a forgotten battle saint.

Quote: *"My grandad fought those Linger Straits bastards so you could enjoy your freedom. What would you know about that, eh? I bet you live in one of those new pre-sanctified apartments—all comforts abounding, praise to the Tranquil Abode or whatever they're calling it now. Enjoy that scenic view. Wouldn't stick around here long, though, if I were you."*

Nikki Valentine, a bartender.

Voluminous feathery hair, crows feet and heavy mascara, wicked laugh. Holds court at the Third Watch most nights. Jokes about being older than the hills, and is the subject of a few local legends. The one about the bar fight, or the burning van and the cliff might be exaggerated—but the one about the abusive ex, who vanished without a trace—that one's absolutely true, even if folks don't seem to have any details. Quote: *"Between you and me, it's about time this town had a bit of a ruckus. I've been here long enough to remember the days when the Watch retired. Overnight we had a bunch of aimless fellas who weren't being paid to sit around anymore. Right heap of trouble that was, till they managed to find some new hobbies. Still plenty of trouble, if I'm honest, but that's how it is. Now, what can I get you, love?"*

Henry Fusil, a handyman.

Dirty overalls, lanky frame, chain smoker. Always patching up or repainting something around town. Moved here with his husband after refusing to sign a contract with the Wirebitten Child when their neighborhood was annexed. Tends a chicken coop in their backyard, and secretly has names for each of the birds.

Quote: *"I've learned that life's too short to fuss over much of anything. Everyone wants something from you—gods, people, things that are something in between. I say, you don't gotta give it to them. Find your own patch of land that's not too polluted, try to make it a bit better, and let others do the same."*

CLUES

- ☐ A tarnished plaque commemorating service under the battle saint Merciful Dawn IV.
- ☐ A signup flier for the Ceaseless Watchers, a neighborhood watch group.
- ☐ Deep craters in the ground, grown over with wildflowers.
- ☐ An extensive collection of war memorabilia.
- ☐ An ad for a new Grindinglord coffee blend: Eternal Vigil - "Never Blink Again!"
- ☐ A window sign that reads "No New Gods—Refugees Go Home."
- ☐ Ruins of an overgrown megalithic tomb in a goat pen. The goats circle and bleat at it occasionally.
- ☐ A homemade shrine to the war god, the Unspeakable Visage of the Atrocious Foe.
- ☐ A live news segment features a debate over allegations of false-faith activity and corruption by local civil servants.
- ☐ A boarded-up tourist booth, broken bottles and the reek of stale urine inside.
- ☐ A monument featuring a massive aircraft propeller, half buried in a grassy hill.
- ☐ A news report attributing recent miracles in a fish cannery downriver to "radical terrorists from the Linger Straits."
- ☐ Children playing at Spies and Sentinels, some watching from an old artillery parapet while others try to sneak past them below.
- ☐ Framed newspaper clippings of a parade featuring the Welkin Coastal Watch, formally disbanded years ago.
- ☐ A torched tractor in a fallow field. The words UPON OUR HALLOWED SOIL spray painted over its blackened metal shell.
- ☐ An evening vigil, candles held by a small crowd. A Side Character urges the residents to remember their history, their purpose, and recalls a recent news segment that claims a threat is growing across the channel.
- ☐ An old motto, repeated on banners and memorial signs "Heroes of Olvidian—Never Forget."
- ☐ A Side Character hints that many Welkin residents have lost family members to military drafts in the past.
- ☐ Noisy equipment has been violently smashed—lawnmowers, a fire alarm, a diesel generator.
- ☐ A tattered paperback on the Battle of Soil and Sky, featuring etchings of crawling tunnel-folk and sky-martyrs standing vigil on makeshift scaffolding.
- ☐ A notice of proposed land development, to include a series of modern, high-rise apartments.
- ☐ Sacrificial garden charms: a robin wrapped in thorny briars with seashells placed in its eye sockets, a circlet of barbed wire with earthworms impaled on each spike, miniature cairns decorated with fresh flowers.

REWARDS

- ◇ A handheld wind-wand, its fan blades stamped with prayer marks of both the Saint Electric and the Blessed Breeze. Add it to your Altar.
- ◇ A pair of antique, military-surplus scout binoculars. Add them to your Altar.
- ◇ A pewter miniature of the Sleepless Warden. Add it to your Altar. The Chapel of the Fog Mantle becomes a place of refuge. When you return to it, choose one: clear a Condition, unmark an item from your Altar, or discover a Clue related to weather (tell the Keeper what it is).
- ◇ A memento from a forgotten war. Describe it, and add it to your Altar.
- ◇ An item from the investigation—ask another Custodian to describe it, then add it to your Altar.

NOTES

INTRODUCTION

The trade roads that cut through the Whisper Plains have been fueling the economy for decades. They are the way trucks transport modern conveniences across the Peninsula. They are the only way into (and out of) rural settlements scattered across the countryside. They are, despite the heavy environmental toll they take, a simple fact of life.

Direct the following to the Custodian that grew up in the most remote area, or the Custodian of your choice: *How do you know that the trade roads take an equally heavy toll on the people living near them? How has this affected you or someone you know?*

Recently, an essential route has been blocked. Near the rural settlement of Alm, on the edge of the Whisper Plains, a woodland trade road has been engulfed in an impossibly thick fog that appears to be spreading. Failing's Ferry & Freight, a large shipping company that uses this route regularly, has reported instances of their drivers being forced off the road—then disappearing entirely. Similar reports are coming out of Alm, where residents have begun uncharacteristically wandering into the surrounding fog, never to be seen again.

Locals are crediting these incidents to a now-neglected god of missing travelers, the Bowered Companion. However, there is little known documentation on this god, and the locals have not been forthcoming with further details. With a major trade road at risk, and possibly more to follow, the Custodians have been instructed to take care of this as quickly as possible.

Direct the following to a different Custodian: *You have heard of neglected and forgotten gods lashing out. What detail from the reports makes you think that this one is particularly desperate?*

QUESTIONS & OPPORTUNITIES

What is the quickest way to retake the trade road—destroying the god or appeasing it? (Complexity: 2)

Unlock the next appropriate Question.

If the quickest way is to destroy the god, how is it vulnerable? (Complexity: 4)
Resolve the Assignment by destroying the god, or otherwise neutralizing the threat it poses.

If the quickest way is to appease the god, what must be sacrificed to do so? (Complexity: 6)

Resolve the Assignment by finding an appropriate sacrifice to appease the god, and potentially relocating it to somewhere more suitable.



THE BOWERED COMPANION



THE VERSE OF THE ABANDONED ALTAR

- ☐ Each Custodian must recall a time when they left something or someone behind, and why it still haunts them.

THE BOWERED COMPANION

He Who Follows, Light-Along-the-Path, Old Friend, The Haunting Solace.

An ever-shifting figure of mist, shadow, and woodland debris, carrying a lantern that never burns out. A gentle unseen hand on your back, guiding you onward. Slow footsteps following yours. The distinct feeling of being watched. His domain is the lost, the missing, the desperate—those in need of guidance to a safer place than they currently find themselves.

The Bowered Companion is from a time long before industrialization and state-sanctioned gods. Lost travelers in the Whisper Plains would pray to him, offering up desperate sacrifices in hopes of finding their way home. Remains of small shrines to him can still occasionally be found along woodland trails, overgrown and untended. Industrialization has pushed out the lonely travelers that once fed this god. The Bowered Companion is neglected, hungry, and desperate. If there are no lost followers to guide, he will make some.

If the Custodians fail to resolve the Assignment in time, the Bowered Companion will take permanent root in Alm and the surrounding trade roads. The entire area becomes an impassable, god-haunted land that will only expand with time.

MOMENTS

- ◆ You feel an invisible hand touch your shoulder, as if trying to guide you somewhere.
- ◆ An acrid fog temporarily drifts into Alm, obscuring the road signs and stinging your eyes. No one else around seems to mind.
- ◆ A Failing's Ferry & Freight driver struggles to start their truck. After the engine turns over a few times, it comes to life with a sputter of dark smoke.
- ◆ A sudden, eerie silence washes over the landscape. For a long moment, the only sound is your own heart beating in your ears.
- ◆ A Side Character trails off mid-conversation, their gaze drifting to the wilderness beyond town. It takes effort to gain their attention again.
- ◆ The trees rustle ominously as something massive walks through the forest, just out of sight.
- ◆ A gust of wind blows litter down an empty road. One of the pieces is a torn flier that reads "HAVE YOU SEEN ME?" The picture of the missing person has been ripped off.

DANGERS

Angels in the fog

The Bowered Companion's angels. Looming, twisted shapes that lumber through the unnatural fog. Easily mistaken for something innocuous from a distance—a tree, a rock formation, an old cabin. Closer inspection reveals vast creatures cobbled together from fallen wood and stray teeth, tattered fur, and rotting sinew.

Followers of the Lighted Path

There are few who still worship the Bowered Companion, and their worship is usually done in secret—however, if those few catch wind of the Custodians taking an aggressive approach with their god, they will respond in kind.

For this Assignment, the Keeper has an additional reaction available: Lure.

Lure. The Custodians are not immune to the Bowered Companion's influence. When a Custodian rolls a miss during the Veiled Move, the Keeper may introduce one of the following consequences in the next scene:

- ◆ The Custodian gains the Condition: Hazy. The creeping fog has become difficult to ignore, and the shapes inside it are beginning to feel more real than their companions.
- ◆ An item from the Custodian's Altar goes missing, only to be found at the edge of the forest. They watch it get swallowed up by the fog until it disappears entirely.
- ◆ The Custodian gains the Condition: Lost. They are lured into the Bowered Companion's domain, lost in the labyrinth of shadows and trees.

LOCATIONS

The Whisper Plains. The wilderness outside of Alm, equal parts forest, field, and hissing electricity pylons. Criss-crossed with muddy trade roads and polluted canals. Perpetually covered in a haze of acrid fog—the eponymous whispers can be heard within by those who listen closely. Paint the Scene: *Almost every acre of the Whisper Plains has been marred by industrialization. What particularly egregious scar have humans left on this part of the wilderness?*

The Town of Alm. Barely large enough to be considered a town, and only noticeable because of its proximity to a major trade road. A sagging town hall, boarded shut. Hand-painted signs for gravel roads. Smoke from wood stoves mingling with truck exhaust and the sharp scent of pine. Distant birdsong from the forest that presses in on all sides. Paint the Scene: *What here tells you that this town, despite it being close to a thoroughfare, doesn't get much outside traffic?*

LOCATIONS (CONTINUED)

The Trade Road. The current dwelling place of the Bowered Companion. Looming pines and electricity pylons. Cracked red dirt bleeding through deep tire tracks in the gravel. Shapes and lights drifting through impossibly dense fog, as if beckoning you to follow them in. An abandoned Fainting's Ferry & Freight truck, overturned in a ditch, is just barely visible.

Paint the Scene: *What detail do you notice that hints at things being even more dangerous than they appear at first glance?*

An Abandoned Shack. One of many scattered throughout the forests of the Whisper Plains. The remains of a home, suddenly vacated, with personal items left behind. Repaired so many times over that its original shape would be unrecognizable. Something in particular makes this one distinct (pick one):

- ◆ A rusted water tank sags nearby, seeping into the cracked red earth. It's the only water for miles.
- ◆ Manic prayer marks are carved into every available surface—walls, old family photographs, bathroom mirrors, couch cushions.
- ◆ The remains of a dinner is laid out on a small kitchen table, rotting and writhing with insects. There is one plate for each Custodian.
- ◆ There is evidence that someone has taken shelter here recently—camping gear, a burned out lantern, and a map covered in incomprehensible scribbles.
- ◆ All of the lights are still on, the wood stove still burns, but everything is covered in a thick layer of dust.
- ◆ Claw marks marr the inside of the door, blood stains a nearby wall. A handmade banner hangs from the ceiling, visible from the entryway. It reads "Welcome Home."

Paint the Scene: *What here makes you think that the former residents of this home were unhappy?*

The Companion's Shrine. The last known shrine to the Bowered Companion, maintained by Farely Solis, in the woods just outside of Alm. It's strangely quiet here. An old-fashioned lantern illuminates a smooth, flat stone covered in prayer marks and small offerings—a rabbit carcass wrapped in red paracord; the skull of a vole carved with intricate prayer marks; a wooden bowl stained with blood.

Paint the Scene: *How do you know that this place is well-loved?*

If any Custodian has marked a Verse of Prophecy, ask them: *How do you know that Farely's sacrifices are not being accepted by their god?*

SIDE CHARACTERS

Ellison Hunter, a small town politician.

Graying early at the temples, bolo tie, broad theatrical gestures. Friendly to the point of desperation. They're trying to revive Alm and make it a thriving trade and tourist town. It's unclear as to whether they're mayor because everyone voted for them or because no one else ran for the position.

Quote: *"Welcome, welcome! I bet you lovely folks are just itching for a tour. Come on, I'll show you around. We're really known for our hiking out here, absolutely beautiful landscapes, great trails, trust me, we've just had to close down for the season! You know how it is. But don't worry! Alm has plenty to offer!"*

Dael McCully, a trucker.

Furrowed brow, well-worn work jacket, always chewing on something (usually a toothpick). A driver for Fainting's Ferry & Freight, he's increasingly worried about his coworkers' safety—and the longevity of his job.

Quote: *"Ever since the... y'know, incidents, my husband's been tryna get me to quit. I think he's gettin' nervous. I keep tellin' him I can't, but shit, I'm startin' to get nervous too. We're runnin' outta drivers."*

Sarika Dev, a librarian.

Bejeweled glasses chain, undercut with voluminous curls, busy hands. A follower of the Saint of the Ever-Turning Pages, she runs a small unofficial library in Alm, and is eager to share her (rather outdated) resources with those who seem genuine in their pursuit of knowledge or love of story.

Quote: *"Are you looking for something in particular? The Wirebitten Child's folks won't come out here like they do out in the city, so we've got to do it the old-fashioned way, but I bet I can find you anything you'd want."*

Hester Clay, a cook (and a waiter and a busboy).

Soft voice, dark circles under kind eyes, a wealth of piercings. He works at a diner—the only restaurant in Alm—and tends to get stuck on shift by himself, even more so now that his coworkers have started disappearing.

Quote: *"Can I getcha anything else? Just holler if you need me, I'm kinda doing everything around here tonight. Laken hasn't come in for the second day in a row, and it's just not like them, they... I'm sorry, ignore me."*

Ale Basurto, a local handyperson.

Tight ponytail, denim work vest, chain smokes cigarettes that smell like clove and freshly turned earth. Always busy repairing one of the rundown buildings in Alm, she sees and hears most of the town's business—not that she's particularly interested in it.

Quote: *"Shame about those missing folks, but I can't exactly say I'm surprised. It was bound to happen sooner or later. The gods out here, they're hungry. Ain't no one around to feed 'em."*

Farely Solis, a devotee.

Small twigs stuck in messy hair, heavy hiking boots, a distant look in their eyes. The only (known) person still tending to a Bowered Companion shrine. They can usually be found there, or wandering in the woods just outside of town, and most of the townsfolk in Alm considered them harmless up until recently. An ally or an adversary, depending upon the Custodians' approach.

Quote: *"You look lost, friend. No need to worry. We all get lost sometimes."*

Laken Fleet, a waiter a missing person.

Wide eyes, tattered diner uniform hanging off of a lanky frame, buzzed hair. A (former) waiter at Alm's only diner, they've recently been lured into the Bowered Companion's neck of the woods. Not yet a saint, not yet a sacrifice. They've been trying to escape by marking their path with strips of cloth from their own shirt, but it's not working. Nothing is.

Quote: *"How am I... I've been walking straight, I've been walking straight this whole time! I can't be back where I started I can't—"*

CLUES

- ☐ A prayer mark desperately clawed into the bark of a tree, bloody.
- ☐ A person has been hollowed out and lit from within to create a grotesque human lantern.
- ☐ Soft singing drifts out from the fog. You don't recognize the song.
- ☐ Evidence that, hidden in Alm's dilapidated town hall, there is (pick one: a secret altar to the Bowered Companion/the rotting remains of failed sacrifices/a chained saint/something else).
- ☐ Long-striding footsteps follow your own. You catch a glimpse of a shadowy figure when you turn around.
- ☐ An effigy made of twigs and broken glass.
- ☐ A pair of hiking boots and a backpack, neatly tucked under a tree. A few barefoot prints in the dirt can be seen walking away from the bundle.
- ☐ A sign near a trail has been hastily covered up. Underneath the inadequate paint job, you can make out "WARNING: UNSTABLE ////" and "TURN BACK."
- ☐ A vintage children's book titled Old Friend. It depicts a tall figure made of twigs and shadow holding a lantern, guiding "good" children away from danger and "naughty" children into it.
- ☐ A paper map of the area, heavily blacked out with spirals.
- ☐ A sealed glass jar filled with mysterious liquid and teeth of unclear origin, half-buried in the dirt.
- ☐ An overheard conversation: "Everyone knows better than to go out there alone."
- ☐ Scattered debris from a vehicle, covered in moss and stinging nettles.
- ☐ Evidence that, buried under the trade road, there is (pick one: the body of an immortal saint bound in plastic tarp/metal bars woven into ritual sigils/a small landfill/something else).
- ☐ A hand-carved walking stick, engraved with prayer marks, found in an unusual place.
- ☐ The remains of a campfire, with a message written in the ash.
- ☐ A hammock hanging vertically from a tree, wrapped around a body like a spider's web around an insect.
- ☐ The ground rumbles until a crack forms. Blood seeps from the new fissure.
- ☐ A quivering pine cone filled with meat.
- ☐ Paracord woven into the intricate shape of a prayer mark.

- ◆ An oil lantern woven from vines and sinew. It never goes out. Add it to your Altar.
- ◆ A small item crafted from the teeth of an angel. Ask another Custodian what that item is, then add it to your Altar.
- ◆ The favor of the Saint of the Ever-Turning Pages, in the form of a bookmark blessed with her visage. Add it to your Altar.
- ◆ A set of keys to a missing Fainting's Ferry & Freight truck. Add it to your Altar.
- ◆ A vintage field guide to the Whisper Plains, filled with additional handwritten notes. Add it to your Altar.
- ◆ A crown of thistles and stinging nettles. Add it to your Altar.
- ◆ If the Custodians resolved the Assignment by appeasing the Bowered Companion, or otherwise taking a nonviolent approach, they may additionally claim the special move, The Lighted Path.

During a Journey Scene that takes place in the wilderness, you may reveal a hidden path by drawing a prayer mark invoking the Bowered Companion. Ghost lights flicker along the path and, if you follow them, trigger the Revelation Move. On a hit, you encounter a Clue.

NOTES

[illegible]

INTRODUCTION

Where people go, trash follows, and few things insult a god more than using ruined spaces as a garbage dump. After several gods went on rampages through landfills and furnaces, the Central Glottage government decreed that all industrial waste be thrown along the coast and into the waters. While this did disrupt many smaller fringe faiths, nevertheless, the plan went through. As more plastic bags and rotting vegetables piled up amongst oil spills and clothing dye, the people begged for a god to break down what no one else could.

Thus was born Young Jolly Junk, a popular ocean god whose followers promised to "Keep Our Coasts Jolly." For decades, she has feasted on the flotsam and jetsam of modern manufacturing. Her image decorates beach signs and lifeguard stands, and children love playing with toys made in her likeness. However, the Custodians recently received reports that Young Jolly has grown to enormous size, far larger than she has been in prior years. The Blue West Channel—located near two manufacturing giants Keplan Textiles and Mortel Plastic Refinery—has been rendered impassible. More worrisome, a flotilla of boats has been gathering near the god as fishing docks have been ripped up and destroyed. Time is of the essence, and there is not enough of it.

Direct the following to a Custodian of your choice: *You have witnessed a god be overfed before. What did you see in the aftermath? What did you lose?*

QUESTIONS & OPPORTUNITIES

How can Young Jolly Junk be transformed into something less destructive? (Complexity: 4)
Resolve the Assignment by trapping the god into a more stable form.

Where is a safer place for Young Jolly Junk to reside? (Complexity: 6)
Resolve the Assignment by luring the god somewhere else.

What caused Young Jolly Junk to grow so rapidly? (Complexity: 8)
Resolve the Assignment by cutting off the source of the god's extreme growth.

THE VERSE OF THE TAINTED SHORE

- ☐ Each Custodian recalls a time where they ignored a problem, hoping that someone else would fix it, only for the consequences to spiral out of their control.



YOUNG JOLLY JUNK



YOUNG JOLLY JUNK

The Esurient Jetsam, Our Strangled Lady of Fishing Line and Refuse

An otter-headed god whose neck is swollen around fishing lines and zipties. She wears a branded t-shirt, stained with grease and bearing the promise "Keep Our Coasts Jolly," and her long train is made of plastic nets and rubber tires. She does not need a mouth to eat; instead, she absorbs rusted cars and rotting flesh into her dress—and for the most fortunate, simply folded into her matted and oil-slicked fur.

Her domain is recent and holy, formed from a thousand wishes to clean up centuries of industrial folly along the beaches. With each passing year, however, more trash is dumped into her swollen body, and her appetite only continues to grow. Her once marketable visage has grown to immense size, large enough to block a channel along the coast as she acts upon the need to consume. No one knows her language—if she has one at all anymore—but all avoid her grasping hands of scrap metal and PVC pipes.

If the Custodians fail to resolve the Assignment in time, Young Jolly Junk continues to grow. And grow. And grow. The channel is blocked off for trade and commerce, becoming nothing more than a receptacle for waste and refuse. Eventually, the god will expand her domain to the land, overwhelming coastal villages in her ceaseless need to consume trash.

MOMENTS

- ◆ A group of ecologists fervently gathers by the waterline, helping a family of ducks escape an oil spill.
- ◆ A mass of floating plastic bags, tangled around a dozen dead—yet still blinking—frogs.
- ◆ Someone strangles a Side Character with a plastic six-pack ring and pushes them into the water.
- ◆ Several picnickers clean up after a meal. A few paces away, a filthy drainage pipe spews foul smelling chemicals into the air and water.
- ◆ Children play on a pristine coastline. One of them tosses a ball, and it lands in an overflowing trash can.
- ◆ A sun-faded sign depicting a cartoonish form of Young Jolly Junk, surrounded by neatly organized recycling bins, glass bottles, and tied bundles of cardboard.

DANGERS

A popular god

Though currently a nuisance, Young Jolly Junk is a beloved figure among the coastal villages near the channel. Improperly handling the situation—either by injuring the god or suggesting a violent solution—draws the attention of powerful officials and average civilians alike. Eyes will constantly be on the Custodians, and attempting to do more clandestine work will raise suspicions of sabotage.

Fanatical followers

Those who worship Young Jolly Junk tend to be beach cleaners, ecologists, and environmentally conscious youth. They will hound and harry the Custodians at every turn, expecting that their sacred duty will go undisturbed. Littering—or trying to evacuate the cheering masses—is a good way to get her followers to throw the Custodians into their god's train.

LOCATIONS

Keplan Textiles. Barrels overflowing with eye-burning chemical dyes. Drain pipes with technicolor, foaming water leading straight to the ocean. The smell of ammonia and sulphuric acid.
Paint the Scene: *What in this factory seems beautiful but is really hiding something utterly grotesque?*

Mortel Plastic Refinery. Brand new machines engraved with the symbol of the Living Polymer, a god of manufactured materials. Cheap, disposable toys and furniture stacking up in one corner. A conveyor belt of plastic waste being dumped out a window.
Paint the Scene: *What is being produced here that no one will ever actually buy?*

Blue West Beach. Slick black rocks, soaked from the salty spray. Water-eroded pebbles and gravel, interspersed with sea glass and the occasional bottle cap. Fishing piers and wet docks for boats; about half of the docks on the downstream side have been torn up.
Paint the Scene: *How do you know that the locals still care about Blue West Beach and the Blue West Channel even when bigger businesses do not?*

The Broken Pearl. A dingy tugboat, nearly falling apart, powered by a leaky diesel engine. Cracked seats and yellowing windows. Parked in one of the few docks left on Blue West Beach and the keys have been left inside. It's clearly been abandoned, and everyone in and around the beach believes as much.
Paint the Scene: *The former owner left in a hurry — what did they leave behind?*

Special Move: Slow Moving Waters

When you use *The Broken Pearl* to explore the waters surrounding the Peninsula or reach locations inaccessible from the mainland, roll with Focus. On a hit, you make it to your destination and discover a Clue along the way. On a 10+, as above, and you find an item that was dredged up from the muck and murk; ask another player what it is and add it to your Altar. On a miss, the tugboat runs out of fuel, stalls, then rapidly sinks as if pulled under; this move is no longer available.

LOCATIONS (CONTINUED)

The Blue West Channel. Murky waters choked with plastic tubs, rotting vegetables, and all manner of things that should not have been flushed down a toilet. Thick algal blooms, dead fish, and an awful smelling chemical foam. A sheen of oil floating across the top.

Special Rule: While the Custodians can see the entirety of the Blue West Channel from the shore, they can only obtain Clues from this Location by being onboard *The Broken Pearl*.

Paint the Scene: *Many small, local, fringe faiths were pushed out by the trash. What remains of their idols and worshipers can be found along the channel's banks?*

The Severed Sea flotilla. A collection of fishing boats and recreational vessels chained together just outside of Young Jolly Junk's reach. Decks lined with plastic trash bags and scrap metal. The occasional screams of someone being thrown overboard or a boat being broken against the growing god.

Special Rule: The Severed Sea flotilla can only be accessed with the use of *The Broken Pearl*.

Paint the Scene: *Describe a boat in the flotilla. Are its captain and crew here willingly, or are they desperately fighting against the current?*

SIDE CHARACTERS

Arthur Keplan, a factory mogul.

Dark, slicked back hair. Fine suit that has not been tailored to fit him. Expensive wrist watch. He is the current head of Keplan Textiles, and he sees the current crisis as a PR opportunity. He is happy to aid the Custodians so long as they make his contributions to "the current problem" look good—and the Mortel plant across the channel look bad.

Quote: *"Eco-friendly dyes have been in style for years now, you know. Competitors have been raving how much better they've been selling. And if people think we switched for our little problem outside, well, all the better!"*

Beth Mortel, a different factory mogul.

Smart pantsuit. Graying hair that has been box-dyed. Shoes better fit for management than a factory floor. While not technically the owner of the plastics refinery, Beth is part of the family and acts as the head manager. She is a devotee of the Living Polymer, and her method of worship shows in excess production; she will not pull back on the waste the factory produces, even to save her own skin.

Quote: *"Bless our carbon-chained divinity and the products by which modern life is lived. If it breaks, there will be another just like it in no time at all. What might we make for you today?"*

Rushie Lee, a dyer.

Arms stained purple. Sweat-soaked headband. A permanent cough. Rushie works at Keplan Textiles, and he hates his job, though he'll never say that while his boss is listening. He is almost certain that working here is going to get him killed, one way or another.

Quote: *"My hands were green last week. That's how much stuff we run through. Green last week, puke orange the week before that. At this rate, if I didn't know better, I'd say Keplan was trying to turn me into some sort of dye saint."*

Perle Leshe, a holy activist.

Suntanned skin. Practical hiking boots. Thick gardening gloves and a net. One of Young Jolly Junk's followers, Pearl works both as a beach cleaner and ranger on Blue West Beach. She can be found out along the beaches picking up litter and she is ecstatic to see her god's influence grow.

Quote (sung like a working song): *"Oh our dear Young Jolly, keep our waters clean from mankind's folly, and sweep away the endless tides, of all the refuse we try to hide."*

Bart Brel a fisherman.

Weather-worn jacket. Repeatedly sunburnt skin. Keeps a few bits of tackle on his belt. Bart owns a small fishing boat and is one of many captains currently part of the Severed Seas flotilla after his dock was destroyed. Seems relatively unfazed about the danger he's currently in.

Quote: *"I remember back when the waters around here were nicer. Had all kinds of things swimming about, big and small. Made for a wonderfully simple life. I am glad Young Jolly's cleaning the place up, 'specially since it's been gettin' worse these past few years."*

Note: Followers of the Trawler Man will easily discern that Bart Brel is a fellow worshiper.

Wallop, a boater.

Tinted sunglasses. Expensive polo shirt. Hands that barely have worked a day in their life. Wallop is a rich man who enjoys a bit of boating in his spare time. He has been swept into the Severed Sea flotilla, and he does not want to be here; he will offer anything to be brought to safety, to the ire of other ship captains.

Quote: *"I will pay you any sum of money you want, just get me back to shore, damn you all!"*

Lucy Devons, a plucky child.

Blonde pigtails. Cotton dress and leather Mary Janes. A slightly dirty Young Jolly Junk plush toy. About eight or so years old, Lucy regularly visits the Blue West Channel with her mother, Anna, and she sees a lot that others don't. She is at the age where she believes recycling will fix all the problems in the world.

Quote: *"My mama says that it's better to get things that you can use again and again. And if you can't use it again, make sure someone else can. Only throw something away if no one can use it. Right, mama?"*

Anna Devons, an ecologist.

Large sunhat. Notepad with drawings of wildlife and sigils. Khaki pants with extra pockets. Anna is Lucy's mother, and the two regularly go on walks to observe the wildlife. She was a worshiper of a fringe god that died as a result of the Blue West Channel being clogged and has since switched her devotion to Young Jolly Junk. As a result, she's not about to see another god of hers pushed aside for corporate faiths.

Quote: *"We called her the Reed Child. Such a small lovely thing, until she was choked out by petroleum and acid in the water. If only I could've saved her. If only..."*

CLUES

- ☐ Barrels of an unknown substance, overturned next to the river.
- ☐ Paperwork detailing the original plan to flood the channel with waste.
- ☐ A map of the area, covered in prayer marks.
- ☐ Scrawlings in an unknown language that, when spoken, sound like grating metal.
- ☐ A recruitment flier for the holy activists that has been deliberately torn into shreds.
- ☐ Drawings of mutated fish and waterfowl.
- ☐ An abandoned recycling facility, just downriver of the stuck god.
- ☐ Bright, glowing blood on a fishing net
- ☐ Rumors of an empty wetland with no current gods residing in it.
- ☐ A religiously significant number of severed fish heads (pick one: 3, 7, 13, 21, something else).
- ☐ A prayer book dedicated to the Reed Child and several other dead gods near the Blue West Channel.
- ☐ Solid lead ingots with a mysterious sigil carved into them.
- ☐ A hidden canal, recently dug to pass around the main channel.
- ☐ Sharp plastic waste, fashioned into a ritual dagger.
- ☐ A mutilated, dying angel, made of slick oil bound in a hollow plastic body.
- ☐ Ritual items (pick one: rings of braided plastic, fat deposits made into half-burned candles, half a rubber tire, fishing nets woven into a noose, something else).
- ☐ A prayer manuscript that details how to make a saint of Young Jolly Junk.
- ☐ An island, far off shore, shrouded in mist.
- ☐ Rumors that one of the manufacturers changed formulas.
- ☐ Hazardous, rotting divine waste, mixed in with other trash.

REWARDS

- ◆ Pearl Leshe becomes a recurring Side Character; you get 1 extra Clue on the Information Move when you seek her counsel about matters related to discarded objects and polluted areas.
- ◆ A Young Jolly Junk-branded plush toy. Add it to your Altar.
- ◆ A survival bracelet made of recycled plastic. Add it to your Altar.
- ◆ A memento from a dead god—describe it and add it to your Altar.
- ◆ A memento from the investigation—ask another Custodian to describe it and then add it to your Altar.

INTRODUCTION

The Custodians have been directed by their handlers to quietly resolve a situation in the sprawling fringes of the Greater Glottage conurbation. Suburbanites within a growing sphere of influence are sickening, contracting a hideous rot from clouds of gray spores spread on the wind. Their skin erupts in weeping rust and cracked concrete. They become obsessed by ascent, drawn to a towering building erupting like a twisted fingernail from the dead urban soil.

Dreams of Ease. The marketeers thought they had done it again. Yet another magnificent high-rise tower shaped from the Slag King's sacred plans and enhanced with cutting edge induced god-craft. Comfortable living with a hallowed manager to protect and watch over you and your family! A single prisoner was sacrificed to the structure, drowned in concrete as tradition demanded. Strangely, they died in secret without the usual ribbon cutting and photo ops. The press release coyly branded the death a "patented experiment."

Direct the following to the Custodian with the highest Insight: *The architect Lucien Beton vanished shortly before the building was completed. What rumors surround his disappearance?*

That was a decade ago. Residents were rapidly consumed, and the newborn tower saint fed ravenously. Most succumbed to the mysterious concrete rot and a fanatical few from the privileged upper floors began to worship the tower, calling themselves the Dreamers of Ease. They proclaimed a sacred mission: great and soaring architectural growth without end. A new name was shouted from the balconies and the Skyward Sprawl was born.

Direct the following to all Custodians: *How will you call on your deity to shield you from the Sprawl's rot?*

QUESTIONS & OPPORTUNITIES

Where is the hallowed corpse of the Sprawl's saint interred? (Complexity: 4)

Resolve the Assignment by destroying or removing the body. The building will rapidly rot and collapse as soon as the Assignment ends.

Why is the Sprawl growing? (Complexity: 6)

Resolve the Assignment by using this knowledge to control or prevent the growth.

How can the schism between the Sprawl and the Slag King be healed? (Complexity: 8)

Resolve the Assignment by presenting a cogent thesis to a delegation of the Slag King's surveyor priests and the Adjudicator's representatives, negotiating a peace.



THE SKYWARD SPRAWL



THE VERSE OF THE CONCRETE JUNGLE

- ☐ Each Custodian recounts an episode from their childhood when a god violently warped the built environment around them.

THE SKYWARD SPRAWL

The Reaching Spire, the Concrete Jungle

The Sprawl is an experimental saint of the Slag King gone wrong, a fusion of flesh, steel, and concrete. It rises, writhing into the sky. Gray spores dance in the wind, carpeting the land. The surrounding public plaza is an exclusion zone of barbed wire sanctified by the Torn Prince and a minefield of military prayer marks. It is unclear if the Sprawl is sentient, but it is powerful within its suburban domain. It is a threat to the territory, aggressively and rapidly expanding upwards as its influence spreads outwards.

If the Custodians fail to complete the Assignment in time, the religious conflict within the tower will explode into a bloodbath. An army of zealots loyal to the Slag King will flock to the building, along with an ever-growing horde of the Afflicted as the radius of effects grows larger. The Adjudicator and the faith of the Slag King will hold the Custodians responsible.

Special Rule: While investigating this Assignment, the Keeper can, as a reaction, infect a Custodian with the Condition: Concrete Rot. If a Custodian would ever be forced to take Concrete Rot when they already have it, they must Write a Verse.

MOMENTS

- ◆ Whispers of liturgical speech echo from a series of wall-mounted speakers. Monitors and screens flash unrecognizable monochromatic prayer marks.
- ◆ One of the afflicted stumbles past, a ruin of weeping iron sores and scabrous concrete. They claw at the walls with bloody finger stumps, seeking to ascend.
- ◆ Black veins snake below the translucent surface of polished concrete. You can feel a pulse through the walls.
- ◆ Progress is blocked by a crude barricade of household items erected in a hallway to prevent incursions by the rival faction.
- ◆ The elevator doors open and close of their own volition to reveal gruesome tableaux of flesh and concrete.
- ◆ Screams echo through the tower as a zealot picks up and holds a red hot ingot of steel to prove their faith. There is a smell of cooking flesh.

Special Move: Ritual of the Skyward Sprawl

When you call on the power of the Skyward Sprawl, roll with Communion; if you have the Condition: Concrete Rot, roll with advantage. On a hit, a garden of steel and concrete erupts from the ground to do your bidding. On a 7-9, choose 1. On a 10+, choose 2.

- ◆ The Sprawl performs a useful service.
- ◆ The infectious gray spores of the Sprawl remain dormant, for now.
- ◆ You are able to convince the Sprawl to dissipate.

On a miss, the Sprawl grows unchecked, out of your control, and you take the Condition: Concrete Rot. On a 12+, you also find a Clue for an active Assignment.

The Custodians can gain access to this move from Brut. It is also available as a Reward.

DANGERS

The Dreamers of Ease

A cult of the Skyward Sprawl's enigmatic doctrine, carriers of the rot and enemies of the zealots. Their robes and religious icons are made from repurposed luxury domestic items. Their leader, Mother Asbestos, looks on as the afflicted approach the sacrificial elevator shaft, gateway to their final fall and apotheosis. They are outnumbered but the building warps in strange ways to help them, resulting in stalemate.

The Slag King's zealots

Residents of modest means who are outraged by the excesses of the Dreamers of Ease and have lost friends and family to the rot. Surveyor Monger has whipped them into a frenzy with his stirring architectural sermons, always exhorting his flock to overthrow the tower from below and expunge its deviation from the plan. They show their faith through ritual burns and scarification, smearing their bodies with thick apotropaic engine grease.

The afflicted

Shambling victims of the Skyward Sprawl's rot. Their bones, teeth, and nails painfully transform into rebar, their joints ooze rust and their skin is afflicted with scabrous gray patches. Their only urge is to ascend the building at any cost and cast themselves down the sacrificial elevator shaft to ululations of the Dreamers, becoming one with the growing Sprawl. The tower grows a nearby express elevator door to guide the afflicted to the roof when the rot has taken them, breaching the zealots' containment.

LOCATIONS

The sublevels. A twisted garden of hallowed flesh dancing with floating gray spores. At its center, a gaping steel mouth opens from the ceiling. Below it, a pile of torn human meat, shattered bones and gristle, slowly transforming and rising into the growing Sprawl.

Paint the Scene: *What miracles of the Sprawl are born as flesh grows into building?*

The lobby. A lofty cathedral of soaring murals and concrete egg box ceilings lit with diffuse light. It is the nerve center and war room of the zealots and the entrance to the elevators. Surveyor Monger has set up a gleaming chrome altar atop a melted and welded pile of lobby furniture. The space has strange acoustics, returning distorted whispers and mysteries.

Paint the Scene: *How do the murals tell the story of the building's founding? How has the Sprawl subtly twisted them?*

The lower floors. Once the more inexpensive apartments of the complex, now the territory of the Slag King's zealots. Fires burn in oil cans spaced along the hallways of this shanty town. There is a pervasive smell of metal, unwashed bodies, and cooking food. Grease-covered men, women, and children live out their lives in daily conflict.

Paint the Scene: *What acts of extreme devotion to the Slag King contrast with scenes of daily life?*

The mid-level front. A raging battle across the band of floors between zealots below and Dreamers above. Stairwells are blocked, hallways are fortified, and tactical elevator skirmishes are common. Smoke and concrete dust fills the air as figures fight to the death.

Paint the Scene: *Which once-communal building facilities now serve as battlefields between the factions?*

The upper floors. These spacious apartments are the homes of the Dreamers of Ease, devotees of the Skyward Sprawl. The cult occupies a pristine complex of tasteful furnishings, conversation pits, and creature comforts provided and maintained by their deity. Cultists speak in rapturous tones about the bounty of their god.

Paint the Scene: *How do you know that the Dreamers have completely forgotten who they were before the Sprawl?*

The penthouse. The apex of the elevator and stairwell opens on a gleaming temple to Beton's vision for Dream of Ease. Set on the roof of the Sprawl within a manicured garden of living steel and concrete that emits puffs of spores. The interior is an exquisite and spotless display of modern subdued taste. At its heart, a sacrificial elevator shaft running the full height of the building.

Paint the Scene: *How does the flawless and impeccable style of the penthouse evoke awe or dread?*

SIDE CHARACTERS

Mother Asbestos, a hallowed priestess.

A looming, eight-foot modernist statue of a robed woman with stark avian features. Her skin has been transformed to incorruptible fire retardant insulation and her robes are mirror-polished concrete. Her almond-shaped and vigilant eyes weep tears of rust. The Mother was the first to worship the Sprawl. She is positioned, immobile, next to the sacred elevator shaft. In one hand she clutches the rusted building manager's keys on a ring. The other finger points to the heavens.

Special rule: The Mother will whisper a Clue in a barely-perceptible death rattle to those who Write a Verse in her domain.

Quote: *"A building. Is a... machine... for living. But. What... is life?"*

Brother Rebar, a majordomo.

The disciple of Mother Asbestos. A charming, quick-witted man of middle years with steely gray eyes and neat white hair. He wears a pince-nez made from mismatched prescription spectacle lenses. His rot-eaten arm stumps are hidden beneath voluminous rust-red bed sheet robes. Novice Timber's stern and judgmental father and Sister Plate Glass's forgotten husband. Once a lawyer, now a negotiator.

Quote: *"This schism is most unfortunate. All we wish is to ascend and multiply in peace. If our faith is contagious, is that not a sign of its compelling message?"*

Sister Plate Glass, a cult warrior.

Wears cloudy robes made from several shower curtains. Her voice is cracked and fragile but sharp, her face covered by a repurposed crystal cheese platter to hide the rot. She battles the zealots of the Slag King at the front in the middle levels, slick with blood. A former realtor who was Novice Timber's mother and Brother Rebar's wife, now lost to the fight and the rot.

Quote: *"Shhhhh. Listen to the walls. Do you hear it? That scratching sound is a sign that we are blessed. It is our war drum..."*

Novice Timber, a runaway.

A small, nervous teenage girl with a topknot secured by a napkin ring in robes made from panels of quilted wood effect chipboard. The daughter of Brother Rebar and Sister Plate Glass. Timber is mourning parents still alive but lost to the Sprawl. She is trapped and desperately wants you to help her escape. She carries a bulging belt of tools

Quote: *"I really don't care who is right or who wins or if the Sprawl is a god or not. I just want a safe place to live and a real family, one that loves me! Fuck this. I'm out of here. I just need my chance."*

Ezekiel Faber, a zealot leader.

A steel plant foreman turned Slag King zealot. Dressed in a scorched leather apron, thick gloves, and welding mask. Carries a blowtorch as a weapon. His face is filthy, burned and scarred, his eye whites gleam, and his enormous beard and hair is separated into cog-braided dreadlocks of grease.

Quote: *"Our industrious deity don't like rich folk spoiling his designs. I mean, growing floors? Could the gentrification be any more plain? I mean to see this tower return to the Faith."*

Surveyor Jeremiah Monger, a priest of the Slag King. Massive, hairless, grease-daubed, and heavily scarified. Monger is from the supply chain fundamentalist faction of the Slag King's faith. His voice box and larynx are a scarred ruin from imbibing a devotional draught of molten iron. His robes are covered with fluttering liturgical fragments of architectural plans. The Surveyor plugs his speech synthesizer into a huge speaker atop his lobby shrine to give deafening sermons in a heavy drawl.

Quote: **feedback* "Disciples, is it in the plans?" *brandishes architectural blueprints* "I said, IS IT in the PLANS!?"*

Brut, an afflicted. An eyeless legless ruin of weeping rust and gray flesh desperately crawling to the entrance to the sacred express elevator. Their answers to questions are incoherent but insightful. They are rapturously joyful.

Special Rule: If a Custodian has the Ashen Circle marked, Brut will daub the prayer mark of the Skyward Sprawl ritual upon their brow in concrete dust. That Custodian now has access to the associated special move.

Quote: **singsong* "Draw the mark, the Sprawl will rise. Dreams of concrete, rust-red eyes. Don't hide the truth, if you are wise. Hee hee hee!"*

NOTES

CLUES

- ☐ A geological survey mapping rich mineral deposits beneath the Dreams of Ease development.
- ☐ An unpublished book manuscript by the architect entitled Religious Dread and Architecture.
- ☐ Research into the upper legal limits of Peninsular airspace.
- ☐ A redacted government document chronicling disastrous attempts to create military gods of defensive architecture.
- ☐ A large ornate key embossed with an elaborate sigil.
- ☐ Ledgers that suggest covert funding for the development by several faiths hostile to the Slag King.
- ☐ The seal of the Saint Electric on a circuit board, defaced and corrupted.
- ☐ A religious tome from an unidentified cult entitled The Psalter of Ascent.
- ☐ An apartment that has no doors or windows, perfectly preserved.
- ☐ A corrupt recording labeled "Dreams of Ease Development - Unviability Report."
- ☐ Graffiti that reads "Togetherness is beating up an empty elevator."
- ☐ A garbage chute is blocked with hundreds of prayers written on bloody scraps of human flesh.
- ☐ Evidence that investors in Glottage are trading in "vertical futures" with the Dreamers of Ease, purchasing apartments that have not yet grown.
- ☐ Signs that the sacrificed saint of the building did not come from the prison population.
- ☐ Blood-encrusted hand-carved prayer marks above every apartment door.
- ☐ Evidence that a member of the Slag King's zealots is a government operative.
- ☐ A hidden space filled with samples of the Sprawl and detailed notes on their growth.
- ☐ Proof that Lucien Beton was unsatisfied with his creation.
- ☐ A hidden prayer mark of the Cloak, god of policemen.
- ☐ The stairwell descends far below the sublevels of the Sprawl.

REWARDS

- ◆ A valuable geometric artwork from the penthouse collection. Add it to your Altar.
- ◆ A lump of concrete jackhammered from a wall with a sigil carved on it.
- ◆ Novice Timber becomes a recurring Side Character; you get 1 extra Clue when you seek her help on matters related to construction and repair.
- ◆ A government manual entitled Architectural Miracles: Guidelines for Neutralisation. Add it to your Altar.
- ◆ An elixir that dissolves concrete and melts steel. Add it to your Altar.
- ◆ The Skyward Sprawl will gift the prayer mark of its ritual if the Custodians have reached an understanding with it, unlocking the associated special move for all Custodians.
- ◆ If the Assignment was resolved by healing the schism, the faith of the Slag King and the Adjudicator of the territory will owe a Custodian a favor that can be called in to learn a Clue that can be used during the Conspiracy Confrontation.

NOTES

INTRODUCTION

A recent article in the *Central Glottage Herald* claims that unsanctioned miracles are being performed in an abandoned rural hospital by followers of several false faith gods. The Adjudicators have released a press statement ahead of any public outcry, while quietly dispatching the usual array of lying martyrs and propaganda saints to tie up loose ends. But continued pressure from hospital shareholders, and increasing demands for a full investigation has brought this case to the Custodians. You have been provided with the necessary credentials to visit the clinic as inspectors, and will be given access to tour the facility. Upon arrival at the clinic, you will be greeted by Phineas Gland—a minister of The Silver Lining—and a group of quiet attendants.

Pose the following to all Custodians: *What breakthrough medical advances and miraculous cures are rumored to be performed at the Clinic?*

Direct the following to a Custodian who follows the Pox Martyr or the Cairn Maiden, or the one who has the most Verses of Prophecy marked: *What makes you suspect that the Clinic is turning its patients into immortal saints?*

A note for the Keeper: some Custodians will have particular advantages in this Assignment because of their faith sheet moves, such as followers of the Pox Martyr or the Cairn Maiden. The intense environment of the clinic—the sheer number of patients and the interference by fringe faiths—can present them with unique challenges, as well.

QUESTIONS & OPPORTUNITIES

What is the hidden cost of the miracles being performed here? (Complexity: 2)

Unlock the next Question. Each Custodian gains the Condition: Treatment Candidate. Certain Side Characters and Dangers will take special interest in the Custodians if they have this Condition. This Condition can only be cleared by answering the next Question.

Can the Custodians put a meaningful end to the suffering here? (Complexity: 2)

If yes, unlock the remaining Questions.

If no, resolve the Assignment by working with Clinic staff to gather the needed documentation that will satisfy the Bureau. Each Custodian receives a complimentary spiritual renewal treatment and can unmark a Verse of History of their choice. Additionally, one of the fringe faiths from the clinic becomes an Asset of the Conspiracy.

Which outlawed faith poses the greatest threat? (Complexity: 4)

Resolve the Assignment by making an example of the followers and severing their god from the clinic. Answering this Question grants the special move: Godkiller.[†]

Who is secretly funding the unsanctioned work of the Clinic? (Complexity: 4)

Resolve the Assignment by unmasking the sponsor of the Clinic and reporting their activities to the authorities. Each Custodian may choose two Rewards during End of Session and gains the Condition: Hero.



THE MIRACULOUS CLINIC OF THE BLEEDING WITNESS



THE VERSE OF THOUGHTS AND PRAYERS

- ☐ Each Custodian recalls a time when platitudes were offered in place of meaningful action. Who benefited from this hollow display? Who suffered?

THE SORROW

The clinic, having reclaimed an abandoned hospital, is siphoning the emotional residue of past tragedies which still linger in its walls and foundations. This ghostly wounded heart that rots beneath the clinic grows larger each day, its burrowing, corrupted veins seeping through into overcrowded shelters and parking spaces, along lonely roads, festering at sites of ripening grief. Those with the courage to cleanse and release it might still find a way to do so—but all around, the vultures gather: opportunists eager to recruit new sacrifices for their banned faith, hawkers of false cures, and the tragically afflicted who only seek the chance at a new life.

If the Custodians fail to resolve the Assignment in time, one or more of the fringe faiths practicing in the clinic will gain a foothold in the region, creating more saints, converting more followers, and eventually becoming recognized as a licensed faith—free to secure funding to continue its experiments at a much greater scale.

MOMENTS

- ◇ The groan, sigh, and mutter of slumbering dream-afflicted patients—slumped in visitor's chairs, huddled in spare rooms, piled gently upon blankets in darkened corners.
- ◇ A rattling phone rings over and over. A kind but appropriately somber receptionist nods sympathetically towards it each time, but makes no move to answer it.
- ◇ A growing cluster of observers outside a patient's door. Murmurings of wonder, cries of rapture and delight at the miracle blooming within. (Custodians do not perceive the miracle unless they have marked a Verse of Prophecy).
- ◇ A steady beep of monitoring equipment turns erratic, joined by another from a neighboring room, and another, and another in a crescendo of frantic warnings and alarms. A distant voice responds in quavering song.
- ◇ An unmarked van unloads a catatonic, stretcher-bound patient outside a back entrance.
- ◇ A beaming attendant pushes an empty wheelchair into the hall, where a row of assembled staff applauds another "miraculous recovery."
- ◇ A screaming patient convulses on the floor, a swarm of attendants lay their hands gently over their shifting, sprouting flesh as a nurse yells to "Pray harder!"

[†]Special Move: Godkiller

You have obtained the undying essence of a living god. When making a roll with Communion, you may check a box below to automatically get a 12+ (the track is shared by all Custodians). Then, take the Condition: Divine Infection, as the god-essence takes its toll on your mortal flesh. When the final box is marked, instead of taking Divine Infection, all Custodians with Divine Infection must Write a Verse.



DANGERS

Fringe faith practitioners

Followers of various outlawed faiths and volatile emergent gods, all involved in transformations of the flesh and spirit. None of them dare practice their faith openly elsewhere—but here, given free reign, and material support, their fanaticism knows no bounds. Meddling visitors make for all-too-convenient sacrifices, or subjects for clinical trials. Notable gods:

- ◇ The Bleeding Witness, a saint who refused to avert her gaze from suffering in any form. Her followers walk a path of radical presence through suffering—the extended observation of another's suffering, that is.
- ◇ The Crimson Inkwell, a reclusive god of martyr-poets whose followers bleed themselves dry as they record every precious human moment they can.
- ◇ The Grafted Glamour, a black market surgery cult which specializes in the ritual grafting of godflesh to enhance cosmetic beauty in radical ways.
- ◇ It Could Be Worse, the less charming cousin of the Silver Lining, worshiped through obsessive chronicling of bad news. Its followers continuously update a calendar with records of tragic accidents, murders, and mass casualty events.
- ◇ Drifters Upon the Slow Wave, a cult of dreamers who exalt in the oblivion of deep sleep above all else. Known for ongoing experiments in subliminal prayer, trance-inducing artwork, and frequencies they test on the public.
- ◇ The Snuff Gods, whose worshipers practice extreme acts of ritual violence and anatomical experiments. Their devotion to the Five Aspects of Pain, and the participation and witnessing of that pain in complex ways, makes them all the more sinister, as they believe that committing the acts themselves makes them somehow more righteous.

DANGERS (CONTINUED)

“Clinical trials”

Any visitors to the clinic may be viewed as potential candidates for clinical trials of the latest experimental cure. This may involve the administration of drugs, exposure to a saint or angel, focused prayer circles, confinement in modified ritual chambers, or any combination of the above. The undisclosed goal of all such trials is to create a new saint that will further the goals of that particular fringe faith.

Avatars of grief

Tall as lamp posts, clad in feathered shadow, emaciated bodies aglow with soothing night lights, wailing mouths like anglerfish. Originally brought forth to aid families in the grieving process, they would mourn on their behalf, crying and lamenting to encourage participation and a smoother transition back to the daily routine. In the clinic, however, without a transition back to the world outside, the cycle of loss and grieving is caught in a loop which only grows in intensity.

LOCATIONS

Clinic parking lot. Rows of tents and picnic blankets take up most parking spaces. Makeshift rope barriers to guide the waiting line into the clinic entrance. Small clusters of transformation seekers gather around traveling preachers and clinic consultants pushing the latest treatments and services. Piles of worldly items cast aside, unneeded—or placed in donation bins for those less fortunate souls who may need them yet.

Paint the Scene: *What signs of hope do you see in the visitors awaiting treatment? What miraculous cures and procedures are being advertised by the clinic?*

The waiting room. A silent, cavernous lobby, dimly lit by dirty ceiling windows and sickly chandeliers. Spindly plants, presumably tropical, die slowly in tacky pink and green pots. Hunched, blanketed figures droop upon rows of cushioned chairs. The air is hushed with anticipation. Occasional murmurs emerge from behind a towering, curved receptionist's desk.

Paint the Scene: *Which patients are admitted, and what cost seems to be attached to their treatment? Which are ignored or left to the limbo of the waiting room?*

The recovery ward. Several floors of cramped rooms and hallways overflowing with improvised beds. Unattended nurse's stations plastered with affirmation cards. Patients shuffle in line for their turn at the blessing vending machines, or stroll slowly with visitors. A screechy overhead monitor plays reruns of the popular police reality show, *Justice: Dispensed*.

Paint the Scene: *How do the patients here seem unlikely to fully recover, and how do you know this is by design?*

THE MIRACULOUS CLINIC

The tranquility garden. Frayed wind chimes hang from an ornamental maple tree. A dried up fountain full of golden leaves. A pair of hollow statues sculpted in comfortingly smooth features—one holding up a red marble heart to the empty chest cavity of the other. The gentle, soothing hum of long-term dreamers standing upright beneath the soil.

Paint the Scene: *This space was designed as a place of recovery, and silent repose for those processing grief. How has it been co-opted by fringe faiths?*

If any Custodian has marked a Verse of Prophecy, ask them: *How do you know that an angel dwells here, feeding off the sorrow of visitors?*

A patient's room. A place outside of time. A cell. A final respite. A place of quiet, inescapable, inevitable transformation. Peering in the door, you find (pick one):

- ◆ Soft night lights, a murmuring, hissing mound of blankets and pillows.
- ◆ Silent, shrouded figures sitting in rows against each wall, facing a beckoning pit in the floor.
- ◆ A mass of old equipment and abandoned belongings woven together in an impenetrable nest. Crooning, scratching, chittering from within.
- ◆ A group of weary visitors at the bedside of an elder, listening to their last words. The elder, floating from the bed, rapturous and gleeful, recounts their glory days in a stream of poetic and vivid detail.
- ◆ A patient writhing and racked with pain. A trio of Sympathy Sisters stand by, nodding gently, reciting words of affirmation from prayer pamphlets.
- ◆ A quaking mound of flesh, suspended by mechanical lift, tubes and wires and implanted devices dangling like the tentacles of a jellyfish. Attendants poke at it with spiny instruments, injecting or extracting a milky blue liquid.

Paint the Scene: *How do you know that this is only one of many such scenes, taking place even now in other rooms of the clinic?*

The surgical amphitheater. Tiered benches and desks look down over an operating table upon a rounded dais. A long table draped in a blood soaked altar cloth. Surgeons' tools soak in ornate jars of sanctifying solution. Miraculous discoveries of the latest operation are sketched in grotesque detail on standing chalkboards.

Paint the Scene: *How has this space been arranged to evoke reverence and spiritual awe?*

Behind a privacy screen, buckets of gore and waste await ritual disposal—and a curiously warped cadaver lies exposed and bound to a gurney.

If any Custodian has marked a Verse of Prophecy, ask them: *How do you know this is the body of an immortal saint?*

SIDE CHARACTERS

Phineas Gland, a greeter.

Garish pastel suit and tie, an inferno of wild red hair, blue-tinted eyeglasses. Wears a bedazzled glowing cloud pin, indicating a third rank practitioner in the Ministry of the Silver Lining.

Quote: *"Greetings, one and all! On behalf of the entire team, and the diverse pantheon represented here, I'd like to extend a very warm welcome to the clinic! And might I add, you're looking positively STUNNING today—clearly nothing can hold YOU back from your dreams!"*

The attendants.

Nondescript and non-threatening. Clean pastel scrubs and gowns, clean shaven and hair tied back, soft gaze and neutral voices. Side by side, they could almost all be related. Swift, mostly silent, arriving with fresh towels and water, with disinfectant and cleansing supplies, or with ritual implements and offerings if required.

Some names: Grace, Amity, Serenity, Prudence, Joy, Liberty, Patience, Hope, Constance, Charity, Temperance.

Quote: *"There there." "Hush now." "Not to worry, the nurse will be in soon." "What's all the fuss about?"*

Harmony Weaver, a nurse.

Intricate silver braids, ostensibly forming a prayer mark. Moonglow eye shadow, bracelets with calm-inducing prayer stamps. Rolls a lumbering trolley of medicines with surprising ease. Has the hands of a magician, deftly manipulating vials, bottles, powders, and tinctures over small tin cups. Carries a set of concealed syringes labeled "Mercy," "Forgiveness," and "Reconciliation."

Quote: *"Hush now. There's no need to fret. Remember, this is all for your own good—and you called it upon yourself, didn't you? We're all rooting for you, you know. You're going to be good as new."*

Sanju Medina, a frequent visitor.

Weary smile, lustrous black ringlets streaked with grey, shuffling along with one overnight bag too many. A pack of prayer cards in their shirt pocket. Knows each staff member by name at this point.

Quote: *"They really do wonderful work here. They worked wonders for my grandparents, and my aunt. My mother's still here—it seems she has a longer journey than we expected. But it's a relief to know she's always being watched over."*

Chelsea Meridian, a bellringer.

Grey silk veil and flowing robes. Bandalier of chimes and bells in felt cases. Statuesque grace. Seems to drift, more than walk. What few words they speak have a way of worming into you. Appears to be tuned in to another realm entirely.

Quote: *"Awaken... no, not YOU—sleep a while longer."*

SIDE CHARACTERS (CONTINUED)

William “Doctor Bill” Forsythe, a “doctor.”

Fiendishly tall, stooped neck like a marsh bird, always looking down on his patients and visitors. Lab coat pockets stuffed with loose notes, a stethoscope and seven amulets around his neck, representing a range of popular healing and wellness gods. His features are stretched tight, his movements restricted, as if his bones strain against the skin. Smiles often. Too many teeth.

Quote: *“Let me assure you, this is nothing to worry about. Nothing at all. We’ll have you right as rain in a few days! Why, I expect your family won’t even recognize the new YOU when we send you off! Now, let’s get your papers in order. We’ll have you sign a few forms, swear a few oaths, get your prayer stamp—just a few traditions we have here, really, got to invoke the legacy of the healing arts and all that—and my associates will take care of the rest!”*

Garth Lumby, a patient.

Hospital gown and non-slip socks, drags around a rolling IV stand dangling with empty bags. Salt and pepper beard and locks grown wild like agitated clouds. Can’t quite recall what brought him here in the first place. It must be in a file somewhere, the doctors are all seeing to it.

Quote: *“Leave here? Nah, I’m only just getting better, ain’t I? Doc says I’ve got a ways to go. I’m only doing what’s best for me. I’m even helping out some of the others, them that can’t get around as well as me. Those attendants said I could wear scrubs too, when I volunteer.”*

Dr. Orison Laverne, a “pharmacist.”

Kindly smile creases, gentle chuckle, reassuring pat on the shoulder. A buzzing center of activity at all times. Hums, waltzes, taps a jaunty tune with their well-polished shoes. Speaks with the dancing gloved hands of a conductor. Conversation is punctuated by the constant flow of attendants who come and go with prescriptions and formulas to be reviewed, corrected, signed, and stamped.

Quote: *“Oh, there’s a cure for just about anything. That don’t mean it’s easy, or pleasant. It don’t guarantee it comes without a new affliction, neither. That’s why we’re always tuning, adjusting. We are all... imperfect instruments of a greater will. But we do our best.”*

Jenny Oldstone, a patient.

Starry eyed and staggering on fresh stilted limbs like a newborn fawn. Gasps of wonder, tears of joy. Swaying to a song only she can hear.

Quote: *“I prayed I could walk again—but look at me now! I can FLY! Praise the Weeping Mother! Praise the Chapel of Unfurling Bone! WE RISE TOGETHER!”*

Litany Ash, a medium.

Older than the bones in the basement. Wears a golden gown and saffron silk blindfold. A gaggle of nervous attendants roll her along in an antique wheelchair, hush bystanders in the hallways when she speaks, and transcribe her oracular diagnoses on the general malaise of the world. Paint the Scene: *What fact does she state about the Custodians which she should have no way of knowing?*

Quote: *“You’ll know what it means. Think on it. Let it unfold within you. Transformation is inevitable.”*

Miriel Kalthoum, a martyr of the Bleeding Witness.

Mirrors and blades sewn into faint pink robes. Bloodshot eyes tidily stitched open, weeping delicate crimson streams. A thick layer of blackened gauze binds her mouth. As one of the rare awakened priestesses of her order, she has sworn to bear constant and unflinching witness to suffering in its most excruciating forms.

Quote: *“...” (mournful, muffled wailing)*

Reverend Tooth, a community leader.

Stained dress shirt. Antique gentleman’s cane. Fire in his eyes. Head of the Conclave of the Cage Unto Oneself, an offshoot of the Snuff God worshipers who take particular interest in the witness of suffering in isolation.

Quote: *“There is so much suffering in the world. So much pain, carelessly inflicted and ignored. Those who look away, who flinch from the mirror of suffering before them, are no better than cattle who plod along oblivious to the slaughterhouse. But to witness the pain alone, free of hopeful distractions—that is to know revelation. Just like the leeching cloisters of ancient times.”*

Joyce Spindlecarver, a surgeon.

Dead eyes, cold hands. Arms and neck covered in bandages and surgical tape. Stands motionless when not engaged. Twitchy eyes.

Quote: *“True revelation pulses in the hearts of pure sacrifices. We receive those profound truths courageously. Only when flesh and bone is laid bare, with nothing to hide us from That Which Bears Witness, is our true nature revealed. May we all have the courage to become the most worthy vessels, when our time comes.”*

Ignatius Sofia, a digger of mass graves.

Knotted muscle under soiled overalls. Thunderous, labored gait. Grinds his teeth like gravel. A perpetual trail of dirt in his wake.

Quote: *“All around us, churning, gnashing. You hear it? Hungry gods. Insatiable. Can’t say I blame ‘em, really—you’d be hungry too, if you were so hollow. Best to keep them occupied—give ‘em someone else’s bones to chew on.”*

CLUES

- ☐ A tattered banner, retaped several times: “We Love Our Healthcare Heroes.” Found in an unusual place.
- ☐ A pamphlet for families of patients, listing resources from a variety of licensed support gods, and, if necessary, the saints of mourning.
- ☐ A prayer mark which alters the experience of time.
- ☐ Color-coded prayer bracelets, indicating pre-planned destinations following treatment.
- ☐ A child’s toy, re-gifted.
- ☐ Photos of recovered patients, displayed reverently with saintly titles instead of names.
- ☐ A notice of supply shortages, attached to a hand-typed list of commonly available substitutions and directions for crafting improvised equipment.
- ☐ An old hospital bill, stamped with both the mark of the Weeping Mother (in crimson ink) and the Silver Lining (in metallic foil).
- ☐ A pile of cast-aside items (pick one or more: crutches, wheelchairs, prosthetics, shoes, wigs, life-support equipment, religious texts, eyeglasses, medication bottles, syringes, ID cards, keys).
- ☐ A container of discarded god-bitten body parts which stubbornly refuse to die.
- ☐ A clothesline of reused gloves and masks, recently sanctified in crystal water, hang dull and dripping.
- ☐ A hoarded gift donations: plush animals, treats, miniature idols and altars, well-wishing cards, blankets and supplies.
- ☐ An intern’s notebook. Each entry is a poem, recalling events of the day in prophetic verse.
- ☐ An overheard conversation: “Don’t bother, one of the gods will claim them soon.”
- ☐ Tearful confessions to an empty bed.
- ☐ Pain and suffering is keenly observed without intervention.
- ☐ A vintage hospital employee handbook, most lines crossed out with black marker.
- ☐ A cassette tape of prayers for eternal life, modified to play on a continuous loop.
- ☐ A festering, necrotic wound, taped over with a smiling icon of Get Well Soon.
- ☐ IV tubes and equipment cords woven in ritual patterns.
- ☐ An ancient caring saint, partially interred in an alcove. Its croaking benedictions are inaudible, but seem to bring the visitors and patients some comfort.

REWARDS

- ◆ A booklet of affirmations from the Ministry of the Silver Lining. Add it to your Altar.
- ◆ A flask of Nurse Weaver’s experimental “Miracle Juice.” Add it to your Altar. You may mark it to get an automatic 12+ on a roll using Vitality, but gain the Condition: Side Effects May Include...
- ◆ A threadbare worry doll, features worn away. Add it to your Altar.
- ◆ A signed doctor’s note, details left blank. Add it to your Altar.
- ◆ A doctor’s ID badge, the features in its grainy photo passably similar to your own. Add it to your Altar.
- ◆ A private letter from the clinic administrator, discussing future partnerships. Add it to your Altar. It also counts as a Conspiracy Clue when marked.
- ◆ A partial bottle of military-grade anti-saint pills. Add it to your Altar.
- ◆ Litany Ash becomes a recurring Side Character. You get 1 extra Clue on the Information Move when you consult her about miracles she witnessed in the clinic.
- ◆ Ignatius Sofia’s contact information. Add it to your Altar. You can mark it to have Ignatius dispose of a body—or group of bodies—in a manner that will not be traced by the authorities.
- ◆ Phineas Gland’s contact information. Add it to your Altar. You can mark it to get Phineas to present a talk on the Silver Lining on your behalf. Work with the Keeper to choose a time and place; any rolls undertaken during the event are made with advantage.