

APOTHEOSIS STUDIOS PRESENTS
A 5TH EDITION CAMPAIGN AND SETTING



THE RED OPERA
LAST DAYS OF THE WARLOCK

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FORWARD BY SATINE PHOENIX



"A hoard of Thistlefuries rampaged their way through the twisted forests of the Shadelands, headed straight for us. Knox managed to right our wagon while Xiggy and Vander dealt with the corrupted creatures which surrounded our party on all sides. My friends called out to me, but I was too far away—there was no way to make it to the wagon before I was overrun. I used the remaining magical energy I could call up from my Fey Pact Patron and cast a Cloud of Daggers in front of the hoard. With every ounce of concentration, I watched as the fiends were flayed limb to limb passing through the metal shards. "Go on, leave me. I'll hold them off. Just get out of here!" Suddenly a tentacle lashed out from the cart, wrapped itself around my waist, pulling me out of harm's way and onto the wagon as we rushed away from our impending doom. Domadred's Warlock pact, one he has always reviled, was the very thing that saved me. As we continued forward, watching the forest writhe with magical infestation, I looked to my adventuring party. I realized that although we each had our own individually traumatic pasts that caused us to make a soul deal with our Patrons, here in Yon'Cath, we Warlocks could rely on each other. We Warlocks had a home worth protecting." - Amber Lighthouse recounting the events of The Red Opera Chapter One

I hope that by watching my friends and I play in our The Red Opera live-stream, you got a taste of the many ways to play a Warlock. From Michelle Nguyen Bradley's playful Tiefling to Jamison Stone's serious Captain Domadred, the styles of play and stories unlocked within The Red Opera are magnificent. Within our collective imagination, we can defeat monsters before us and master the demons within us. In The Shadelands, we can form friendships, or in my case, during the live stream for this book, find a soulmate.

We have come upon a new epoch of gaming. It is now 2021, and those who grew up playing games as children, are now making the games we love. Apotheosis Studios has brought Table Top Gaming into a new era of storytelling. In the 32 years I've been playing Dungeons & Dragons, never before have I seen a campaign book so expertly crafted in art, story, and music! This adventure has a full symphony soundtrack embedded into the book with QR codes—this is amazing!

Within the pages of this book, you'll find a city ruled by Warlocks. A safe haven for all manner of misunderstood adventurers and creatures, filled to the brim with

magic, love, and betrayal. Warlocks are a profoundly unique class, and this city brings to life, in terrifying clarity, what makes this class so powerful. Here in The Shadelands, players have the ability for a character of any class to petition a Patron and taste what it's like to be a Warlock. And for Dungeon Masters, there's an entire chapter dedicated to creating your own Patron and effectively Game Mastering them. For those who have always wanted to run a game with Warlocks but found it daunting, or those looking for a wildly unique setting to level up your storytelling skills, this guide is a must-have and gives definitive answers on how to play and DM this mysterious class.

And now, Adventurers, if you're all settled in,
Pass through the Veil and enter into the Shadelands.

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Throughout the book you will find QR codes which link to the Orchestral Version of The Red Opera Album by DiAmorte. Each of our ten adventure acts were written to synergize with a song from the album, and each pairing is provided via QR code at the beginning of the act so you and your fellow players can easily listen to each chapter's musical theme as you read or play through our campaign.



THE RED OPERA ORCHESTRA
Scan this QR code for the full Orchestral Version of the Red Opera Album. Future codes will only list the song related to its respective act.



THE RED OPERA ORIGINAL
Scan this QR code to listen to the original version of The Red Opera album and learn what inspired this musical apocalypse!



Introduction

*"Without your divinity, what separates
you creatures from animals?"
-Majin the Betrayer*

Death is nothing more than a little footnote before the next adventure. In others, it's the reason to attend premier wizardry academies in order to master the fine art of Necromancy. Nobody expects a proper wizard to clean their floors when reanimated skeletons exist.

In civilized societies, clerics provide all the answers and questions about the afterlife. Death truly holds little fear for mortals when their Gods exist. Say your prayers and sweep the monastery or live a life of dashing crime in service to your God, and you will be rewarded. Even worshipping the very Gods of Death can yield results to stave off its imminent march. When the bell finally tolls on the great Lich who has lived for a thousand years, their soul can still be reincarnated.

And so, usually, death is of no great concern.

Of course, there have been attempts to make it permanent. Cursed artifacts that prevent those from awakening, or even cause sickness to those who've cheated death's grasp. Cults dedicated to putting the undead back in the ground have risen to full Paladin orders (rising over the indignant protests of the Necromancers). Despite their efforts to make death meaningful—they all fail, time, and time again.

The experiments of Necromancy march ever onward. Clerics continuously find themselves worshipping the deities of death, and Vampires remain alluring. Even the very Gods themselves never die. Atheists, those foolish enough to willfully ignore the miracles all around them, are not even sent to oblivion! Instead, they find an eternity of torture within Hell. To be tortured, you need some semblance of self. And when the torturers grow tired of you, your soul might find itself wandering to the abyss, a place which feeds on the baser emotions, until you rise again as a demon.

So we say again: since death is no true end, it's but a trifle.

With Death being nothing more than a joke (at least a donation in gold to the nearest temple), it is no

wonder that civilization lurches forward. Elves defy death with their incredible lifespans and cling to the past with their very long memories. Dwarves keep their old grudges close for centuries.

Civilization thrives in major cities, then the rot and corruption spread, a calamity befalls it, and then it's rebuilt. Gods change names, rulers shift hands, and to the local farmer, maybe life is a little different—maybe he's a skeleton now.

When one sees the intrinsic flaw in this problem of Death, this cycle of infinite loops, and ninth chances to be had, they become curious. If death is a joke, what does death truly mean? How can something attain a true death?

Warlocks know.

They alone are the only ones who dabble in the elusive *true death*, those who would worship entities beyond reality, offering themselves as playthings to their Patron, to fulfill the promise of their pact. Wielders of eldritch energies, hear the calls of forgotten things, hidden things, cosmic and uncanny things that impart secrets. But when their powers fade and they're no longer useful, Warlocks are cast aside, forgotten, ignored. In an existence full of spellcraft, miracles, wizardry, and Gods—being ignored is death.

The Warlocks' Patrons are indeed powerful, but they are not Gods. Why? Belief, faith, conviction - these are the threads that bind a deity to the realms. Trapped outside this universe, clinging so desperately to get in, and whispering secrets to their followers, the Patron's ties are weak in comparison to deities. Just enough, perhaps, to deliver an order to a few faithful: *Burn this village. Find these artifacts. Avenge me. Tasks.* Task after task. To what ultimate end? What do the Patrons want?

To avoid being forgotten. To avoid True Death. One step in the wrong direction, one mishap, and the Patrons find the

threads tying them to these worlds stretched further. It's a little unjust, don't you think? That special force we all know—Magic, either arcane or divine—has made a mockery of Death.

Even if the warlocks and all their Patrons banded together and ripped open great gates to the void, armies of archmages would march against the outsiders. The Gods themselves would smite them. This has played out in history in one form or another for thousands of years. Some tales remembered; most tales forgotten. Every time we tell ourselves: "It will be different! This time, the secrets we've learned matter! Our faithful people will bring us through!"

They never do.

Because in the end, mortals choose to fight for those connections to each other. Those emotions are what

binds them. The first flutter of love, anger that fuels a war, laughter in a tavern with friends. Mortal souls strive to make life into a meaning that will outlast them.

Would you be willing to be forgotten? To embrace true death so that you can save... everyone? Those who knew you, those who didn't? There will be no records, no songs, and no memories.

Or would you borrow the Patrons' power and claim a thread yourself? Would you betray their pacts? Would you damn them all and steal the crowns of Gods?

We shall see if mortals are willing to let go. To let true death take hold and settle in their souls. Let's stack the odds, set the stage, invite the Players, and watch the show.

WELCOME TO

THE RED OPERA



A SCARLET MERCY

Scan this QR code to listen to the main theme of the Red Opera by DiAmorte



Opening

*"Salvation was a moment too late, give me a
new ending when the curtain falls."
—Dorian The Accursed King*

The Red Opera is a 10-chapter campaign for *Dungeons & Dragons* that was inspired by DiAmorte's musical acts of the same name. Written in collaboration with them, our goal was to create an epic campaign that combined the gothic horror of settings, like *Ravenloft*, with the high magic of other settings, like *Faerun* or *Ebberon*.

Warlocks are a fascinating class. Patrons from beyond whisper secrets of the universe to a diverse crowd. Great academies of Warlocks don't exist, and civilizations typically don't let them form the ranks of their armies. With good reason of course: no one can trust where their true loyalties lie.

There are places of great magic in the world though. Places where the veil between worlds runs thin. The Feywild seeps into the Material Plane a little more in the wild or shadows run longer than in other parts where murder is common. In these narrow slivers between worlds, Warlocks find contact with their Patrons easier, and their powers amplified.

Luckily for the world, such places are rare.

Centuries of war, death, artistic creation, fertility, famine, and magic have taken their toll on the old eldritch ways. Forcing the barriers in some places to become rifts between worlds. The last bastions of connection to a fading world. None have grown as prominent as the Shadelands.

In the Shadelands, Warlocks have found cities to call their own. For decades under the rule of the Accursed King, Warlocks have found a home to practice their craft.

Inside this book, you'll find the unique setting of the Shadelands and its major prominent Players. As a Game Master, you'll find a use for this in your existing campaigns as a setting or starting location for Warlocks. We also provide a full campaign in the adventuring styles of *Diablo*, *Shakespeare*, and the glory

of fine Metal music. There will be blood, death, love, and we promise—at least one person will die.

The setting of the Shadelands is living, unconsciously aware of the events transpiring within. Outsiders and chosen characters find themselves unwittingly roped in as characters within the Red Opera. Their choices and connections are vital to the outcome of the Opera and there is a multitude of possible endings for the story, but death marches them closer to three immediate outcomes. Because of this, you can run this campaign multiple times, and each time yields a different result.





The Shadelands

*"What is a sunset, but the end of a life
that I will never know."*

- LaCroix The Knight Captain

Isolated in the cold reaches of the world, where night runs longer than day, two great cities have come to rely upon one another for survival. Here, the veil between worlds runs thin, letting creatures from the Shadowfell feel the warmth of a hearth, or the Feywild to inspire love between two strangers.

Many warlocks, occultists, and other witches often hear tales of the Shadelands from the very familiars they summon and take a pilgrimage out of ambition or curiosity. The long journey north is a solemn and grim march of isolation, but travelers are rewarded each evening. Great lights dance in the night sky; violet hues intertwine with green swirls that run from talons of red. Called The Elemental Dance by locals, every night the Shadelands is illuminated by an Aurora Borealis in the sky.

For half of the year, snow crunches on the ground, while the other half is filled with vibrant nature. A dance between the Shadowfell and the Feywild that dominates the landscape regardless of what farmers and clerics pray for. Festivals here, long ago, abandoned the practice of praying to feeble Gods with little power. Elsewhere in the world, grand cleric monasteries or wizard towers may stand as the dominant force, but here in the Shadelands—it's the Patron's influence that moves mountains.

To thrive here, races built their architecture to match the changing landscape. Beautiful spired buildings with gothic carvings make every building as unique as its owner. Slanted roofs handle the weather and keep people warm in the winter and cool in the summer. Art and architecture are the prize features of the Shadelands (often as a tribute to their Patrons), so one will find that local laws protect the destruction of property greater than they will protect the very people within.

At first sight, the Shadelands is a quiet northern reach of vast wilderness, a few small hamlets, and two sprawling cities so close they might as well be one. Most adventurers might expect humans to dominate the landscape, and, like anywhere, they exist in fair numbers. Because of its distance from other kingdoms (or because of its lack of Gods), hearth wisdom reigns supreme. Diversity is how it has thrived.

Tiefling's travel the world over, looking for a place they can call home settle in large numbers. Dwarves who've seen horrors in the depths below seek refuge. Those touched by fire, air, earth, or water come for great festivals of their elements and perhaps linger a little longer. Adventurers from even southern jungles might seek out secrets that only the Shadelands know. No matter their race, their lot in life, or their past background, all citizens of the Shadelands are superstitious. It's a little hard to avoid it.

Milk is left on doorsteps, garlic wreaths line kitchen windows, and almost every knight carries iron nails in their pouch. For here, legends and myths tend to creep into reality. The Patrons may be celebrated during festivals, but sometimes having salt to banish an aberration from the Great Old Ones is just good practice.

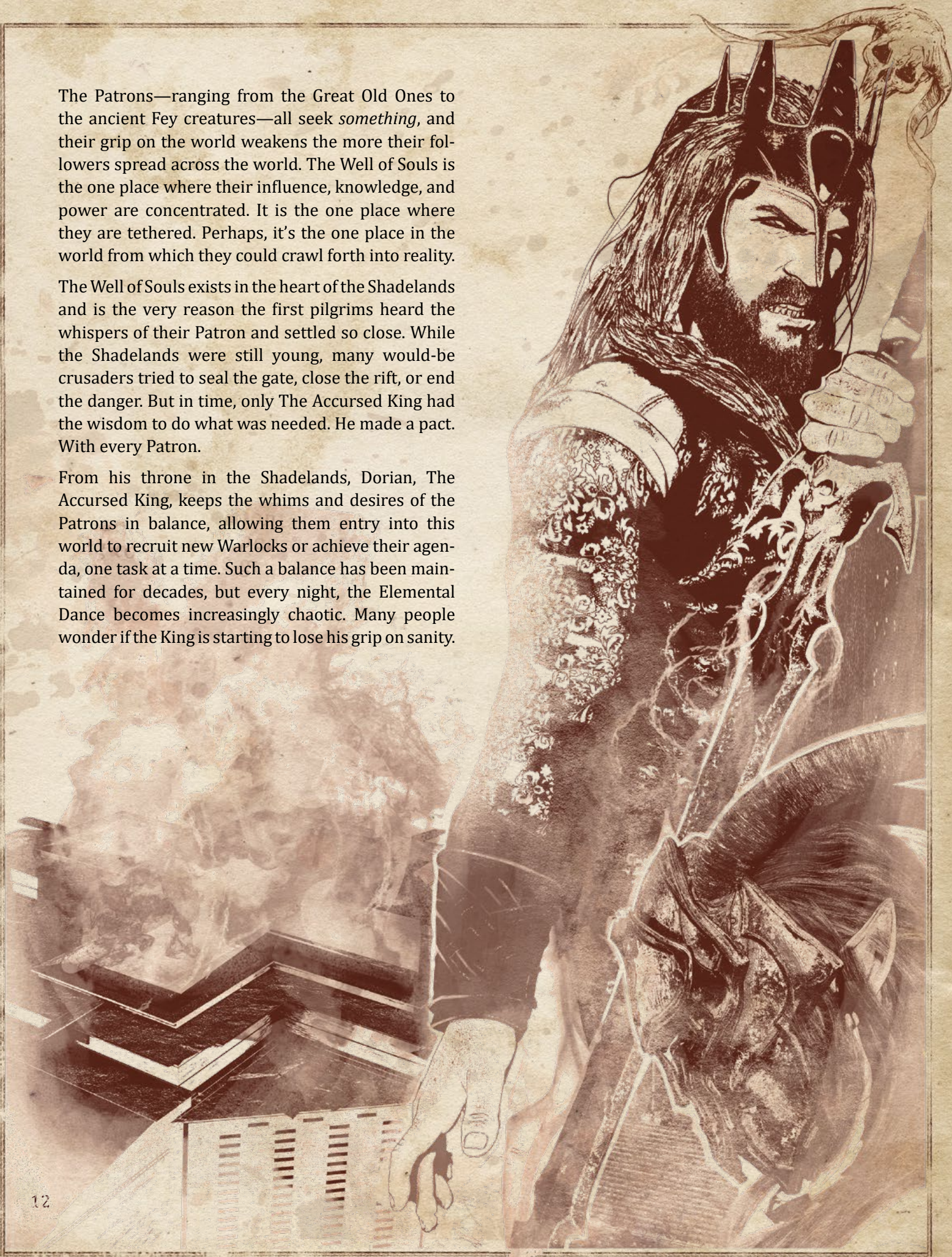
Of course, the Shadelands is not without its natural enemies. Nobody in this world gets to live such an exquisitely diverse gothic lifestyle without Gods of Law or Order sending their armies north. Wizards and Sorcerers, envious of power, have manipulated empires to wage war on the Shadelands. Everyone else in the world can see the danger that the Shadelands represent, yet invasions are beaten back, and the place persists, time and time again. Why? How?

Because of the Well of Souls. Because of The Accursed King.

The Patrons—ranging from the Great Old Ones to the ancient Fey creatures—all seek *something*, and their grip on the world weakens the more their followers spread across the world. The Well of Souls is the one place where their influence, knowledge, and power are concentrated. It is the one place where they are tethered. Perhaps, it's the one place in the world from which they could crawl forth into reality.

The Well of Souls exists in the heart of the Shadelands and is the very reason the first pilgrims heard the whispers of their Patron and settled so close. While the Shadelands were still young, many would-be crusaders tried to seal the gate, close the rift, or end the danger. But in time, only The Accursed King had the wisdom to do what was needed. He made a pact. With every Patron.

From his throne in the Shadelands, Dorian, The Accursed King, keeps the whims and desires of the Patrons in balance, allowing them entry into this world to recruit new Warlocks or achieve their agenda, one task at a time. Such a balance has been maintained for decades, but every night, the Elemental Dance becomes increasingly chaotic. Many people wonder if the King is starting to lose his grip on sanity.



THE SHADELANDS

1 WELL OF SOULS

IMPOSSIBLE SPIRE

3 THE CRACKED PACT

4 GLASS MANOR

2 BLACK SPAN

12 LIBRARY

5 MAGHORO'S PERCH

11 THE LITTLE HELPER

6 THE GILDED GALLERY
(KNIGHT CAPTAIN'S STRONGHOLD)

7 STONE LEG

HOLE IN THE WALL

8 TAVERN

9 PATRON'S PASS

10 SCARLET HEARTH



W



P

Warlocks

"Close your eyes. Silence your mind. Listen. ... Your Patron whispers to you. Its words heard only in your dreams. When you wake, the words are only half-remembered. What are they?" -Majin the Betrayer

Warlocks are described as seekers of knowledge that lay hidden in the fabric of the multiverse. Their pacts are defined with an eldritch being of immense power—their Patrons—but often not the deities and Gods clerics serve.

Roleplaying the Patron can take a back seat in many adventuring parties because only one Player plays a Warlock. And at a crowded table, it can be difficult to achieve the sort of one-on-one connection a Warlock can have with his Patron. This campaign and setting helps to shine a light on that unique relationship, allowing the entire party to get a better view of what their crazy Warlock companion is sometimes gibbering to himself about.

Storytellers are encouraged to allow everyone in the party to encounter avatars or hear whispers of Patrons while in the Shadelands. The veils of the multiverse run thin here and deals for great power can be struck easily—even if only temporarily. The Raven Queen might grant a pact-boon to a fighter for a task during the campaign, or a Monk may quietly meditate and hear whispers of the Great Old Ones. In the end, based on the party's choices—every Player will have the option to become a Warlock.

Patrons themselves are powerful entities, but not quite God-Tier. What holds them back? Perhaps they are near death themselves and lost all their followers, or nobody felt fit to worship them, or their sole connection to existence is just a single Warlock. But just as some Patrons lose power, a Warlock character could gain so much as to become a Patron himself, and a Patron might rise to become a God. If that could happen anywhere, it would happen here, in the Shadelands.

An interesting relationship to consider is one of romance. Nothing prevents a Patron from having a romantic relationship with the Warlock, and love is a powerful motivator. Here in the Shadelands, not every Patron is powerful enough to be registered with the Accursed King, and finding their way to his

court can be done through the romance of would-be Warlocks. A marriage between a Warlock and his or her fledgling Patron or its intermediaries is certainly something that can be arranged.

Being a Warlock in the Shadelands does have some mechanical benefits. For starters, Warlock characters should certainly have advantage on ability checks made to contact or socially interact with their Patron. The storyteller is encouraged to allow Warlocks greater power when using spells iconic to their Patron within the Shadelands. Such boons often include advantage on spell attacks, or imposing disadvantage on saving throws against their effects, though more unique interactions can be appropriate as well. Lastly, Warlocks in the Shadelands can cut extra deals with their Patrons. In exchange for a favor, a Patron might allow a Warlock to refresh their abilities without the need for a rest—much to the chagrin of any who would bring harm to the Warlocks by trying to exhaust them.

Benefits cut two ways of course. Warlock characters should have disadvantage on attack rolls, saving throws, and ability checks when trying to resist their Patron. Disloyalty to their Patron, or refusal to obey their requests, will be met with swifter and more immediate punishment. If not outright possession and eternal thralldom.

Despite these risks, the Shadelands still serve as the premier place to court, learn, and study among other Warlocks with a little less fear of retribution. This campaign setting is a diverse and dynamic land featuring races and people of all colors, sizes, and shapes. No matter what class or background the characters are coming with, they will all get a little taste of dealing with Patrons.

PLAYER SPECIES



GLAU'BJURN

The Glau'bjurn, or Glau for short, is a rare variant race of elvish people that originate from being born under the Elemental Dance in the Shadelands. Though they were not separate people when they first settled in the Shadelands some four thousand years ago, their years spent in their new home has led them to adapt. Their new home was founded deep within the forest of Sweet Mist Hollow, built high among the tops of the mighty Jadewood trees. Over the years the town of Grenloft grew and continues to serve as the center for Glau'bjurn affairs.

The Glau of today all sport skin of greenish tan, sometimes as dark as mahogany, which provides excellent camouflage within the Jadewoods. Their name is derived from a lost dialect that loosely translates to "Children of the Lights", referencing the glowing Auroras in the sky above the Shadelands, which were seen as a sign that this place should be their new home. While plenty of Glau mingle freely about the Shadelands, they are very selective about who is welcomed into Grenloft. The town is their sanctuary, their haven from a history of exile. And they value its safety above all else. Very few Glau have dared to return to the Feywild, and many spit on the ground when they hear the name of that place. Their original reason for leaving the Fey is the most closely held secret of the elders.

Glau culture often places a high value on empathy for living things and attuning to the spiritual essence of the world around you. These connections have real lasting effects, as evidenced by the varied physical features of Glau as determined by the season of their birth. But the effects don't end there. Over time, a Glau living in a certain place or spending an exorbitant amount of time with certain people will start to display subtle, nuanced physical traits of those people or that place.

Ability Score

A single ability score of your choice increases by 2.

Size

Glau are medium-sized creatures, though they skew toward the shorter end of that spectrum. Most stand between 4 ½ and 5 ½ feet tall. A rare few ever grow to a full 6 feet. Regardless of your position in that range, your size is Medium.

Age

Glau attain physical maturity around the age of 21, and full adulthood around 33. The average Glau lifespan is 300-400 years.

Speed

Your base walking speed is 30 feet.

Shadesight

The Glau feel a special bond with the lights in the skies above the Shadelands. Within the bounds of the Shadelands, under those Aurora lights, Glau can see through dim light and darkness within 60 feet of you. Outside of the Shadelands however, you instead have ordinary darkvision out to a range of 60 feet.

Fey Ancestry

You have advantage on saving throws against being charmed and magic can't put you to sleep.

Deep Sleep

Long ago, Glau only needed to meditate 4 hours a night to gain a rested state. However, in their self-imposed exile from the stars, they have lost some of that ability. When you take a long rest, you only require 6 hours to attain the benefits of full rest, instead of 8.

Languages

Born in the Shadelands, languages are naturally common. However, the secondary languages people use are diverse. Abyssal is common, as is Elvish, but Primordial speech finds itself whispered in tavern halls. Glau who were raised in the Shadelands are encouraged to start with common but can pick 2 other languages as well.

Seasonal Traits

Over the generations, the unique magics of the wild northern tundra seeped into the Glau, altering their bodies with strange power. Their bodies became tuned to the seasons, developing strange abilities and physical features that correlated to the season of their birth.

Spring Glau

Hair colored green and pink. Eyes of emerald.

Ability Score Increase. An ability score of your choice increases by 1, and you gain proficiency in a skill of your choice associated with that ability score.

Elemental Affinity. You have resistance to thunder and psychic damage. Additionally, when you deal

damage of any kind, you may change that damage type to either psychic or thunder.

Summer Glau

Hair colored peach and lavender. Eyes of violet.

Ability Score Increase. An ability score of your choice increases by 1, and you gain proficiency in a skill of your choice associated with that ability score.

Elemental Affinity. You have resistance to fire and radiant damage. Additionally, when you deal damage of any kind, You may change that damage type to either fire or radiant.

Autumn Glau

Hair colored yellow and red. Eyes of burnt orange.

Ability Score Increase. An ability score of your choice increases by 1, and you gain proficiency in a skill of your choice associated with that ability score.

Elemental Affinity. You have resistance to Acid and Necrotic damage. Additionally, when you deal damage of any kind, You may change that damage type to either acid or necrotic.

Winter Glau

Hair colored blue and white. Eyes of gray slate.

Ability Score Increase. An ability score of your choice increases by 1, and you gain proficiency in a skill of your choice associated with that ability score.

Elemental Affinity. You have resistance to Cold and Lightning damage. Additionally, when you deal damage of any kind, You may change that damage type to either cold or lightning.



KALDENKIND

The medium humanoid bearfolk are native to the Shadelands. Their fur is mostly white but often has accents of blue or purple. They are broad and thickly built, with an average height ranging from 5'9 to 6'9 feet. They are typically gregarious and amicable, but capable of brutal violence if threatened. There is a curious trait shared by many wherein they will typically laugh off minor insults directed at themselves while becoming excessively defensive and vengeful if those same minor slights are directed at someone they care about. With the Shadelands playing host to such a diverse range of species, they are traditionally tolerant of other cultures. The Kaldenkind pride themselves on their extra-cultural repertoires, how many languages they speak, and how many different sorts of folk they've interacted with.

There are a few basics to traditional Kaldenkind garb, such as a blue woolen tunic and leather, fur-lined cap. The official tool of the Kaldenkind is the versatile long-handled pickaxe, and its likeness is oft seen displayed on family crests. The Kaldenkind generally strive for something of a "mismatched" aesthetic with their outfits and the decor of their

homes. Wealthier families will have intricate runic symbols carved into the walls of their homes, paying good money to ensure no pattern is ever repeated. A set of Kaldenkind plate armor will have been crafted to specifically look as if it were cobbled together from three to four different sets. This is seen as a sign of accomplishment and worldliness.

Kaldenkind are very communal, with an affinity for group collaboration toward a common goal. This was born out of necessity due to the harsh winters of the Shadelands. That being said, they are generally encouraging toward pursuits of personal enrichment; you wish to be a painter or a singer? That's perfectly fine, but make sure you finish chopping the wood before you practice. Kaldenkind trace their history back to what they call The Dawn of Thought, which is estimated to be some 20-25,000 years ago. The Shadelands of this era were sparsely populated and the barriers between planes were nigh impregnable. Then something changed. Kaldenkind historians will often debate on which plane this rift originated from, however, they all agree the resulting shockwave of raw cosmic energy it unleashed is what granted their people the gift of consciousness.

Versatile Tradesfolk

Three different ability scores of your choice increase by 1

Children of the Tundra

You have resistance to cold damage and advantage on Constitution saving throws against extreme cold.

Speed

Your base walking speed is 40 feet.

Age

Kaldenkind reach physical maturity between 10-14 years old and are considered full-fledged adults at 20. The average lifespan is about 115-130 years.

Skilled Linguists

With so many varied peoples coming to the Shadelands, the Kaldenkind have developed a knack for languages. You can speak, read, and write common, along with three other languages of your choice. Additionally, at 5th level and again at 10th level you learn how to speak, read, and write a language of your choice that you have heard before. It is not rare to meet a Kaldenkind who speaks Abyssal and Celestial or another who knows Infernal and Sylvan. There's a saying in the Shadelands, *"If you need something translated, find a Kaldenkind. If they don't speak the language, they have a cousin who does."*

Hardy Stock

Each time you gain a level, your hit point maximum increases by an extra 1d4 on top of the normal increase.

Maul

Thanks to their large, clawed paws, you can tear your enemies apart without the need for paltry weapons. Your claws are natural weapons that you can use to make unarmed strikes. If you hit with an unarmed strike in this manner, you deal slashing damage equal to 1d8 + your Strength modifier, instead of your normal damage type (2d8 at 5th level, 3d8 at 10th level, 4d8 at 15th level).

Savage Rush

As a bonus action, you can drop to a stance on all fours until the end of that turn. While in this stance, your base walking speed increases to 60 feet. You may still take the **Maul** action, but cannot cast spells or hold anything in your hands for the remainder of that turn.



PLAYER BACKGROUNDS

SHADELANDER

You are a native of the vast and frigid north, where the veil runs thin, and the extraordinary is commonplace. You may be from any part of the Shadelands, from Sweet Mist Hollow to Twixtful Bog. The specifics of where you were born aren't nearly as important as the effect that being from the Shadelands has had on you.

Skill Proficiencies: Arcana, plus your choice of Survival or Nature

Languages: Two of your choice

Equipment: A letter from home, a map of the Shadelands, a set of clothes appropriate to where you're from, and a pouch containing 5gp worth of assorted Shadelands currencies.

Feature: Veilspeech

Not only are you intimately familiar with most of the cultures and traditions within the Shadelands, but growing up in the Shadelands has also made you incredibly sensitive to the veil, and to what may lie on the other side. As such, you are much more capable of communication through the veil with patrons or planar creatures than the average person, no matter the languages you speak.

Such creatures are also much more willing to communicate with you and recognize you as someone who understands the relationship between the Shadelands and what lies beyond the veil.

Suggested Characteristics

Shadelanders are most-often a quiet and humble folk, looking to make a living in the northlands. However, many also have great aspirations, seeking to rise to power or to elevate their home to a higher standing.

Your bond is likely somehow connected to your relationship to the specific place where you're from, and its role in the Shadelands. Perhaps you love the Shadelands and want to improve the community where you grew up. Or, perhaps you seek to leave the Shadelands for some reason.

D8 - Personality Trait

1. I have no sense of normalcy without magic. It infuses my very essence.

2. It doesn't matter where you come from, there is always a place at my table.
3. I welcome the terrors of the night into my home. Fear is a powerful teacher.
4. Armies and organized mercenaries frighten me. Much of my family's blood has been harvested in the name of their zealotry.
5. I believe every wives' tale I hear.
6. I always order two meals wherever I go, leaving one outside in the cold for those who need it.
7. I never trust cartography. The stars always change based on the world you are looking at.
8. I often mix-and-match languages in the same sentence without realizing it.

D6 - Ideal

1. **Freedom.** Why would we bow to kings and queens when they are merely mortal?
2. **Beauty.** If you want to see wonder, look to the night sky.
3. **Self-knowledge.** If you know yourself, there's nothing left to know.
4. **Might.** Cunning and wit are fine inside a city with a contract, but steel is reliable everywhere.
5. **Change.** The seasons change and the sun sets, why should we confine ourselves to one tradition?
6. **Determination.** Anyone can survive in this world if they acknowledge that they are not on top.

D6 - Bond

1. I will never forget the aberrations who gave me laughter as a child.
2. I will get revenge upon the Warlock who cursed my family.
3. I seek to guard a secret tome that Clerics have been trying to destroy for centuries.
4. I was born a noble in another Kingdom but cast out because of what I can see. Someday, I will return.

5. One day I will build my own village under the Elemental Dance and welcome travelers from across the planes to see its beauty.
6. The Devils I dine with are the worst at gambling, but I'll gladly keep taking their money.

D6 - Flaw

1. I always regret killing monsters. They might have a story of their own.
2. Even though I have been robbed by strangers, I still give trust first, and... never let it falter.

YON'CATHIAN

You are intimately familiar with the twin cities of Yon'Cath and have lived there most of your life. Here, you've learned how to get by in a city under the rule of the Accursed King. You've learned to navigate the streets of both Yonder and Cathrach deftly, avoiding spots of danger while frequenting friendly merchants and innkeepers.

Skill Proficiencies: Arcana, Persuasion

Tools Proficiencies: One type of Artisan's tools

Languages: One of your choice

Equipment: A key to a single-bedroom at an inn in either Yonder or Cathrach, a set of artisan's tools with which you are proficient, a set of commoner's clothes including a hood, and a pouch containing 10gp worth of assorted Shadelands currencies.

Feature: Like the Back of Your Hand

You've lived in Yon'Cath most of your life, and know the ins and outs of nearly every part of the city. You cannot get lost in Yon'Cath except by magical means.

You know where to find goods and services that you and your party may need anywhere in the city.

Additionally, you know many of the folk who live and work in Yon'Cath, who will view you with some level of familiarity. This means merchants from the Three Bridges may offer you discounts, and you may be offered to purchase goods that outsiders cannot.

Suggested Characteristics

Yon'Cathians come as varied as they are private. While there is no great rule-of-thumb or stereotype for what a Yon'Cathian may look like, they do tend to have many shared characteristics among them.

Your bond is likely related in some way to your relationship with Yon'Cath. Perhaps it is tied to the

3. I refuse to sign anything. No matter how much help it will be.
4. When the walls start bleeding, it is time to move to a new town.
5. I have no reservations about making deals with any type of creature.
6. I've been secretly saving coin so I could leave this godforsaken land and join a temple.

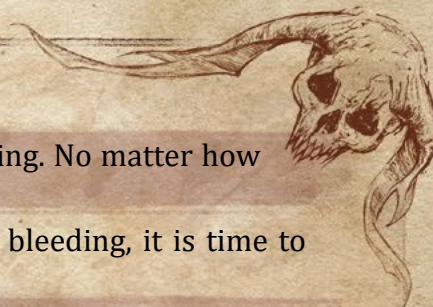
reason your family (or you, yourself) came here, or perhaps it is connected to your relationship with the ever-thinning veil.

D8 - Personality Trait

1. Charity is a myth. Whether it's money, power, emotion, or knowledge, every single social interaction is an exchange of currency, in one form or another.
2. I don't trust anyone except myself and my shadow... and I'm not quite certain about my shadow.
3. I see the beauty in the grim, light in the dark. Even here in this obsidian stone jungle teeming with hungry malice, there is goodness to be found.
4. This city is tough, especially for outsiders. I feel a need to help others whenever I can, if for no other reason than to rub a little polish on Yon'Cath's image.
5. Yon'Cath is the pinnacle of urban civilization. It's the most beautiful city, the most interesting city, the most wondrous city in the world.
6. I try not to get attached to people or things. Everything comes and goes so easily around here.
7. Yon'Cath is hilariously fun. Even the horrific, blood-soaked corners of the city are entertaining in their own macabre way.
8. I try not to get my hopes up in general. Everything eventually goes bad at some point.

D6 - Ideal

1. **Power.** There is no baker's confection nor decadent honey mead so sweet as the taste of power and control.
2. **Wealth.** Yon'Cath is a golden goose... if you know where to find the feathers for plucking.



3. **Justice.** No matter how bad things get, they can always be set right in the end, and it's my duty to see to it.
4. **Liberty.** Yon'Cath is a utopia where any being is free to pursue the life they desire.
5. **Anarchy.** All societal governing systems are inherently corrupt. The only fair system is no system.
6. **Excitement.** The one thing everyone can agree on, whether they love or hate this place, is there is never a dull moment in Yon'Cath; which is why I live here.

D6 - Bond

1. **Yonder.** The western city is a marvelous and beautiful place; far superior to the ugly gloom of Cathrach.
2. **Cathrach.** The absolute strength and ruthless power we wield is all that's keeping Yon'Cath's dignity intact in the face of Yonder's constant weakness.
3. **Black Span.** The wonders of this bridge are unrivaled across the world. No dragon's hoard, no long lost sunken city, no King's tomb can match the rarity and value of the goods available in Black Span.
4. **Stone Leg.** The outside world might not realize it, but this bridge is the epicenter of economics for the entire continent.

5. **Patron's Pass.** In matters of spreading truth and goodness in the world, there is no more critical foothold than here in the shadows of that most fell of monoliths.
6. **Scarlet Hearth.** There is no temple like the Scarlet Hearth in this or any world. All other temples are feeble attempts at the self-aggrandizing of insecure gods. The Scarlet Hearth is for any and all great beings who would deign to share their power.

D6 - Flaw

1. When it's all said and done, my only real concern is for me, myself, and I. Everything else is expendable.
2. I love gossip and am truly terrible at keeping a secret.
3. I lie frequently, just for fun; even when there's nothing to be gained.
4. I can't let it go when someone wrongs me. Long after my body has died, and my bones reduced to dust... my grudges will still be alive and well.
5. My moral code is about as rigid as water. It changes freely to best suit the situation at hand.
6. I can't resist the temptation of simple worldly pleasures such as food, drink, and romantic attention... there are so many varieties of them all in Yon'Cath. You'd be a fool to deny yourself.

WARLOCK OPTIONS

New Pact Boon: Pact of the Crystal.

You possess an arcane crystal with great otherworldly power. This crystal may be a large, opaque white crystal which, despite its outward appearance, is as light as a feather. It may be a piece of jewelry or some small trinket, deceptive to any would-be thief in its power and potential. Or, perhaps the crystal is a part of you, occupying the space where your eye, or even your heart, once was.

Your patron gives you a powerful crystal with great arcane potential. When empty, you may spend a bonus action to focus your energy on this crystal, putting it into a susceptible state for 1 minute. While in this state, it can be infused with one damage type when you take damage of that type while holding the crystal, storing that damage type within it. When infused, the crystal changes color to reflect the type of damage it is infused with. The crystal cannot be infused with bludgeoning, piercing, or slashing damage.

As long as the crystal is infused with a damage type and in your possession, any time you deal damage

other than force, bludgeoning, piercing, or slashing damage, you may change the damage type of that attack or ability to the damage type infused within the crystal. Additionally, as a bonus action, you can expel the energy within the crystal immediately after you deal damage to a creature or object you can see. When you do so, you deal 1d8 bonus damage of the type stored within the crystal to the affected creature. When the crystal's damage type infusion is used in this manner, the crystal takes 10 force damage.

The crystal is an object (AC 15, 30 hit points) and returns to full hit points when you complete a short or long rest. If lost or destroyed, a new crystal will regenerate in your possession after 24 hours have passed.

New Pact Boon: Pact of the Instrument

You can use an action to create an Eldritch instrument gifted to you by your patron. You may choose the form the instrument takes and are always proficient with it. While playing your instrument you may use any effect from *Thaumaturgy* as a free action. The music from your instrument may mimic multiple tunes, and even give the impression of a full orchestra.

Your pact instrument disappears if it is more than 5 feet away from you for 1 minute or more. It also disappears if you use this feature again, if you dismiss the instrument (no action required), or if you die.

When you cast a spell while holding your instrument, you can choose to use it as your spellcasting focus by playing upon it. When you do so, you do not need to provide any verbal components for the spell. While playing your instrument, you may cast Charm Person as a ritual and your target will have disadvantage against resisting.

New Eldritch Invocations

Die for Me

Prerequisite: 15th level

As a reaction to taking damage, you may choose a target creature that you can see and force that creature to make a Charisma saving throw versus your spell save DC. On a failed save, the target takes the damage instead of you. Once you have used this feature, you cannot use this ability again until you finish a long rest.

The Blood of Life

You may perform a ritual using the remains of any flesh and blood creature who has died in the last 8 hours. If you maintain direct contact with the remains for 1 minute, during which time you concentrate (as though concentrating on a spell), you magically absorb what little life remains, regaining 1d8 hit points. You can use this feature a number of times equal to your proficiency bonus and regain all expended uses when you finish a long rest.

Just a Memory

Prerequisite: 9th level

As an action, you may make a Charisma (Performance) check to beguile any number of creatures of your choice that are not your enemies within 120 ft. This check is contested by a Wisdom (Insight) check from each affected creature. On a success, you strike all memory of your name, face, and personal details from their minds, leaving them only with vague descriptors that can be used to identify you. Once you have used this feature, you cannot use it again until you finish a long rest.

Crystalline Chaos

Prerequisite: Pact of the Crystal feature

When you deal damage using your crystal granted via your Pact of the Crystal feature, you deal maximum damage on the damage dice. This effect cannot occur more than once on each of your turns.

Prismatic Play

Prerequisite: Pact of the Instrument feature, 5th level

When dealing damage with a spell or an Eldritch Invocation, you may target one glass object within 50'. Each creature within a 15-foot cube must succeed on a DC Strength saving throw or take 7 (2d6) thunder damage and be knocked prone. The saving throw DC is equal to your spell saving throw DC. You may target an additional object at levels 10, 15, and 20.

Fragmented Schism

Prerequisite: Pact of the Crystal feature

You may infuse your crystal with up to two damage types at a time. When changing the damage type of spell attacks or damage-dealing abilities, you may choose either of the damage types infused in the crystal.

WARLOCK SUBCLASS

THE ARTISTS

Your patron is one of the extraplanar Artists of the multiverse. You have made a pact with one of these masters of the stage and the instrument. They are known for putting on eldritch performances designed to open up the psyche to the unknown. All the world's a stage.

Expanded Spell List

Level 1: Hideous Laughter, Unseen Servant

Level 2: Alter Self, Detect Thoughts

Level 3: Bestow Curse, Sending

Level 4: Phantasmal Killer, Confusion

Level 5: Dominate Person, Creation

All the World's a Stage

At Level 1, You have the grace of a gifted eldritch performer. You always have Advantage on Charisma (Performance) checks. Additionally, when you cast the spell eldritch blast, you may change the type of damage dealt by the spell to psychic damage so long as the target(s) of the spell can hear you.

The Cursed Script

At Level 6, you may place your sign to herald your arrival on those you deem worthy.

As an action, you may touch a creature or object within reach (making a melee spell attack if the target is unwilling), inscribing it with an eldritch script for 24 hours or until a creature within reach uses an action to attempt an arcana check versus your spell save DC, removing the script on a success.

A target you inscribe in this manner is cursed for as long it is inscribed, becoming vulnerable to a damage type of your choice for the duration.

Once you have used this feature, you cannot use it again until you finish a long rest.

At Last, I was King

At Level 10, you can turn your audience or foes into temporary marionettes that serve your whim. You may cast the Planar Binding spell upon any creature who has seen you perform a magic trick.

The creature temporarily gains the benefits and disadvantages of being a construct. If it was an aberration, then it replaces its charisma score and performance score with yours.

The Marionette can assume the form of any creature it wants as if affected by alter self, and you have psionic control over the puppet. If killed the target reverts back to its natural type with 0 hit points and sheds its marionette shell.

Have you seen the Sign?

At Level 14, you gain the ability to put on a show-stopping performance of magic and wonder.

As an action, you begin a grand performance that includes a number of additional creatures up to your

proficiency bonus that you can see within 60 ft. of you. The performance lasts for as long as you concentrate (as though concentrating on a spell), and causes the following effects according to the targets you affected. The effect also ends for a creature if it is ever farther than 60 ft. from you.

- If a target is an enemy creature, it is considered an antagonist in your performance. It cannot have advantage on attack rolls, saving throws, or ability checks for the duration.
- If the target is a friendly creature, it is considered a protagonist in your performance. It cannot have disadvantage on attack rolls, saving throws, or ability checks for the duration.
- If the target is neither an enemy or friendly, it is instead charmed by you for the duration unless it succeeds on a Wisdom saving throw versus your spell save DC.

Once you have used this feature, you cannot use it again until you finish a long rest.

Occasionally, your patron himself may manifest, send an emissary, strange writing will appear, or something of the sort to the masses. The GM will decide if this happens and what happens if it does. It's usually not good.

WARLOCK SUBCLASS

THE EVERMORE

The gnarled and crooked clock tower, Maghoro's Perch, looms high over the Warlock city of Yon'Cath. The structure's namesake is an otherworldly being of unknown origin. Those who claim to have seen her say she appears in the form of a blue-skinned halfling woman. Her motives and ambitions are a mystery to all, save those in her service. Maghoro's power is felt through the Warlocks that have agreed to her Pact. They are called the Evermores, and time itself is the sandbox they play in.

Silver Timepiece

At Level 3, Maghoro bestows a gift upon you: a silver pocket watch with a glowing blue face. This magical item marks you as a true Evermore, granting you unique abilities and spells.

Better with Age

Starting at Level 3, the longer the battle goes on, the more you feel for the flow of battle improves. You get better and better at timing your attacks and defenses. Starting on your second turn of combat, you may add +1 to all attacks, checks, and saves. This effect increases by 1 each round, with the maximum bonus equaling your CHA modifier. This ability can be used once per rest.

All Wound Up

Starting at Level 3, on each of your turns, you can use a bonus action to gain to gain an additional action that turn, in exchange for 1 level of exhaustion.

Time Thief

Starting at Level 5, you can prevent aging by stealing time from others. As an action, you can attempt to steal the time from a creature of your choice that you can see within 60 ft that can hear you. Your words are laced with magic, but all they hear is banal, inconsequential small talk a la "Great weather today, isn't it?" The target must succeed on a Charisma saving

throw versus your spell save DC. On a failure, you may steal any amount of time up to 1 year, causing the target to age and you to grow younger. Stealing more than 6 months from a target will grant you the effects of a long rest and result in them taking 1 level of exhaustion. When stealing 6 months or less, you gain the effects of a short rest, and you can attempt to do so without the target being aware of the effect. This requires a CHA check against the target's passive perception.

Expedite

Starting at Level 8, when you are affected by an effect with a duration greater than instantaneous, you can use your reaction to reduce the duration of the effect so that it lasts until the start of your next turn. Once you have used this feature, you must finish a short rest before you can use it again.

Tempo

Starting at Level 10, as a reaction, when an enemy you can see makes an attack against you, you can attempt to avoid it at the last second. You must attempt a DEX save with a DC equal to the attack roll. On a success, the attack automatically misses. This may be used 3 times per long rest.

Turn Back the Clock

Starting at Level 14, as a reaction, you can turn time back a few seconds, immediately undoing whatever happened on the most recent turn in the initiative, whether it be friend or foe. All effects within that moment are undone. However, it is now that player or creature's turn again and they may attempt the same attack again or try something different. This may be used twice per long rest.

Entropic Field

Starting at Level 17, the ebb and flow of minutes and seconds are yours to command. At will, you can create a bubble of controlled time emanating from a point of your choice and stretching up to 120 feet in spherical diameter. The spell lasts for 3 rounds and requires you to maintain concentration. All creatures and objects within the bubble are affected. The spell can be crafted to avoid affecting allies, however, it reduces the duration to 1 round. You may choose 1 of 3 possible spells to affect all objects and creatures within the bubble: Haste, Slow, or Time Stop. This requires an immense amount of energy and effort and you gain 1 level of exhaustion for each round the effects last. 1 use per long rest.

Expanded Spell List

Cantrips:

SYNCHRONIZE

Cantrip Divination

Casting Time 1 action

Range 300 feet

Components S

Duration Concentration, up to 1 round

Classes Warlock

You study a single enemy, gaining an uncanny understanding of how they fight. Until the end of your next turn, you have advantage on attacks against that enemy. Additionally, that enemy has disadvantage against you.

TEMPORAL DISPLACEMENT

Cantrip Evocation

Casting Time 1 action

Range 120 feet

Components V S

Duration Instantaneous

Classes Warlock

You unleash a jagged arc of blue energy from your fingertips. Make a ranged spell attack. On a hit, your target takes 1d8 force damage and must attempt a Wisdom saving throw. On a failure, it cannot take bonus actions or reactions until the end of its next turn.

This spells damage increases by 1d8 when you reach the 5th level (2d8), 11th level (3d8), and 17th level (4d8).

Level 1:

STEAL A MOMENT

1st Level Necromancy

Casting Time 1 action

Range 60 feet

Components V S F

Duration Instantaneous

Classes Warlock

You psychically reap the thoughts of a creature you can see within range. The target must attempt a Constitution saving throw. On a failure, you steal their time to heal yourself and learn their next action. Target takes 1d8 psychic damage, and you regain hit points equal to the damage dealt.

At Higher Levels. When you cast this spell using a spell slot of 2nd level or higher, the damage increases by 1d8 for every slot level higher than 1st.

Level 2:

SKIP FORWARD

2nd Level Transmutation

Casting Time 1 action

Range 90 feet

Components V F**Duration** Instantaneous**Classes** Warlock

You attempt to thrust a creature you can see within range forward in time, forcing it to attempt a Charisma saving throw. On a failure, the target vanishes, appearing in the nearest unoccupied space to where it vanished at the end of its next turn.

WIND UP*2nd Level Transmutation***Casting Time** 1 action**Range** 90 feet**Components** V F**Duration** Concentration, up to 1 minute**Classes** Warlock

You target an allied creature within range, greatly amplifying the speed of their mental functions granting them the ability to make complex probability calculations in fractions of a second. For the duration, the target has advantage on Intelligence, Wisdom, and Charisma ability checks and can use a bonus action to take the Search action.

Level 3:

PAUSE*3rd Level Enchantment***Casting Time** 1 action**Range** 90 feet**Components** V S F**Duration** 1 Round**Classes** Warlock

You target one creature or object within range and freeze it in time and space until the start of your next turn. An unwilling target must succeed on a Charisma saving throw or be paralyzed for the duration. The target is immune to damage, cannot be moved or magically teleported.

Level 4:

ASHES TO ASHES*4th Level Enchantment***Casting Time** 1 action**Range** 120 feet**Components** V S F**Duration** Concentration, up to 1 Minute.**Classes** Warlock

You attempt to age a creature of your choice that you can see within range. The target must succeed on a Wisdom saving throw or age 40 years. If the target's age exceeds the typical lifespan for a creature of its type from this effect, it falls unconscious. While

under the effects of this spell, the target has disadvantage on all STR, DEX, and CON saves.

At Higher Levels. When you cast this spell using a higher spell slot, the number of years a target is aged on a failed save increases by 10 for every slot level above 4th. When cast as a 9th level spell, aging a creature past their typical lifespan causes instant death.

DUST TO DUST*4th Level Transmutation***Casting Time** 1 action**Range** 120 feet**Components** V S F**Duration** Concentration, up to 1 minute.**Classes** Warlock

You twist time around an object or structure you can see completely within range, aging it to ruin. At the end of each of your turns for the spell's duration, The target ages 50 years and loses 4d10 hit points. A target reduced to zero hit points from this effect crumbles to dust.

Level 5:

ECHOES OF THE PAST*5th Level Enchantment***Casting Time** 1 action**Range** 60 feet**Components** V S F**Duration** concentration, up to 1 minute**Classes** Warlock

You reach into the mind of a creature you can see within range, seeing their past stretching out before you and returning them to a point where they were more vulnerable. For the duration of the spell, the target suffers the following effects.

- Loses proficiency in a saving throw of your choice.
- Loses proficiency in a skill of your choice.
- Loses resistance or immunity to a damage type of your choice.

TIME OUT*5th Level Conjuration***Casting Time** 1 action**Range** 60 feet**Components** V S F**Duration** 1 minute**Classes** Warlock

Your target needs to take a moment by themselves to think about the consequences of their actions. The target must pass a CHA saving throw. On a failure, an impenetrable black stone monolith materializes around them. The monolith is just big enough to fit the target and their gear. No weapons or spell effects

can penetrate the monolith. The arcane energy of the monolith tethers the target to this plane, preventing teleportation. This spell can be used on creatures up to and including Large in size. The target can attempt a Charisma saving throw to escape at the start of their turn. For every failed save, the target feels the shame of their transgressions and takes 1d8 psychic damage. Casting the spell above the 5th level increases the damage by 1d8 for each level.

Level 7:

DOUBLE TIME

7th level Transmutation.

Casting Time 1 action

Range 120 feet

Components V S

Duration Concentration, up to 1 minute

Classes Warlock

Until the spell ends, the target's base movement speed is doubled, all attacks against the target have disadvantage, and the target has an additional action on each of its turns.

WARLOCK SUBCLASS BROKEN PACT

Perhaps you sought to make a pact with a regular patron and unknowingly entered a deal with the patron Gosoliad, or maybe you sought her intentionally. Once a powerful wizard living near the Shadelands, she sought to become a lich to extend her life. No one is sure how it happened or why, but the process of transferring her soul into the reliquary was interrupted, and she instead ascended, becoming a patron. Furious at this unexpected resolution, she eventually tried to make the best of this newfound ascension until those seeking her power kept calling. An order of wizards began worshiping her, spreading the word of this glorious event, and sought to make pacts. Giving up some of herself and her power angered Gosoliad, who was selfish and isolationist in nature.

She still found herself stuck in pact-after-pact even as a Patron! It turns out, would-be-Warlocks were often very charismatic, and she was anything but. And so she spent countless years trying to find a way to stop them from seeking her out while trying to break the very deals she felt conned into brokering.

Finding a way to use the chaos of primal magic to shatter pacts and bonds that she made to these lesser beings, who could talk a good game, didn't earn Gosoliad any allies in the Shadelands. When they turned their ire to her followers or her, they quickly discovered she had mastered the art of neutralizing Warlocks. Majin was particularly pleased with the excess energy they gained each time Gosoliad broke pacts.

Patrons decided to give Gosoliad what she wanted. Isolation. They leave her in peace and discourage those from speaking her name or seeking her, hoping

she will fade into obscurity in her solitude before her influence destroys the system of pacts they partake in.

Warlocks of the Broken Pact enter into a deal with Gosoliad, often by having to trick her (or her followers) into making her gain more power. Everyone knows she'll regret having to pay up her end of the deal later—but that pact breaking is what they really want anyway.

With the creation of a symbolic reliquary like the one she used, they channel primal magic to break the pacts of others and disrupt both Warlock and traditional magic with its chaos energy. They do this under her guidance until she gets bored (level 10), and they have a level of mastery where they can channel these forces on their own, once again leaving Gosoliad to her solitude.

Once you have reached such a level, you will be revered and sought after by Warlocks to break pacts they wish to break and feared by powerful Warlocks who want to keep their own. Many members of the Legionnaires have walked this path to help others break their own pacts.

Expanded Spell List

Level 1: Chaos Bolt, Inflict Wounds

Level 2: Shatter, Phantasmal Force

Level 3: Phantom Steed, Bestow Curse

Level 4: Phantasmal Killer, Shadow of Moil

Level 5: Destructive Wave, Contagion

Whispers of an Apathetic God

Starting at Level 1, your connection to Gosoliad is one of necessity. However, the patron wishes to be left in solitude, making most of her replies disparaging. While you understand the nature of this temporary symbiosis, others cannot. As an action you can send the nihilistic whispers' of the void to any creature you can see within 60 feet of you, disrupting its perception. Until the end of its next turn, the creature is considered blinded beyond a radius of 15 ft. and centered on it.

Breaker of Bonds

At Level 6, your connection to your patron enables you to begin the steps to break pacts as reputed by learning to sever the bonds of lesser effects and what they correspond with. As a reaction, when a creature you can see within 30 ft attempts a saving throw to end an effect, you expend a Warlock spell slot to grant it a bonus to the saving throw equal to the level of the spell slot expended.

Pact Breaker

At 10th level, you no longer need Gosoliad to channel primal chaos magic, and your pact with her is broken.

You exude an aura of chaos in a 30 ft. radius sphere centered on you. When an enemy creature in the affected area attempts to cast a spell, you can use a

reaction to force it to succeed on an ability check using its spellcasting ability, or the spell fails and any resources used to cast it are wasted. The DC of this check is 10 + the spell's level.

Power Covenant

Starting at 14th level, your power over primal chaos magic is genuinely terrifying. Breaking other Warlock pacts is easy. You now understand how to create stronger, one-sided pacts. After breaking the pact of another Warlock, you may re-forge a portion of this bond to yourself. Choose an otherworldly patron other than the Broken Pact. You gain that subclasses 14th level feature, instead of this one. You may only have one additional patron bonus at a time and can repeat this process after a long rest.

WARLOCK SUBCLASS

SOUL THIEF

Your patron is one who exists outside of the material plane, in what many cultures refer to as "the afterlife." What that means is beyond mortal understanding, as the plane your patron exists on doesn't seem to be accessible even by magical means. Unless, of course... you die. Your patron may be a simple ferrier, long-tired of whisking the souls of the dead to and fro millennia after millennia. Or, perhaps your patron is some personification of death incarnate, seeking to claim as many souls as there are mortals.

Soul Thief Warlocks are masters of disguise, changing faces as often as they change shapes. Formidable in combat, a Soul Thief is capable of draining the very essence of their opponents away from them, then using that essence to their advantage. Many soul thieves choose to keep their wicked powers a secret, due to the unsavory implications of draining, and even eating, souls. Those Soul Thieves who do practice their dark arts openly are the ones to fear the most, for they are confident in their power..

Expanded Spell List

Level 1: Jump, Longstrider.

Level 2: Enhance Ability, Barkskin.

Level 3: Protection from Energy, Water Breathing.

Level 4: Polymorph, Stoneskin.

Level 5: Awaken, Reincarnate.

Soul Drain

Starting at Level 1, you gain the ability to concentrate and impose your force of will over another

creature to steal their soul. As an action, you can attempt to drain the soul of a creature within 30 ft. unless they succeed on a Charisma saving throw versus your spell save DC. On a failed save, their soul is now being drained by you. Draining a creature's soul lasts for 1 minute, during which time you must concentrate (as though concentrating on a spell) or the effect ends.

While their soul is being drained, at the beginning of each of their turns, the target creature takes 1d8 necrotic damage. This damage increases to 2d8 at 3rd level, 3d8 at 6th level, 4d8 at 10th level, 5d8 at 14th level, and 6d8 at 17th level. A creature may spend an action to attempt another Saving Throw against your Spell save DC. Succeeding on this save will stop the Soul Drain.

If a creature dies while its soul is being drained by you, and you have an empty dark reliquary (as per your Dark Reliquary feature) you may use a reaction to capture a creature's soul inside the reliquary. You do not need to be the one to land the killing blow in order to capture their soul. You may only capture the souls of creatures who possess a soul, and who have a DC equal to or lower than your player level. Creatures that do not have souls include constructs, inanimate objects, plants, and undead.

Dark Reliquary

Dark reliquaries are the tools of trade for the Soul Thief. These reliquaries may look like amulets, jars, lanterns, or bottles. Whatever their shape, their purpose is simple: they are made to contain the stolen souls of the dead. You begin with 1 dark reliquary. You gain an additional dark reliquary at 5th, 7th, and 9th level. While a creature's soul is trapped inside a

dark reliquary, it cannot be revived until the soul is released.

A dark reliquary is an object with an AC of 10 and 20 hit points. If one or more of your dark reliquaries are destroyed, you magically replenish them when you finish a long rest. As an action, you may consume a captured soul inside a dark reliquary, absorbing the soul within. Consuming a soul restores 1 spell slot and heals 1d6 hit points per hit die of the source creature. If a creature's soul is consumed in this way, it can never be returned to life, short of divine intervention or a wish spell.

Soul Form

At 1st level, you may use the captured soul of a creature to change your physiology. When taking on a soul form, your bones shift and crack visibly beneath your skin as your anatomy changes.

You may use an action to shift into a soul form by expending a spell slot and using a filled dark reliquary. Using a dark reliquary in this way does not consume the soul inside.

The soul forms you can shift into depends on the source of the captured soul within the crystal you're using:

- If the source creature was not awakened, you take on the appearance of a ghostly, misshapen, or otherwise-abnormal version of a creature of the same species as the soul source creature.
- If the source creature was awakened, you take on the appearance of that specific creature, including their voice. You are virtually indistinguishable from the source creature.

You cannot take the soul form of a creature larger or smaller than yourself.

While you are in a soul form, the following rules apply:

- Your game statistics are replaced by the statistics of the soul source creature, but you retain your Hit Points, Hit Dice, alignment, personality, and Intelligence, Wisdom, and Charisma scores. You also retain all of your skill and saving throw proficiencies, in addition to gaining those of the creature. If the creature has the same proficiency as you and the bonus in its stat block is higher than yours, use the creature's bonus instead of yours. You retain the ability to speak, even if the soul source creature could not. If the creature has any legendary or lair actions, you can't use them.

- You can't cast spells, and your ability to speak or take any action that requires hands is limited to the capabilities of your soul form. Transforming doesn't break your concentration on a spell or ability you've already cast, however, nor does it prevent you from taking actions that are part of a spell that you've already cast.
- You retain the benefit of any features from your class, race, or other source and can use them if the new form is physically capable of doing so. However, you can't use any of your special senses, such as darkvision, unless your new form also has that sense.
- You choose whether your equipment falls to the ground in your space, merges into your new form, or is worn by it. Worn equipment functions as normal, but the GM decides whether it is practical for the new form to wear a piece of equipment, based on the creature's shape and size. Your equipment doesn't change size or shape to match the new form, and any equipment that the new form can't wear must either fall to the ground or merge with it. Equipment that merges with the form has no effect until you leave the form.
- If you die while in a soul form, you are restored to your normal form at zero hit points.

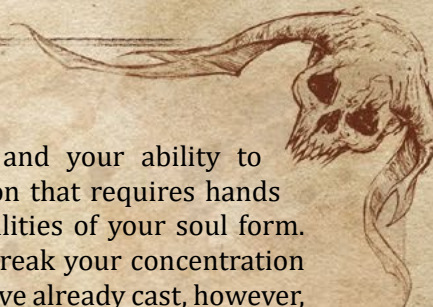
You can stay in a soul form for 1 hour, after which you must finish a long rest before you can assume the form again. You can revert to your normal form as a bonus action on your turn.

Eldritch Malediction

Starting at Level 6, your connection to the occult has grown strong enough that you can cast spells while in soul form, provided they do not require concentration. You can, however, use your Soul Drain ability while in soul form. Additionally, you may take on the soul form of source creatures 1 size category smaller or larger than you.

Esoteric Reclamation

At Level 10, you learn a dark ritual that allows you to reclaim the lost souls of the recently deceased. This ritual must be performed at night, taking 8 hours of strenuous activity to complete, during which time you must touch the remains of a creature slain within the last 24 hours. At the end of this duration, the remains are consumed, and you reach into the void to reclaim the soul of the deceased creature for yourself, capturing it in one of your empty dark reliquaries.



Ego Eater

Starting at 14th level, creatures affected by your Soul Drain feature have disadvantage on Intelligence, Wisdom, and Charisma saving throws against you. Additionally, you gain access to the thoughts and memories of creatures affected by your Soul Drain features, allowing you to impersonate or know secrets they may have kept from others.



WARLOCK SUBCLASS THE MIRRORWALKERS

Your patron is the Mother of Mirrors, an interplanar goddess who values experience and dimensional travel. To the Mirrorwalkers, the world is neither good nor evil, simply a place to experience new wonders—and every world offers something unique.

Mirrorwalkers are often Warlocks with a thirst to travel and experience new planes of existence, wondering what possibilities await them if they walk in the shoes of another's life. They are masters of travel and versatility by trade, often serving as fantastic messengers for interplanar entities.

Expanded Spell List

Level 1: Longstrider, Goodberry

Level 2: Calm Emotions, Mirror Image

Level 3: Blink, Sending

Level 4: Dimension Door, Freedom of Movement

Level 5: Legend Lore, Teleportation Circle

Cracked Reflection

You have seen all the potential roads that you can walk down in life, and perhaps even spoken to yourself at times. This has granted you invaluable insight into your true nature as a being—regardless of what box the world aims to trap you in.

At Level 1, you may spend a short rest conversing with yourself in a mirror. When you are done, you may swap any tool or language proficiency with another. The knowledge you once had is now gone, lost to another lifetime, but you are as familiar with your new knowledge as if you've had it all along. The only way to reclaim what you've lost is to perform this ability again.

Demand Attendance

At Level 6, you may force others into places at your whim. You may target one creature within line of sight and offer them a choice: move or suffer consequences.

On your action, a target creature must make a choice—be surrounded in silvery mist and moved to an unoccupied space within 120' of you or suffer Force damage equal to your Eldritch Blast.

The target has no knowledge of where you will be moving to unless you are polite enough to inform them of such.

Mirrorwalk

At Level 10, you may step through mirrors as if they are water, appearing in new locations. You may cast Dimension Door at will, however, you do not need to see where you will appear or need to visualize the space. Instead, you may only exit from a mirror, glass object, or body of water large enough for your creature type to fit through. If no such place exists you take 4d6 force damage, and the spell fails to teleport you.

Celestial Convergence

Mirrorwalkers are distinctly aware of their infinite possibilities and unlimited potential. Across the stars, they live countless lives and have hundreds of experiences—even if they have only lived their current life.

At Level 14, you may Plane Shift yourself and up to eight willing creatures to a different plane of existence with incredible accuracy. At the GM's discretion, you may even travel to places that you have never encountered nor have any attunement to. You may use this feature once per long rest.

Additionally, after using this feature, you may choose one of the Warlock spells you know and replace it with another spell from the Warlock spell list, which also must be of a level for which you have spell slots. Similar to Cracked Reflection, you trade this knowledge with another version of yourself and would need to travel to an entirely new plane to regain spells you have traded out.

ADVENTURE HOOKS



Every adventure requires a starting point. Getting your Players' characters to care about what events are happening within a nation of warlocks far to the north shouldn't be too difficult. Nonetheless, we've included a few ways to entice them. This list is by no means finite, and many other options exist. However, these reasons will also work for why other NPC adventurers you need are in the Shadelands if required. Who doesn't want to summon eldritch horrors and rule the world after all?

- *Everyone is running from something. Those who would proclaim otherwise are, in truth, running the fastest and furthest of all. What are you running from? In this scenario, the Player characters come to the Shadelands as an escape from trouble, and they can earn their keep with The Knight Captain in the first adventure. Before the adventure, Players will write a letter to their loved ones as a goodbye note.*
- *Look around you. You are not alone. Feel the presence of the Others. What do the Others mean to you? Hearing the call of the Shadelands can be worked into any campaign leading up to this through whispers on the wind. Seeking a quest for knowledge, Players will write a letter for what they hope to learn from these Others they hear in their minds.*
- *Eldritch horrors that should not be have begun to walk the earth. We need your expertise to investigate these horrors and exterminate them. Of course, you are paid to not ask questions... Other civilizations outside of the Shadelands have finally learned about the Well of Souls. Terrified of the danger it represents, they've hired adventurers to go rendezvous with The Knight Captain and "solve" the problem in the way adventurers are best known for. In this scenario, the Players will write a letter to their loved ones about their duty to investigate.*

SETTING & TIERS

Many options exist for incorporating the Shadelands into existing worlds or homebrew campaigns. The lavish Victorian-era gothic lifestyle lived in the cities fits well to expand upon any gothic settings. Or one could settle this north of civilization in a typical fantasy setting. In a high magic setting, the Shadelands could be a district of a floating city and have alliances with various guilds. It is even further possible to imagine the Shadelands as a setting out in the elemental planes, nestled among the chaos for all planar travelers. What's important is that the storyteller finds a home for the Shadelands within their world, whatever it may be. As such, we've written this book to be self-contained within its own city.

Tiers of play vary per group, but our aim is to design a higher tier adventure, one with the fate of cities at play and Machiavellian politics. We've done our best to aim for a Tier 3 thru Tier 4 level of play, but as with all campaigns at that range, storytellers know their party better than others. Tier 4 play is facilitated through roleplay and the weight of choices the group has to make, while Tier 3 play is supported by the lore the characters will be uncovering.

Running this module as a Tier 1 or starting module is feasible as well! If choosing this route, leave the encounters as wildly dynamic and thrilling as they are. Just have NPCs like the Shield Maiden or the Knight Captain lend extra assistance in battle or make the wounds Player's score a little more grievous. Do not be daunted by the stat-blocks of monsters. The GM screen exists for us to fudge dice in the player's favor, and it's okay to weaken monsters down or let players utilize the terrain for combat effects that punch far above their level.

RUNNING THE ADVENTURE

Do not attempt to run this module without reading it in its entirety first. This book is intended for you, the Game Master, and not the Players. **There are multiple endings, and there is no way to predict what option your Players will choose, or what path their choices have led them down. And that's part of the fun. Be prepared, read ahead, and know where they could wind up.**

Their choices will hopefully be difficult ones to make, with meanings that resonate. The endings cannot be reached happily ever after. In a story that asks questions about true death and being erased from all memory, how could they? Make no mistake: tragedy will befall someone in this opera, but it will be the Players that decide around whose neck falls the hangman's noose.

Each chapter is intended to be run as its own module with the major story beats. Each chapter is divided into three acts, and each act can vary in length. Between each main plot, potential side quests are shown for alternative sessions until you are ready for the next major chapter. The first three chapters center on the Knight Captain, his forces, and motivations. Chapters four, five, and six concern the arcane forces surrounding the Well of Souls. Chapters seven, eight, and nine will bring the party to the Accursed King's court and perhaps into his good graces, then off to war. The Red Opera closes with significant death in the final chapter. Perhaps the Players, the Kings, the Captains... No matter who's, someone stands to gain.

A critical portion of this adventure is "The Letter Home." At the start of this campaign, all Players must fill out a letter as described in the section below. This out-of-game object you collect as the Game Master will represent their character's connection to the world, and if circumstances dictate setting it aflame, it will represent their character's true death.

Should the characters die, or struggle during the adventure due to high challenge ratings, or not being equipped for the journey, don't panic. Patrons exist in the Shadelands to make temporary pacts as described in the Warlock section. If any rebalancing is required, something is always nearby to cut a deal.

A CLASSIC OPERA

When most people think of opera, the image of the 19th century Bel Canto style comes to mind. Dominated by Giuseppe Verdi and Richard Wagner, the popularity of opera continued into the 20th century. As technology increased, so did its reach and mediums, but many factors remained the same. Opera is, at its core, a musical saga and an over the top drama. Martyrdom, vibrant colors, and drastic emotional actions always steal the stage.

The Red Opera is no different. The Shadelands might be gothic, but they are filled with culture and a life of their own. Passions run hot in the Warlocks that live here, and many Bards find equal inspiration. Majin the Betrayer, however, has set the stage with three parties and invited the characters to be the active audience that takes center stage.

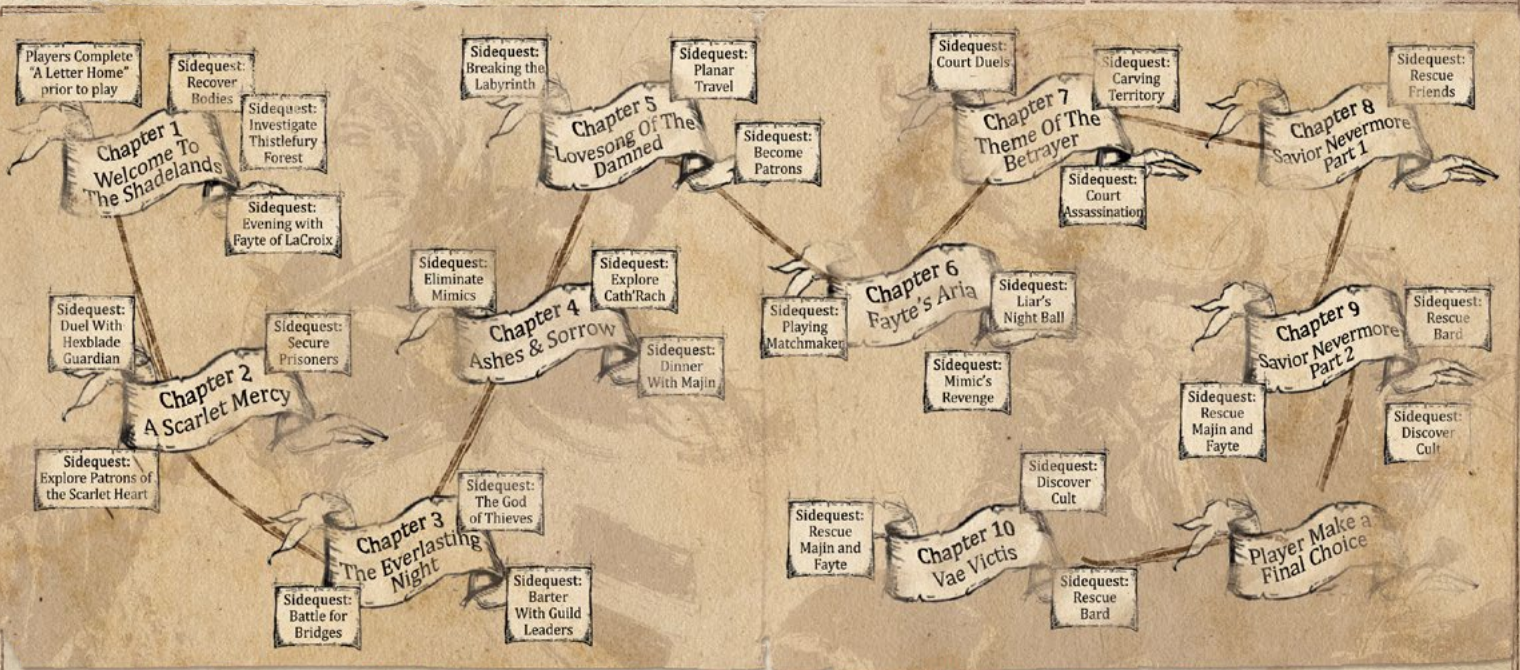
If, in the course of running this campaign, your Players find a theatrical and tragic outcome—embrace them. Even if it foils Majin's plans. If the Players aren't helping bring their plan to fruition, they'll clap and applaud the Players, as they reset the stage for another try. To Majin, this is all an experiment in the great dance of exploring Death.

Within each act, you'll find a section about the current state of the setting as it changes throughout. We've found this useful for characters with divination magic, and if someone in your party has it, feel free to describe the setting of the Shadelands in the later acts as it will change. Encounters, monsters, and traps can be found in the appendices, but we assume you have access to at least the following:

- *A group of players.*
- *Candles.*
- *Polyhedron Dice.*
- *Rules set of your choosing.*

MONSTERS & ITEMS

Most of the monsters and magical items in The Red Opera are original creations. You can find stats for all original creations in the Appendices. Many of the items will be specifically noted throughout the adventure. However, there are more original items that you are free to place around the world as you see fit. (Or not use at all, if you prefer). These are found in Appendix #2.1: Unassigned Magic Items. And by all means, feel free to add whatever additional items and loot you think your Players would enjoy throughout the adventure.



STORY OVERVIEW

"Unlike Gods, for Patrons, you must whisper gently that your payer may be heard. Though by its end, your peril still awaits."

-Fayette The Shield Maiden

In 'Welcome To The Shadelands', the characters find themselves side-by-side with The Shield Maiden and Knight Captain. Together, they survive a hunt on the outskirts of Yon'Cath against aberrant beasts that have slipped through the veil. Planar creatures find cracks into the material plane near the Well of Souls, often to the detriment of Yon'Cath citizens. Upon investigation, the party discovers that The Accursed King set forth this attack. With no recourse and little help—the duo employs the characters.

In 'A Scarlet Mercy', The Knight Captain and Shield Maiden lead their forces on a march through Yon'Cath during the day to the Scarlet Hearth, a temple of sacrifice. This is in hope to free The Knight Captain's men and persuade the warlocks inside of The Accursed King's insanity. Day-by-day the Shadelands grow worse, and the madness must be put to an end. By seizing and capturing the temple, The Knight Captain hopes to earn some reprieve before the night becomes permanent.

In 'The Everlasting Night', after weeks held up in one corner of the city preventing The Accursed King and his men from paying homage to Patrons through the sacrifice of civilians, night falls entirely. The Knight Captain is pushed to desperation, ordering his soldiers to take over the bridges and strangle trade. The

party is tasked with eliminating insane aberrations and holding the bridge long enough for The Shield Maiden to cross.

Letting The Knight Captain and his forces hold one side of Yon'Cath, The Shield Maiden and group sneak through The Accursed King's territory to locate Majin in 'Ashes and Sorrow'. Information about why The Accursed King has lost all semblance of sanity and why the Elemental Dance has gone haywire is vital to restoring the Shadelands to what they once were.

In 'Lovesong of the Damned', The Shield Maiden and Majin will lead the group through an inverted labyrinth to the Well of Souls. Through exploration, Majin makes the Maiden explain how the King was human once, and she was his lover. Once at the Well of Souls, to save the Shadelands from damnation, The Shield Maiden makes a pact with an unlikely Patron. Perhaps the party does as well...

In 'Fayette's Aria', Majin pulls back the veil about the nature of the Shadelands and the Elemental Planes. Continuing deeper into the unknowable Temple, the characters are shown answers, and secrets tied to their curiosities, but one is certain to be uncovered—the perplexities of death. How to kill a God, for in death it is the loss of a name, and The Shield Maiden now has a pact with a mysterious Patron.

In 'Theme of the Betrayer', Majin and The Shield Maiden return to Yon'Cath, a city engaged in open warfare between many factions and Patrons. Majin leads them straight to The Accursed King, where the characters find him perfectly sane but struggling with an open rebellion of Patrons who broke their pact. The party is thrust into the political arena

as outsiders into court; wheeling and dealing with Patrons, nobles, and even the King himself to restore the Shadelands. Even the most anti-social character can't avoid being involved.

In 'Savior Nevermore I': The Confrontation, The Accursed King asks the Players to reclaim the temple they captured in the first place. For without him and his infinite knowledge of Patron pacts, events will only spiral further out of control. Turned back to assault the territory they once captured, the party may have to claim the very lives they once saved.

In 'Savior Nevermore II': The Consuming Shadow The Well of Souls erupts. Both The Knight Captain and the King, unable to truly stop fighting, charge the party with helping hold back the bleed of realms as gravity itself changes. Meanwhile, Majin and The Shield Maiden force the party to make a choice regarding her life—and the fate of the Shadelands.

In 'Vae Victis', the outcome of the party's choice is made manifest in one of several operatic outcomes. The city is changed forevermore, and the final stand is made.

ADVENTURE STRUCTURE

*"With wounds too deep, which even a martyr would envy, you forced my hand to bring the end."
—Dorian The Accursed King*

Each of the 10 chapters are all structured the same way. The adventures are not always designed to be instantly back-to-back with each other. In some cases, there is ample time for downtimes or other sidequests within the Shadelands as demanded. Rather than cover every possibility, we've focused our encounters around the high-end set pieces that are shaping the world around the party.

The intro section of each chapter describes how the adventure fits into the overall story and highlights the plot beats and goal of the adventure.

Each setting section provides descriptions of what the PCs see, hear, and sometimes even smell all around. It will also detail how the Shadelands have changed since the last act, growing increasingly darker and more hostile as the Well of Souls and Temple are both occupied by opposing forces.

Each chapter is designed to be its own self-contained story with a beginning, middle, and climactic, revelatory end, each planned out in three 'Act' sections. The adventure does not need to be run in a single session, although it is a certain possibility. Adapt the adventures to suit your playgroup. Some Players spend hour's roleplaying, investigating, and theory crafting, others will want to roll initiative and disarm traps as often as possible.

By splitting the chapters into acts, it gives the party a little wiggle room to go off-script, but as mentioned

before, read the whole adventure so you know what hasn't transpired yet. For example, if the party earns an audience with The Accursed King before act 7, they'll find him busy, disinterested, or as erratic as The Knight Captain thought he would be. Why? Because Majin and the group haven't fixed the Well of Souls yet.

If they wander too far off script though, the Game Master has tools to rein them back in to keep the game engaging and fun. The Knight Captain can simply move forward with his siege. The Shield Maiden can wander to the Well of Souls alone. The Accursed King can attempt to slay Patrons by himself. None of these outcomes will be as successful if they had the party with them. Which brings us to our final point:

Failure.

Failure is difficult when many of the chapters are structured around making a choice. It is a matter of give and take. If the party's siege at the Temple fails in Chapter 8, perhaps the Knight Captain's forces still win. Or, in a more likely scenario, they are pushed back, and later adventures will have to rely on stealth. If at any point you feel the adventure has gone so completely off the rails because of failures or poor planning, just remember the NPCs' (and Patrons') motives. The Accursed King, Shield Maiden, and Knight Captain are all puppets with their strings being gently tugged. They want these events to transpire, and it's the Players who are trying to stop everyone else from being caught in the crossfire.

Or, just burn it all down. Majin will applaud you and thank you for making their job much easier this time around. Even if a little less fulfilling for them.

CHARACTER LEVELS

As mentioned under 'Settings and Tiers', this campaign is designed for Tier 3 and Tier 4 characters but can be run for any tier. It is easier to scale an encounter down than up. In the appendices, you'll find monsters and traps grouped by each encounter and act so you can reference them easily.

In order to make scaling easy for Game Masters, we've included one unique monster as a set-piece, and then others are added (or subtracted) according to tier. For level 1 or Tier 1 characters, just say the main foe is wounded and reduce its hit points and attack power. Every encounter should be treated as "deadly" with only one major encounter per chapter. We want the party to feel the challenge, but not the exhaustion of the grind.

For player controversy or level 20-campaigns: You can run this campaign without leveling up. The Shadelands is an interesting place, and there is an experience to be had at the end of the Opera (based on the outcome), but a level one character at the start—could remain level one if you wanted. Not only

will this add to their horror, but it will also force them (and even higher-level characters) to realize they can grow their characters in other ways, such as Patron pacts and skill training through horizontal growth. In this campaign, we encourage the use of the optional rules to learn feats with training, or new skills or special abilities and boons from Patrons.

It goes without saying that this is your chronicle. If you want to use experience and level up, we suggest leveling points via milestone experience at Chapters 2, 4, 5, 7, and 9. If the party is Tier 1, level them up after Chapter 1, and Chapter 3 as well. Use the downtime between chapters to have the Knight Captain, Shield Maiden, Majin, or the King be instrumental in their leveling up process and teach them secrets and new techniques. The Shield Maiden is a wealth of knowledge.

Since each adventure has many side quests, you may find those serve as good markers for character progression. Lastly, if your group is high-level or around level 20 then there are plenty of boons and other pacts to reward the party with rather than experience.

PLAYER CHARACTER QUESTIONS

To enhance immersion, we've included a list of questions for the Player characters. For existing campaigns with rich backstories, these questions can serve to reconnect the Player to a character. In order for both comedy and horror to have an impact, that connection is a cornerstone of storytelling.

The best method to run these questions is not to hand them out to the Players at the start of the chronicle. Rather, every time the characters sleep or have a long rest, let them hear the question in their dreams and be compelled to answer. Timely questions to the storyline at hand can both help you, the Game Master, improvise by knowing your party and keeping them focused.

- *We've been watching you. We want to help... but are terrified. Will you help us?*
- *The goals in your life are in reach, but about to be snuffed out. What is one goal you will never let go of?*

- *Letting go of your past is never easy. We can see both fond and terrible memories. Who was your first crush?*
- *Perhaps you were destined for a different life. What will you do after you prevail?*
- *That young bard was eyeing up your coin purse on the bridge the other day. Did you even notice you've been pick-pocketed?*
- *You've become distracted. Troubled even, by your connections. Why haven't you freed them yet?*
- *When you woke up this morning, did you think about your place in the world? What made you wear that outfit today? Ever think about changing your style?*
- *Did you know that someone painted a portrait of you and your friends? What do you think it was for?*
- *We've noticed you've got a grudge. Why do you hate them? What did they do to you that hurt so badly?*
- *How do you want to die?*

A LETTER HOME...

Once you are ready to begin the Red Opera with your Players there is one final step. During the first game session, when their characters leave home or begin their trek to the Shadelands: Have them write a letter. Yes, a real, physical letter. This act is key to the immersion of the Red Opera and has actual game mechanics.

The letter should ideally be to someone the character loves. It should also be written in character. No other Player should get to read their letter, and even the Storyteller should avoid reading it. For now, seal the letters up and set them aside. We recommend you paperclip the letters to the GM Screen. This serves as a constant reminder for the Players of where they've come from. Once the events of the Red Opera have concluded in the Shadelands, open and read all the

letters. If the characters are still alive, then they serve as closure to the end of the campaign. A full campaign has unfolded, so even the Players may be surprised at what they wrote some time ago.

If a character dies, unseal and read their letter aloud, bring that character back to life (sometime in the future), and burn the letter (Be safe, of course). Even if they've lost their body or their soul was trapped, they will return—provided it is during the events of the Red Opera. Burning their letter home represents the world forgetting them. In time, perhaps they forget themselves. Their past, their time, their threads, their children and more will all forget about them.

If a character returns to life this way, he or she earns a free class-level of Warlock, and their Patron is none other than Majin. They've got quite a task for them...

FINAL DEATH, AND FINAL CONSEQUENCES...

The Red Opera is designed to end in three possible ways. The characters will have the ultimate choice as to how the story plays out, and Majin is closely watching what they decide. The Shadelands could survive the Red Opera based on the party's choices.

In all cases, the death of NPCs during the Shadelands is final (There are no letters home for them). The Knight Captain, the Accursed King, The Shield Maiden, even the townsfolk or other Warlocks the characters meet will not return to life. Their souls will forever feed the great Well of Souls or move onto greater service of their Patron. There is a magic here preventing them from ever returning, and that magic is the realm of the Shadelands itself, the entity called Majin the Betrayer.

It is up to you as GM to scatter hints throughout the story that death is permanent here. Perhaps soldiers can be sitting around a campfire talking about the futility of a cleric trying to revive a fallen brother.

In truth, the Players will come to learn that Majin the Betrayer is responsible for the imbalance at the Well of Souls and that they are a Patron themselves. In their attempts to uncover how to kill someone in a land filled with magic, Majin has also found ways to become immensely powerful from harnessing the Well's energy.

Everyone else is already entangled in this web, but not these newcomers. Without the Players knowing,

Majin has invited them in, ensuring the raw power of the Well won't drive them mad.

In the end, the Accursed King's or the Knight Captain's victories can each change the very nature of the Shadelands. One might lead the land further into the weird, the unspoken horrors, and the mysteries of the Great Old Ones. The other might turn the Shadelands into a hub for those who hunt monsters across dimensions – a city of warriors, stalkers, and murderers charged with seeking and killing rogue Warlocks before their unraveling pacts transform them into nightmares.

No matter the outcomes, the Shadelands endure. In time, there will be another King, and another Knight Captain, or another Shield Maiden because there always is. The only one who wins along the long stretches of time is they who stacked the deck ages ago. Majin the Betrayer. Will anyone ever prove their hypothesis wrong and shatter this grand experiment? Will any character ever give their life willingly, and truly die to save something besides their legacy?

Until that happens, Majin will get what they want: an army of Warlocks scattered across all realms and planes who answer to no other Patron but them.

Of course, the Players will always be the Players and shatter even the most well-laid plans! If they come up with some grand scheme that seems fun for your world—roll with it. Be cautioned, however, that robbing your Players of at least one final consequence will undermine the very themes of the Red Opera:

There is always a cost...

... And no side is ever absolutely correct.



Dorian

THE ACCURSED KING

*"From avarice pacts our greed provides. Conquests came at a dire price. Undaunted reign for a cost most high they said. We traded further for eternal life." -Dorian
The Accursed King*

Dorian The Accursed King has the answers. The answers to what many in these diverse lands desire. When Gods grant spells to clerics and walk amongst mortals, it is easy to have faith in them. When a wizard utters incantations and burns a goat's eyeball to curse a foe, it is easy to fear them. A fighter can easily place his trust in steel, and a druid can seek solace in the comfort of his grotto.

But what kind of transaction can Warlocks rely on for power? The whispers of Patrons, of course.

It was only a matter of time before the commonality of service to otherworldly entities drew bands of Warlocks together. Those called The Accursed began as a small group of outcasts and mercenaries who offered their arcane might to any nation willing to house them. They traveled from nation to nation, realm to realm, waging war for the highest bidder, outlasting wizards and sorcerers on the battlefields. Dorian proudly counted himself among their ranks. He realized the value in banding together not only earned coins but, more importantly, appeased their Patrons as one (This notion would one day become the foundation for the Well of Souls). It wasn't long before Dorian rose to lead The Accursed.

Like many stories told before, and many still yet to be told, Dorian's ambition changed with his first touch of true love. Meeting Fayte, The Shield Maiden who saved his life one battle after another, ignited a desire to build something more. A life of servitude, battle, and death was no real life. As his love for Fayte grew, Dorian wanted to retire from conflict, settle, and live at his own bidding, as much as any warlock could.

Dorian's Patron, a creature from the Shadowfell known as He-Who-Shudders-With-The-Lidless-Eyes, spoke to him of a place in the north where the veil was thin. There—at the place where the fabric of many dimensions wove together, a spring where all Patrons' powers were amplified—Dorian would find his dreams manifested. Fayte's heart would swell

with love. There, laid a Well with the power he would command, Dorian could build a thriving kingdom all its own, a haven for wayward Warlocks. And for years, with Dorian guiding them at their Patrons' bidding, Warlocks the world over answered the summons, trekked northward, and lent their hands at building their bastion from nothing. The twin cities of Yonder and Cathrach rose from the snowy wastes.

Of course, other nations came to feel threatened by the gathering community of Warlocks beyond their borders. And so, in those early days, Dorian, Fayte, and LaCroix fought side-by-side to hold the threats to Yon'Cath at bay.

Despite their efforts, the invaders only increased. And so, one fateful night, Dorian spoke desperate words to the unseen, pleading for the means to ensure lasting peace and freedom for the Warlocks of the Shadelands, to provide them with the safety and splendor he promised them. A deep cold invaded his chamber, setting the candles to sputter.

A stranger from nowhere greeted Dorian and seated himself, setting a cruel blade down upon the table between them. A kind voice filled the small room, reverberating off the unfeeling stone. The stranger offered Dorian a chance to obtain his lofty aspirations. A crown to seal the glory of his kingdom, everlasting would it be.



The stranger asked a simple question:

“What would you give to be beyond the reach of all other kings and kingdoms?”

Dorian’s thoughts betrayed him.

“Ahh,” said the stranger. “If not for your people, then for her...”

“For her, I would give anything...” Dorian replied.

The stranger led Dorian to the spring of Patrons’ powers to the far north of Yon’Cath and revealed the hidden paths inside. Deep within the labyrinth, standing at the edge of the Well itself, Dorian struck a deal... with every Patron. He entered as a man but emerged as The Accursed King. A warlock with the blessings of Archfiends, Fey, the Raven Queen, even the Great Old Ones. With their power, The Accursed King would protect the Shadelands, the warlocks’ bastion, forevermore.

And with his crown, Fayte surely would love him.

ROLEPLAYING HINTS

The Accursed King is a man always talking to the entire room, never an individual. Even if the room is empty, he addresses creatures that most can’t even comprehend. His motivations are simple, and always out of reach: maintain control.

Fayte was once his pillar, but now he barely even notices her absence. With this in mind, Dorian always does what is best for his people. Unfortunately for many, perhaps the people of Yon’Cath are no longer his people. Or are they? If everyone would just let him focus!

Balancing all Patrons’ desires is a spider web entangling him. Without Majin to advise him, Yon’Cath would have spiraled into oblivion long ago. His Accursed Guard does what they can to buy him time. He trained them well, but day-by-day the demands of the Patron’s tug him further and further into an impossible web.

Based on your party level and size, the King’s stats and abilities can change as appropriate. You can find a suggested stat block in the Appendix. These, however, are some of his key abilities that should be used in any fight with him (even if the damage dice are altered to be as appropriate to tier play).

The Accursed King appears as a battle-hardened mercenary who was perhaps pretty once in his youth. A human with sandy-blonde hair and striking

hazel eyes, he was quite the lady charmer. Stress, battles, and time have taken their toll. Now one eye is blind, he walks with a limp in his right leg, and he’s missing three fingers on his left hand. In his wardrobe, instead of kingly robes and fancy attire... he maintains a simple monk-like aesthetic. Robes, bandages, and leather sheaths adorn him, because the King is always ready to pick up the sword once again.



DORIAN, THE ACCURSED KING

HUMAN WARLOCK, CHAOTIC NEUTRAL

LEGENDARY ACTIONS

Dorian the Accursed King can take 3 legendary actions, choosing from the list below. Only one legendary action option may be used at a time, and only at the end of another creature's turn. Dorian the Accursed King regains used legendary actions at the start of his turn

Summon Horror (costs 3 actions).

Dorian calls forth a creature from beyond to serve him for 1 minute, which appears in an unoccupied space of Dorian's choice within 60 ft. The creature has the statistics of a bone devil, but with the following exceptions. It is an aberration instead of a fiend, is resistant to bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing damage, and is vulnerable to radiant damage.

The horror acts immediately after Dorian's turn and follows his commands (no action required) to the best of Dorian's ability. The horror immediately vanishes if Dorian uses this action to create an additional horror.

Astral Exile.

Dorian attempts to exile a creature he can see within 60 ft. to a world beyond space and time. If the target is unwilling, it must succeed on a DC 24 Charisma saving throw or vanish as it is lost in time and space. At the end of the target's next turn, it reappears in the nearest unoccupied space to where it vanished. Additionally, when the creature reappears it has aged 1 year and any effects with a duration greater than instantaneous affecting the creature are ended

Lich Blade.

Dorian makes an attack with his Lich Blade.

LAIR ACTIONS

On initiative count 20 (losing initiative ties), Dorian can take a lair action to cause one of the following effects, so long as he is within the Impossible Spire. Dorian can't use the same effect twice in a row.

Sinister Shadows.

Dorian gently dances his fingertips about the air as if conducting an orchestra. A sly smile traces over his expression during a momentary pause. A sharp upwards flick of his hand grows the atmosphere dark; filling the chamber with deafening screams. From the shadows, slender blades of every size and shape are instantly outstretched. All of Dorian's enemies must make DEX saves (DC22) or take 31 (5d10) slashing damage.

Eldritch Shackles.

Magical shackles erupt from the ground to bind a creature of Dorian's choice. The target must succeed on a DC 20 Dexterity saving throw or be restrained by the shackles, which are an object with an AC of 15 and 20 hit points. While restrained in this manner, a creature cannot cast spells.

Shadow Winds.

Winds of dark power swarm around creatures of Dorian's choice in the affected area. Until the next initiative count of 20, affected creatures gain a fly speed of 60 ft. (hover).



Fayte

THE SHIELD MAIDEN

What is Fayte without intervention?"

~ Fayte The Shield Maiden

Let's make one thing clear: Fayte is not in love. Neither The Knight Captain LaCroix nor The Accursed King Dorian holds her heart (despite their wishes). They pine, yearn, and court her-but time and again she finds herself closing the door to a relationship. She's got more important things to do, and very limited time to do them.

The name Fayte was given to her by the people of Yon'Cath, along with the title of Shield Maiden. But long before that, in the distant past, she had heard the siren call of a Patron and traveled north with Dorian, her lover. She was at his side in battle as one of the Accursed. But in time, he grew distant. While Dorian rose to power and searched for the means to protect their new home, Fayte spent countless nights in the Scarlet Hearth seeking her Patron. Whenever it called to her, empowering her through their pact, she tried to answer, only Fayte's Patron would slip away again. She could feel its presence ever beyond her reach. As if she was grasping at smoke.

All of her effort and prayer were not wasted, however, as Fayte discovered many other Patrons lurking across the thin Shadelands veil. These she would direct to Dorian, who would ultimately bring them into the fold at his "Well of Souls," a mysterious place only he could enter. Much like Dorian, Fayte could hear the Patrons through her prayers at the Scarlet Hearth and soon found herself constantly busy playing match-maker between warlocks and these new Patrons. She has spent so much time in the temple helping others seal their pacts that the smell of incense almost permeates her skin—something many citizens of the Shadelands have come to enjoy and recognize.

In time, the man she once knew as Dorian had withdrawn from her completely, lost in his Well. And frustrated by the one-way connection to her Patron, she was ready to leave the Shadelands altogether. To be a warlock ignored by your Patron was unbearable. This was no kind of life for her. She had helped

Dorian find this place, build this place, defend this place, and in the end, it brought her no happiness.

As she packed her things to leave, the whispers of an Arch Devil Patron came to her unbidden, directed to a young warlock nearby. She eavesdropped on the terms of their pact—incredibly dangerous and unfair. Fayte found that she could not sit idly by and allow Patrons to abuse their would-be servants. Here, in the Shadelands, even though she never asked for this gift, she could save the souls of the innocent. She dropped her satchel and stepped in. Both devil and warlock were shocked that she could even hear their conversation (after all, it was a spiritual bond). The young warlock thanked her, claimed that it was an intervention of Fate, and soon spread the word: The Shield Maiden who lives in the temple can help pilgrims.

And so Fayte remained, her true calling clear, even if she never found her Patron. She soon became a champion for the mortal warlocks of Yon'Cath. As time marched forward and The Accursed King was less and less present within his city, secluding himself in the Well more and more, Fayte became a mix of a governor, lawyer, and when needed—paladin of Yon'Cath.

Running the affairs of the city filled her days with purpose. It was not all politics and policy, however. She often found herself on the battlefield alongside the Fallen Legion, trying to stem the tide of invading aberrations. Their leader, The Knight Captain LaCroix fell in love with Fayte, but the feeling was not mutual. For Fayte, their occasional encounters were merely a distraction, something that filled the void left in Dorian's absence.

She thought herself content with being ignored by her Patron until a stranger found her. Majin, they called themselves. Somehow, they knew that her pact was not reciprocal, only one-way. They knew she yearned for a Warlock's true connection. For her part, Fayte's unique gift to hear the terms of pacts has revealed

that Majin is... different. Not of this world. Not a Patron. Not a person. And yet, Majin enticed her with claims they could find the Patron that seems to ignore her. As a start, Majin reveals it is a celestial being. Without the King's knowledge, the two of them search for her source of strength. Or so Majin would have her believe...

If the Accursed King is the ruler of the Shadelands (albeit an absentee one), and the Knight Captain of the Legion the commander of its armies, then Fayte and Majin serve as the ministers that keep Yon'Cath held together. As the King's closest

advisor, Majin is aware of what the Patrons are scheming, and Fayte is there to represent the interests of the mortal Warlocks.

Within the Shadelands, whenever she meets with Majin, the Shield Maiden feels she is doing the most good, protecting the citizens of Yon'Cath at the source. Little does she know, Majin is simply waiting for her to realize she can seize the power of the Well for herself. They continue to wait, and hope, for the moment when Fayte calls on her Patron's power directly.



ROLEPLAYING HINTS

Fayte is the character that will journey through all ten chapters with the party. As The Shield Maiden, it is her job to welcome the party and be their liaison throughout Yon'Cath. She's a down-to-earth Paladin with a sworn Oath of Devotion. Tossing back a few pints at the tavern, training squires, and signing new permits for merchants are part of her daily routine.

Fayte is often looking for a distraction, anything to take her mind off the constant call of the unidentified Patron she hears in the back of her mind. Distractions can take the form of many things—adventure, battle, a fling, or even games of skill. This gives her the appearance of being enthusiastic, eager, and full of life—but cunning characters with solid insight checks can learn that she is running from something. She won't open up to anyone about her true self unless a strong relationship is formed with them.

Around The Knight Captain, she is awkwardly charmed by his robust displays of affection, but will always mention that there is no future there. Her path leads down a different direction.



The Shield Maiden is a character that is best served as a fully made NPC by the Storyteller. We suggest building a Paladin with a dabble of Warlock for her. Out of all the characters in the story, Fayte is the one who will grow and evolve with the characters. For this reason, we've taken the approach of leaving her stats and character sheet out. Her race, class features, and aesthetic style is entirely meant to be customized to each table.

Please remember you should change this character to a race, age, and atheistic that works for you: the Storyteller. We envisioned Fayte as a wood Elf with violence hiding just behind her eyes. Clad in full elven platemail, custom made with a samurai aesthetic, and decorated with badges of victory—Fayte commands attention where she goes. She often wears a smirk on her face, so many believe she finds misery funny, and her humor certainly can find light in the darkest times.

FAYTE, THE SHIELD MAIDEN

GOVERNESS OF YON'CATH

LEGENDARY ACTIONS

Fayte can take 3 legendary actions, choosing from the options below. Only one legendary action option may be used at a time, and only at the end of another creature's turn. Fayte regains used legendary actions at the start of her turn.

Command the Field: Fayte shouts words of inspiration, which can be heard up to 120 ft. away from her. Creatures friendly to Fayte that hear these words cannot have disadvantage on attack rolls until the end of their next turn.

LAIR ACTIONS

On initiative count 20 (losing initiative ties) while she is in the Scarlet Hearth, Fayte takes a lair action to cause one of the following effects; Fayte can't use the same effect twice in a row.

Sacred Favors. Fayte calls in a favor to one of her many minor Patrons, causing a creature loyal to that patron to magically appear in an unoccupied space within the lair. The creature is friendly toward Fayte, and follows her commands (no action required) to the best of its ability. The creature can be any non-legendary fey, fiend, celestial, or undead of DC 10 or lower. If Fayte uses this option again while a

Strike: Fayte makes a single weapon attack.

Deadly Charge (Costs 2 Actions). Fayte moves up to her speed and can make a single weapon attack at the end of that movement. This attack scores a critical hit on a roll of 16 - 20.

Sacred Strength (Costs 3 Actions). Fate beseeches her Patron for aid, which responds by granting her one of the following benefits until the end of her next turn.

- Resistance to all damage
- Proficiency in all saving throws
- A 13 (2d12) bonus to damage rolls made with weapon attacks.

creature is aiding her in this manner, the first creature vanishes immediately.

Holy Light. A 20 ft. radius cylinder that is 100 ft. high of daylight appears centered on a space of Fayte's choice, which lasts until the next initiative count of 20. While Fayte or creatures friendly toward her are in the area of light, they have advantage on saving throws against being paralyzed, petrified, or stunned.

Whispers of Strength. The voices of Fayte's patrons whisper to her, granting her strength in her hour of need. Fayte can choose to either regain 22 (4d10) hit points or end one spell or magical effect of 6th level or lower currently affecting her.



LaCroix

THE KNIGHT CAPTAIN

"Even death is too great a kindness..."

~ LaCroix The Knight Captain

LaCroix, the Knight Captain of the Fallen Legion, is a grim fellow. Embodying the determination a warrior from the north would expect. Even more so because the creatures he and his troop's hunt are born from Warlocks' failures. The Legion serves many roles: militia, police, vigilante, but chief among these is the hunters of creatures that cross through the veil. The more pacts that are sealed and flow through the Well of Souls, the more chaotic and unstable the separation of dimensions, so naturally; the more chances monsters find ways into Yon'Cath.

As the Shadelands' ruler, the Accursed King, grew more and more distant from his people and his Accursed Guard were ordered to protect his interests, the people of Yon'Cath were left to fend for themselves. In time, the Fallen Legion rose to prominence as protectors. Every legionnaire was once a Warlock themselves. Induction into their ranks requires that the candidate has at some point heard the demands of a Patron, but ultimately their pact was broken, and they fell out of favor. Once abandoned by their Patron—either by their own failure or events out of their control—these Warlocks were eligible to join. They are unified and driven by their shared, yet unspoken, sense of loss, and disconnection. In time, most legionnaires adhered strictly to martial pursuits while others struck new bargains with Patrons to become Warlocks once more.

For LaCroix, however, the small warm flame that drives him and sets his soul ablaze even in this frozen and barren north wasteland is love. He first laid eyes on Fayte the Shield Maiden when she saved him from death after a particularly gruesome hunt. It didn't take much to convince Fayte that Yon'Cath needed her on the battlefield just as much as in the temple. LaCroix found in himself an overflowing vigor and strength with the Shield Maiden by his side. He hoped perhaps she could feel the same, yet knew she never will.

When Fayte introduced LaCroix to Majin, the two became fast friends through a mutual enjoyment of Dragonchess. While LaCroix enjoys their company, he can't help but feel this Warlock 'outsider' is too cunning for their own good. LaCroix was once a Warlock serving an Arch Devil that was killed by a Paladin, proving that even the most intricate schemes can be halted in their tracks by the sheer unpredictability of chance. LaCroix sees a similar fate for Majin. Hopefully, Majin pays up the money they owe LaCroix before then.

While the Legion does what it can to fight back the invasions, LaCroix has some theories as to why the attacks are only increasing. Years ago, when the Shadelands were still young, LaCroix viewed Dorian the Accursed King as a just ruler, but now the Knight Captain questions his lord's sanity. Lately, many have taken notice of LaCroix no longer calling Dorian his King. Many can see how he futilely pines after the Shield Maiden, who all know once loved Dorian. Rumors abound of a plot to seize control of the throne...



ROLEPLAYING HINTS

LaCroix may be tall, stoic, and grim in the face of adversity, but is truly a passionate man. His love for The Shield Maiden is as deep as the river that runs through the Shadelands—and he shows it, in rather unconventional, out of touch ways. Feel free to be a little over the top with their one-sided romance. A flower presented on a sword. A dagger gifted with a box of chocolates. LaCroix seems focused on weaponry since battle brings him closer to Fayette and defines his life.

When it comes to Dorian, LaCroix begins the campaign as forlorn or unsure of himself. On one hand, it is his King and he is sworn to protect the kingdom at all costs. On the other, things have been getting worse for years. By the end of the story, Dorian and LaCroix will be at war.

The party represents new blood in the Shadelands and a welcome hand to protect the land. Unlike most militia, the Legion's coffers are not empty, nor wanting for magical weapons and gear. They simply lack the bodies to outfit. LaCroix won't ask the Players too many questions as long as their spells and steel cut true for his cause.

LaCroix embodies noble intentions that fall to despair.

Occasionally plagued by nightmares, the characters may find LaCroix awake most nights (and asleep early in the morning). If the party inquires, he'll only say a final choice lies ahead soon, and he hopes that he's prepared to lead. If they probe deeper (perhaps divination magic or by asking

NPCs for favors) to the point where his dreams are revealed, this is what is foretold:

"Arms were drawn as the very storm of vengeance gathered with an unrelenting might in the souls of those who survived. Mankind was indeed cast astray into the tempest of battle as this, what would be sorrowfully known as "The Great Divide", had begun. Burning with souls of white-hot fire, a legion of men charged outward, few in number but undying in resolve to take back what was lost to them and to reclaim the days and nights once more. But there was no victory, no glory for either side, just the prevailing dead growing with each encounter.

Each side fierce in conviction, refusing to retreat, equal in prowess on the battlefield which left none to tell the tale as all succumbed to their mortal wounds.

LaCroix traversed the filth-paved streets of his once beautiful home, a kingdom rotting from inside. Fearful of the peril that lies in the dark, of what lies beyond the walls, none dare to leave the sanctuary. Bells tolled the numbered dead with an almost ceaseless ring. Resources grew scarce, the dead rose in number with nowhere left to bury, sties were piled with lifeless bodies, and pestilence bred with a voracious appetite, fouling the air with the vile stench of decomposing meat.

Facing death outside the walls as well as within, LaCroix gathered the very few left that possessed a strong resolve, and for final salvation, ventured out."



Based on your party level and size, the Knight Captain's stats and abilities can change as appropriate. You can find a suggested stat block in the Appendix. These, however, are some of his key abilities that should be used in any fight with him (even if the damage dice are altered to be as appropriate to tier play).

Easily over six feet tall, LaCroix towers over many. A human with cheek length dark hair, a brown beard, and several demonic tattoos; he certainly looks like trouble. LaCroix fights with any weapon he can get his hands on and tends to wear different armor for the day—like spring fashion might draw out leather as surely as fall would draw plate mail. Regardless of armor, LaCroix always has a little extra flair hidden on him such as a small flower, or the scent of lavender oil, or a popping bright color under the black armor. In another life, he might have been a great courtier.

LACROIX, THE KNIGHT CAPTAIN

LEGION OF THE FALLEN - COMMANDER

LEGENDARY ACTIONS

LaCroix The Knight Captain can take 1 legendary action, choosing from the list below. Only one legendary action option may be used at a time, and only at the end of another creature's turn. LaCroix The Knight Captain regains used legendary actions at the start of his turn.

Impregnable - 2 uses per encounter.

The strength of The Knight Captain's armor and his personal resilience is legendary. When a Player performs a successful attack, The Knight Captain can choose to shrug it off, taking no damage and negating any effects (for spells).

Spiteful Rage - 2 uses per encounter.

When an enemy makes a successful attack against The Knight Captain, he may immediately make a melee attack against the closest foe.

LAIR ACTIONS

On initiative count 20 (losing initiative ties). This action only activates if The Knight Captain is fighting in Yonder. It does not activate on the Bridges, in the Scarlet Hearth, in Cathrach, or the outer Shadelands.

Plan For The Worst.

In his obsessive strategizing, The Knight Captain had dozens of automated crossbow traps rigged up throughout Yonder, hidden in building windows. They are activated when false cobblestones are stepped on. Each Enemy must make a DEX save (DC20) or be hit by an automated crossbow. On a failed check, the target is hit for 3d6 +10 piercing damage.





Majin

THE BETRAYER

*"And to what am I vilified for tonight? For compassion inflicted on immortal souls?
Or the field of bodies left behind?" - Majin the Betrayer*

Majin the Betrayer is a creature bold enough to openly wear their insidious title as a badge of pride. As far as it—not quite a he—knows, that's what humans do: take absurd titles and wear them as their own. Majin is not truly mortal. They are a manifestation of the Shadelands itself. Like a Patron, but not one that ever cut a deal with the Accursed King to cross over, therefore not bound by the rules of other Patrons. Instead, Majin was born from the Well of Souls due to the coalescence of eldritch energies. In a sense, Majin is the very energy that binds a Patron to its Warlock and vice versa.

After becoming self-aware, Majin studied mortals and gleaned the secrets of the multiverse from the very Patrons who contacted them. They listened for so long. But neither side of the conversations impressed them. Time and time again, Warlocks across the world wanted power and Patrons wanted something done.

For a time, driven by boredom, Majin contemplated suicide—closing the Well of Souls and severing all pacts, destroying the Accursed King's dream of the Shadelands. And they would have if it wasn't for the Shield Maiden, Fayte, and her most intriguing pact. Fayte's Patron, unlike all others, asked for nothing in return, only sent her visions, and thus never revealed itself. Majin alone knows Fayte's Patron is not a deity, but a celestial - an angel.

As Majin observed this unique one-way relationship more and more, they were struck with a fascination, which ultimately grew to their greatest desire. If Majin could silence all the Patrons, close off their flow of power through the Well, then they could easily masquerade as any of them, thus all "pacts" would be made with them, and Warlocks across the world would become their army to amass. The idea itself is horrific enough that no sane individual would attempt it. No deity would allow it. No Patron would ever approve it.

To test if this would even work, Majin began by slaying the angel and assuming the role as Patron, unbeknownst to Fayte of course. Next, they took the form of a mortal to study the pacts of Warlocks more closely. Their knowledge of Patrons quickly set them apart from other advisors and they rose through the Accursed King's ranks to become one of Dorian's most trusted advisors. Even though Majin is poised to strike, there's just one puzzle left that they cannot solve: Death.

How difficult it is to achieve the deaths of Patrons. With magic, divine power, nature magic, multiple realms, and even the direct intervention of the Gods themselves—any major overthrow would be foiled as they simply creep their way back into existence like cockroaches. And even if they killed every Patron's mortal servant, those deaths could be undone with a few waves of their masters' hands.

In time, Majin realized to take over as the de facto voice for all Patrons, they would need all sides to agree. To unknowingly agree.

That brings us to today. As the Accursed King's adviser, Majin is the entity that ensures the Patrons are kept happy with the arrangements and helps carry out their wishes. The Knight Captain and his Fallen Legion stay busy slaying anything dangerous that crosses the veil and so protects the mortals. The Shield Maiden ensures new Warlocks are taken care of in a pact. As these mortals grow in power, and the more direction they have over the great dance of Yon'Cath, the more Majin will have a chance to enact their ultimate plan: becoming the One Patron.

But it relies on the choices of others. Anything they do themselves risks being instantly divined by clerics, or undone by the Patrons' otherworldly magic. Not even the Accursed King knows who or what Majin truly is. So, quietly, Majin advises the King to alter the flow of whispers in the Well of Souls, tipping the balance

in Yon'Cath, making the Patrons hungrier and hungrier. As the fires of unrest grow, as the veil thins, the Knight Captain puts his legions more at risk. And with these added dangers, the Shield Maiden will grow tired of passively waiting for her silent Patron's aid and demand Majin open the Well so she can plead directly. Unprecedented. Forbidden.

And so Majin's victory shall be sealed.

Once the mortal request is made, Majin can answer it however they see fit. A Warlock's pact is what gives them power, after all, and the same is true on the other side. Fayte will unknowingly forge a pact with the

Well itself, with Majin. At that point, both the final thread of the Accursed King's sanity will snap and he will blast all the other immortal Patrons to bits with all the Well's energies. Or the Knight Captain will launch a final purge of all mortal Warlocks who still hear the infected whisperings of their masters. Regardless, Majin's grand manipulation will lead to death. It's in a mortal's nature after all: Kill first, investigate later. In this, Majin is certain. What mortal would choose patience, or sacrifice?

If that happens... well, maybe they'll have to take a direct hand after all.

ROLEPLAYING HINTS

You know everything but have also forgotten everything. Food is a particular curiosity, but it can't distract you from this delicate game. You need the Players to make a choice, because it is their choice helps bind the threads of fate.



Majin's chosen mortal form is that of a Tiefling. It is, after all, the form they saw most often dealing with Patrons so it was only natural they assumed that was the standard race. Nobody was around to tell them that they are some of the most distrusted creatures. Still, their blue skin is adorned with tattoos. Their long-pointed ears are pierced with adamantite and mithril jewels. Majin could certainly use some help in the fashion department, as they wear white robes with red and gold tabards almost daily. Majin has, however, taken to wearing masks as means of accessory. From

simple red sashes that hide the lower half of their face, to full-face ornate silver masks. Often, they find that people not trusting them has been working in their favor because they can predict what people will do.

Food is their weakness. A hunger that they have never known as a swirling pool of eldritch energies now rests within. The taste of spices, sweets, and various culinary delights is something alien. As such, they are almost trying out some delicious or grotesque combination of flavors.

MAJIN, THE BETRAYER

ADVISOR TO THE ACCURSED GUARD

Majin's stats are left to the imagination intentionally. These will be made clear during the story, but we've included some of their special abilities. Truthfully, Majin's abilities should never be used on the field of battle or in the story unless the party is attacking them. Their entire purpose in this Red Opera is to not

take official action; otherwise, anyone with divination magic might catch onto them. This is the reason Majin avoids using any abilities or powers they possess.

They need the party to do it for them.

LEGENDARY ACTIONS

Majin the Betrayer can take 1 legendary action from the options below. Only one legendary action option may be used at a time, and only at the end of another creature's turn. Majin the Betrayer regains spent legendary actions at the start of their turn.

Gaze of Chaos. Ranged spell attack: +14 to hit. Range 60 ft., any number of creatures of Majin's choice that they can see within range. Hit: 14 (4d6) acid, cold, fire, lightning, or thunder damage (Majin's choice).

Usurp Pact (Costs 2 Actions). Majin curses a creature they can see within 120 ft. that has made a pact with an otherworldly patron (such as a Warlock). The target must succeed on a DC 22 Charisma saving throw or be unable to use any features, spells, or actions

granted by that patron for as long as it remains cursed. At the end of each of its turns, an affected creature can repeat the saving throw, ending the effect on a success.

Pact Boon (Costs 2 Actions). Majin grants a creature they can see within 120 ft. a powerful pact boon, granting it one of the following benefits until Majin chooses to revoke it.

- Proficiency bonus increases by 1
- Proficiency in a saving throw of Majin's choice.
- Proficiency in two skills of Majin's choice.
- 30 hit point increase to target's hit point maximum.

This effect on a creature immediately ends if that creature benefits from this action again.

LAIR ACTIONS

On initiative count 20 (losing initiative ties) so long as they are within the Well of Souls, Majin takes a lair action to cause one of the following effects.

Bend Reality. Majin creates a non-magical object or structure whose dimensions cannot exceed a 20 ft. cube of space. The creation appears in an unoccupied space within the lair, and cannot have an AC greater than 18 or more than 200 hit points. This creation vanishes if Majin uses this effect again.

Waltz of the Elements. Majin opens a rift of elemental power, which appears as a 30 ft. radius sphere of energy centered on a point within the lair. When the rift appears, creatures in the affected area must succeed on a DC 22 Dexterity saving throw or take 35 (10d6) acid, cold, fire, lightning, or thunder damage (Majin's choice).





Yon' Cath

THE DUAL CITY

"Where else in the world can you stand at the edge of reality and stare directly into the maw of insanity?" -Dorian The Accursed King

Deep within the northern reaches of the Shadelands, the veil between our world and the ethereal grows sheer. It is here that the habitable tundra comes to an abrupt end at a low ridgeline of jagged dark rock stretching from east to west. North of this ridge, a frigid black sea extends beyond the horizon. Countless pillars of dark ice rise from the inky depths. At one point along the coast, the water pierces the jagged rocks and forms a gently winding river known as the Obsidian Rush. It is said you can see stars reflected in the pitch-black water which does not exist in the sky above.

Centuries ago, lands bordering the Rush were found to be especially attuned with the realms of the Shadowfell and the Feywild. Ambitious adventurers followed the rumors and came to stake their claim, and over time, small settlements emerged on either side of the river. West of the river, the village of Yonder flourished, its original denizens finding themselves drawn toward the beauty and whimsy of the Fey. Yonder folk were no strangers to treachery and mischief. East of the river, the town of Cathrach thrived. And while ruthless ambition flowed freely, so too did hope for a world made better.

Would-be Warlocks hungry for power, magic, adventure, and plain old freedom, continued to find their way north. Summoned unknowingly by the invisible hand of their Patrons and the growing power beneath the northern sea (the place that would one day be the Well of Souls). The forests to the south provided much-needed isolation, and within those clusters of ancient trees, creatures of the Fey made new homes away from home. As more and more settlers flooded north to this bastion for warlocks, a defense force became needed. The Accursed mercenary company filled that role, and its leader Dorian would eventually rule as king.

And so, in the span of a few short generations, these modest hamlets developed into towering cities. Clusters of squat huts became a forest of black spires raking the sky. If not for the river, it would have been impossible to tell where Yonder ended and Cathrach began. Folks gave up trying to discern between the two and started calling the combined metropolis Yon' Cath.

But while it might seem the city is one, unified entity, the civil divide between the cities runs as deep as the depths of the Obsidian Rush. On the western bank, The Knight Captain and his Legion watch over the people of Yonder. On the eastern bank, The Accursed King cradles Cathrach in his palm.

Because Yon' Cath plays the happy host to every manner of Warlock, the air itself practically sizzles with arcane tension. Imps, sprites, fairies, and familiars of all shapes and sizes abound in the streets (and in the air just over your heads)! In the Mead Halls of Yonder, adventurers sing songs while toasting each other's endeavors. In the citadels of Cathrach, blood pacts are forged in pursuit of unfathomable power.

The perpetually damp stone of the city streets glows with reflections of the ever-present Aurora in the night sky, the Elemental Dance. The air feels thick and heavy with mystical potential. Ethereal whispers linger around every corner. Unnatural shadows lurk in every alley. Death is frequent and a common resolution in disputes between citizens. Mortal blood holds little value, save for the appeasement of otherworldly beings.

Yonder and Cathrach are joined by three great bridges: Patron's Pass, Stone Leg, and Black Span. Each one at least a quarter-mile long and one hundred yards wide. These bridges act as the de facto neutral zones for Yon' Cath. Hundreds of tents clog the stone causeways, forming makeshift bazaars of honest merchants and

devious swindlers. Those with adventurous taste buds can peruse the culinary offerings from dozens of far-flung cultures among the white tents of Savory Lane on the middle bridge, Stone Leg. Sometimes a magic user requires an item so obscure, not a single city merchant will stock it. It is then that they will browse the wares of the arcane dealers on the northern bridge, Black Span.

The lengths of rope and wooden planks that connect the gaps between bridges are known collectively as The Stretches. They allow inter-bridge travel without having to enter either city. But attempt to cross these at your own risk, for the wood is rotted, the ropes are frayed, and it's all held together with little more than hope and prayer. Many who fall into the river are lost, and those who do emerge find themselves forever haunted with visions of their own grisly deaths.

Like a barbed spear piercing and tearing the skidding clouds, the Impossible Spire casts a long shadow over the heart of Cathrach. Within this stronghold, The Accursed King holds his court, gathering the most influential subjects in the Shadelands to ensure their fealty. From the Spire, he marshals patrols of Accursed Guard to protect his interests in Cathrach, and within his personal chambers, he alone plots the bloody machinations that will hold all the Shadelands together.

A stark contrast to the jagged black towers that make up so much of the dual city's skyline, The Gilded Gallery is The Knight Captain's attempt at polishing Yon'Cath's image. This alehouse is whitewashed stone trimmed with gold, and it serves as the center of Yonder's affairs. The interior is filled with bronze sculptures and sparkling fountains. It is also the favored hang-out location for Iorfaan Shimbaac, the hulking brass Dragonborn who runs the muscle-for-hire Brute's Guild. He and The Knight Captain have mutual respect and understanding to stay out of each other's way.

The enormous clock tower, Maghoro's Perch, looms high over the Rush's western riverbank. But don't expect to find any gears behind the shiny black stone. This clock is powered by otherworldly means.

Warlocks looking to alter their fate can visit The Cracked Pact. The proprietor, Khouryn Brickfoot, is a dwarf woman of indiscernible age and origin. Staring down customers from behind opaque black spectacles, forever chewing on an unlit cigar, Khouryn offers to buy out their Patron's deal or even swap it

for another. But buyer beware: Neither Khouryn nor her establishment holds any responsibility for retribution meted out by a scorned Patron.

Atheneum Arcana holds the unique honor of being widely considered the most dangerous library in the known world. Mimic infestations are common. Ghosts are plentiful. Sentient books looking to cause mischief to any soul who dares crack their spine abound. Some books are written so vividly, that their contents spill into reality. Knowledge seekers are advised to enter at their own risk.

Familiars looking to blow off steam can find refuge in The Little Helper, a Cathrach watering hole that caters specifically to those invaluable, yet oft underappreciated creatures.

At the southern edge of Yon'Cath, the Obsidian Rush empties into a vast, deep basin of pitch-black water, the entirety of it surrounding the dual-city's most renowned structure: The Scarlet Hearth. Vines of blood-red ivy cling to the ziggurat's white stone. The Patron's Pass bridge branches to the front gate, the only method of entry. Below, the temple is encircled by a spider web of bottomless fissures that suck the waters of the Rush down into unexplored subterranean channels.

All around these, spears of black stone stab skyward. Shadelands historians believe these geological scars formed from so much diverse and unnatural power concentrating in such a relatively small location. Some refer to the Scarlet Hearth as the Patron's Pantheon. Within its chambers, you can find all manners of otherworldly beings looking to offer power in exchange for a piece of your soul.

The least famous structure in Yon'Cath is quite possibly the most important. North of the cities, an unseen temple called Rem Exius lies within the reflection of the still black waters, existing only between physical planes. Within this place lies the immensely powerful and eternally misunderstood Well of Souls. Only those the Well has deemed worthy have ever found it.

Should the Well deem you worthy, you would do well to keep your wits about yourself, for this place has no shortage of trials, traps, and monsters that have wandered its labyrinthine halls for an age, eager to prey on the weak and unsuspecting.

Of course, should you happen to find yourself trapped inside, you will have at least one way out. It's the same



way out of any danger you may find in all the Shadelands. You just need to be open to deal. Because waiting in every corner, lurking down every alley, hiding behind every shadow in Yon'Cath, ambitious Patrons seek their next servant. All you need to do is ask.

Due to the abundance of Patrons and the amplified connections forged in their pacts, Yon'Cath is primarily a haven for Warlocks. But they aren't the only class of adventurers that can thrive in the Shadelands. Rogues have also carved (pun very much intended) a substantial niche for themselves, especially along the Bridges. And you will find plenty of Bards, Druids, Rangers, and Barbarians living amiably among them. Clerics do all they can to avoid this place, and not a single monk can be found within the city limits. In the opinion of Sorcerers, if Yon'Cath had a flavor, it'd be bitter lemons. Wizards will occasionally pass through in the course of some arcane pursuit, though they best be prepared to receive plenty of ribbing at their own expense.

Even those outsiders who detest the place will find the inherent power within too alluring to ignore. But while Warlocks make up the majority of the population, make no mistake...

Yon'Cath does not belong to the Warlocks.

It belongs to the Archfey, the Fiends, the Old Ones, the Undying, and the Celestials. Yon'Cath is the Patron's City.



YON'CATH: THE DUAL CITY



Well of souls

Impossible Spire

The Cracked Pact

Glass Manor

Black Span

Library

Maghoro's Perch

*The Gilded Gallery
(Knight Captain's Stronghold)*

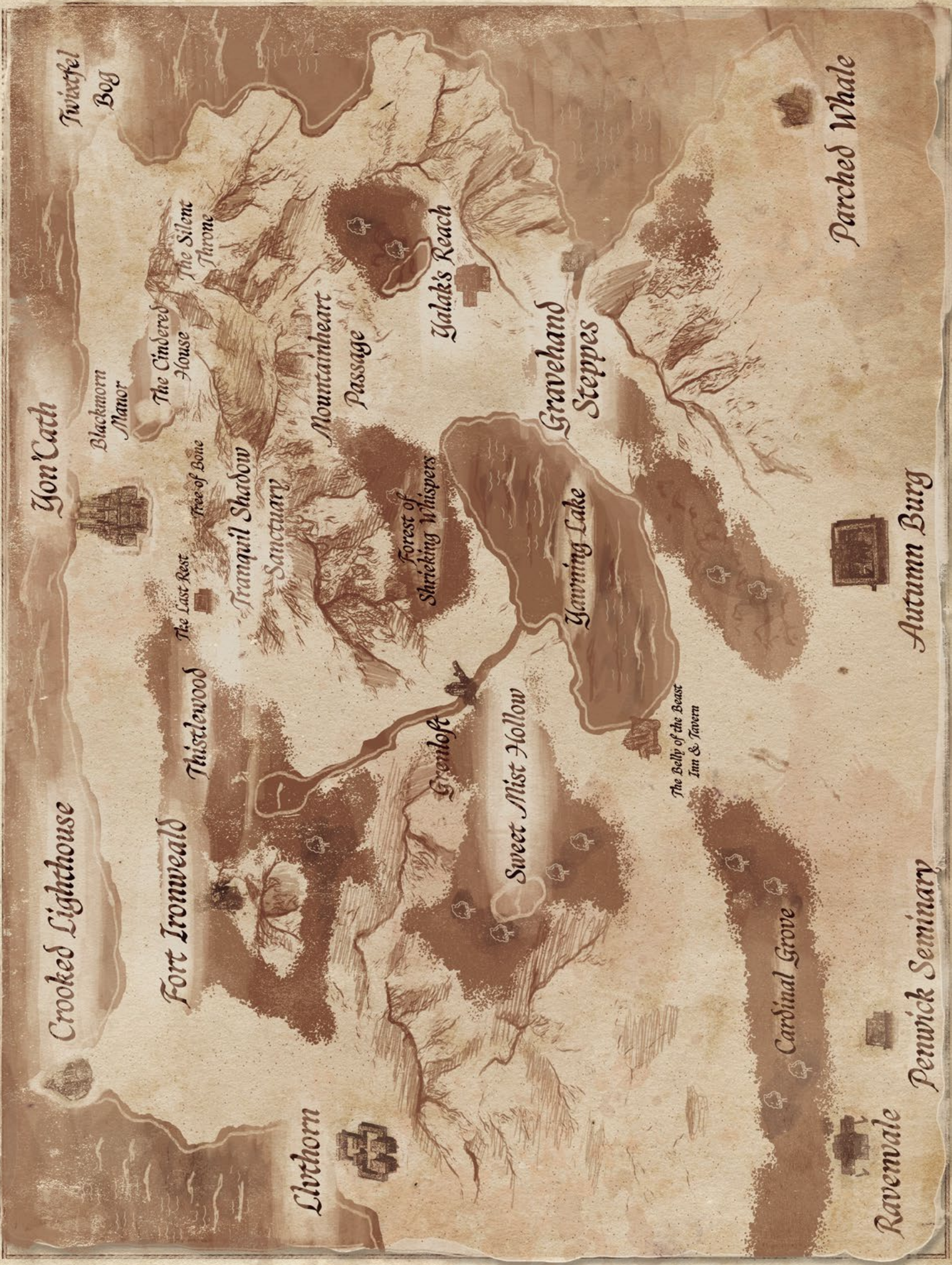
The Little Helper

Stone Leg

*Hole in the Wall
Tavern*

Patron's pass

Scarlet Hearth



Yon' Cath

Blackmorn Manor

The Cindere House

The Last Rest

Thistlewood

Fort Ironweald

Clvthorn

Tranquil Shadow Sanctuary

Mountainheart Passage

Forest of Shrieking Whispers

Grenloft

Sweet Mist Hollow

Gravehand Steppes

Yawning Lake

The Belly of the Beast Inn & Tavern

Cardinal Grove

Ravenvale

Twixfel Bog

The Silent Throne

Yalak's Reach

Parched Whale

Autumn Burg

Penwick Seminary

Crooked Lighthouse





WELL OF SOULS

Portal to Yon' Cath

Material Planes

Ocean Surface

White Stone StairCase

Rem Exius

Outer Realms

ShadowFell

Feywild

Well of Souls

Majin's Mural

Negative Planes?

Elemental Planes

Positive Planes?



SCARLET HEARTH

*Stairss Leading
Down*

Cereomonal Altar

Upper Floor

Front Lobby

Patrons Chamber

Black Pool of Water

Lower Floor



Cuisine of the Shadelands

"No wonder most adventurers crave the tavern. Even I'd wake myself from the dead for this spiced wine." – Majin The Betrayer

Do not let the location of the Shadelands fool you. Although the Shadelands are in a place that may be remote and traditionally so cold as to be unsuitable for raising crops and animals, the thin veil between planes allows them to not only thrive but to flourish. For half of the year, the Shadelands are a lush and lavish environment, a perfect place to grow a wide variety of colorful fruits, vegetables, spices, and livestock. This can be attributed to the qualities of the Feywild that flow into the Shadelands during the warmer months.

Farmers who live on and cultivate the land produce a bountiful variety of flavors and colors each year at harvest time. In addition to the locally grown seasonal produce, powerful Warlocks and Druids traverse the planes all year long providing a steady stream of imported ingredients. This constantly abundant supply of a wide range of culinary trade items has provided many opportunities for those who seek to profit from preparing cuisine, find pleasure in dining on luxurious dishes or simply enjoy imbibing intoxicating beverages.

Throughout the dual city of Yon'Cath, one will find many dining halls. It is nearly impossible to ignore the tantalizing smells of sweet pastries, savory meats, and exotic spices as one passes near these establishments. Likewise, when traveling on one of the three bridges one cannot help but be taken hostage by the feast for the senses that the open-air markets provide.

Bright yellow, green, and orange tropical fruits are large and supple, emitting sweet smells that are sometimes tinged with appealingly tangy notes. Deep green and dark purple vegetables are dense and healthy with thick leaves that pleasantly smell of a fresh bouquet of earthy minerals from rich, fertile soils. Sizzling sounds can be heard as a variety of meats are steamed, smoked, and grilled, filling the air in front of some shops with a cloudy haze that burns the eyes and awakens the desire to consume flesh. A near-infinite selection of spices representing every terrestrial and many interplanar varieties send the olfactory senses into a dizzying dance of pleasure and excitement.

Indeed, many of the inhabitants of the Shadelands take part in the decadent offerings of the markets and

dining halls of Yon'Cath. The cuisine upon which one dines is often considered a mark of distinction for the most powerful and influential members of Yon'Cath society. It is widely known that even the Patrons themselves are not above the temptations of a decadent and delicious dining experience. In fact, some rites and rituals involve the preparation and sacrificial offering of particular delicacies that are known to be acceptable to certain Patrons to earn their favor.

A Feast For Gods

You may choose to allow players to create or purchase dishes and burn them as offerings at the Scarlet Hearth. You may reward these players by giving them temporary stat bonuses to Charisma or by giving them the ability to use a Warlock spell of your choice once. If a player makes this type of offering five times or more, consider creating a scenario in which they are personally contacted by a Patron, who thanks them for their offerings and offers to make a deal with them that could advance the storyline.

Druid Groves

Some farms are not... quite farms; rather they are massive enchanted groves that are tended by druids who are favored with Patrons that reside in the Feywild. These groves appear to be nothing more than wild forests to the untrained eye, but within these dense forests, one would find a wide variety of plants, all of which are edible.

Fruits like tomatoes, pineapples, citrus, melons, and berries grow abundantly in the groves. Many vegetables like squash, beans, and cruciferous also grow plentifully in these food forests. The rich soil of such druid-tended slices of paradise is perfect for root and bulb based plants like potatoes, carrots, radish, garlic, ginger, turmeric, and onions. The ground is even littered with herbs

such as cilantro, oregano, rosemary, basil, dill, sage, parsley, mint, and thyme.

Though produce from the groves is sold throughout the Shadelands and beyond, the land upon which the groves reside is sacred to the druids and are jealously guarded.

One could live forever from the sustenance provided by the grove, but the druids would rather kill trespassers in sacrifice to their fey Patrons. Wild animals are protected and allowed to eat freely in the grove, however, it is common for humanoids that the druids find within their sacred groves to have their blood mixed into the soil, their organs hung from the trees and their bones ground up and sprinkled through the forest.

The Vineyards

Some locations in the Shadelands host interplanar portals to the Shadowfell and Feywild to aid in the production of food and beverages. One such location is the Earth and Bone Vineyard and Winery located in the Shadelands countryside.

At Earth and Bone, there is a portal to the Shadowfell from which Warlocks who are skilled in the art of necromancy summon skeletal minions to perform labor in the vineyards. The vineyards are through another portal that leads to a region in the Feywild featuring an eternally sunny summer climate with the perfect amount of rain every night. This weather accompanied by the enchantments around the vineyard helps to produce the highest quality muscat and merlot grapes all year long and at a rapid rate. The skeletal minions harvest the grapes and bring them back to the Shadelands to be processed into sweet Moscato and dry merlot wines.

These wines are then teleported from the winery into the cellar of the high-end Blood of the Goat Tavern in Yon'Cath, where they are magically aged and served to guests; the Moscato is paired with soft goat cheese and the merlot with dark chocolate. Blood of the Goat Tavern is also known for the dark and broody chamber music that guests enjoy as they sip their wine. It is a rather exclusive venue that is attended by nobles and influential members of Yon'Cath society and outsiders are not easily granted access to Blood of the Goat Tavern.

Seafood and Fishing

Though one might not normally associate the northern region around the Shadelands as a prime location for procuring seafood for consumption, there is

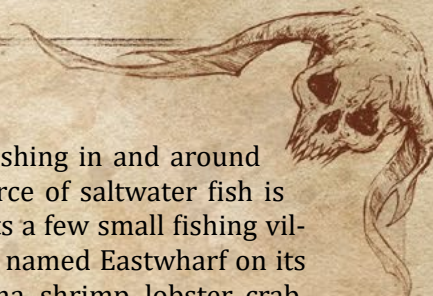
a rich cultural history of fishing in and around the area. The primary source of saltwater fish is the eastern sea, which hosts a few small fishing villages and a single port city named Eastwharf on its shores. Salmon, halibut, tuna, shrimp, lobster, crab, mussels, oysters, and squid are among the most commonly found seafood species in the eastern sea.

The inhabitants of Eastwharf are superstitious and maintain many unique rituals. It is customary for every fishing excursion to include at least one Warlock under the patronage of an entity known as 'The Bearded One Who Twitches.' The duty placed upon this Warlock is to build a small human effigy from driftwood and seaweed, imbue it with illusion magic to make it appear alive, recite an incantation requesting protection for the vessel and crew, then throw the effigy into the sea on the first day of the fishing excursion. This is just one of the many unique practices of the fishermen of Eastwharf.

Rumors of missing fishermen and monstrous creatures lurking in the depths of the eastern sea often spread through the Shadelands, but it is well known that the eastern sea is a much safer fishing location than the Nameless Black Sea to the north, which many fishermen throughout the Shadelands refer to as "The frigid black, from whence ye may not back." However, fishermen who dare brave the waters of the northern sea primarily return with meat from the large tentacles of a species of fish-like amphibian aberrations that can be found in the inky depths of the black northern sea.

Most fishing boats in the Shadelands are equipped with barrels of preservation, which are magically crafted to keep their contents as fresh as the moment they were placed within. There are portals in the city of Eastwharf that teleport those who enter into the Feywild, where much of the seafood is seasoned with special herbs that only grow there. From the Feywild, the fish and other ingredients are taken through another portal that leads straight to the city of Yon'Cath where these highly valuable trade items are transported throughout the city.

Yon'Cath's dining halls serve many dishes that include these seafood ingredients. Steamed crab, baked fish, boiled lobster, fried scallops, and even raw fish wrapped in seaweed with rice and various vegetables and sauces can be found among the delicacies in the city. Considered by many of the Yon'Cath well-to-do as the best spot in town for fine cuisine, there is one dining hall that specializes in



seafood produce; The Tentacular Aberrant. The sigil of The Tentacular Aberrant is widely recognized throughout the Shadelands and contains a circular crest that displays a tentacled aberration flanked by two olive leaf branches. Unbeknownst to most, The Tentacular Aberrant is the meeting place of a secret cabal of very powerful necromancers who, in addition to their love of seafood, share many common goals for the future of Yon'Cath. They use the sigil of The Tentacular Aberrant printed in dark purple on a field of black to identify each other.



FESTIVALS AND FEASTS

The Day of Mourning

During the festival known as The Day of Mourning, solemn magic fills the street. Four tolls of a bell from each corner of the city echo at dawn. Snowflakes and a brisk chill lightly dust the cobblestone streets which absorb the stain of sin from the city--blood-stained patches appear over the fresh snow like tiny roses blooming in winter.

Chimes waft through bleak air and silken umbral tapestries gently drift, mimicking spirits dancing from death to beyond the midnight sky. In shambled costumes, tributes to the dead are held. Some bind their eyes until the following dawn with a rough, black cloth called a "mourning band" while others adorn chimes to imitate the bell tolls. Ceremonial dances are held in succession at the three locations where Dorian's men put their former compatriots to the sword. At the end of each commemoration, the dancers lay upon the ice-covered ground to give up the warmth of life, in hopes that the dead below may feel.

Practical folk fasten leather black bands around their belt as they set out for the day's labors, acknowledging death, though still needing to make a living.

There are no feasts on the day of mourning. Instead, many of those who observe this holiday engage in ritual fasting to be closer to the dead, who can no longer eat. Others only allow themselves plain meats with no seasonings and drink only water. It is considered disrespectful to the dead to drink alcohol or indulge in flavorful meals on The Day of Mourning.

Though rare and not commonly practiced anymore, the ritual consumption of the flesh from recently deceased members of the community was heavily associated with The Day of Mourning when the festival

was still new. Some of the older families of Yon'Cath still engage in these cannibalistic rites in the privacy of their own homes. It is said that the act of eating the flesh of the dead could return the deceased to life by becoming a part of the person who consumed them. To those who still practice this ritual, it is considered the highest respect one could pay to the dead.

At the end of The Day of Mourning, many citizens of Yon'Cath anoint themselves in the oils and spices that are traditionally used to treat the corpses of the dead. This is done in the belief that on this night they will sleep among the dead. There are two purposes for this; they believe that visiting the realm of the dead for one night will prevent them from meeting their true death in the coming year and because they believe it will please the most powerful Patrons of the Shadowfell, who often visit them through magical visions in their dreams on this night.

Blessed Day of Black Ash

Unknown to the common folk, this is a day of unspoken truce. Shedding armor in the cover of night, soldiers of warring kingdoms retire into the fleeting hours whilst peasants and farmers lay tools of every manner by logs. Drink and laughter herald the harvest's end as the crackle of campfires glitter on the starless night horizon.

Living in the passing moments as nameless countrymen unbeknownst to either Dorian or LaCroix, deadly warriors of both kingdoms fade into the drunken gladness of celebration, taking in the ease and leisure of a harvest's end they took no part in. Identified only by the black sediment streaks covering scars of war, to the untrained seen only as dirt from the day's final labor; warriors catch the occasional glance from across the flames. A nod is exchanged between the two. This hidden secular holiday has been cherished by both reluctant sides for untold years.

RECIPIES OF THE SHADELANDS

"Do you know how many times LaCroix has tried to poison me with his paltry excuse for cooking? At least two, and that's one more than the last friend."

— Dorian, The Accursed King

Contained below are some common meals and tasty beverages found within the halls of the Yon'Cath. However, one should always be warned: the quality of the food is determined by the skill of the chef. While serving your player's suspicious food (or vice versa) might fall into the category of amusement - make sure to sacrifice a taste-tester before actually trying these dishes.

Sorcerer's Coda - By Olivia Kizior

"We would love to muddle actual Sorcerers up and drink their blood... but they tend to taste like sparkles."

Rei'zel

- 8 Maraschino Cherries
- 1 Cup Ice
- 1 oz. Peach Vodka
- 3/4 oz. Cranberry Juice
- 1 oz. Simple Syrup
- 1/4 oz. Lemon Juice
- 1 oz. Clear Brandy
- 1 1/2 oz. Sparkling Sake
- 1 1/2 oz. KINKY Blue Liqueur

Muddle Maraschino Cherries in a glass. Add Ice, Peach Vodka, Cranberry Juice, Simple Syrup, Brandy, and Blue liqueur into the shaker. Shake furiously until hands are as cold as winter snow. Pour unstrained contents into glass and top with Sparkling Sake. Stir gently before serving to your favorite patron.

Sunrise Pie

"Time for breakfast, wee ones. Can't go around harvesting the souls of the damned on an empty stomach, now can we?"

Nana Goff

- Pie Crust
- 5 eggs
- 1 lb. pork sausage
- 5 cups frozen, shredded potatoes
- 2 cups shredded cheese
- 1/2 cup milk

1. Heat the oven to 425°F and take the pie crust out of the icebox. Coat a pie dish with oil or cooking spray. Fully cook sausage in a large skillet.
2. Add potatoes to the skillet. Cook 5 to 8 minutes, until potatoes are slightly soft. Remove from heat and stir in cheese.
3. Beat eggs in a large mixing bowl. Add the milk and blend. Set aside 1 tablespoon egg mixture. Add potato, sausage, and cheese mixture to the bowl and mix it all together. Spoon the filling into the pie pan.
4. Lay pie crust over the filling, folding over the edges, and pressing them to the dish with a fork. Cut multiple slits in the top of the crust. Brush the crust with the tablespoon of eggs you set aside.
5. Bake for 25 minutes. Then cover the pie with foil to prevent overcooking the crust and bake for an additional 15 minutes. Remove from oven to cool. Enjoy.

Black Bean Soup and Rice

"When the Impossible Spire's meat locker came down with an infestation of Spoil-tongue Squirmlings, I had to get creative in thinking up a hearty yet vegetarian meal for his lordship."

Griselda Grubsmith, Chef Arcanist

- 2 cans of black beans
 - 2 tablespoons of olive oil
 - 1 small onion
 - 1-2 jalapeños
 - 3 garlic cloves, minced
 - salt and pepper
 - 2 teaspoons chili powder
 - 1 teaspoon cumin
 - 3-4 cups vegetable broth
 - Rice
 - 1 Lime
 - Cilantro
 - (Optional Toppings) Avocado, Tomato, Tortilla Chips
1. Heat oil in a soup pot over medium heat. Dice onion and jalapeños and add to the pot. Season with salt and pepper. Sauté until onions are softened, about 8 minutes.
 2. Add minced garlic, chili powder, and cumin. Sauté another 1-2 minutes.
 3. Drain, but don't rinse, the black beans, and then add to the pot. Add vegetable broth and turn the

heat up to bring the pot to a boil. Then reduce again to medium-low and simmer for 10 minutes.

4. Cook the rice and then add the juice of one lime and chopped cilantro to preference.
5. Spoon rice into a wide bowl and then pour soup over it. Add optional toppings of your choice. Enjoy.

Hearth Pasta Bake

"I need something to soak up all this wine in my belly! Chef! Make me something delicious... and filling... and meaty... and cheesy... and did I mention it should be delicious?!"

Baron Urbic Silkstone of Lluthorn

- 1 box of penne or mostaccioli noodles
- 1 lb of ground beef
- Tomato sauce
- Shredded Mozzarella cheese
- Seasoning (oregano, thyme, rosemary, sage)
- Tomatoes
- Red or green bell pepper

1. Heat oven to 400°F. Cook ground beef in a skillet and add seasoning. Bring a pot of water to boil and cook noodles.
2. Dice tomatoes and bell peppers and add to beef in skillet.
3. Add pasta to a glass baking dish. Stir in some of the cheese. Then add beef and vegetable mixture. Pour tomato sauce over it. Layer more cheese across the top.
4. Bake for 25 minutes. Then cover with foil to prevent cheese on top from burning and bake an additional 15-20 minutes. Enjoy.

Ravenvale Spiced Apples

"Know why every villain always eats apples? Because they make you look cocky. Cook this though, and you'll get henchmen." Cordelia, General of the Shadelands

- 4 Apples
 - 1 cup rolled oats
 - ¼ cup brown sugar
 - 1 teaspoon ground cinnamon
 - Pureed Blackberries
 - (optional) Chocolate Cream Liqueur
1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees F (175 degrees C).

2. Hollow out the top and center core of each apple making a large well in the center of the apple as if carving out the heart of a foe.
3. Arrange apples on a rimmed baking sheet.
4. Mix oats, brown sugar, pureed blackberries, and cinnamon in a bowl; cut in butter and mix until everything is combined. Spoon ¼ of the oat mixture into each apple. (Mix ½ teaspoon of Chocolate cream liqueur in as option). Offer any leftovers as a sacrifice to the gods.
5. Bake in the preheated oven until the apples are tender and filling is bubbling, which should be about 30 minutes.

Firebrand Spiced Wine

"It's best served as a single bottle per person, but I've gone through a few cases myself for breakfast. It's noon somewhere."
Alios, Guildmaster

- Red Wine (1 bottle) – Cabernet Sauvignon
- 2 cups apple cider
- ¼ cup honey
- 1 orange (juiced)
- 5 whole cloves
- 2 cinnamon sticks
- 1 whole star anise
- ¼ cup brandy
- Garnish with orange slices

Pour all contents into a larger container and stir gently. You can serve either warmed or chilled based on your preference or the time of year.

Alchemist Sour Tingle

"When dabbling in the courts, sometimes you need to LOOK like you are drinking. Who says your skin can't tingle while everyone else gets shitfaced." Xael, Noble

- 1 Heaping Tablespoon Citrulline Malate (L-Citrulline DL-Malate 2:1)
- 2 Teaspoons Beta-Alanine
- 1 full squeezed lime
- 5 to 10 muddled mint leaves
- Ice to taste

Add the above ingredients to a cocktail, highball, or tall glass. You will first add a little sparkling/tonic water to the mix and stir to dissolve the powder and crystals to make a solution (does not need to be entirely dissolved) and then add the sparkling/tonic

water to fill. Garnish with additional lime juice on top and mint spring for decoration (and good breath). If the court meeting goes south, add in 1-2 shots of Gin.

Dwarven Breakfast

"Look, don't judge me. Dwarves know their way around the kitchen." Araqwa, Patron of Beverages

- Muddle half an apple
- ½ oz of lemon juice
- 2 oz of rum
- ½ oz of honey syrup
- ½ oz of ginger syrup
- One bar spoon of orange flower water
- One full egg

Wait, you didn't think this was actually food, did you? Shake this with ice once, remove the ice, and shake again for extra foam that will help with beard shaving.

Legionnaire's sweet, spicy nuts.

"The name is misleading, but what else are we to call them? They are sweet-spicy nuts that almost every legionnaire keeps with them for long journeys!"

LaCroix, Knight Captain

- 6 cups of mixed nuts (cashews, hazelnuts, and almonds preferred)
- ¼ cup pure honey
- 2 tbsp grapeseed oil
- 2 tbsp mixed herbs (sage and rosemary, but thyme or turmeric is fine)
- ¼ tsp of cayenne pepper.
- Salt and freshly ground pepper to taste.

1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees F
2. Toss nuts in honey, oil, and spices. Spread nuts on a baking sheet and bake for 15 minutes.
3. Stir occasionally until the nuts are lightly browned. Season with salt and pepper tossing in a bowl until cooled.
4. Will last for about 2 weeks in a closed container or 1 day in the hands of a hungry soldier.

Sneaky Spring

"Ah, the dangers of alcohol. Sometimes it tastes like a fresh spring... Or orange cough syrup. People have different comparisons, I just make another glass."

Kaifain Xiltyn

- Blood Orange Gin
- 1-2 shots of Vodka
- Cranberry juice
- Lemonade
- Lemon Juice or ½ a lemon

Put as much of the Gin in as you wish, or as the room requires. Add one or two shots of vodka, but carefully, it does bite back. Afterward, add a splash of cranberry juice and top the rest with lemonade, adding a few drops of lemon juice, or squeeze half a lemon.





P



M

Patrons

"How does it feel to nip at the heels of divinity, only to be left begging for table scraps?" -Dorian The Accursed King

Power and divinity are not the same. A God holds rank and sway over an aspect of the Universe. Love, Life, Death, or even the very elements fall under a deity's reign. From their gilded cages, they parcel out power that is not theirs, but rather their domains to those who worship them. A weak God can still allow Clerics across an empire to siphon off power from their domain. The more followers who pray to a God, the stronger grasp they have upon the reigns of the domain. Yet to replace a god, one merely needs to undertake a crusade to eliminate their followers. To make them forgotten. Doing so does not remove love from all humans, or defeat the very concept of death—but might create an opening for someone else to take the reins of the Domain or even a portion of it.

Patrons couldn't care less.

Patrons are creatures who have power inherently. Perhaps they found a secret of the universe, or are a creature so cosmic and unknowable that they've left behind such petty things as domains. Patrons can be champions of realms who are on the up-and-up, or devils that steal their power from the souls of others. The list is eternal. What they all share in common, however, is they need agents in the world to do their bidding and do not have a domain's power to pass out like candy. They must use their own energies.

This means taking on a Warlock to grant them power has a cost. It doesn't matter how well-intentioned or good a Patron is, they still need their Warlocks to follow through with a task. The agreements, even lightly made ones, bind their souls together in a cosmic agreeance. Power and secrets, for service and deeds. Sometimes it's would-be-Warlocks who journey the world seeking the hidden corners to find a Patron, and other times Patrons spend centuries cultivating entire lineages of protégés. It's no surprise that devils delight in making such pacts to inflict evil upon the world, but at times even those Patrons may see themselves as the hero. No matter what form it takes, a Patron is always looking for a favor in return, and in the Shadelands, they've found a kingdom that facilitates such deals.

The Well of Souls, nestled within the Shadelands, serves as a conduit of energies for Pacts. As the number of Warlocks across the Planes have risen, it self-manifested from unfulfilled deals and energy that had nowhere to return. Perhaps the Patron and Warlock both met unfortunate ends at the same time. In this, the energy of the Pact, with nowhere left to go, started to pool between Planes. As eons passed, those very energies started flowing through Rem Exius and the Well, taking the path of least resistance. In even further time, Majin the Betrayer, became self-aware from these very energies, born from the needs and desires of Warlocks and Patrons both. And so, in the Shadelands, after Dorian, Fayte, and Lacroix helped settle the terrain, Patrons were soon to follow. Eager to have a city where deals were easier to forge and eager to have a city where they too, could harvest power.

Because power is what every Patron needs, no matter their alignment. This act of favor exchange has seeped into every aspect of Shadelands culture. From the high courts of the King, down to merchants on the three bridges who will take favors and debts instead of coin. Patrons grant Warlock's direct power in exchange for favors, and we believe there is no reason that debt cannot be traded and dealt with.

Imagine a young Warlock, caught in a deal with a devil to offer a sacrifice in exchange for mentorship. After a few adventures, that Warlock has failed to deliver anything of value or even failed to learn a lesson the devil sought to teach. That very devil may find himself coming to the Shadelands to sell off the useless debt he's made, hoping some other Patron might find value. The devil, in this case, has lost his power and energy, his investment into the Warlock was wasted, but perhaps he can trade any remaining debts to another for something useful.

It's important to remember as a Storyteller that you don't remove your player's agency in this. Characters like Fayte and the Governess's office serve to advocate for the Warlocks after all. Challenging the deal or even

finding ways to break the pact altogether, are services that can be bartered for and provide endless roleplaying opportunities.

The Well of Souls

In the Shadelands, the Well of Souls serves as a conduit for Pacts and favors. Every deal made between a Patron and a would-be-Warlock (even temporary one) flows through the Well. The transfer of power links the two parties together on a cosmic scale. While Patrons can die, and Warlocks can forsake their oaths, that energy still swirls around in the Well just waiting to be used. When Pacts and favors are traded, it is this energy that is truly being bartered. A dead Patron's unfulfilled power can be scooped up by another if the Warlock seeks out a new one since one soul still exists.

If your campaign doesn't use a concept like the Well of Souls, feel free to reimagine the idea using Blood Contracts, or old occult scribblings to bind parties together. The goal is to ensure that both parties have a vested interest in their deals and upholding their contracts—even if one side was duped or forced into it.

Becoming A Patron

So, what does it take to become a Patron? This question is almost impossible to answer given their variety. At their core, a Patron is something that has the power to give and found the ethereal means in which to do it. They can come from Arcane, Fey, Shadowfell, Astral, or even things yet unknown. The only limits are the Storyteller's imagination. A God can indeed offer up some of their own power to become a Patron, but why would they? They have foresight over a domain and can make Clerics far easier. Yet perhaps such things have happened in the history books.

What we do know, however, is a Patron needs three things: Power, the means to transfer said power, and a desire to do so. The first is the hardest to come by. A player-character becoming a Patron would need to ascend to a high enough level (we advise level 20), but perhaps inborn energy is enough. Like a Dryad in the Feywild or an Elemental. Wizards, Liches, Sorcerers, and other creatures not dabbling in divine magic make good candidates, mostly for thematic sense. After all, a high-tier Cleric might just convince people to develop faith and pay no costs themselves. Yet Angels or other celestial beings might need services done across the

planes and don't have access to a deity's domain—these are perfect candidates for Divine Patrons.

The means to transfer power is the hidden secret. Warlocks are described as people who've found secrets in the cracks of reality. It's not as simple (at least outside of the Shadelands) to just do a handshake and transfer power. We provide a conduit for such deals through the Well of Souls and Rem Exius. Journey to the Shadelands and Majin and Fayte can make your deals come to fruition and handle the exchange. Outside of the Shadelands, finding this path of power transfer can be a quest for would-be-Patrons or even Warlocks who want to free a prospective Patron from their bindings. Making it a ritual that is locked away, or whispered by the Great Old Ones is also fair game. The thematic goal with this, however: it's taboo. A great spin to take with the transfer of power is that the ritual might even be twisted to drain a God of its power if they were tricked into such a pact. (See sidebar called "Transfer of Power" for an optional Shadelands rule on becoming a Patron).

The third step in becoming a Patron is the desire to transfer said power. Power doesn't always mean giving people Eldritch Blast or Invocations, it can mean wealth, status, Feats, or even information, but there must be a compelling reason to enter such a soul-binding agreement. Patrons have agendas. This cannot be stressed enough. Patrons are not idle entities. Even True Neutral Patrons have tasks and deeds they desire to get done, but cannot do it alone. Maghoro, the Patron of the Evermore Warlocks, nips bits of time at the end of lives or stolen moments to feed such time to the far outer planes. For her, there is an eternal need for such a deed, and thus, she needs many Warlocks to help harvest stolen moments. If a King who had power found the secret to transfer it, they might have a strong desire to create a few champions to enforce their ideals.

There must be some limits, however. After all, unlike a God, a Patron is giving their own power. If they parcel off too much, they will be weak to their enemies. Luckily for Storytellers, there are many systems already in place to toggle what a Patron is capable of. Experience is an easy metric, Epic Boons are another, and Influence (gold, favors, and more) serves as a third. When a deal is completed by both parties (i.e., I'll teach you an Invocation in exchange for you killing a Green Dragon and bringing me back its heart) then the Patron can recoup his investment. The Warlock learns their secret and has probably leveled up. The Patron benefits by proxy and can reclaim their experience, maybe gaining some in the process itself. It's

this recouping of investments that makes becoming a Patron desirable. If you choose your Warlocks well, then you stand to benefit immensely and grow your network, perhaps even garnering enough strength to challenge the very Gods.

Transfer of Power

An optional rule and method to become a Patron in the Shadelands use the "Letter Home" mechanic. A character who is high enough level (tier 3 or tier 4), and has the desire can find Fayte, Majin, or the Governing body in Yon'Cath and seek registration in the Scarlet Hearth. The character will read their letter home and burn it, forever inscribing their history onto Majin's Mural and inscribing their True Name into the walls of Rem Exius. Everyone who ever knew the characters will forget they exist, as the character has now become something else, and the sacrifice they paid is striking their history from the minds of mortals.

Once this deed is done, the characters can now form pacts and favors and will be awarded Epic Boons to parcel out as a Young Patron. Sponsored of course, by Dorian the Accursed King. It goes without saying that all backgrounds, former connections, lovers, children, or even entire empires will be lost to the character. Such places will only remember the character as a distant memory or a myth, and will never recognize the person even if they showed up in front of them. Going forward, they will have to make new friendships and build new empires. That said, it does seem like a tempting offer for those with little to lose...

Roleplaying Patrons

For the Game Master running a session of The Red Opera, roleplaying Patrons is an opportunity to tie individual Player backgrounds and story arcs to the larger narrative. There are as many relationship dynamics between Patrons and Warlocks as there are people; Patrons can act like bosses, teachers, and mentors, or family members, with the full spectrum of function and dysfunction present in those relationships. A fiend Patron could be a narcissistic CEO,

an overbearing parent, or a rebellious older sibling. A Patron could even have a role where they seem to need help or protection, like a powerful child or a being diminished by age or injury. The dynamic a Patron has with the Player's Warlock can be anywhere between friendly and hostile, and some Patrons can seem indifferent or disguise their actual level of interest or affection.

As with all NPCs, it helps to keep in mind the larger goals of Patrons. What do they seek to accomplish? Simply gaining power and influence is too vague. The specifics of their plans and the methods they use to pursue them will shape them as characters. Even the most chaotic Patron has desires and behaviors that give pleasure and reward. In characterizing Patrons, Game Masters can benefit from using some familiar archetypes, while subverting them at key points for narrative effect. Players will recognize traditional Patron types like vain Archfey, manipulative Fiends, and ravenous Elder Aberrations, but these characters can be enriched by giving them relatable qualities like occasional empathy or a code of behavior formed by their individual experiences. A powerful being may seem to be apathetic at times; Perhaps they have grown cynical over their beyond mortal lifetimes.

One of the defining aspects of the Patron-Warlock relationship is how asymmetrical the power dynamic can be. Patrons may not value their Warlocks as equals and be willing to sacrifice them in pursuit of their aims. Powerful beings can even be physically or emotionally manipulative, sometimes to a harmful degree. Take care with your Players to not cross lines of types of content to be in-game. While Patrons may be willing to use their position and power in many ways, make sure your Players understand that they have the final say on what types of scenes (especially concerned with sexuality and violence) they will participate in.

A Gamemaster should be able to describe a Patron's personality without referring to their type (Great Old One, Hexblade, etc.), and be able to quickly differentiate (even if in a nuanced way) that Patron from others of their kind. Not all Undying Patrons will be Grim Reapers with goals of world domination, and a Celestial Patron need not be a perfect paragon of virtue. If a Patron on the surface hews to a more traditional model, make sure there remains something for the Players to learn about them over time.

Not all Warlocks will have unfettered access to their Patrons at any given moment. Their Patrons may be engaged with other affairs, agents, or choose to ignore pleas if they are not in the mood to communicate or

wish to punish their Warlock. There may even be a hierarchy among Warlocks who serve a Patron, whether or not the Patron's servants are aware of it. That being said, one common difference between Warlocks and Clerics is how much more personal the relationship can be. Warlocks know the Patron they serve is an individual being and not the embodiment of a more abstract principle. Patrons do not derive power from people believing in them, they need boots on the ground actively promoting their cause. In *The Red Opera*, it is almost a certainty that a group of Players will have multiple distinct Patrons, and that Players can share a Patron. Warlocks of the same Patron are not guaranteed to have the same type of relationship with their Patron and can be allies, rivals, or enemies with each other throughout a story.

Contact between the Patron and Warlock can take many forms, with some Patrons needing to be summoned via elaborate rituals, or speaking to their agents via dreams or visions. While it isn't necessary for a Patron to be "on-call" at any moment the Player reaches out, it falls to the Game Master to provide opportunities for interactions and scenes between Warlock Players and their Patrons. The mystical bond that connects them can allow for telepathic connection, out of body experiences, visions, and even conversations in extraplanar spaces that are not subject to mundane notions of time. You can adjust the length and intensity of these interactions to fit the pacing of your game, either having them as discrete scenes or by weaving them in to play. A Patron may interact with a Warlock during exploration, social encounters with other players and NPCs, Skill Checks and challenges, and even Combat Encounters. Be aware of the level of engagement of all Players at the table, and avoid long stretches of play where only one Player can interact with the Patron. If you are playing the Patron well, all of your Players will be invested in seeing them and how they connect to the narrative.

Above all, treat Patrons like some of your most important NPCs. Allow them or their bond to a Warlock to change to suit the actions and choices made by the Players over the course of a session or campaign. Lucky for you, Patrons and their actions are at the center of the story of *The Red Opera*, and you will have plenty of opportunities to draw the Players into their struggles.





BLURGH, THE BLACK HAND



"Life is a celebration and meant for enjoyment. The pleasures and pains offered by the world around us are meant to be experienced. Without the knowledge obtained through the act of life, one's True Path may never be realized." – Fifth & Final Tenant of the Order of the Orcish Hand

If an adventurous soul were to brave the Mountainheart Passage south of Yon'Cath, they will, in all likelihood, die. There is no malice in that statement. It's simply fact. However, were that soul to survive the first half of their trek, they would undoubtedly find themselves at the door of the Tranquil Shadow Sanctuary. This stone compound is nestled within the cliffside. Stepping through the towering doorway, one would find themselves within a massive lodge. Goliaths, mountain dwarves, and even frost giants are common in the crowd. There is one regular customer, however, whom a newcomer might assume to be out of place. For one thing, he's a half-orc with a greenish tint to his skin, whereas most orcs in the Shadelands hail from the grey and white lineages. For another, he never wears a shirt, let alone the many heavy layers one would assume is required to survive the surrounding elements. His imposing physique looks as if it's been chiseled from the mountain itself. His name is Blurgh and, while in the Sanctuary, he is seldom seen without a grin on his face and a tankard in hand.

The contents of said tankard are always the same: a special spirit he brews himself and donates to the Sanctuary. Blurgh's 'Serenity Smash' has been described as an angel kissing your lips while a devil gut-punches your spleen. A typically jovial soul, he is well-regarded amongst the other regulars. However, if any of them have a problem with Blurgh, they keep it to themselves. If one were to pull aside the heavy rug hung on the back wall, they'd find a goliath-shaped hole that stretches some fifty feet deep into the mountainside. The remains of the goliath's body that formed the hole have never been recovered, and the rug provides a nice reminder of the dangers in directing any sort of rudeness in Blurgh's general direction.

Where Blurgh comes from and how he found his way to the Shadelands remains a mystery to most. And those who do know share one crucial trait: they are Warlocks and Blurgh is their Patron. For many years, Blurgh was a wanderer, never staying long in one place. Then, one day, he felt a call from within, a call to head north. He took his time with the journey, never passing up a chance for a new life experience or adventure.

But always, the Call remained. Eventually, he reached the southern edge of the Shadelands, where the Call became a beating drum in his head. It pulled him all the way to the northern border, to the Nameless Black Sea. He sat on the rocky shore and meditated for days. Tendrils of black smoke emerged and wrapped themselves around him. He heard words in his head. Words promising him power, wealth, glory, whatever he desired... words promising him the opportunity to become whomever he wanted to be.

It was at this moment that Blurgh attained Enlightenment. He opened himself up to the shadow energy and laughed as it entered his mind. He felt the consciousness behind the energy grow confused, for upon peering into Blurgh's mind, it saw no desire. Nothing it could use to tempt the monk. When it tried to withdraw, Blurgh held it fast, asserting his control. The power he gained on that day is a type that can only be derived from absolute self-actualization. A crystal clear understanding of one's own identity at the deepest core of their being, and unwavering confidence in that identity. And once Blurgh attained this absolute Enlightenment, it did not take long for him to want to share it with others. To strike a pact with Blurgh is to embark on a path of self-discovery, to seek out and experience as much Life as one can. It is not all pleasure, however, for pain and struggle are a part of life as well. Warlocks of Blurgh must always be true to themselves and others. Lies and deceit are poison to one walking this path. One must never pass an opportunity to better oneself, and always be looking for the next challenge, the next accomplishment.

Blurgh - Hexblade Patron

Hexhand: Traditional Hexblades wield weapons hewn from the dark energy of the Shadowfell. Blurgh teaches his Warlocks how to internalize that energy and channel it outward. Wisps of black smoke roll off their hands as they attack with such force and precision that these strikes mimic the effects of martial weapons. Warlocks of Blurgh choose the intended damage type of their melee attacks (Bludgeoning, slashing, piercing) dealing 2d6 + Hex Weapon bonus damage. The Pact Weapon modifier is also added if a Warlock chooses Pact of the Blade.



AMADÁN, PATRON OF GAMBLER SOULS



"If Fayte had her way, every game between Warlocks would be a seventeen-volume contract. Life is a risk. Go all-in and cash out as a god. Come sit at my table to play a hand and you'll never beg for scraps again. One way or another."— Amadán, Patron of Gambled Souls

Entry into the Scarlet Hearth is a prize coveted by Patrons across the realms. Amadán refuses it. An Efreeti Patron who stalks the streets of Yon'Cath looking for anyone down on their luck and needing a change of fate; Amadán is the best (or worst) Patron you've ever met. He'll even tell you himself. A former Bard would never miss an opportunity to weave a tale for a captive audience. After all, everyone needs a chance to escape from the shackles of poverty, and Fayte's rules regarding the Scarlet Hearth only seek to add a system into the grand pandemonium that makes up the cosmos.

Amadán began his life as a bard under a different name, Zeri Danteus. Like many, he came to Yon'Cath seeking coin, a new life, and if the stars were willing—a Patron. The would-be-Patron had standards and wasn't just going to gamble his destiny away on any he could beat with dice and song alone. So, for a time, he remained a Bard, albeit one growing in popularity (even in the King's court).

Until he met Fayte. They met time and again in taverns, courts, and even staring off into the Elemental Dance. Often when Fayte was taking a much-needed break from her Governess duties.

No matter how many games they played though, Fayte always won. She was just a tad luckier, or even outright called his bluff. Not just with dice, but with nights of passion, matchmaking games, bets over which gladiators would win a fight, and more. Zeri knew Fayte was the one to find him a Patron, the perfect one—but as the years went on, it never materialized. With every promising prospect, Fayte found a thousand things wrong with the contract. To Zeri, she was so concerned with preventing a possible bad pact from happening—she blocked any from being authorized. Unlike her, he was aging.

One evening in the Accursed Kings court, running games of chance and playing the part of the fool, a Marid Patron saw a chance to steal Zeri as a prize. A slave who could spin tale-after-tale and entertain its comrades for eternity. Zeri was tired of Fayte blocking his deals, and with the King's permission, he accepted the gamble, confident in his abilities.

Needless to say, he lost. His destiny was stolen from him in a single cheated dice toss. The exact bad deal Fayte had cautioned him from making.

Running to his friend Fayte in the hopes she could help him break his pact was in vain. She refused to help for a variety of reasons (the truth is she could not overrule Dorian, no matter how much she wished) but also felt Zeri's tale was a good lesson.

And so, the cheated Bard spent years shackled to the Marid and his three other Genie companions. They took pleasure in the four of them gambling the fates of their Warlocks like chips on a table. Over the years of being bounced around like a used playing card found on the ale-ridden floors of a seedy tavern: Zeri figured out how they cheated. When next in the presence of the Accursed King and Fayte, he made his move, challenging the four to a single game with a Wish as the prize.

In front of Majin's own eyes, Amadán was victorious, knowing Majin would prevent their tricks. His wish was for the four's power to be absorbed into him, and for him to take over their spot as Patrons. In his own way, a chance to prove Fayte wrong. That she should allow would-be-Warlocks to make a mistake. When the dust settled, Amadán was born. The Patron of Gambled Souls. A legend in the King's court that would spread beyond the borders of the Shadelands that anyone with enough cunning can make it.

Now Amadán's goal in the Shadelands serves to foil his old friend Fayte and eventually best her in a game. The prize he seeks is more freedom for Patrons. To allow Warlocks to make mistakes and stop breaking pacts and bad deals so quickly. In this, Amadán refuses entry into the Scarlet Hearth and gambles (but never cheats) to earn his followers. Amadán is famous for making temporary pacts and bargains with non-Warlocks. He is not a kind Patron unless the wager specifies, and delights in leaving out information or making every negotiation a game. Yet deep down inside, he is still left wondering if Fayte saw this potential in him when they first played.

Amadán - Genie Patron

Doubledown: Amadán does not believe his Warlocks should have their potential limited, or their personalities shackled. Over the years he's cultivated a large network of spells to gamble off between his followers. When choosing your Expanded Spell List, Warlocks of

Amadán may gamble with him to alter their list at any level. If they win, replace a spell of equal level to the players choosing. If they lose, the Storyteller will pick for them. Amadán is not bound by any spell list or restrictions on his list. However, Amadán will always

challenge his Warlocks to a game each time they meet, and they have no choice but to accept. Perhaps this is why Warlocks who get lucky often try to avoid their Patron if they can. It never works.



THE MOTHER OF MIRRORS



"Have you ever fought with your inner thoughts? It's always a losing battle. Unless The Mother of Mirrors is playing tricks on you that is. In which case, might as well go along for the adventure." - Domadred

The Mother of Mirrors has walked a thousand roads. With each journey, she learned a new insight into her world and the worlds around her. For her, the Elemental Dance found within the Shadelands was more than just a beautiful night sky—it was the manifestation of infinity.

As a young Glau'bjurn born in the Shadelands underneath an Autumn moon, she predated Dorian the Accursed King's empire. The Well of Souls did not have the pull to lure Patrons and Warlock with great frequency, but its early whispers could still be heard. Magic still infused the land, and in both the night sky and the Obsidian Rush rivers, the young Glau could catch glimpses of what could be. Visions of her born during the spring, summer, and winter, like her other family, sparked her imagination. As did visions of other worlds with great cities, horrible vampire built cities and even worlds where time travel was possible.

Of course, merely running to the Obsidian Rush each night and gazing into the waters was a passive act and was not enough to satiate the young adventurer. As the winters turned, her yearning to experience life beyond the Shadelands grew. If her family had left the Elemental Dance once, why should she settle to remain in one place as well?

In a leap of faith one winter, prepped only with her cobbled adventurer's gear, she stood upon the river's edge and fell forward. To this day, Glau'bjurn still warn their youth about the Obsidian Rush, but not about falling in. Instead, to always bring a mirror.

What Vlahnya discovered as she tumbled into the other planes was a thousand roads and no way home. Once she crossed into the Elemental Dance, the young elf could cross into new worlds through mirrors. Trapped in the exact place she wanted to go but forced to watch each world as she swam between the planes.

This would not do.

Through raw determination, the Mother of Mirrors was slowly born. At first speaking to receptive souls who could hear her whispers between realms. Hauntingly, Vlahnya felt as if the world was closing in around her, and she could hear herself calling back warnings. Ignoring the calls as the impetuous often

do; she became both muse and confidant to her early Warlocks. Offering advice from her unique position to see multiple worlds, where her Warlocks could see only one. In exchange, these Warlocks would take a pilgrimage to the Shadelands and throw mirrors into the Obsidian Rush. The more Warlocks the Mother helped, the larger her palace of mirrors grew—and the more worlds she could physically enter.

Today the Mother of Mirrors has a gilded palace of light and wonder within her realm. Each bit is built from fragments of different realms and possibilities. Into each of them, she can freely journey now and experience the lives she always wanted. More important to her, however, is the help she can provide the Warlocks who find themselves staring at their reflection and hating who they are.

From her position nestled in the cracks between realities, the Mother of Mirrors finds those lost souls who feel they do not belong. She offers them visions of what they could become or worlds where they fit in. Her advice is not always kind, and sometimes hard truths and realities need to be faced. A journey must always be walked. But for those Mirrorwalker's who complete their pilgrimage, they find themselves welcome among the stars.

Yet every mirror risks being cracked. A vision of Vlahnya has become cracked, and her ominous warnings becoming more dire by the day. Not every dimension does she succeed in, as demons and fiends run rampant. She goes by many names in each of them, and many of them call for her help. As the Shadelands have started to break, one mirror with a more enlightened version of herself has become clearer and more vocal—Anaya Tara Rachana has many warnings for the young patron. Some are what Vlahnya could become, others are what is at stake if reality devouring demons are left unchecked. Those-who-wait-beyond could very well be her undoing, or her greatest victory in the nights to come.

Vlahnya - Mirrorwalker Patron

Shattered Soul: Mirrorwalker's journey the elemental planes with ease enough, but even they often lack the internal reflection that their arch-patron represents. Vlahnya inspires more from her closest Warlocks

than the average Mirrorwalker, and when the dice are cast—it shows. Once per adventure chapter (at storyteller discretion), a Warlock who chooses this bonus can burn all arcane energy in their power to manifest another reality in the form of a story seed. All spells are crossed off their list for twenty-four hours, but in exchange, they may alter the current reality slightly.

Work with your storyteller to determine an appropriate effect, but small things like finding a secret escape at a pivotal moment, or finding aid in dark times are appropriate. Calling upon this gift, and then refusing the alternative path is a sure-fire way to risk wrath from the Mother of Mirrors.



HOW TO SELL YOUR SOUL



The relationship between a Warlock and their Patron is complicated and can entangle adventurers who seek a quick pathway to power. The intricate webs Patrons leave are an essential part of the structure that enables them to grant their power. This system keeps the Shadelands economy running, where boons and favors have more buying power than gold. Clever Warlocks will try to unweave the pattern Patrons use, only to realize each Patron values Boons and Favors differently, so precisely knowing the cost of something is almost impossible.

There is a primary system all Patrons and Warlocks use for an exchange of power, one which never actually goes away, no matter how hard a Warlock tries. Each Patron has a plan they need to accomplish, and they do that by collecting favors, calling them in, trading them, creating Pacts, and offering Boons. This power dynamic allows Patrons to maneuver multiple chess pieces to accomplish their goals. This structure includes several vital pieces that all work together to create the trade economy within the Shadelands.

Each Patron places different values on these exchanges. The value can shift depending upon what the Patron needs accomplishing at that time, what the adventurer can offer, or even the amusement level of the request. Some Patrons are very picky about who they make deals with, others not so much. Their whims and machinations are never predictable.

Favors

Favors are the primary currency used by all residents in the Shadelands. Favors help to build a working relationship between those that grant them and those that call them in. Many Warlocks start off giving Favors before asking for Boons or forming Pacts with their Patrons. Warlocks, Patrons, familiars, and citizens alike collect, use, and trade favors. This common magic works for everyone.

Favors are a promise given to someone else as a payment for a good or service. It is 'I scratch your back, later, you can scratch mine.' While they start small, trivial even, they can be collected and traded for larger tasks. With Favors, magic is not usually exchanged between the individuals. Favors are often used in conjunction with money or other trades, making bargaining intricate.

The agreement of a Favor is a magical pact in which both individuals benefit when it is fulfilled. The Favor holder can trade that Favor with another for any variety of reasons. A Favor trade does nothing more than transfer the agreement to a different individual, so this may not be ideal for the debtor, but they have little to no say. Trading a Favor simply involves both parties willingly agreeing upon the traded Favor, so they cannot be tricked or coerced.

Favors are easy to call in. First, the debtor is aware of the Favor called in, and they can gather the who, what, where, when, why, and how of their task. The task tends to be very quick, running an errand, passing a message, or fetching some sort of ingredient or object. The debtor does not need to be on the same plane as the holder for this to work. The holder or debtor may not send other messages in this way. When the holder calls a Favor in, they gain +1D4 to all Ability Checks for 1 hour.

The debtor then must decide if they are willing or able to complete the Favor. If they successfully fulfill the Favor, they gain +1D4 to all Ability Checks for 1 hour. They also begin to gather more trust around them as the residents of the Shadelands hold those who complete their Favors in higher regard. Patrons are more likely to work with individuals who can complete Favors, and in turn, they may find the inhabitants of the Shadelands are more willing to deal with them, making negotiating much easier.

If they are unable or unwilling to complete the Favor, they gain -1D4 to all Ability Checks for 1 hour. Those who fail to complete their tasks are often less likely to be trusted by those in the Shadelands. Someone who fails to pay their debts will find their word held in low regard and may have to offer much more than a Favor to gather what they need.

Boons

Boons are a far different variety of exchanges for those that deal in magic. A Boon is offered from a Patron to a user in exchange for a larger task to accomplish. Boons provide an exchange of power, usually the use of magic for a short time or a weapon enchanted by the Patron. Patrons will often use this to recruit potential Warlocks to demonstrate what the Patron can offer for their loyalty. Boons can be provided to anyone but must come from a Patron. Boons

allow a Patron to extend their magic to the one who accepts the power, giving the Patron a small amount of influence over them.

Anyone may ask for a Boon from a Patron to accomplish a task, but a Patron does not have to answer. Suppose an individual asks for a Boon but has previously proven themselves unworthy, either through failing to complete Favors or having never offered Favors. In that case, the Patron is not likely to assist them without a hefty cost.

A Patron can give out any spell on their Extended Spell Lists or Pact Purview. It is up to the Patron on what they wish to give out but they usually find it advantageous to share a spell that the asker will find useful at that moment. Some Patrons will even offer this first Boon for free to the adventurer to entice them into service. The Patron may also provide an enchanted weapon of sorts as a display of their powers and what they can offer. These enchantments vary with the Patron.

Boons are not a permanent offering; instead, they are available for a limited time depending on the task or level of the spell. A Boon may only last for anywhere from 1 usage or until a job is completed. Patrons pay attention to those who have Boons with them and if they are accomplishing the job agreed upon in exchange for power. It is not unheard of for a Patron to take a boon away if the asker is not staying on the task which they set out to accomplish.

Patrons may offer an enchanted weapon as a Boon. Only the one granted the Boon may wield this weapon. In the hands of another, it is just a regular weapon. Enchanted weapons tend to have more power but exchanging that power may be too high a price. Patrons often give these weapons out to carry out an assassination contract or to aid in the retrieval of a valued artifact the Patron wishes to acquire. They also can be taken away by the Patron if the asker has ignored their task or if they are displeased.

The payment for a Boon is different from a Favor due to the exchange of magic, but it is still an agreement between the Patron and the asker. A Patron may have a particular quest they want to be completed after all. Still, the receiver of a Boon has set out to accomplish a task the Patron already wants to be done, and it is advantageous to the Patron to help them achieve it for a bit of magic. The Patron may be looking to recruit this individual as a Warlock, so they may offer a Boon to show the power they offer for the cost of loyalty.

Pacts

Pacts are a binding magical agreement between the Patron and the Warlock. A Warlock who makes a promise of this nature is granted specific powers from the Patron, allowing them access to greater and greater magics as they grow together in strength and connection. Patrons use their Pacts to ensure a constant stream of energy is granted to them. It also ensures they have someone who can help accomplish tasks that further their agendas. This exchange of power allows the Patrons to continue to grow in strength, and a Warlock to gain access to the magic they would not otherwise have.

When entering a Pact, a Warlock agrees to be of service to a Patron. This agreement isn't one where the Warlock loses all of their autonomy, but one where they must occasionally complete tasks for their Patron in exchange for their magic. Any Warlock who fails in their duties may lose access to their magic because the Patron will withhold it, usually at an inopportune time. It is possible a Warlock may rarely hear from their Patron and can go about their business unhindered. But should a Patron call, the Warlock is bound to answer.

A Warlock who just enters an agreement with a Patron must prove their worth, often growing in power with little interference. Newly conscripted Warlocks often operate below the radar of their Patron unless needed. They are stuck with completing the tasks no other Warlocks wish to do, or menial jobs. Once a Warlock has proven themselves worthy, their Patron may provide them more significant tasks to further their goals. Along with more responsibility, the Patron will offer the Warlock more extraordinary powers.



THE COLLECTORS – ARCH DEVIL



Words are powerful to a Warlock and held in high regard to those that live in the Shadelands. Favors are the backbone of their society. Within the central government of the Shadelands is a division of Patrons who are not well known to any outside the organization, The Collectors. Every Favor, every Boon, every Pact, is known to The Collectors. The Collectors make sure anyone who fails to uphold their end of a Favor, Boon, or Pact, are held accountable for their actions. Even if a Warlock breaks their Pact with their Patron, their owed Favors continue.

The Collectors are a small group of Patrons who keep the accounting of the trades that make up daily life within the Shadelands. They keep their collection of scrolls at the Library, deep in the lower portions of the building. This sanctuary is the Lair of The Collectors, though it is rare they are ever actually seen. Instead, anyone visiting the sanctuary just knows The Collectors are there, overseeing scrolls upon scrolls of names and debts. When a Warlock actively decides to end their Pact with their Patron, the debt of the Warlock transfers to The Collectors.

The Collectors make Pacts with only a small number of Warlocks, so this system is how they maintain their power. The Collectors send out Warlocks to make sure Favors are repaid when called in, collect the Favors and Boons owed to The Collectors, and ensure those in The Shadelands are using these systems. Warlocks in service to The Collectors tend to stay solitary due to the physical changes they take on. While nobody knows what The Collectors look like, the Warlocks in their service will tell you they know when The Collectors are near. The whispers the Warlocks hear from their Patrons crackles like dry paper, and there is a smell of ink. It goes

without saying, that many of the Accursed Guard revere and even work as agents for The Collectors. After all, if the King's economy folds, then so does the entire house of cards.

Pact of the Reaper

Warlocks of The Collectors who take up this path are few and far between. The Collectors tend to choose Warlocks, who can devote their entire being to their purpose. Those wishing to prove themselves to The Collectors start as recorders, auditors and organize the library and scrolls containing all the Favors, Boons, and Pacts made throughout the Shadelands. Those in this service either muster through the mundane tasks that could take years for them to endure, or they move on, seeking out other Patrons who are more willing to take on Warlocks.

Those that prove their worth and take their Pact oath are finally released from their library service unless called back to that position due to other needs. Those that move out into the world then use their knowledge to help keep the balance of magic behind the Favors, Boons, and Pacts. They do this by seeking out those who fail to uphold their end of an agreement. Their purpose is to make sure the magic flows for the Shadelands and the Patrons that built it. This class is less of an adventuring class, which is why it is presented here in this chapter—to help showcase how the Shadelands has become its own economy. Still, it is not unheard of for agents of The Collectors to move beyond the borders of Yon'Cath, albeit they have little reason to. Throughout the events of The Red Opera, feel free to use Warlocks of this pact as members of the Accursed Guard.

Invocations

Mark of the Unfavored

Prerequisite: 1st Level

You know if any individual has ever failed to uphold their end of a Favor by interacting with them for 1 minute. The Unfavored will have a mark that appears over their head that only the Warlock can see. The greater the number of unfulfilled Favors, the brighter the mark will shine. This mark cannot be hidden by magical means. If you wish to see if they have broken any Boons, you must make a contested Investigation check against their Deception.

What Good Is A Favor?

Patrons trade Favors. A lot. The Collectors are no different. Any Favor they gain is one they can potentially trade for something beneficial to them. Many times, The Collectors will never actually search out individuals unless a Patron asks or pays them. The Collectors will often trade back the Favors of those Warlocks who broke their Pacts, a dangerous position for the former Warlock.

Favors	Mark Characteristics
0 Favors broken	There is no mark above their heads.
1-2 Favors broken	There is a faint mark above their heads that is barely visible.
3-4 Favors broken	The mark glows with a yellow hue above their heads
5-6 Favors broken	The mark glows with a red color above their heads.
7+ Favors broken	The mark radiates a black color above their heads.

Extracting Payment

Prerequisite: 15th Level

After using **Mark of the Unfavored**, you may choose to use this spell. Make a Ranged Spell Attack against the target. If successful, there is no way to remove this effect short of another Warlock using **Mark of the Favored** upon the target. Even those with divine magic or the highest tiers of arcane wizardry find themselves helpless against their own actions. When the debt is due, not even deities intervene—nor can they do anything about it. The best response one could hope for is their deity telling them that they should not have broken their deals.

Accounting

Prerequisite: 6th Level

You are relentless in your duties as a Warlock to The Collectors. As a result, you gain Advantage while using any spells against an Unfavored. You must use the spell **Mark of the Unfavored** to use this spell.

Mark of the Favored

Prerequisite: 8th Level

You can bestow upon an individual the Mark of the Favored. This spell may either absolve the debt they owe and remove their **Mark of the Unfavored**, or this may be used on an individual who has already shown themselves to uphold their end of a bargain. Upon touching the individual, you grant them a bonus 1D6 to all their ability checks for the next hour.

Favors	SPELLS EFFECTS
0 Favors broken	No effect
1-2 Favors broken	The target must repay their debts within 24 hours, or have Disadvantage to all rolls for 1 hour.
3-4 Favors broken	The target gains Disadvantage on all rolls for 1 hour
5-6 Favors broken	Target gains -1D6 against all Ability Checks for 24 hours per Favor broken
7+ Favors broken	Target loses -2 ratings in all its Base Ability Scores until the debt is paid.





Chapter 1

WELCOME TO THE SHADELANDS

"Gather well under the stranded moon, as fearless prey stands before wolves." - LaCroix The Knight Captain

INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the official start of the Red Opera. After the Players have built their characters (or had their session zero to hook them into the Shadelands), make sure they complete 'A Letter Home.' Once the storyteller has collected all the letters, the adventure can begin in earnest. We have included an optional start

that takes place before this adventure called Killing Time which can be found after this chapter.

With multiple adventure hooks or paths into the story, getting your party to rendezvous with The Shield Maiden should not be a problem. If they've been traveling for some time, feel free to skip long and tedious parts of a journey to the far -north- but always play up the Aurora Borealis upon their arrival. Even if the characters teleport in, they should experience the lights.

SYNOPSIS

"There I stood in the morning deep blue. Where light grew tired in the cold, and I knew that the Summerlands of our dream would never be."

- LaCroix The Knight Captain

On the outskirts of Yon'Cath, the characters will rendezvous with The Shield Maiden and make their introductions. The Shadelands is a place of great wonder, mystery, and beauty - but someone has to keep the beasts at bay. An entire forest of trees nurtured by Warlocks has grown out of control. Already stretched thin from hunting invading creatures, the Legionnaires are paying good money for assistance. The party will meet The Knight Captain, and each person gets a dog sled team.

Heading out into the frozen north, the second act is a tour of Shadelands geography. The party can see the Scarlet Hearth, Obsidian Rush, and even inquire what land lies beyond the northern sea. Until the fight against the Thistlefury begins... the party is assigned one tree (or several based on level) and races through the aberrant awakened forest while ending the threat along with other legionnaires.

Putting down the aberrations is only one part of the hunt. The party investigates the battlefield with The Shield Maiden and finds information as to why the forest came alive. What angered the Feywild Patrons this time? Through either arcane knowledge, spellcraft, clever tracking, or other means, the party will uncover that the trees are being fed mortal sacrifices from Yon'Cath, and by the looks of it -it's been conducted by the official members of the Accursed Guard.

THE SETTING

"The Shadelands at night, its everlasting night, is most beautiful when locked in arm with those you love." - LaCroix The Knight Captain

A river of green light winds across the twilight sky. The dual city of Yon'Cath looms to the north, a mass of tall spires twinkling with torchlight. Beyond the city, the northern horizon is engulfing darkness. The first dusting of winter frost coats the surrounding tundra. There is a large, sturdy wooden lodge a mile south of the city. Inside, a crackling blaze nestles within a massive stone fireplace which the party gathers close to around a circular table. Steaming flagons of mulled wine and bowls of hot stew are set before them.

The Shadelands is vibrant and filled with life. Soft music from a bard fills the air within the lodge, and folk inside are cheerful. It's another day and another hunt. To the small contingent of Legionnaires, the group rides out with, this is another day of joyful battle even if they are weary.

When the group rides South to the forest, the following list of adjectives describes the woods: crystalline, foggy, chilling, ice-kissed, leafless, crimson, wet-cold, enchanted, fluffy, upending, crisp, and crackling.



WELCOME TO THE SHADELANDS

Scan this QR code to listen to this adventure act's paired song from the Orchestral Version of the Red Opera Album by DiAmorte.

ACT 1



The party arrives at the lodge and meets with Fayte, The Shield Maiden. She's already reserved several seats for them and is ready to make their introductions to LaCroix, The Knight Captain. Among the warm crackling fire, Fayte seems happy, shooting smiles at the group and eager to welcome them to Yon'Cath (or just eager to welcome some help on the hunt). For today at least, she has hung up her civic duties and is ready to battle aberrant monsters. The Knight Captain misreads this as her idea of a date with him, but Fayte is happy to break away for a bit.

Much of the first act will revolve around character stories. Both LaCroix and Fayte are interested in the Players' tales. If any of them are a warlock, they'll enquire about their Patron and the method used to communicate without any judgment. Fayte will even offer advice on dealing with that Patron (grant advantage to their next roll) if it comes up.

After introductions and a bit of reverie, the time comes for the group to plan... and get information about why they are required.

The Knight Captain takes over to explain:

"Mmm, friends and warriors, you've heeded our call and shared our wine. Our quest is simple but no less dangerous than any other war. Here in the Shadelands, we are blessed with mystical wonder and cursed with aberrant horrors at the same time. The Fallen have been stretched thin with their patrols and now the Feywild has grown restless. An entire forest of Thistlefurries, each coated in mortal blood, has uprooted itself and began marching to the capitol. Our job today is two-fold... become lumberjacks and find out which idiot messed up."

Both The Knight Captain and Shield Maiden hold no secrets about this encounter and eagerly offer answers to any questions the party may have. It may be useful to slip in information about the following rumors during the conversation:

- *The Legionaries of the Fallen are comprised entirely of former warlocks. Some have abandoned their Patrons; others have had their Patrons slain. Few of them ever become a warlock again, but it doesn't mean they've forgotten what they've learned.*
- *Thistlefurries are indeed weak to fire, and since they have an entire forest to deal with—they have every intention of corralling it to set the trees ablaze. The party is to help with any trees that get through.*
- *The Knight Captain is thinking about asking Fayte for her hand in marriage, but every time it comes up (or gets close to it), she finds a way out of the conversation before it happens.*
- *It's a long journey and the dog sleds are required to help carry the supplies (and corral the trees). The other soldiers seem very attached to the dogs (who are all good boys) and implore the party to take good care of the dogs.*



Act 1 will come to a close when each Player in the party is introduced to a personal dog sled team (AC 13, HP 35, Speed 45) made of four dogs. There's no roll required, but an Animal Handling check with a DC of 18+ can increase the speed of the dogsled team (by +15).

ACT 2

After an evening ride to the forest, the party will see the army of marching trees. Horrid, crystalline beasts slowly lumbering toward the city. Corpses of farmers, hunters, and several deer dangle from their branches. Thistlefury seedlings constantly drop off the branches and creep away to forage for living things, and if the characters squint just right—the seedlings return to coat the larger parents in blood.

To the Legionnaires and everyone else, this grotesque procession is just another evening in the Shadelands. LaCroix's plan involves herding the trees into closer proximity and then setting the entire lot of them ablaze—a task easier said than done. The party races through the trees using intimidation, fire, and weapons to kill any outliers or start the herding process. These Thistlefuries can move fast when threatened, however, and will make active use of their seedlings in an attempt to overwhelm the party.

Run as a tier one encounter, have the party take care of one Thistlefury as it breaks rank, or even race in to save a fallen dog-sled team. Run as a tier four encounter, let the party be in charge of corralling the trees that are constantly using seedlings to swarm and attack the dog sleds (which is the Thistlefury seedlings' primary target). Attacking the dog sleds and having the party protect the sleds adds another layer to the encounter.

Thistlefuries can spawn multiple seedlings per turn and have no issues about doing so, particularly if the party has used spellcraft to create massive walls of fire. The goal of this encounter is to rank as "deadly" in difficulty. Should the party get knocked out, Fayette will intervene to help get them back into the fight. Seedlings are fast (60 ft. movement), even faster than the dog sleds. Remember to describe these angry, blood-smeared aberrations running down the Players on their sleds for added horror.

Act 2 comes to a close once the party has failed or succeeded at corralling the forest. Should they fail and the Thistlefuries bust forth—the party will have to regroup at the lodge and try again with a new plan. Once the forest is contained and burned, move onto Act 3.

Thistlefury

Large Aberration, chaotic evil

ARMOR CLASS 17 (natural armor)
HIT POINTS 78 (12d6 + 36)
SPEED 20 ft., burrow 20 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
16(+3)	14(+2)	17(+3)	10(+0)	14(+2)	10(+0)

Damage Resistances Cold

Damage Immunities Poison, Psychic

Damage Vulnerability Fire

Condition Immunities Blinded, Deafened, Exhaustion

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 12

Languages none

Challenge 3 (700 XP)

ACTIONS

Root Snare. Melee Weapon Attack: +6 to hit, reach 15 ft., one target on the ground. Hit: 10 (2d6 +3) bludgeoning damage and 7 (2d6) poison damage. If the target is a creature, it must succeed on a DC 13 Strength saving throw or be grappled and restrained.

Seedling Drop (3/day). The thistlefury creates 1d4 Thistlefury seedlings in unoccupied spaces within 5 ft. of it. The seedlings are friendly toward the thistlefury and act immediately after its turns.

THISTLEFURY SEEDLING

Tiny Aberration, unaligned

ARMOR CLASS 13
HIT POINTS 1 (1d4 - 3)
SPEED 60 FT

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
16(+3)	16(+3)	5(-3)	1(-5)	1(-5)	1(-5)

Damage Resistances Cold

Damage Immunities Poison, Psychic

Damage Vulnerability Fire

Condition Immunities Blinded, Deafened, Exhaustion

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 5

Languages none

Challenge -

ACTIONS

Bite. Melee Weapon Attack: +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target., Hit: 5 (1d4+3) piercing damage.

Infection. The seedling attempts to burrow into the flesh of a living creature within 5 ft. The target must succeed on a DC 13 Constitution saving throw have the seedling enter their body. A creature so infected is vulnerable to all damage, and the seedling can only be removed by a creature within reach using an action to succeed on a DC 13 Wisdom (Medicine) check to remove the seedling.

ACT 3



As the chilling screams of the burning forest echo through the northern reaches of Yon'Cath, the party and Fayte take a rest to watch it burn, yet before all evidence is lost, LaCroix approaches.

With the Legion tied up, the party and Fayte are asked to cross into the burning woods and hunt for clues about the origin of this attack. Thistlefuries are typically immobile creatures, certainly not this fast, so LaCroix suspects that there was interference. Perhaps some twisted Patron's demand. Walking into the burning forest will require athletics (or acrobatics checks) and the party will have to hunt for clues.

Describe the cold crunch of snow beneath their boots, the contrast of warm fire, and the occasional ear-piercing scream of the immolated Thistlefuries.

As the party goes around from tree to tree, there are several bits of information they can glean. For each party member, have them roll a DC 20 Intelligence (Investigation) check (investigating burning, screaming trees at night is difficult after all). After revealing a bit of information below, require a follow-up athletics check to avoid a burning branch or other debris.

- The bodies of several Accursed Guards are found among the trees. Personal warlocks of The Accursed King. It doesn't look like the King killed them however, it looks as if they were ritually slain.
- On trees near the middle, pages from a book are carved into the Thistlefuries. Characters with a knowledge Nature check (or other Feywild) can recognize some of the words as Nature's Dance by Dagny Ferral. A book dealing with the enchanted nature of the Feywild.
- While many animals have been fed to awaken this forest, any mortal creatures (Elves, Dragonborn, and Halflings) of the Shadelands found in the trees are all sacrificed in the same way. Characters trained in Knowledge Arcana can glean that this was all part of a great ritual. Probably performed at the center of the Thistlefury herd's original location.

WOODSKIN BANGLES: If a Player passes an average difficulty investigation check, they find a number (equal to the number of party members) of wooden bracelets. Each bangle grants the Player the option of

turning their skin wooden for 1 hour. The Bangle recharges after a long rest. A Player with wooden skin is resistant to piercing and bludgeoning damage. They also become immune to poison. However, they take double damage against fire and lightning attacks. A Player can choose to dispel the effect early but cannot reactivate it again until a long rest has occurred.

PET SEEDLING: If a Player has an exceptionally high investigation roll, they may discover an undamaged, unhatched seed. If a Player picks it up, they will see the seed change color to match the skin tone of the Player holding it. If the Player drops any water on the seed, it will hatch. The seedling will have bonded with the Player that hatched it. It will still resemble the other seedlings, but also take on the slightest bit of features like the Player that hatched it. The Player may keep it as an animal companion.



PET SEEDLING

Tiny plant, unaligned

ARMOR CLASS 13
HIT POINTS 28 (8d4 + 8)
SPEED 40 FT

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
16(+3)	16(+3)	12(+1)	1(-5)	1(-5)	1(-5)

Skills Stealth +5, Perception -3

Senses darkvision 30 ft., passive Perception 7

Languages -

Challenge 1/8 (25 XP)

ACTIONS

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit., reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 5 (1d4+3) poison damage.

Master's Magic. The seedling casts a cantrip known by its creator, using the creator's character level, spell attack bonus and spell save DC (when applicable). If the cantrip deals damage, it instead deals half damage when cast in this manner.

Fayte does not seem happy with this information, and when they bring this news back to LaCroix, he becomes furious. Yet again has the Accursed Guard been involved with a mass sacrifice. He'll lament that the King is running out of settlers outside Yon'Cath to sacrifice so he's starting to include his own guard. It's only a matter of time before he feeds all of Yon'Cath to the Patrons.

Fayte takes a more cautious approach, not quite defending the King, but not outright condemning him. She knows (seemingly first-hand?) that The Accursed King has had to balance the desire of many warlocks and Patrons—not all of which are kind—and that this may be a rogue Patron's doing. They will pull down the bodies of everyone possible, load them on the dogsleds, and make their way back into Yon'Cath.

WEAVING THREADS

SOCIAL

Bonding with Fayte is the main social encounter of this act. She's happy to welcome them and become their tour guide—it is her duty to welcome all pilgrims of course. Learning that The Knight Captain LaCroix already has issues with The Accursed Kind is an important part of the first act. Also establish that Fayte is not as automatically opposed to the King as LaCroix, revealing a potential conflict for later.

Sidequest Potential: While taking a short rest, the party might get Fayte to open up about the social dynamics of the Shadelands before later acts. Catching her off

guard, and with a few good insight checks, they learn she's not truly returning The Knight Captain's love.

OR

The party might be approached by The Knight Captain, who will ask them for advice on getting his chance to propose. He aims to do it before dawn. In either case, he'll either forget about it after learning of the Accursed Guard in the forest or Fayte will be pressured, turn red in the face, reveal that she can't marry him then ride back into town.

COMBAT

The first adventure features dynamic racing combat among aberrant trees in the Shadelands. Party members geared to combat should have ample opportunity to shine in the second act and might even discover new brothers in arms. The combat is more than just hacking down an endless supply of Thistlefuries, however; success in combat is about saving their dogsled teams while corralling the forest. Either as a tier one, or a tier four encounter, the characters should get the feeling of being part of a larger army. They pull off heroic acts in either regard, but the Legionnaires are there to help. This bond is important for later.

Sidequest Potential: After recovering bodies, the Legionnaires wish to get back to town to resurrect those they can. Some of the Thistlefury roots might fetch a pretty price at the right store to pay for it, and if the characters are willing to help. The Legionnaires will ask the characters to hunt one or two more on their own for extra money.

EXPLORATION

This is a great adventure to showcase the outskirts of the Shadelands and even the visual layout of Yon'Cath from a distance. Take extra care to provide descriptions of the two cities, the Scarlet Hearth, and the Obsidian Rush.

Sidequest Potential: Should the party wish to explore further South at the Thistlefury herd's original home, let them! Finding their way there could involve tracking for a few days South and discovering more destruction from the ravenous seedlings. At the site, confirm without any doubt that The Accursed King ordered this sacrifice for a Fey Wild Patron. This can be revealed in the journal of a warlock who is still enchanted from a Dryad's kiss and very much in love with what he's done, so he'll have a loose tongue. The ritual to awaken an entire forest—was given to the guard by the King.

The Sidequest The Performance In Tatters (Included at the end of Chapter 7) should begin the first act if you wish to run it here.



Side Quest

KILLING TIME

AN ALTERNATE PATH TO BEGIN THE CAMPAIGN

INTRODUCTION

Time is an interesting concept. Invented by mortals, they toil away inside their little bubble, confined in its boundaries, tirelessly tracking the ever-turning sun. They note the passing moments. They add the days, the weeks, the years.

In the extra-dimensional planes, however, there is no “time.” Everything converges, flowing like a stream of consciousness—marked only by the passing of prominent souls. Sundials can’t show you much when every elemental plane spins light and shadow in its own way, you see.

And so I, Maghoro, a being you might call a “patron of Time,” saw my chance. A niche I could carve in the wall between planes, where I could bring the tedious notion of time out into the planes as a saleable commodity. My pacts gave focus to entities far removed from the mortal gaze and helped snap several primordial back into reality. In exchange for helping

my market place, I’ve started recruiting those who don’t mind nipping a little time from their world and giving it to me. A few breaths at the end of life, a missed connection between lovers, or even ensuring an arrow ends a life years before their time.

My Warlock servants, the Evermore, are few in number now, but I’m always looking for new recruits. They come in all shapes and sizes, rich or poor, Shadeland-borne or no—but all of them have seen the crack in time where I reside. While wizards and Sorcerers use their magic to merely distort the perception of time, my Warlocks have the power to bend it to their will like no other. This is the gift I give when striking a pact.

Anyone who crosses paths with the Evermores can become my servant. An eternal subject, bound to feed me time forever. Old or young, it matters not. Anyone can offer me their life’s precious time and be blessed with my power. I have an eternity to bargain, after all.

SETTING

Welcome to the Shadelands, a wide swath of chilly but vibrant tundra, bordered to the north by the nameless black sea. In the darkened sky multiple Auroras carve winding trails of eerie, effervescent light.

Time in the Shadelands often moves forward at a familiar pace. Of course, we say “often” sparingly, as it is not unheard of for an unfortunate soul to stumble upon a Time Anomaly in the city of Yon-Cath. Most escape physically and mentally unharmed, but a little disturbed. But the unlucky ones may find themselves trapped in a repeating loop, reliving the same few minutes over and over forever. Perhaps they trip on the wrong brick at exactly the wrong angle and fall into the future, hitting the ground ten years later.

This is when followers of Maghoro, known as the Evermore, come into play. Originating from the blue-faced clock tower in Yon-Cath, these Warlocks prowl the Shadelands in search of time anomalies

to correct them. At least, that is what the Evermore claim to be doing...

Lately, it seems as if these time anomalies are on the rise. And as with any dangerous phenomena, the rumors surrounding it have started to fly. Denizens of Yon’Cath trade hushed whispers, conjecturing whether the Accursed King has started to lose his grip on the many pacts he’s forged with the Patrons.

This has also led to an uptick in the activity of the Legion of the Fallen, every one of them former Warlocks whose sacred sworn duty is to defend The Shadelands from the chaotic evils of Warlocks. They see these otherworldly time anomalies as further evidence that the Shadelands is a beast that must be tamed.

SYNOPSIS

Quiven Luxx, First Lieutenant for the Legion of the Fallen, wants the players to investigate whether the Evermore's are, in fact, helping contain the time anomalies, or actually exacerbating them. To entice them to take the job, Luxx has looped in Khouryn Brickfoot, who might be able to give the players what they want: freedom from their nefarious Patrons.

In Act 1, the players will have to choose which of the three famous bridges of Yon'Cath they will attempt to cross. They may find themselves reaching the other

side with a new ally, or a new enemy, depending on the choices they make.

In Act 2, the players will attempt to enlist the aid of a scorned Imp familiar, and in the process, get a first-hand experience of what a time anomaly can do.

In Act 3, the players will assail the looming clock tower, Maghoro's Perch, navigating the many dangers contained within, hopefully discovering the truth behind the time anomalies and in the process, securing release from their pacts.

ADVENTURE HOOKS

This is a Tier 1 module. Each player must play as a Level 1 Warlock, however, there is a twist. None of them started their adventuring careers with the intention of becoming a Warlock, but a malicious Patron has tricked or coerced them into forging a pact.

This means while every player's character sheet will contain the stats and abilities of a Warlock, their roleplay and appearance should be that of a different class: druid, paladin, ranger, cleric, etc.

Many of the villains are far stronger than level 1 characters. To make up for this: secretly fudge almost all of your dice rolls as a storyteller and describe them as near misses... just seconds away from hitting. Maghoro is looking for replacements after all. If anyone dies, A Letter Home can be used to bring them back per usual and perhaps cement them in the Shadelands even more.

The player characters are looking for a way out of their pacts. Their patrons should be "over-the-top" evil in nature. A young character may have sold their soul, or perhaps, in exchange for power, their Patron is demanding entirely unrealistic goals. There are plenty of "good" or "healthy" Patron-Warlock relationships in the world, but that is absolutely not the case with this group of characters. The fiends that have attached themselves to the player characters are wicked beyond redemption.

In some cases, the player may have thought they were making a deal with one patron, only to find themselves tricked into subservience with one who is eviler than initially expected. Regardless of the reason, Khouryn Brickfoot has methods to break the pact. In exchange for a little work, the party can be rid of their former patrons—for now.

ACT 1: NEW IN TOWN

After character creation is done, our goal is to get the players right into the action. Work with your players to describe their horrid patrons, and how these pacts are keeping them from being their true selves.

As luck would have it, the player characters have come to understand that they are all in the same boat. They've seen each other's weary faces from day-to-day and maybe shared a few whispers amongst each other. As fate would have it though, the Shadelands does provide means for young Warlocks who've been caught in a bad deal to break their pact. Many who do so, end up joining the Accursed Guard or the

Legionnaires because they've gained new knowledge, or want the extra protection against an angry Patron.

This is why our scene opens in a tavern, as many adventures do. Perhaps it's that something about the darkness outside that brings people together. Huddled there behind wooden walls near a warm hearth, with the sound of clock tower bells ringing, and the setting sun in the distance, our adventure begins.

The Hole in the Wall is a hidden tavern near the center of Yonder, the western city. Despite its moniker, it is a clean, well-furnished establishment. They keep a table in the back reserved for customary clandestine

meetings. Quiven Luxx, Khouryn Brickfoot, and the player characters sit around this table.

Khouryn is a dwarven woman, her eyes hidden by black, circular glasses. She chews absent-mindedly on an unlit cigar.

Quiven is a battle-hardened and weathered looking Elf man who's missing the pointed tip from his right ear. He begins the conversation by explaining to the player characters that he is looking for proof regarding the Evermore's involvement in the dangerous time anomaly phenomena. He should explain that this would be considered an unofficial Legion operation, and he'll deny any knowledge of it once you all part ways.

Once the scene has been set, this would be a good opportunity for the players to get some screen time and tell their introductions. Let them each go over how their pacts have wronged them, and feel free to have Quiven show sympathy, having dealt with many of these offenders. Khouryn's demeanor may come across as more amused than sympathetic. This is also a great time to talk about how many Warlocks who come to the Shadelands aren't looking to become Warlocks at all, but rather rid themselves of something they were forced into.

After the player characters have introduced themselves, Khouryn, in her thick sailor's accent, informs them that she can break each of their pacts. But her price is steep: she hands the party a mid-sized satchel and tells them that she wants it filled with the blue quartz stones that power the clocks of the Evermore Warlocks. She's used the quartz in the past to break Maghor's pacts, and she thinks she can also use it to create a means of dispelling these pesky time anomalies that have been plaguing the Shadelands.

"Last week there were three bloody Tuesdays in a row! Who the fuck needs that many Tuesdays?" she complains.

They have a lead for the players to follow: recently an Evermore Warlock named Sarvish Dunn was killed by his brethren. His imp familiar, Retch, survived the encounter and has been reportedly drowning his sorrows at The Little Helper, a bar that caters to familiars across the river in Cathrach. But there are rumors the Evermore's are searching for him too.

The players must choose which bridge they are going to cross to get from Yonder to Cathrach. Each bridge is a quarter-mile long and over one hundred yards wide. They are their own self-contained neighborhoods with huts, shacks, and tents forming massive bazaars and markets:

Black Span

The northern bridge is a dark and dangerous place. It is known for its arcane market, where one may find some of the world's oddest trinkets. Black Span is run by an alliance of Sorcerers and Assassins. The Sorcerers are led by an elderly grey orc named Ulka Resh. He's relatively unconcerned with matters of the "mundane" and only interested in expanding his arcane power. The Assassins have their alliance with the Sorcerers to maintain their hidden base of operations within the bridge, however, they are seldom seen openly roaming the bridge (as one might expect from assassins). The Sorcerers keep a much more ostentatious presence among the black tented bazaars.

Stone Leg

The central bridge, a haven for those with adventurous appetites. The bazaar at the center of the bridge is constantly bathed in the scents of cuisine from a hundred walks of life. Stone Leg is run by a group of rangers. Their leader is a wood Elf woman called Snow, and she may be the shrewdest businessperson in the entire city. Coin is everything to her, and she will fiercely try to destroy any threat to her smuggling operations. She likes charging tolls to outsiders who try to cross "her" bridge.

Patron's Pass

The southern bridge. At first glance, this bridge might seem like the safest option. It's near the great temple, the Scarlet Hearth. The bridge is filled with clerics, mostly preaching against the foul temptations of the Warlock life. But don't let your guard down. The real authority of this bridge is a band of thieves and rogues, led by the shapechanger Alios. He is a worshiper of the God of Thieves and often poses as a benign cleric. Alios considers himself a realist. Others call him a cynical fatalist.

Once the players have chosen a route, Quiven should reiterate that the Legion is not officially involved in this mission. He can remind the players that the Legionnaires do not care much for Warlocks. Fortunately for the players, the Legionnaires don't care much about those leaving Yonder toward Cathrach. However, Quiven advises them to avoid Legion checkpoints when they make their return.

Khouryn will hand over a scroll sealed with a thick glob of red wax. The symbol pressed into the wax looks like a stag, a dragon, a squid, a praying mantis, a serpent, and a tortoise all encircling an eyeball. She can explain that it's the official seal of Dorian, the Accursed King, and the scroll could potentially

be used by the party to bluff their way past the Accursed Guard stationed on the eastern side of the river. Khouryn may or may not divulge that the scroll itself is totally blank.

Bridge Encounters

Black Span

GM Note

There is a potential encounter prepared for each of the bridges below. You can adjust or create your own as you see fit. The time anomalies will play a role during the climax, however, you are welcome to incorporate them throughout the adventure.

Feel free to let the players explore a bit. You may want to pre-plan a few merchant booths and tents where the party can peruse creepy and occult wares. At some point, they should be approached by a Tiefling Sorcerer flanked by two figures hidden under cloaks. His name is Aksos Tormentia and he wants to buy the player's body parts: someone's ear... their foot... their eye... the price he offers should not be generous. If a player accepts the offer, Aksos can remove the part with little pain. If you want to reward them for their boldness by providing some kind of reward, feel free. For example, a player sacrifices their eye and is granted a gemstone to replace it that allows them to "see" through walls. If the party declines, Aksos will reveal himself to be an illusion, not physically present in this encounter. The cloaks of his guards will drop, revealing themselves to each be three differently colored, magical monkeys called Alasim's stacked on top of each other. The monkeys will attack the party. Their stats and abilities are in the Appendix. Adjust as needed for your players.

Reward: When there is just one Alasim left standing (either the others are all dead or have fled the battle) that final monkey will surrender to the party and offer his/her service as a familiar. They admit Aksos is not the most pleasant of masters and would love a new opportunity.

Stone Leg

All the tents and structures here are white, offering concealment for the white-cloaked rangers. Near the

GM Note

You can create a final encounter with the Illusionist Aksos later in the adventure, especially if the party accepts one of his monkeys as a familiar!

center of the bridge, built into the south-side wall, is the Frosty Flagon alehouse. There is a front patio area enclosed within a short split-rail fence, where thirsty customers can sit outside in the crisp air to enjoy their drinks, and dartboards have been set up along the front wall. As the party passes, they may find themselves taunted by some off-duty Legionnaires: "You may not look it... but I can tell you have the infernal stink of Warlock on you." The Legionnaires will challenge the party to a game of Picks 'n' Piss, where contestants take shots of Ice Piss, a local liquor, and then throw ice picks at a dartboard.

To entice the players, the Legionnaires should hold up a few "baubles they took off a dead Warlock." These are the **Hourglass Pendant** and the **Warlock's Kaleidoscope** (Appendix). Perhaps one of the players' patrons will whisper in their ear regarding the value of these artifacts.

The rules of Picks 'n' Piss are as follows: Each round contestants take a shot of Ice Piss and roll a CON save.

They then throw the ice pick. Roll DEX check with disadvantage, straight roll, or advantage based on the CON save.

The difficulty increases every round.

The Team with the highest score after 5 rounds wins.

Round 1

CON save - 1-5 Disadvantage, 11+ Advantage
DEX check - equals points scored.

Round 2

CON save - 1-8 Disadvantage, 14+ Advantage
DEX check - equals points scored.

Round 3

CON save - 1-11 Disadvantage, 17+ Advantage
DEX check - equals points scored.

Round 4

CON save - 1-14 Disadvantage, 20+ Advantage
DEX check - equals points scored.

Round 5

CON save - 1-17 Disadvantage, 23+ Advantage
DEX check - equals points scored.

If the Legionnaires win, they will demand payment of half the players' money, otherwise, they will attack. This will draw the ire of the white-cloaked rangers who will then put down the disturbance by attacking both the party and the Legionnaires.

Patron's Pass

This bridge is jam-packed with missionaries, miniature church tents, and preaching clerics. Most are

GM Note

You can let the players deal with their drunkenness going forward as it affects their abilities. Or if you're feeling benevolent, you can have an alchemist vendor outside the tavern sell them an arcane coffee to sober them up.

ranting and raving about the evils of the Warlock lifestyle. Have the party make Perception checks. At some point, a rogue will try to pickpocket one player's coin purse, then another, until all players have lost something (the Accursed King Scroll and Legion badge too!) or have caught the would-be thieves.

If they catch them in the act, there can be a fight or skill challenge where they chase the rogue through the religious bazaar. Some possible obstacles:

1. Monk swinging a Censer on a chain full of incense. Everyone make CON save against the incense
2. A wandering prophets waving a sign "The End Already Happened! We're All Dead! This is Hell! Glory to Kelemvor!" Make an acrobatics check
3. A stack of gigantic jugs filled with holy water
4. A trio of old women in rags screams "Sinner! Sinner! Sinner!" They try to grab and pull a character into their tent "We must cleanse you! Must cleanse body and soul!" Make an athletics check.
5. A holy scroll salesman tries to get your attention. When you undoubtedly ignore him, he tries to cast a spell to hold your attention. Make a CHA save.
6. Another thief tries to trip you, making an unarmed attack against your AC.

7. Prayer circle, holding hands, eyes closed.
8. Priests of the Inferno Order are putting on a performance demonstration, conjuring dancing creatures made of fire. Roll a DEX save to avoid the flames.

If they catch and defeat the rogue(s), Alios will be disappointed in his pupils and order one to go with the party to atone for incompetence. If the party gets robbed blind without noticing, they can ask around and maybe find their way to Alios. When he learns of their mission, he'll send someone along with them: Almaya the half-elf rogue thief. Breaking into a place like Maghoro's Perch is too big of a feather in the cap for him to pass up.

Having the rogue with them will grant the party ease of infiltrating and navigating the clock tower.

Some Accursed Guard Warlocks should be posted at the eastern end of each bridge. How strict or lenient they are regarding allowing the party to enter Cathrach is up to the DM. Act 1 ends once the players reach Cathrach.



ACT 2: THE LITTLE HELPER



The night-time streets of Cathrach are much quieter than that of Yonder. This city is a jungle of towering black towers, citadels, and obelisks. The dark stones of the street appear to be perpetually damp. Magical torches cast eerie light from wall-mounted sconces. It is the type of place where you constantly feel unseen eyes on your back.

The party may stumble into some minor time anomalies (Listed in the Appendix) or possibly a pack of fiendish Warlocks prowling for their next sacrifice. Or they may reach the Little Helper with no trouble at all.

As for their destination, The Little Helper is quite easy to find. The establishment's name is spelled out in glowing red letters against the black stone backdrop of a massive tower. The actual door is set back a bit, under an archway and flanked by a pair of imposing, yet bored-looking **Kaldenkind**: creatures that resemble upright bears with snow-white hair, and more humanoid facial features. The Kaldenkind aren't likely to let a party of non-familiars into the bar unless given proper incentive. (Future favors, charming compliments, cold hard cash, etc.).

Entering the Little Helper, the party will find the room to be relatively spacious, with high ceilings. That being said, all the furniture: the tables, chairs, stools, the bar... all of it is sized down for smaller creatures. Unnatural neon colors emanate from alcoves along the walls. Imps and sprites are the majority of the clientele, though there are also Quasit, winged monkeys, and some pseudodragons snoozing high up in the rafters.

There's a stage where a cat-sized spider is playing three different stringed instruments simultaneously, and a dozen or so creatures dance wildly about on the floor in front of the stage. As the party enters, the music stops, and all eyes turn toward them. What do they do?

As long as the party doesn't do anything too threatening, the clientele will go back about their business. If the party offends them, they will have to fight the **Familiar Horde**.

Retch can be found at the bar, face down on the polished wood counter. The bartender, a sprite woman with black gossamer wings and streaks of red in her black hair, wipes down the bar near Retch whilst shooting the dozing imp annoyed glances.

If woken up, Retch will be very loud and very drunk. He is morose and emotional, mourning the loss of his Warlock master, Sarvish Dunn. He is angry at the Evermore's for betraying his best friend.

He will likely be agreeable to helping the party investigate the Evermore's and steal some blue quartz, however, he isn't too keen on sobering up. He should try to coerce the players into buying him a few shots of Ice Piss. And throughout the remainder of the adventure, he will attempt to discreetly keep drinking from a flask.

As most likely expected, this task will require gaining entry to the clock tower. If the party agrees to let Retch come, he can teleport them all to right outside the clock tower with Sarvish's pocket watch.

GM Note

If your group seeks more combat and/or investigation, feel free to elaborate on the search for Retch. Perhaps the Evermore's reached him first, and perhaps a time anomaly in the alley out back will take players to the past just moments before they arrive...

Act 2 ends when the party reaches Maghoro's Perch, either by teleporting with Retch or walking back the way they came.



ACT 3: MAGHORO'S PERCH

The party finds themselves in the street at the base of the clock tower. The evening is quiet and there is no one around, save for one single person sitting on the steps leading up to the tower door. They appear to be a dark blue-skinned Tiefling dressed in fine clothes. A gold mask rests on the step next to them as they puff on a pipe, appraising the party with a smirk.

Retch will be wary and uneasy to see the Tiefling. The figure stands, extinguishes their pipe, and says, "Don't fret, my little imp friend. I'm not here to interfere. I just wanted to get a quick look at the city's new blood."

After giving the players a quick appraising gaze, they'll nod at the tower and say, "Good luck in there."

They then vanish. If asked, Retch will explain that was Majin the Betrayer, someone well known in the city as a meddler in the affairs of others. If the party wishes to know more, they should seek out Fayte and LaCroix at an inn in Yonder (Act 1 of the main campaign).

GM Note

What follows next is a short series of traps, puzzles, and fights as the party attempts to climb to the top of the clock tower. You are welcome to keep Majin in your back pocket as a "Get out of jail free" card. If the party finds themselves trapped in an unwinnable situation, Majin may appear to solve the problem but should admonish the players for their failure and mention "You get one free favor" before disappearing again.

Tick Tock

The only discernible way into Maghoro's Perch is a set of double doors painted dark blue. The brass doorknobs have been molded to look like clocks.

The doors are locked. If the party has Alios or one of his rogues, they can easily pick the lock without any checks. If they don't, someone else must try to unlock them. The DC for picking the lock can be low, but they should also have to roll a difficult stealth check. If they fail a stealth check, nothing happens

immediately, but make a note of it. The pocket watch carried by Retch will unlock the doors if held up to the knob, though he may be too drunk to help.

The lobby of the tower is an open, cavernous space. A black staircase spirals upward from about two-thirds of the way across the room. It rises nearly one hundred feet before disappearing through the ceiling. The walls around the lobby are lined with hundreds, if not thousands, of unique and strange clocks. The air is filled with a quiet symphony of ticking.

Each player will need to pass three stealth checks to reach the stairs. Have them make at least one more stealth check as they begin to walk up the stairs. If they pass, they can reach the next level without trouble.

On a failed stealth check, 1d6 clocks will fire bursts of blue energy. The targeted players should be random. Players must make a medium difficulty DEX save to avoid the bursts. On a failure, the player is cursed with Slow. Their movement is halved, and they have disadvantage on all saves and attacks. If a Slowed player is hit a second time, they become frozen in place.

Touching the stairs removes the curse and also prevents the player from being targeted by more Slow Bursts. Once all players have reached the stairs, they can ascend to the next level.

Planning the Past

The second level appears to be some kind of workshop, filled with tables, benches, and piles of gears and machinery. Tall windows are set into the surrounding walls. If the players look out the windows, they will see a curious sight. Instead of seeing the developed city of Yon'Cath, they will see a tiny settlement of just a few permanent wooden buildings, and dozens of tents and shacks. The clothing of those in the settlement appears old and outdated, almost as though looking back in time.

At the center of the room are five clocks arranged in a circle where the spiral staircase should be. Going left to right the clocks are set at 1:05, blank, 3:16, 4:22, and blank. The hour and minute hands of the second and fifth clock are laying on the floor.

Once a player gets to within fifteen feet of the clocks, a series of metallic clinking and clanking noises are

heard. Looking around, the party will see dozens of gears, levers, nuts, bolts, and other bits of machinery all coalescing together into one long, tubular shape. In a matter of seconds, they will find themselves looking at an automaton in the form of a gigantic **Clockwork Serpent**. Its massive jaw opens to reveal rows of razor-sharp metal shards. Its eyes are a pair of clock faces set to 12:30 to form a very reptilian appearance. Roll initiative.

After the Clockwork Serpent is defeated, keep the initiative order active. The Serpent will reform itself on its next turn with full HP. The Serpent cannot be killed and it does not take an action on the turn it reforms. The party must fix the second and fifth clocks by setting the hour and minute hands to 2:11 and 5:27 respectively. If the party visualizes each of the times, they will see the hour and minute hands are overlapping.

If the party seems to be struggling or has their attention focused on the Clockwork Serpent, Retch can tell them fixing the clock is the way to solve this problem.

Once they do, the Serpent falls apart and the circular staircase descends from the ceiling, allowing access to the next level.

Remembering the Future

The third level is a spacious room filled with cozy, antique-looking furniture, appearing to be some kind of lounge. Perceptive players may notice that the floor is slightly pitched so that the center of the room is raised as if to drain water. Like the level below, this room is surrounded by tall windows that display a barren, broken, and desolate landscape. Canyon-sized fissures scar the land with plumes of white fire bursting upwards towards the crimson sky. Yon'Cath is nothing but a sea of broken black stone, rubble, and dust. If players look closely, they will see the ground littered with thousands upon thousands of skeletons of every sentient race.

A massive oaken desk stands against one of the walls covered with scrolls and parchments. Upon closer inspection, the party will find maps of various Shadelands locations. An hourglass symbol has been drawn over numerous spots. Some of these drawings are circled. Some are circled and crossed out.

Have a player make an investigation check and on success, they will realize that the hourglass drawings that are both circled and crossed out align with known locations of past time anomalies.

The ceiling is one hundred feet above the floor and bears a massive inscription. To everyone except the

oldest player character, the inscription looks like gibberish. The oldest character can see the inscription reads:

"In time, all things turn to dust."

The player must say the word "Dust" out loud to trigger the trap. Suddenly streams of sand begin to pour down from a dozen tiny holes in the ceiling, filling the room at an alarming rate.

Once the sand starts falling, have the party roll initiative. Each round, every player must pass a DEX save. The DC should increase every round:

1st Fail - The player is buried to their knees and restrained.

2nd Consecutive Fail - The player is now buried up to their waist. On their next turn, they must make a STR save to free themselves.

3rd Consecutive Fail - If they fail the STR save, they are now buried up to their necks and immobilized. They can no longer free themselves without help from others and will start suffocating on their next turn.

Unrestrained players can dig their allies out with successful STR checks. Spells such as Freedom of Movement or movement effects like Burrow can allow a creature to move through the sand easier. When the sand starts falling, the inscription vanishes for the oldest player. Instead, only the youngest can see what it says now:

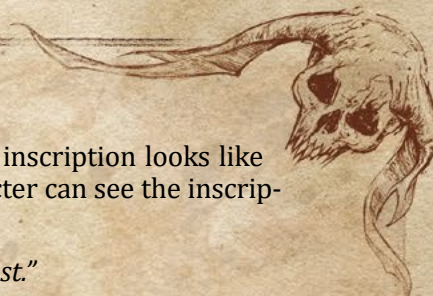
"I can bring tears to your eyes, resurrect the dead, make you smile, and reverse time. I form in an instant but I last a lifetime. What am I?"

The answer is A Memory. If a player says "Memory" the sand will stop falling from the ceiling and start draining through chutes opening in the floor. The ceiling will open and the next staircase will descend from above.

If a player wants to attempt to halt the trap by other means, such as casting Dispel Magic, they are welcome to try and we recommend encouraging and rewarding creative solutions. However, we also recommend a relatively difficult DC for such methods.

If the party completely fails this trap, becoming totally buried, they will all blackout. They will then awaken, covered in a light dusting of sand on the floor of the now drained room with half the HP they started the trap with. The ceiling is open and the staircase is present.

The intent of this trap is the passage of time. While magic can short-cut and extend time, all things turn



to dust—even the players' ambitions. They can heal up before ascending to the final level.

Blood in the Gears

Emerging into the top level, the party will see that each of the four walls is the backside of an enormous clock face. They illuminate the room with an eerie blue glow. Complex tangles of gigantic gears take up most of the space. As if purposely laid out, a basin rests on a chest-high pedestal in the center of the room and is filled with hundreds of glowing blue quartz crystals. But they are not alone. A team of Warlocks stands between the characters and the pedestal. The races are varied, but they all wear long navy blue trench coats with a patch shaped like a clock face sewn into the left breast, and all wield matching rapiers. These are the **Evermore's**, devout followers of Maghoro.

Upon seeing them, Retch starts ranting and raving, cursing them out by name for betraying his master. In a blind, drunken rage, he hurls his pocket watch. It strikes the pedestal holding the quartz and explodes, sending the crystals everywhere. A few dozen of them shatter as they hit the gears/walls/floor. Wherever quartz shatters, a small 10x10ft time anomaly should form.

The party must now battle the Evermores while avoiding the many time anomalies in the room. You can place the anomalies as you see fit or randomize them. Whenever a player moves, there should be a chance they encounter an anomaly (Listed in the Appendix). Remember that the Evermore's are FAR stronger than the party. Defeating them should not mean reducing them to zero hitpoints, but rather wounding one at least to the point where they decide to flee as a group. Maghoro's time anomalies can also be used as a reason away why attacks are often near misses.

Once the Evermore's are defeated, the party can fill up a sack with the quartz and begin to leave. Retch should urge them to hurry as he's certain reinforcements will be en route.

The party will find two figures waiting for them in the lobby. One is Majin. The other is a blue, translucent spirit in the form of a halfling woman. Retch should be quite terrified.

Majin will smile at the spirit next to them and say, *"Told you they had potential."*

The spirit form is Maghoro projecting herself across planar dimensions. Her demeanor is calm, but stern. While by no means pleased about it, she does not appear to be overly angry at the party's actions. But

she will demand all the pocket watches be returned, or else she cannot promise they won't be cursed and somehow wind up falling out of time unexpectedly. She will, however, offer a watch and a pact to any player who wishes to become an Evermore, after Khouryn has freed them from their current pacts, of course. For those who decline, she will shrug and say, *"It's your decision, though I can't guarantee your safety from my followers. They will likely take this affront more personally than I."*

She'll scold Retch, *"I know you're upset about Sarvish's death, but this little tantrum of yours is ridiculous. You know what he did. We were tired of cleaning up his messes. The time anomalies are not playthings and he was getting out of hand. He wouldn't stop tinkering and I knew the rest of us would carry the blame for his transgressions."*

Retch's punishment is far more brutal, as she ages Retch until he's a decrepit old imp with his teeth falling out and days away from death. Retch will die of old age before the end of the Red Opera main campaign.

In the end, it was Sarvish who was causing all the trouble with the chaotic, unchecked time anomalies popping up everywhere.

Maghoro will admit there isn't much she can do in her current form to stop the players from leaving, though she'll mention she is coming back to this plane soon in her full form.

Majin will give the party a parting nod before vanishing.

The first rays of dawn are peaking over the horizon as the party exits the tower. They have what they need to gain freedom from their nefarious patrons and as they walk the quiet streets toward The Cracked Pact to meet Khouryn, the wind picks up a bit. A few leaves rustle by. And if one were to listen closely. It might sound as if the wind is talking, but only repeating two syllables over and over...

"Tick tock tick tock tick tock..."

THE END

**Thank you for participating in
"Killing Time!"**

Appendix 1

NPC & CREATURE STATISTICS

Alasim

Magical Winged Monkey

ARMOR CLASS	13				
HP	41				
SPEED	30 FT walking 60ft. flying				
STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
10(+0)	15(+2)	12(+1)	11(+0)	14(+2)	8(-1)

Magic Resistance. Advantage on rolls against magic effects.

Actions

Nimble. 3 uses. Reaction. The attacker has disadvantage on attack

Bite. +6 to hit. 1d6+2 piercing.

Sprout Wings. Alasim grows wings. Melee attacks have disadvantage.

Fire Alasim (Red)

Spitfire. Range 20ft. Coughs up a wad of molten lava and spits it. +5 to hit. Deals 2d6+6 fire damage.

Ice Alasim (White)

Frost Breath. Hisses out a 15ft cone of freezing mist. Save DC12. Deals 1d8+6 cold damage. Half damage on save.

Shadow Alasim (Black)

Possession. Range 30ft. Alasim turns into black smoke and envelopes a character. Make a WIS save DC12. On failure, the character is possessed until they take damage from an ally.

Stone Alasim (Gray)

Rock Fist. 5ft range +7 to hit. Deals 2d6+6 bludgeoning.

Venomous Alasim (Green)

Venom Fang. Normal Bite attack, but add 1d8 poison. Make CON save DC12. Poisoned on failure.

Storm Alasim (Blue)

Zap. 5ft range. +5 to hit. Deals 3d6 lightning. Make STR save DC12. On failure, the character is stunned until the start of Alasim's next turn.

Clockwork Serpent

Magical Construct

ARMOR CLASS	14				
HP	20				
SPEED	40 FT				
STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
18(+4)	16(+3)	19(+4)	10(+0)	10(+0)	8(-1)

Actions

Bite. +5 to hit. 1d6+2 piercing damage

Tail Swipe. +6 to hit. 1d4+2 bludgeoning damage

Acid Spit. Range 30ft. Target makes DEX save DC13. Takes 1d8+4 acid damage on failure.

Evermore Warlock

Follower of Maghoro

ARMOR CLASS	17
HP	40
SPEED	30 FT

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
16(+3)	18(+4)	14(+2)	18(+4)	16(+3)	12(+1)

Actions

Right-on-Time Rapier. The preferred Evermore weapon may not deal the most damage, but it is one of those most precise in existence. Roll with Advantage for each strike. +6 to hit. Deals 1d8+4 damage.

Cantrips:

Synchronize. The Evermore Warlock spends the round studying a single enemy, gaining an uncanny understanding of how they fight. On their next turn, and for the duration of the encounter, the Evermore will have advantage on attacks against that enemy. Additionally, that enemy will have disadvantage against the Evermore.

Temporal Displacement Blast. Holding up the pocket watch, firing an arc of blue lightning from the clock face. Deals 2d6+7 lightning damage. On a hit, the target must make a WIS save, or be Slowed until the start of their next turn.

Reactions

Perfect Timing. The Evermore attempts to dodge an attack that would otherwise hit. The Evermore rolls a DEX check DC15 to avoid the attack. 2 uses per encounter.

Reverse Time. The Evermore targets any creature, friend or foe, and undoes whatever just happened. For example: If a player deals damage, the damage is undone. If a player is healed, the healing is undone. Make a contested CHA check to see if the spell succeeds.

All Wound Up. When the Evermore makes three successful attacks in a row, they may use a bonus action on that turn to use this reaction, gaining an extra action that round.

Spells

Double Time. Buff. Range 120ft. Duration 30 seconds. Can target one or more willing creatures. Until the spell ends, movement speed is doubled, all attacks against the target have

disadvantage, and the target has double actions each turn. The number of creatures that can be targeted is equal to the Spell Slot Level used.

Pause. Target one creature or object and freeze it in time and space for 1 round. Make a spell attack roll.

Steal a Moment. The target must make a CON save. On a failure, the Evermore steals their time to heal themselves. Target takes 1d10+8 psychic damage, and the user is healed by the same amount.

Ashes to Ashes. Concentration. Range 120ft. Duration 1 minute or until the concentration is broken. Target one creature that must make an INT save. On failure, they instantly feel themselves aging 10, 20, 30, 40 years... until they are old and feeble. Target's speed is halved. All attacks against the target have advantage. Target has disadvantage on their attacks, and may only take one total action during their turn.

Dust to Dust. Concentration. Range 60ft. Lasts as long as the concentration is maintained. Target a non-living object such as armor, a weapon, or a magical item. The wielder of the target object must make a WIS save. On failure, the object rots, rusts, and breaks. All benefits, stats, and abilities of the object are completely negated. All AC from armor is lost and weapons do no damage. Once the concentration is broken, the object returns to normal.

Rewind Person. The Evermore reaches into the enemy's mind, seeing their past stretching out before them. Giving them a mental shove, the Evermore pushes the target back in time to before they were as powerful as they are today. The target must make an INT save. On a failure:

- HP is not affected
- AC is reduced by 3 points
- All ability modifiers are reduced by 1
- All spells above Level 1 are lost.
- Add -3 to all damage rolls for non-magical attacks

Effects last until Warlock breaks concentration.

Time Out. Range 120ft. Duration 3 minutes. The target needs to take a moment by themselves to think about the consequences of their actions. To help them focus, the Evermore transport them to another plane of existence where they will be stuck in a small white room. The walls around them will then playback all the memories of moments from the target's life that they regret. The target makes a CHA save (DC18).

The target can attempt a CHA save to escape on their turn. The CHA save DC drops by 1 every attempt. Upon returning, the target must make an additional INT save. On a failure, they are overcome with the shame of their past transgressions and take 4d8 psychic damage.

Familiar Horde

A gang of imps, sprites, quasits, pseudodragons, and any other creatures that choose to join.

ARMOR CLASS	15
HP	200
SPEED	60 FT

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
10(+0)	18(+4)	12(+1)	14(+2)	12(+1)	16(+3)

Actions

Imp. A cluster of winged imps scratches at a target with their sharp claws. +7 to hit. Deals 4d4+4 slashing damage.

Sprite. A squad of sprites fires a volley of shimmering, glittery beams of arcane energy. +5 to hit. Deals 4d6+4 force damage.

Pseudodragon. Range 40/80. A flock of pseudodragons focus their tiny fire breath on a single point. Every creature within fifteen feet of the target point must make a DEX save or take 4d4+6 fire damage. Half damage on successful save.

Quasit. A small pack of tiny demons tries to bite a target's ankles. +7 to hit. Deals 4d4+4 piercing damage.

Kaldenkind

Medium Humanoid Snow-Bear

ARMOR CLASS	19
HP	60
SPEED	30 FT

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
20(+5)	18(+4)	16(+3)	14(+2)	12(+1)	14(+2)

Actions

Display Dominance. Kaldenkind lets out a furious roar and beats on its chest in an attempt to intimidate its foes. All enemies who can hear and see Kaldenkind must make a CON save or become intimidated. On their next turn, they will have disadvantage on all rolls. **After the first use, ability recharges on a d6 roll of 5 or 6.**

Maul. Kaldenkind swipes with claws. +7 to hit. Deals 2d8+4 slashing damage

Grab. Kaldenkind attempts to grab an enemy. The target must make a DEX save, or they are caught in the Kaldenkind's massive paws.

Toss. This can only be attempted on an enemy that is held by the Kaldenkind. The Kaldenkind makes a DEX check (DC15) to hurl the enemy across the battlefield. On success, the enemy is thrown twenty feet in the direction of the Kaldenkind's choosing and takes 2d8+8 fall damage and will start their next turn prone. On failure, the player is released from the grip taking no damage.

Crush. This can only be attempted on an enemy held by the Kaldenkind. Make a STR check (DC15). On success, the enemy takes 1d10+4 bludgeoning damage and must make a CON save to avoid passing out.

Savage Rush. The Kaldenkind can drop to all fours and burst forward, covering 60 feet of ground. They may still take the Maul action, but cannot cast spells or attack with a weapon.

Appendix 2

ITEMS & EVENTS

Hourglass Pendant

Magical Item

A medallion with a tiny hourglass set into a circular frame. The wearer can, as a reaction, turn the hourglass halfway around the circular frame to freeze time for 6 seconds (1 round). 1 charge per short rest.

Warlock's Kaleidoscope

Magic item.

A ceramic tube painted with dozens of different, unique eyeballs. When looked through, the user sees the world washed out in gray. Anything the Kaleidoscope thinks the User should focus on is highlighted in bright glowing violet light. The item is especially useful in locating a means of escape from a dangerous situation, or for solving a puzzle. For example: If the User had a sheet of paper with 1+1= written on it, and they looked through the Kaleidoscope, they would see a 2 appear in violet light.

However, the effectiveness of the item can vary. Players must roll an Investigate check whenever they use it. Roll effects:

- 1 - Nothing is revealed
- 2-10 - Very vague information is revealed
- 11-19 - Helpful information is revealed
- 20+ - The exact, detailed solution is revealed

Time Anomalies

Freeze. Creatures are frozen in place. They must pass a STR save with disadvantage to escape the effects without help.

Frantic. Creatures begin thinking, moving, and reacting at an uncontrollably fast pace. Actions are doubled, but there is disadvantage on all rolls as people have trouble controlling themselves. Effects linger for one additional round after exiting anomaly.

Reversed. Everything a creature attempts to do, they do it backward. For example, try to walk forward and they walk backward. Try to cast a spell in one direction and it goes the opposite direction. Effects linger for one additional round after exiting anomaly.

Agging. A character ages one year for every round they remain within the anomaly. Take 5 points of damage for every year lost. Take disadvantage on the next attack action after exiting the anomaly as the character will be unaccustomed to the body's new age.

Youth. A character grows one year younger for every round they remained within the anomaly. Regain 5 points of damage for every year lost. Take disadvantage on the

next attack action after exiting the anomaly as they will be unaccustomed to their body's new age.

Visions. For every round a character remains within the anomaly, they see a vision of the future. While within the anomaly, the character has advantage on all attack and spell rolls. However, all attacks against the character also have advantage as the character will be too distracted by these visions to properly defend.

Evermore Warlock Equipment

The Evermore's are a considerably more regimented and organized group of Warlocks than most. As an initiate in their community, you are given two gifts:

Right-on-Time Rapier

The preferred Evermore weapon may not deal the most damage, but it is one of those most precise in existence. Roll with Advantage every time you strike. Deals 1d6 + DEX modifier + proficiency bonus.

Clocktower Coat

A dark blue trench coat that can be worn over all armor types other than plate. Adds +1 to all saving throws.







Chapter 2

A SCARLET MERCY

"Here we join The Great Divide. Separate the aspects like a knife. For our fate consumes desire. A scarlet mercy more than hallowed"— Legionnaire's Song

INTRODUCTION

'A Scarlet Mercy' is a trigger point chapter in The Red Opera that marks the first major conflict between the three factions. Weeks may have gone by since the first act where the Players helped the Knight Captain, and the setting of the Shadelands has changed drastically since.

Before beginning 'A Scarlet Mercy', make sure any side quests are resolved, and you might want to give the Players a chance at a downtime session. It's perfectly okay to spend extra time creating the set piece for the Scarlet Hearth (or drawing extra maps). The work won't go to waste as you'll be using this location later on in the Opera.

SYNOPSIS

"Freedom in death is denied and so we carry on. Often; fools presume they've come out on top of their Patron's bargain. At the same time, they complain about where skeleton soldiers come from." — Fayette the Shield Maiden

The goal of 'A Scarlet Mercy' is for the Players to join the Knight Captain and Fayette to capture the temple known as the Scarlet Hearth. The Scarlet Hearth serves an important role in the Shadelands as one of the prime gateways to interact with Patrons. By capturing the area, the Knight Captain hopes to strangle a source of the Accursed King's power and thus open negotiations.

In Act 1, the Players will have the chance to engage in war-room tactic planning and take stock of the city. The Knight Captain and his Legion will march on the front gates while the party takes a stealthy approach into the temple. They'll have a few choices available to them, and their mission is to get in with Fayette and handle the Patrons.

With Fayette on their side, Act 2 will be an encounter with the Patrons. The Knight Captain can't strangle eldritch energies and cut off access to Patrons unless they are dealt with, and while he distracts the

Accursed Guard, the party will have to get at least one Patron on their side.

In Act 3, there will be a decisive battle against the Accursed Guard, elite-level warlocks that are holding the Knight Captain at bay. The party will be able to come in from behind them and create a flanking assault, or perhaps even convince the enemy to retreat or surrender. 'A Scarlet Mercy' ends when the Knight Captain and Fayette have complete control of the Scarlet Hearth.



A SCARLET MERCY

Scan this QR code to listen to this adventure act's paired song from the Orchestral Version of the Red Opera Album by DiAmorte.

THE SETTING

"Thirty-one attacks in thirty-one days and the King still expects taxes to fund a new library? I'm not sure which part is more insane. They are drowning us in life, and in death. No more."

— LaCroix the Knight Captain

In the nights and days since 'Welcome to the Shadelands', the entire realm has grown darker. There are more attacks from creatures slipping through the veil, and fliers with sketches of missing people litter near every wall. The Legionaries of the Fallen are on edge, and often have civilians pleading for their assistance. Meanwhile, the Accursed Guard assures everyone that everything is all right while simultaneously singling anyone out for arrest. Tensions have risen.

The Patrons are no different. Many of them sense that the end of their proverbial free 'buffet' is coming, and they've begun to demand more sacrifices and more deeds performed in their names. Not all are obviously as evil as Arch Fiends, but even the kindest nature Fey is still demanding tasks from their Warlocks in a race to keep up with other Patrons who are taking advantage of the chaotic situation.

The Scarlet Hearth is a prominent set-piece in this battle, and the Players have seen (or even been within) its hallowed halls. Jutting off the third bridge, this temple is built over the Obsidian Rush in between both cities. Its exterior is filled with elaborate statues and wonderfully carved stonework in tribute. Glowing runes and wards protect the interior of the temple from both internal and external invaders, but for the most part, the interior is a stark stone palace. No one Patron is shown any more service than the next, and the doorways only facilitate a connection to planes of existence for easier communication. Heavily guarded in multiple realms of existence, the Scarlet Hearth is a vital source of power for the Shadelands and is guarded as such.



ACT 1

The party is summoned with Fayte to the Knight Captain's barracks. A map with a battle axe hewn through the center dominates the middle of the room and several soldiers look grim at their prospects. The city has grown worse and the Accursed King has become insane with his demands. There are more and more reports of Accursed Guard leading chained civilians into the Scarlet Hearth, and no sign of them re-emerging. Two words linger on the lips of the Legion... Sacrifice. Treason.

The Knight Captain's plan is not to engage in full war against Dorian, but rather capture the Scarlet Hearth. The temple where Fayte spends most of her time is a key military and spiritual base for Yon'Cath. Within its halls, the Patrons are offered tribute and sacrifice in exchange for temporary power. Warlocks and the Accursed benefit greatly from the eldritch energies that emerge from deals struck within. If being a Warlock elsewhere in the world is powerful, imagine being able to change your pacts or learn new secrets easily. It also serves as the place where the Accursed Guard are anointed and recruited.

Seizing the temple would give the Knight Captain and the civilians of Yon'Cath some collateral. Before they can sit at the bargaining table with the King, they must first bear arms.

Without Fayte, this would be impossible. Dealing with the Accursed Guard inside is one problem, but there are also the Patron avatars themselves. The temple

itself is, by its own accord, under the Patrons' influence. While the Legionnaires lead one assault, the party will escort Fayte inside another way of their choosing. From there, they are to recruit Patrons on their side, possibly forming a pact with them temporarily, to cut off their power to new Warlocks or Accursed Guardsmen (none would dare cross the King yet).

Once the stakes are set, sit back and let the Players study the map and formulate a plan in character. The Knight Captain and Fayte will present two options listed below, but they are by no means exhaustive and the Players are free to find other means of entry. Teleportation or magic, however, will pose a greater risk due to the magical wards and influence of the Patrons, so they will be cautioned against those methods.

If the Players insist, force some challenging, nightmarish, unpredictable consequences on them!

The Scarlet Hearth is only accessible via the third bridge, Patron's Pass. From the middle of this, a separate, warded bridge with cold-iron railings carries would-be pilgrims over the Obsidian Rush to the actual temple. The temple itself is constructed on top of several blackened rocks jutting out of the river.

For everyone's safety, the front gate is barricaded and guarded, opening only when pilgrims walk through. The Knight Captain and his soldiers will try to break through head-on and battle the Accursed Guard, so he asks the Party to find another way in.

OPTION 1: THE RIVER

The Obsidian Rush is the inky black river that divides Yonder and Cathrach. It flows against gravity upstream from the Nameless Sea and empties into a pool beneath the Scarlet Hearth. The party can choose to dive into the river and swim under the temple to come up from below. This route provides the quickest, easiest access, however, there is a price. The Players must pass a DC 18 Dexterity (Acrobatics), Strength (Athletics), or Wisdom (Survival) to complete the swim instantly. A failure results in the Player drowning almost instantly. The Obsidian Rush is not a normal river, and its water flows between planes. The only way out for the

Players who failed their check is to strike a pact with the Patron who lurks in the river's depths (any of the DM's choosing, but we suggest a large catfish with a penchant for mischief and gambling). The Players who pass the check will emerge from the pool at the lower levels of the Scarlet Hearth, dripping water yet mysteriously dry. Even with successful checks, the party may be haunted by visions of their future selves dying in horrible ways. Before a Player makes their next roll, they first roll a D20 to see if they have a vision. If an odd number is rolled, they have a vision, thus earning disadvantage on the intended roll. This effect lasts until the end of this encounter.

The party emerges from the black pool in a dim circular chamber under the center of the Scarlet Hearth. A stone ledge rings the pool and there is a staircase leading up to the main level. Unguarded and quiet, if the party asks why the river access is such a blind spot to an otherwise important temple, Fayette provides the answer.

"If any pilgrim is bold enough to swim through seven planes of existence to gain an audience with their Patron, then not even the King is bold enough to stand in their way. The price is paid in the end. The price is always paid."

OPTION 2: THE ROOF

If the party attempts to climb the thousands of crimson vines that enwrap the outside of the temple, it will take three successful DC 15 Strength (Athletics) or Dexterity (Acrobatics) checks to reach the top. Creativity in helping each other climb is encouraged because at stake is a fall below into the Obsidian Rush (which still leaves option 1). A fail at the first level yields 1d6 bludgeoning damage, second level 2d6, and third is 3d6. The rocks jutting out of the river also bypass any damage reduction and inflict their damage as a magical attack (they exist in multiple realms at once).

Once at the top, the party will have to carve out a hole in the concrete roof. This can either be a stealth encounter (timing the cuts with the sounds of bells) or a combat encounter as Accursed Guard warlocks on the riverbanks fire off eldritch blasts at the party.

Once in, the party can drop down into an ornate ceremonial chamber with a sacrificial altar. If the party has snuck in via the roof before the Knight Captain's assault, then they will witness a ceremony taking

place. A Hexblade Patron is having two Accursed Guard's forge a blade of bone out of the torn-off arms from a still-living (and very much screaming) soldier of Yon'Cath. The party will get the drop on the two Guards (see stats below).

Should the party arrive after the Knight Captain's assault, then they will find an armless soldier slowly dying, gibbering madly as he dies, and a very happy Hexblade Patron fading back into the shadows.

GM Note

Either the sacrificial chamber on the top level or the pool chamber on the bottom level could be a good place to sprinkle some standard loot or some pieces from the Unassigned Magic Items Appendix. Some good options could be: Red Sight, The Calm Exterior, or Cirlet of Spatial Displacement.



ACT 2

The Second Act begins with Fayte taking charge and lighting her oil lantern. The sounds of battle rage outside, and through stained glass windows and vine overgrowth, the party can see fireballs explode over the river.

With a hurried step, Fayte leads them to the main level, where they stand in a circular chamber with six doors, each marked by a different symbol: Stag, Dragon, Serpent, Tortoise, Squid, and Praying Mantis. The doors open to reveal empty rooms, and Fayte will let them know they must all enter the same chamber to cross over. Here, they are choosing which Patron to challenge first... so choose wisely.

Once every party member enters, the effect takes hold: Depending on the route they take, they will

have to overcome encounters, fights, or puzzles based on the major types of Warlock Patron. In every situation, there is always the option to make a Pact with the Patron for an 'easy' out. The second act will come to an end once dramatically appropriate and at least one room has been solved.

The Party can attempt one door or can attempt all the doors. For each additional door beyond the first they resolve: remove spell levels from all future Accursed Guard encounters from this point until the start of Chapter 7 (unless they recapture the temple). Start with the highest abilities and work down. Once the party has learned of a room's contents and the nature of the challenge, they are free to simply walk away and return to the main chamber.

STAG DOOR – ARCHFEY

The party finds themselves suddenly outside in the middle of a beautiful autumn forest. A trick of the mind easy to spot, but real to them nonetheless. Knowledge of the illusion falls into the 'true-but-useless' category of arcane trivia. Before them stretches a long table laden with a rich feast. Four Fey (Satyr, Nereid, Pixie, and Dryad) creatures sit at the table and invite them to eat just one item.

Each creature poses a different riddle. If the Players eat an item that matches the riddle, they are released

from the realm. Eating the wrong thing causes the Player to fall into a magical sleep. If there is a Warlock in the party that serves an Archfey Patron, they will find hospitality and enjoy fine wine.

The riddles are merely a game of good sport, and if taken—will negate the Obsidian Rush's curse that the Players may have earned in the first act.

DESCRIPTION OF THE TABLE OFFERINGS

Meats: Chicken, Boar, Bison, Sausage, Pork Belly, Fileted Fish, Duck, and Crab Legs.

Fruits & Vegetables: Apples, Bananas, Grapes, Pears, Plums, Strawberries, Cherries, Tomatoes, Carrots, Potatoes, Cabbages, Beets, and Squash.

There are loaves of bread and plates of butter. There are toast points topped with caviar, hard-boiled eggs, and bowls of peanuts, almonds, cashews, and walnuts litter the table.

In between all lie spices: Salt, Pepper, Saffron, Paprika, and Oregano.

Lastly, sweet delicacies pile upon each other near the far end: ginger cookies, chocolate cake, peach cobbler, and frosted pastries.

The Dryad - *"Eat of the fruit that never wants to be alone."* (A pear.)

The Satyr - *"It can poison water in a way no Detect Poison can tell you. Damned it is in water, highly priced when dry."* (Salt)

The Nereid - *"Alive without breath, As cold as death; Never thirsty, ever drinking, All in mail never clinking."* (Fish)

The Pixie - *"In marble halls as white as milk, lined with skin as soft as silk. Within a fountain crystal clear, a golden apple doth appear. No doors there are to this stronghold, yet thieves break in and steal the gold."* (Egg)

If one Player eats a correct item, they've earned the Patron's favor and can request they remove their support for Accursed Guard. If all choose wrong and fall

asleep, an Archfey meets them in the dreamscape to offer a Pact in exchange for their release. One only party member needs to make the Pact. As with all riddles, characters' knowledge often beats the Players themselves. If a Player needs to roll, then a Nature

(wisdom) check is appropriate. Narrow down the food group rather than answering outright, and for added flavor have one of the other creatures offer the advice to the chagrin of which asked for the riddle.



DRAGON DOOR – FIEND

The party finds themselves in what appears to be a cozy lounge or study. Shelves laden with books line the walls and nestled between it all, a fireplace crackles with inviting warmth. A figure reclines in a cushioned chair. She looks like a Tiefling, but her skin is chalky white skin and her eyes are empty pools of pitch-black ink. Her voice is deep and hollow:

"You were probably expecting fire and brimstone and threats of endless torture. That can still be arranged if need be... but what good would that do any of us? You're here because you want something. I want something too. I want power. I want influence. I want an infinite army of devoted sycophants slaving at my feet. What can you offer me?"

This Fiend is cunning, ruthless, and overly ambitious. She is not one of the more famously powerful Fiends that rules in hell but aspires to attain that status. The challenge for the party will be if they can offer her something that would motivate her to revoke her support of the Accursed Guard. One deal the Fiend may offer is to accept a trinket, a small ruby gem tied to a strap of leather, which affixes to their weapon. Any person killed with the now enchanted weapon will have their soul become the property of the Fiend. Souls will need to be sent to the Fiend regularly to ensure the bargain is upheld. Details for this item can be found in the Appendix under **Fiend's Trinket**.

SQUID DOOR - LURKER OF THE DEEP

The party abruptly finds themselves standing in murky, waist-deep water. There are ripples as something large approaches before being revealed to be the same watery Patron from the bottom of the Obsidian Rush (the catfish, if you chose that description). The exchange can go one of two ways depending on how the party entered the temple:

1. The Party came in through the river, and a Player failed their swim check and was forced to make a pact with this Patron: The Patron greets them warmly and gladly offers a favor to their new follower. The Patron asks the rest of the party if they would like to form a pact as well. If the Player already with a pact can convince anyone else to take one, both Players will receive advantage on any rolls relating to this pact for the rest of this encounter
2. If every Player passed their swim check or came in through the roof, this will be the first time they've met this Patron. If no one wants to form a pact to earn the Patron's favor, the Patron challenges the party to a game of chance:

Patron's Game: Dozens of small creatures appear in the air and drop into the water. There were two kinds: bright golden fish and large crustaceans that look like black, four-clawed lobsters. A fishing pole materializes in each Player's hand. The Player's roll a Dexterity ability check to cast their fishing line. If they beat a DC20, they've caught a golden fish. If they roll 15-19, they've caught nothing. If they roll 1-14, they've caught a black Lopper, which lashes out at them with its claws before scuttling back into the water. The GM rolls a melee weapon attack for the Lopper: +10 to hit, reach 5ft, one target. Hit: 1d8 piercing damage. Each Player takes one turn till one round is completed. If they've caught more golden fish than Loppers, the party wins a favor from the Patron, but if they caught more Loppers, the Patron refuses to help unless someone strikes a pact. If there's a tie, they continue casting until either a golden fish or a Lopper is caught to break the tie.

SERPENT DOOR - OLD ONES

The room is pitch black. Then tiny white lights start creeping into existence all around the party. Dozens, then hundreds, then thousands, until it looks as if the party is floating through space. If they look down the ground is invisible, making it seem as though the starscape stretches infinitely in every direction. A platform of floating rock comes into focus not far away. When the party approaches, they will see four enormous marble columns on the platform. A large being, at least thirty feet tall, stands in the center, chained to the columns. Its body is that of a muscular humanoid with dark red, leathery skin, two bat-like wings sprout from its back. Its head and face are shaped like a human's, yet it has no nose, no mouth, no ears, just one large eye in the center of its forehead. It looks down at the party, who all hear a bellying voice inside their heads.

"Insects... what do you wish of Ahk Noh Ra?"

Ahk Noh Ra desires either a Patron pact or to be set free. If asked what he will do if set free, he only answers, "Rain down retribution."

He does not give any further clarification as to who or what the target of this retribution will be. If the

party tries to talk to him or ask any questions, his only answer will be:

"Burn, Break, Heal, Bleed."

If the party inspects the columns further, they will find a word written three times in three languages: *Primordial, Abyssal, and Deep Speech.*

- The Front Left Column says "Burn" (A Player must strike this column with fire to release its chain)
- Front Right Column says "Break" (A Player must strike this column with a melee weapon to break its chain).
- Back Left Column says "Heal" (Cast a healing spell to break the chain).
- Back Right Column says "Bleed" (A Player must cut themselves, take damage, and bleed on this column).

If the party releases Ahk Noh Ra, he will disappear. The Accursed Guard will no longer have any powers associated with the Old Ones. His "retribution" will manifest later.

PRAYING MANTIS DOOR – HEXBLADE

The party enters the chamber to find what looks like a sparring ring in the middle of the floor. A half-elf woman stands in the center of the ring. She is clad in black leather armor and wields two long curved blades. The half-elf introduces herself as Leth'ka the Hexblade Guardian. Her Patron respects combat prowess above all else, and so offers the party a wager:

Defeat her in combat and the Hexblade Patron will be indebted to the party. They can call this favor in immediately to ask the Patron to withdraw its support for the Warlocks loyal to the Accursed King.

If the party is defeated, they are all given the option of striking a pact with the Hexblade Patron in exchange for their lives.

On Leth'ka's turn, she receives one action per party member, including Fayte. For example, a 4 Player party would yield 5 actions for Leth'ka per turn. It is recommended (but of course, not required) for the GM to direct one attack or action toward each Player

per turn. This simulates her blinding speed as she strikes at each party member every turn.

If the Hexblade encounter needs to be dialed down in difficulty: Let the Player damage stack together as they fight her OR simply have her relent after the party spends a few rounds testing their skill (and her offering advice to them about their stance).



Leth'ka, the Hexblade Champion

Medium humanoid (half-elf), lawful neutral

ARMOR CLASS 19 (natural armor)
HIT POINTS 356 (31d8 + 217)
SPEED 50 FT

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
26(+8)	16(+3)	24(+7)	22(+6)	16(+3)	24(+7)

Saving Throws Str +14, Con +13, Wis +9, Cha +13

Skills Athletics +14, Acrobatics +9, Insight +9, Perception +9

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 19

Languages Common

Challenge 17 (18,000 XP)

Fey Ancestry. Leth'ka has advantage on saving throws against being charmed and cannot be magically put to sleep.

Gift of Renewal (2/day). At the start of each of her turns, Leth'ka can choose to regain any of her expended spell slots.

Spellcasting. Leth'ka is a 17th level spellcaster. Her spellcasting ability is Charisma (spell save DC 21, +13 to hit with spell attacks). She regains her expended spell slots when she finishes a short or long rest. She knows the following spells:

Cantrips (at will): booming blade, eldritch blast, true strike

1st-5th level (4 5th-level slots): banishing smite, blink, blur, dispel magic, misty step, shadow blade, shield, wrathful smite

Blade Waltz (Recharge 5 - 6). Leth'ka magically teleports to an unoccupied space she can see within 5 ft. of an enemy creature, then makes a single spellblade attack. She can then repeat this action, so long as she does not target a single creature more than once, and no more than a total of ten different creatures.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. Leth'ka makes three attacks, or makes one attack and casts a spell.

Spellblade. Melee Spell Attack: +13 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target., Hit: 11 (1d8+7) slashing damage. When she scores a hit with this attack, Leth'ka can choose to expend a spell slot to deal an additional 22 (5d8) necrotic damage with the attack.

Reward: If the party defeats Leth'ka, in addition to pulling Hexblade support from the Accursed Guard, she will offer one Player a sword, Deadly Precision (see Appendix)

TORTOISE DOOR UNDYING

The chamber transforms into a dank, moldy stone hall. Banners, torn and yellowed, drape the cold walls and a simple throne of gray stone rises before the party. The figure seated on the throne is a green Dragonborn male, however, he is older than what seems possible. His scaly skin, which once might have been a vibrant emerald, now appears an ashen gray-green. His facial features are pinched and sunken. A few wispy white hairs dangle from his chin. His purple robes, once quite fine, now appear dusty and faded. What stands out most, however, are his eyes. The irises are a bright, luminescent shade of violet. He is Ultuun the Eternal and he addresses the party in a pained rasp: "Welcome, seekers of infinity. I can give you what you desire..."

Ultuun wants one of two things: First, of course, is a pact. If a Player strikes a pact, Ultuun will revoke his support of the Accursed King. Second, is time. He will ask if any Players would be willing to give him twenty years of their life in exchange for a favor. The Undying Patron will hold out his hand and a Player must touch it. If a Player accepts, Ultuun's visage will improve. He will look a bit younger, healthier. The color will return some to his skin.

The consequences of accepting

The Player Character instantly ages twenty years (hair gets some gray streaks, the face gets an extra wrinkle or two, etc.). The Player must reduce either their Strength and/or Dexterity ability score by a combined total of 3 and may increase either their Wisdom and/or Intelligence ability score by a combined total of 3 (to a maximum of 22. This ability score increase is permanent. There is an additional accidental consequence of the transaction: The Player who trades their life receives Undying Nature (they can now hold their breath indefinitely, and do not require food, water, or sleep, although the benefits and requirements of short and long rest still apply)

GM Note

Advancing to Act 3: Remember that successfully clearing a room results in that specific Patron's power and support being withdrawn from the Accursed Guard. The party must clear at least one room to open the path to the temple lobby, where they can battle the Accursed Guard at the front gates. However, the party can choose to clear more rooms, thus stripping additional Patron support for the Accursed Guard. The more rooms the party successfully clear the weaker the enemies in Act 3 will be.

ACT 3

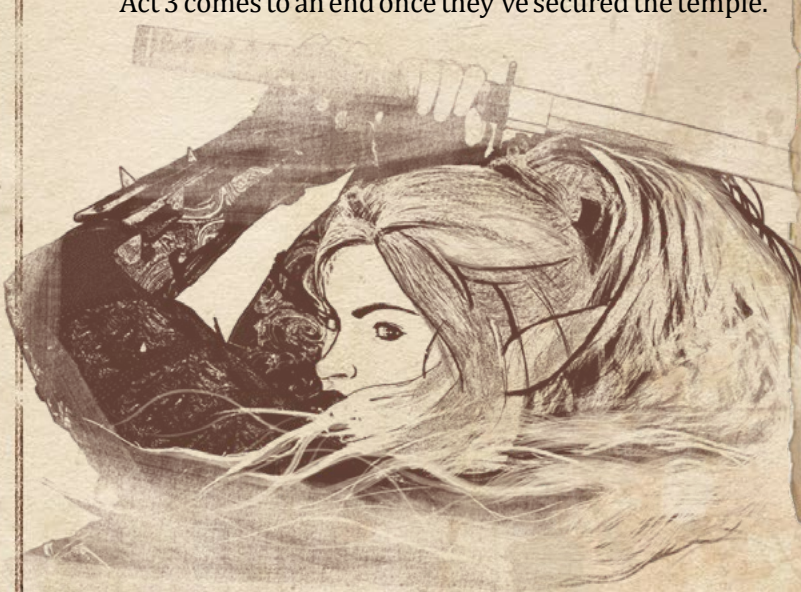


The third act brings the Players back to reality. Crashing out into the main lobby, Accursed Guard fight column-to-column with Legionaries of the Fallen. A small-scale skirmish, but no less high-powered as elite Warlocks fling spells in close quarters. Wedged between the party and the Legionaries, the Accursed Guard will make their last stand. If the party is Tier 4, throw them directly into the fray against these high-level warlocks and their dynamic abilities. If the party is Tier 1, then let the chaos happen around them while the party gets the drop on warlocks that have been grievously injured already.

If the party insists on capturing warlocks alive (the Legionnaires will not take prisoners), shift the encounter into a tense social situation. Let the Accursed Guard surrender (particularly if their Patrons all pulled their support), and then engage in a series of opposed diplomacy and intimidation checks to keep prisoners. A dangerous game as many believe the Accursed King can scry on his followers (in truth, Majin can).

As a possibility, you can start the encounter with only one or two Accursed Guard warlocks, then have more teleport themselves in each round as the battle intensifies. If you choose this option (increasing the tension and adding more Legionaries vs Warlocks), have Fayte tell them to buy her time. She will cut deals with Patrons (one Patron every two combat rounds) until she has removed the Accursed ability to teleport after six rounds. The party, in this case, must hold the doors to the inner sanctum while the Legionnaires are pushing in from the front gate.

Act 3 comes to an end once they've secured the temple.



Accursed Guard

Medium humanoid, Adjust Alignment to fit Campaign

ARMOR CLASS	20 (natural armor)
HIT POINTS	224
SPEED	30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
16(+3)	22(+6)	24(+7)	18(+4)	16(+3)	26(+8)

Saving Throws Str +14, Con +13, Wis +9, Cha +13

Skills Athletics +14, Acrobatics +9, Insight +9, Perception +9

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 19

Languages Common

Challenge 17 (18,000 XP)

Spellcasting. The guard is an 11th level spellcaster. Its spellcasting ability is Charisma (spell save DC 21, +13 to hit with spell attacks). It regains its expended spell slots when it finishes a short or long rest. It knows the following Warlock spells:

Cantrips (at will): booming blade, eldritch blast, true strike. **1st-5th level (3 5th-level slots):** The guard knows the following spells according to which patron it serves, as detailed below.

Archfey. Faerie fire, calm emotions, greater invisibility, dominate person

Fiend. Burning hands, hellish rebuke, fire shield, flame strike

Great Old One. Dissonant whispers, phantasmal force, black tentacles, telekinesis

Hexblade. banishing smite, branding smite, shield staggering smite

Lurker in the Deep. cone of Cold, gust of wind, lightning bolt, thunderwave

Undying. blindness/deafness, contagion, death ward, contagion, ray of sickness

ACTIONS - 2 PER TURN

Multiattack. The guard makes two attacks, or makes a single attack and casts a cantrip.

Halberd. Melee Weapon Attack: +8 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. Hit: 8 (1d10+3) slashing damage.

Gift From Beyond (3/day). The guard entreats its patron for aid, regaining an expended spellslot granted by its Spellcasting feature.

WEAVING THREADS

SOCIAL

The main social component of this adventure is in forging pacts with the Patrons. Remember that the Patrons aren't always out to hurt the party (or even the Accursed Guard). They benefit from anyone making a deal with them as it tethers them further into this world. A pact grants them one more NPC who could later act on their behalf.

Remember to play up the difference between clerics and their deities versus warlocks and their Patrons, as it is an important social aspect. Clerics pray to their deities, but here, Patrons need to recruit their Warlocks. While Patrons appear to possess knowledge and power, what they lack is influence on the material plane. Characters can use that to their advantage.

Sidequest Potential: If the party can secure Accursed Guard prisoners, they can be helpful in later missions. Additionally, it may open up a viewpoint that the Accursed King is engaging in these horrid acts to keep the ever-growing pantheon of Patrons in check until a more permanent solution can be found.

COMBAT

Featuring plenty of combat, 'A Scarlet Mercy' is a chance for characters to shine with their martial abilities. Combat against Patrons is not an option, but if the party truly pushes (or has access to plane shift) it is possible.

Sidequest Potential: After securing the Temple, the party might wish to take a Patron or two up on a duel or a lesson during downtime. The Hexblade Guardian is particularly keen to teach martial feats to characters in exchange for a gold donation.

Additionally, this is a great chance to introduce Xael and the sidequest Under The Bleeding Moon.



EXPLORATION

The main adventure features two ways into the temple, yet Players always surprise the GM and think of unexpected ways inside. Perhaps they turn into fish and swim in, or perhaps they fly in while shapechanged as birds. The real meat of the encounter is the choice to commit treason and the negotiation with the Patrons. If the party explores other possibilities in the temple, reward them for cleverness.

Sidequest Potential: After the temple is secured, there are more gates than those mentioned above. Different Patrons from other places are available to cut deals with to secure their power for the Knight Captain's side. By exploring further doors, or imagining the possibilities of what Patrons could exist, the Players might have a chance to strike a few more bargains before the next battle.







Side Quest

UNDER THE BLEEDING MOON

INTRODUCTION

Can evil be redeemed? How many steps down a path of torment is too many? Vampires, like Warlocks, are shunned in most corners of the world, but in the hallowed halls of the Accursed King, some of these ancient creatures have found refuge among his armies. Wreaking havoc upon crusaders and pious armies who constantly threaten to topple the Shadelands borders, on the field of battle, their bloodlust is satiated and the Shadelands borders secured. Both the King and the vampires form a symbiotic relationship.

Two of the most prominent conquerors are Rei'Zel and Zai'Liu, twin sisters among the ranks of General Cordelia's personal guard. Since their arrival, they've ended would-be wars through their brutality alone. Rei'Zel made a terrifying name for herself with her signature move of ripping an opponent's tongue through their throat with her Flesh Rending Clutches, armored gauntlets ending in dagger-like claws. The fact that Zai'Liu waited until after her enemies were dead to add their eyes to her collection made her seem gentle by comparison.

Centuries can ruin a mind. During the first century as a vampire, a human can be your best friend or even a lover. After they pass, and then another, perhaps humans are better seen as a pet dog. A few more, a cute

hamster in a cage. And so, on until they are nothing more than insects that you eat for lunch.

Occasionally, an act of true surprise can snap such a lost soul from this cycle of chaotic endless evil. Such was the case of Zai'Liu. While off at a recent conflict with Cordelia, a young human noble by the name of Xael knelt by the wounded to grant them water as they died. Xael was a diplomat from Yon'Cath, based on the Yonder side, and this kindness he showed among the carnage felt out of place. He displayed humanity that Zai'Liu had long forgotten. Perhaps even a flame of romance that had long been snuffed out.

Rei'Zel watched on from nearby, noticing her sister's fascination as a curious scheme turned in her mind. What if she snatched this man's life and made him her spawn? To twist him into a soulless evil undead? In those few moments, while Zai'Liu pondered her place in the Elemental Dance, Rei'Zel convinced herself she hated Xael for the simple audacity of existing.

So she killed him that evening.

As his blood drained from his corpse, Xael prayed to the Patrons of the Shadelands for a second chance.

He never expected someone to answer...

SETTING

As a red moon rises over Yon'Cath, outside of the Scarlet Hearth, a struggling hooded vampire spawn named Xael waits for Fayte to return from her expedition into the Thistlewood. Across Patron's Pass; Cordelia and Rei'Zel eagerly watch what Xael's plea for help brings.

This adventure will largely be settled around Blackmorn Manor. An imposing estate that stands atop a rocky hill near the coastline, just a short ride east of the city. This aged (though awe-inspiring) estate is overgrown with dried weeds that emerge from the cracked stone.

Within the house itself, torn red carpets and banners adorn every hallway, although their color is hardly uniform and to those battle-hardened folk, smell

faintly of dried blood. Yet while common rooms seem run-down, individual rooms range from neat and tidy, to a chaotic mess, a clear sign of roommate troubles among the undead who reside. The Blackmorn family has been part of the courts of the King for many years, despite barely attend, and it has been well over a decade since a beating heart called this place home. Although for very different reasons.

Currently, residing in the estate is Rei'Zel, and there she will be awaiting Xael and the party to challenge her—or fall in line like the good little subjects they are meant to be. After this sidequest is over, the fate of the Blackmorn family and manor is hardly determined—as there is more than just Rei'Zel in the undead ranks.

SYNOPSIS

Xael, a former Lawful Good noble in Yonder who believes in Fayte, has found himself needing her services now more than ever. His very soul is at risk of being stolen by a vampire for no reason other than pure sadism. In desperation, he entered a deal with an unknown Patron with no assurance that his soul will be saved. With only a night left before he is fully turned, he has sought out Fayte for her advice and help.

In Act 1, Xael will entreat Fayte and the party for their assistance, and explain to them the situation. With Cordelia so close, attacking Rei'Zel is out of the question, and the party may discover that evil is already seeping into his veins. If they choose to help, his new Patron is going to demand a sacrifice inside the Scarlet Hearth.

In Act 2, it is off to Blackmorn Manor for a wall-shattering boss fight with Rei'Zel. Fayte will be occupied dealing with the political ramifications of earlier acts, so it will be up to the party and Xael to put this matter to rest. By any means needed.

In Act 3, as dawn rises, Xael will be ready to meet his end outside of Blackmorn Manor when his Patron manifests and shows him a new path. A new path that may set him against the very person who arranged the favor of the Patron to begin with, as Zai'Liu returns home to see the carnage. Or perhaps, Rei'Zel is victorious and the party can look on as another soul falls into the abyss.

ADVENTURE HOOKS

This is a Tier 4 module, even if there is but one major encounter for the fight. A legendary vampire fully decked out with magical gear and centuries of battle. Xael will make many offerings in the first act to increase his power, but he will still need the help of the party. Run as a Tier 1, 2, or 3 module, allow Rei'Zel to only go as far as maiming the party gloriously and leaving them to bleed—a classic villain mistake. Additionally, the storyteller can set the fight closer to dawn (or even during the daytime itself) to create

more weaknesses for the vampire in the dilapidated manor as Xael and Rei'Zel fight.

Fayte is the advocate for Warlocks and thus, Xael falls under her purview. Particularly if Cordelia, the General of the King is involved: getting another noble on their side is paramount. Knowing what the King's forces were up to in the Thistlewood during Chapter 1, the party could use the favor of a noble within Yon'Cath. It is, after all, one less dagger in the back.



ACT 1: THE TRUSTWORTHY UNDEAD?

This story begins outside the Scarlet Hearth on Patron's Pass. It is best to have this quest take place after the party has completed *Welcome To the Shadelands* or *A Scarlet Mercy*, but the storyteller can weave this tale in as a random encounter during any of the opening four chapters. Once the party crosses into Cathrach however, Xael's brutal fate will have been sealed.

As the sun sets in the Shadelands casting its rays like piercing light through a city on the edge of war, a hooded figure does its best to avoid the last remnants of sunlight on Patron's pass. Donned in a glorious blue-gold cloak with delicate tracings, knee-high fold-over boots, and adorned in magical items—Xael's wealth is on display. In stark contrast to the protestors on Patron's Pass packing the bridge.

While protests are nothing new on this bridge (often religious zealots and clerics congregate here to warn and even harass Warlocks), tonight's protests are enough to pack the entirety of the small bridge-city. The Accursed King has betrayed his people, and the injustice will not stand to the citizens of Yonder. Priests on wooden boxes rant and rave, trying to channel this fury into new followers for their deity's.

At the east end near Cathrach, the general Cordelia hovers in the air with a squadron of Accursed Guard trying to keep the peace. Next to her, Rei'Zel watches gleefully at the unfolding chaos and the game she's set in motion. Perhaps wondering if her new progeny will snap tonight, and start devouring the delicious morsels that surround him.

It is within this setting that Xael rushes up to Fayte and the players once they are standing outside of the Scarlet Hearth. *"My governess, please, I implore you, my life is in your hands and I've come seeking your assistance."*

Caught off guard and no-doubt curious, Fayte gives this individual a chance. *"It is not often that people other than LaCroix offer their life to me so easily. You... are Xael right? Noble in Yonder. Why is it that you hide yourself so?"*

What follows is a conversation between the party, Xael, and Fayte. No insight, diplomacy, or checks are required to gain this intel: Xael is truthful and Lawful Good. However, any checks the party makes for extra

hints will reveal that he is indeed hiding from the sun, and he is terrified of Rei'Zel.

Xael's family oversees mining companies for rare minerals used in spell components (diamonds and the like), and eagerly reveals that while the party was dealing with the Thistlewood. Cordelia and Rei'Zel were putting down a small force of Crusaders that were trying to take over one of Xael's family mines. After the battle, Rei'Zel said he had 'potential', and she devoured his soul and turned him. With only nights left, perhaps even just this one, he needs Fayte's help to entreat a Patron with who he cut a deal with that is keeping his soul intact.

Unfortunately for Xael, Fayte's hands are busy at the moment with matters that shake the foundation of the Shadelands. However, Xael is a fine noble and can serve as a political ally should the tenuous situation of Yon'Cath destabilize further. Fayte will ask the party to help while she attends to other matters for the night.

If the party refuses, then by nightfall Xael will lose his internal battle and begin attacking citizens on Patron's Pass as a Vampire Spawn. This conflict will give Rei'Zel all the ammunition she needs to push the Accursed Guard in, slaughter everyone on the bridge except Xael, and take over Patron's Pass fully. This will have consequences in later missions in the events of *The Red Opera*.

If the party accepts, however, a different story can be written. Several tasks must be achieved before moving onto the second act. Scouting Rei'Zel, and uncovering Xael's newfound Patron.

Rei'Zel is unassailable at this time, and even for high-end characters with cosmic magic, the consequences for attacking her in public will allow Cathrach to fully assault Yonder before the Legionnaires are ready. However, a conversation is not impossible. Nor is gathering information about the Vampire Lord. Rei'Zel... is not a subtle creature. Tales of her conquest and brutality can be heard from any preacher on a soapbox. If the party asks them (or Xael), feel free to reveal any information in the Intro section. Most importantly, that Blackmorn Manor is her family's estate. Thematically, ensure that any information given is filled with vile, hatred, and slanted. Feel free to

create a thousand legends that have never happened, but all displaying their hatred for her and Cordelia.

Walking to the edge to confront Rei'Zel gets a different result, however. Rei'Zel is calm, poised, and curious about how Xael is feeling with his newfound immortality. Cordelia and Rei'Zel have given him a gift, is he not thankful for this gift? There is no hiding or even pretending to care that she has snatched this noble's life away. General Cordelia will only remark that she is looking forward to Xael joining the ranks of the army, as there seem to be more battles ahead.

Skill checks should be required against Rei'Zel for additional information. All of them will be opposed by her Deception score, but here are two bits of extra intel that can be gained.

Rei'Zel is curious why Xael has not fully turned and is wondering if she's lost potency and strength herself. If fostered, this can be a useful taunt in later fights.

The embrace of Xael was not out of potential, but jealousy. Her sister Zai'Liu has softened and started questioning their methods ever since the battle with Xael. Even perhaps falling in love with the noble. Rei'Zel is terrified of spending eternity alone.

If the party elects to uncover Xael's Patron, then they will need to prepare several dishes for offerings within the Scarlet Hearth (or pop over to a restaurant and buy some high-end offerings, at least 7 gold's worth). The only information Xael knows is the following:

"When I was on the doorstep of oblivion, I begged the very shadows themselves to save the tatters of my soul. A reptilian voice echoed and said my entry fee hath been paid, but for my service, your steel is required. Are you willing to sacrifice love for eternity? I... never answered. This is when I came to Fayte and you. The deal is not yet finished, but I've bought myself a few more hours."

Uncovering the Patron might be easy if the party has already explored the Scarlet Hearth. The Undying Patron, an ancient green Dragonborn named Ultuun, who typically resides within the Scarlet Hearth. If they have not yet, let them make food offerings to each of the statues in the Scarlet Hearth and investigate which Patron it could be. A high-quality food offering to any Patron will get them to reveal the Patron they seek.

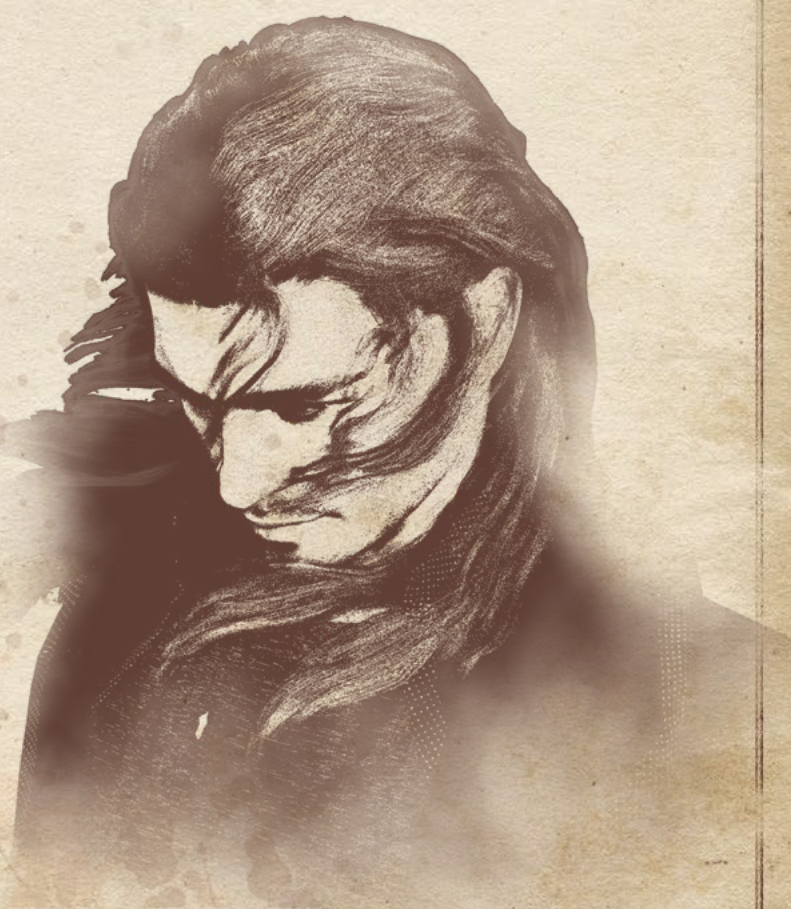
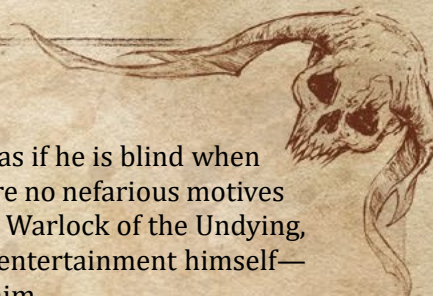
Information about Ultuun can be found in A Scarlet Mercy. The Dragonborn Male with ashen grey-green

scales and dulled eyes acts as if he is blind when his avatar appears. There are no nefarious motives in his desire to make Xael a Warlock of the Undying, for he only seeks time and entertainment himself—time which Xael can grant him.

"You have a bloody angel who watches over you, child. Thus, you have my attention. Your soul can be saved, but the powers of the undead are vast. If you wish to be free of Rei'Zel and learn the secrets of the Undying—you must bring me every drop of blood in her body. Drain her dry and bring me the vitae as a sacrifice. I doubt she will let you take it willingly. Do this, and we can warp the gift of immortality she gave you while keeping your soul. I will teach you our secrets. If you wish to be human again, simply wait to dawn and end yourself. Perhaps you'll reincarnate in a few hundred years and we can talk then."

Even if Xael is willing to meet the dawn, he will not let this injustice stand and asks the party to help him slay Rei'Zel. Or at the very least, tie her upside down over a tree and slit her throat to drain her out. Since time is of the essence, they must get to Blackmorn Manner now. Rei'Zel will certainly return home before dawn and it is isolated enough that there should be no political ramifications for attacking her there.

Once the party is ready to move on Blackmorn Manner, head to Act 2.



ACT 2: BLACKMORN MANOR

Act 2 is a combat act. Blackmorn Manner's estate is just far enough away that there will not be other visitors to interrupt the upcoming battle. Based on the character's levels is how you should set the time: Low level characters should arrive early, have time to sneak in, and ready some traps around Rei'Zel's bedroom and the Vampire Lord will arrive drunk on blood mead just as dawn is coming. High tier characters should arrive at the manor to find the doors open and Rei'Zel sitting like a boss on a chair she pulled to the top of the staircase. She looks down on the party with sinister glee, knowing full well they are here for violence. Upon seeing her, Xael will fly into a rage, attacking before any words can even be exchanged.

What follows is a knock-down, drag-out fight that will move all over the mansion and the estate grounds. Fueled by his vengeful malice, Xael's vampiric powers will fully manifest. Almost every round, the fight should move to another section of Blackmorn Manor. The mechanism for this comes from Xael and Rei'Zel battling each other. Perhaps Xael flies into Rei'Zel with such force that it drives them both through a wall into the next room. Then Rei'Zel punches him so hard it hurls him up through the ceiling to the second floor. Or perhaps she vanishes and reappears in another chamber of the house as a means of taunting the party.

GM Note

If you notice, we have not included stats for Xael in this encounter. Due to the various party levels that may run through this adventure, Xael is the storytellers' toggle. He can be a high-tier Wizard with a vampiric template or a mere noble with some extra vampire bonuses as needed. Based on the adventure's outcome, replace his Bard nature with Warlock of the Undying variety.

When playing Rei'Zel in combat, take note she does not want to kill Xael, merely subdue him. Conversely, she has zero reservations about killing the players quickly and ruthlessly. When running at a higher tier, consider adding some additional animated statues, sentient

flying brooms, and ghosts as defenses for the estate. While they occupy the players, Rei'Zel and Xael's fight can continue to move. The players will have to work hard to keep up with them. Below is a list of locations in the estate. Arrange the rooms as best suits the encounter.

GM Note

Keep the battle moving from room to room. Rei'Zel wears a pendant of free movement which grants the ability to shrug off any spells or maneuvers that would otherwise impede her ability to move. She may also teleport at will with the Shadow Step ability.

Front Hall

This is where the party will likely enter. A grand, high ceiling lobby with a wide, crimson staircase leading up to Rei'Zel. The hall extends straight back with multiple doors along the left and right walls. Marble busts of past Blackmorn's stand between the doors along the wall. Their stone-hewn visages are silent but can and turn, watching the encounter with rapt attention.

Upstairs

Upper Landing

Xael will waste no time lunging up the stairs toward Rei'Zel. The crimson carpet of the stairs spreads across the floor of the open-space landing. Xael's lunge should come as something of a surprise to Rei'Zel and the two tumble across the floor. The battle has begun. Roll Initiative. Where the fight heads next is up to the decisions of both players and the two key NPCs.

Master Bedroom

A massive bed with translucent black veils hanging between the ceiling-high bedposts. Dozens of nasty-looking swords, axes, and daggers adorn the opposite wall. At the start of the first round in this room, Rei'Zel telekinetically hurls the weapons found here at creatures of her choice that she can see. Each affected creature must attempt a DC 20 Dexterity saving throw, taking 3d8 + 8 slashing damage on a failure, or half as much on a success.

Guest Bedroom

A simple, but comfortable bed is covered in a thin layer of dust, and old dressers and drawers appear to have remained unopened for generations. On the floor, there are patches of an oily white substance occupying a number of 5 ft. spaces of the DM's choice, which counts as difficult terrain. A creature that enters such a space for the first time on a turn or starts its turn there must succeed on a DC 15 Dexterity saving throw or fall prone. There are dozens upon dozens of bats sleeping on the ceiling. The oily substance is their droppings. If disturbed by the loud noises or touched in any way, they will swarm the party, making one attack, before flying out the window. Make one single +11 attack roll for the bats against each target of Rei'Zel's choice in the room. That one roll is made against everyone's AC. Any hits deal 2d12 piercing damage.

Balcony

A wide stone platform overlooking the estate grounds. Two detailed sculptures of Gargoyles are perched on the balcony railing. Rei'Zel begins mumbling an incantation as she fights. As a bonus action on each of her turns, she can awaken a single Gargoyles. As chaotic beings, they can be swayed to the party's side, but it should be difficult. The player with the highest INT should recognize the incantation. They can make a contested Arcana roll against Rei'zel to complete the spell before she does. On a success, the Gargoyle becomes loyal to the player rather than Rei'zel.

Study

A dark, mahogany desk laden with yellowed parchment, a humanoid skull, and a green gem housed within a glass decanter. The gem emits an anti-magic enchantment; spells and magical effects from creatures that are not related to the Blackmorn family by blood are suppressed within the affected area.

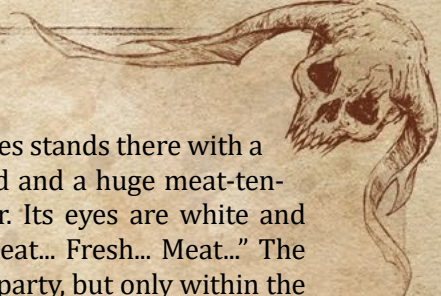
Servant Quarters

An unadorned, sparsely furnished room. An elderly, grey-skinned Dwarf man sits on a cot staring at the wall. If his door is opened or the battle spills into his room, he will sigh and mutter something about having "another mess to clean." He will start sweeping and mopping up rooms where the fight has already been through.

Ground Floor

Kitchen

This room is colder than the rest of the house, unnaturally so. Unidentifiable carcasses and corpses hang from meat hooks to dry out. The shelves are lined with mason jars filled with a dark red substance. A tall hulking humanoid who looks as if they've been sewn



together from multiple bodies stands there with a massive cleaver in one hand and a huge meat-tenderizing mallet in the other. Its eyes are white and empty. It moans "Fresh... Meat... Fresh... Meat..." The Flesh Golem will attack the party, but only within the kitchen, as it is magically bound to the room and cannot leave. It makes two attacks each turn. In addition to the standard actions, this Flesh Golem wields two weapons: Cleaver: +9 to hit, 11 (2d10) slashing damage. Tenderizer: +7 to hit 14(3d8) bludgeoning.

Parlor

Cracked leather couches and armchairs face an oversized fireplace of soot-stained stone. Above the mantle hangs a pointed shield. It is painted an unearthly shade of matte black, so dark it seems as if it's absorbing the light around it. The only adornment is an iridescent mother of pearl inlay at the shield's center, creating the appearance of a fanged jaw. This is the infamous **Sun Drinker**.

Library

The walls are completely covered in shelves brimming with ancient tomes. Some books are glowing and some are even making sounds. In the course of the fight, some books may get knocked off the shelves, open, and unleash a random arcane effect. Each book is an object (AC 12, 30 hit points) that produces one of the following magical effects in the area of the room. If the effect produced has a duration greater than instantaneous, it instead lasts for the spell's duration (when applicable), until a creature uses an action to close the book, or it is destroyed.

Effects:

1. Reverse gravity.
2. Slow.
3. All creatures in the room are teleported to a different random location within the house. This can simply be a different spot within the room or a whole other room.
4. Magical tentacles burst forth from a book, attempt to grab creatures within reach. At the start of each of its turns while within 15 ft. of the book, a creature must succeed on a DC 19 Strength saving throw or be grappled and restrained (Escape DC 19). At the end of each of its turns, a creature grappled in this manner takes 11 (2d10) bludgeoning damage.

Dining Room

An oaken table so long it's almost comical. A headless corpse drained of all blood lays across a six-foot-long platter. There are place settings and bowls of

fine porcelain filled with blood at a number of place settings equal to the party size. Rei'Zel comments on what a good host she is and how she prepared the party's first meal for once they've been turned into her thralls. Rei'Zel can expend 30 ft. of movement to drink from a bowl within reach. When she does so, she regains 34 (4d12 + 8) hit points.

Conservatory

Checkered marble tiles on the floor. Wicker furniture. A few withered and untended plants hang from pots. The ceiling and three of the walls are made from thick panes of glass. An urn rests on a small table in the room's center and, if knocked over, the urn will break, spilling pale ashes across the floor. A ghost in the form of an old woman rises from the ashes. She is Rei'Zel's great aunt, whom she betrayed and murdered, trapping her spirit in the urn. The urn was in display in this room as an everlasting taunt, so her great aunt could "always watch the sunrise." She takes her only turn immediately following the turn that caused the urn to break. She unleashes an unearthly, head-splitting scream which can be heard throughout the room. Each creature in the affected area must succeed on a DC 22 Intelligence saving throw or take 35 (10d6) psychic damage and be stunned until the start of their next turn. A successful save halves the damage. As the scream is focused on Rei'Zel, players should have advantage on their saves, and she should have disadvantage. The ghost vanishes after her one attack.

Gaming Room

A billiard table in the center of the room. A shuffleboard table with black sand and discs carved from bone. On the far wall are three dartboards. Multiple dead fairies are pinned to the boards by the steel darts. There is one live fairy trapped in a glass jar on a nearby shelf. If freed, the fairy will cast haste on the PC who frees her before fleeing the mansion.

Gallery

Fine tapestries and large oil paintings adorn the walls. The technical craftsmanship on display is exquisite, however, the subject matter of the art is utterly horrifying. Nasty, visceral images of brutal violence. The gruesome scenes seem to shimmer and

even move slightly when viewed as if coming alive. All players in the room must pass a WIS save or become frightened of the room itself, feeling compelled to move as far away as possible until they are both out of the room and cannot see into it.

Outside Veranda

An expansive, two-tiered patio, stretching 90 feet wide and 60 feet out from the mansion. A 20 foot wide, six-step stair connects the upper and lower patio. An awning covers the upper tier. A still reflecting pool takes up most of the lower tier. The water within is the same black water as the Obsidian Rush. If a PC looks into the water or comes into direct contact with it for the first time on a turn, they must succeed on a DC 16 Wisdom saving throw or suffer a random short term madness for 1 minute.

Gardens

Wicked looking flowers of white and purple, all with sharp, angular petals. Pale gray-green vines with long thorns spill out from tall stone pots. Topiaries shaped to look like devils and demons loom eight feet tall. Whenever a creature comes within 10 feet of a flower, it reacts. The White flowers emit a thick fog-like mist, which heavily obscures a 20-foot radius area centered on the flower. The Purple Flowers spit acid: +8 to hit, dealing 2d8 acid damage. Both flower types are creatures that can be destroyed (AC 10, 20 hit points).

Hedge Maze

The ten foot high hedges can be cut through, and are very flammable. Looking close, the PCs may notice a large, closed flower bud every five feet or so. If the hedge is touched or disturbed, any affected bud will erupt with a cloud of noxious spores in a ten-foot radius sphere. Each creature in the affected area must succeed on a DC 19 Constitution saving throw or take 11 (2d10) poison damage. The spore cloud remains for three rounds before dispersing.

Family Crypt

This is built on a low rise further away, east of the mansion. As the sun begins to rise and the battle turns against her, Rei'Zel may make a break for the ancient stone mausoleum. She cannot be allowed to make it inside. The crypt is a source of great power and strength. Every round she remains within the crypt, Rei'Zel will regain half her missing HP (to a minimum of 1).

Act 2 ends when the battle ends... one way or another.

GM Note

The fight should move outside it draws to a close. Describe the first tiny hints of dawn peeking up over the horizon.

ACT 3: A STOLEN LIFE



With her last few breathes, Rei'Zel cackles and taunts Xael, *"I still won, you know. I took a pure, good soul and turned it into a monster. Sure, you'll hold out for a while... maybe a year, maybe ten, maybe a hundred. But the thirst will win. The thirst always wins."*

Xael contemplates this statement for a moment, and he actually agrees with her. He decides the right thing is to let the rising sun claim him, purging one more abomination from the world.

As he sits on the grass, facing toward the creeping dawn, the party hears the clicking of a cane on cobblestones. They see an ancient Dragonborn male with ashen grey-green scales and milky eyes sauntering toward them with a coy grin on his reptilian face.

"My boy, why in the world would you throw away such a gift... and spare me the tired 'it's not a gift, it's a curse' spiel. We still have a few minutes before you melodramatically burst into flames, so allow me to share my vision with you:

Vampires are a frustrating ilk. All the time in the world and not a damned clue what to do with it. I think it's safe to assume there are plenty out there, much like yourself, who don't relish the bloody, visceral aspect of the lifestyle. What if they had another option? Accept me as your Patron, and become my Undying Warlock. I will save your soul, purge you of that infernal thirst, but you will retain your immortality. And in return, you will seek out others like you. Find all the vampires searching for something grander than the scraps they scrounge in the shadows. You will bring them to me, and together we will offer them salvation."

Xael should be initially hesitant to accept this offer. Perhaps he wants to know more about what's in it for Ultuun. Perhaps he simply wants to give up and die. Regardless, it's up to the party to sway him toward accepting the pact. Otherwise, he will sit still and let the rising dawn consume him.

If the party convinces Xael to accept Ultuun's offer, this will come back around to help in the Theme of the Betrayer. A much healthier looking Xael will be present in the Accursed King's court when the party is there attempting to sway nobles to their cause. Xael will happily pledge his vote.

After Xael has made his decision whether to live or die, a streak of black smoke shoots across the sky. It strikes down next to Rei'Zel's blood-drained body, and the smoke materializes into Zai'Liu. At first, she is relieved to see Xael alive. But then she sees what's left of her sister, and her relief turns to anguish.

"You didn't have to do this! You could have come to me! I could have helped you!"

The sunrise is imminent, and she realizes she cannot linger here. Her anguish hardens into a cold, simmering anger as she stares down the party, "There will be consequences for this. I promise you." And then she vanishes in a wisp of black smoke.

If the party did not kill Rei'Zel, and instead drained her of blood and incapacitated the vampire, the reaction from Zai'Liu is much the same: however, she will flee with Rei'Zel's body. In time, the sisters will both be at full health, but the hatred of Rei'Zel has subsided. Instead finding Xael to be curious and perhaps a bit charming, while Zai'Liu is the one falling to her feelings of betrayal. If the party ever meets them again, swap their roles, and have Xael constantly complaining about the problems of immortal relationships.

Their love triangle will be one of an eternal dance of jealousy and redemption back and forth. If this ending comes into play, inviting the party over to an awkward dinner at Blackmorn Manor while it is still destroyed would be a nice treat, and there is potential for the party to check back on their relationship problems of immortals throughout the events of the Red Opera.

THE END

**Thank you for participating in
"Under the Bleeding Moon"**

Appendix I

NPC & CREATURE STATISTICS

Rei'Zel

Medium undead, lawful evil

ARMOR CLASS	23 (plate, sun drinker shield)
HP	348 (41d8 + 164)
SPEED	40 ft. 60 ft. fly

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
20(+5)	17(+3)	18(+4)	12(+1)	14(+2)	18(+4)

Saving Throws: STR+5, DEX+9, CON+10, WIS+8, CHA+10

Skills: Arcana +13, Athletics +11, Perception +14, Religion +7, Stealth +9,

Damage Resistances necrotic, poison; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical weapons

Senses darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 24

Languages Common, plus three other languages.

Challenge 19 (22,000 XP)

Legendary Resistance (3/Day): If Rei'Zel fails a saving throw, she can choose to succeed instead.

Regeneration. Rei'Zel regains 20 hit points at the start of her round if she has at least 1 hitpoint and isn't in running water or sunlight. If she takes radiant damage or damage from holy water, this trait doesn't function at the start of her next turn.

Catatonic Collapse. Unlike other vampires, Rei'Zel does not turn into mist when she drops to 0 hit points outside her coffin. Instead, her body appears truly corpse-like and starts to wither and rot in an eternal torpor until she is fed at least 1 gallon of blood, at which point she is restored to half her hit point maximum. As long as her head remains attached to her body, she will eventually return unless left to bake in the rays of the sun.

Magical Weaponry. Rei'Zel's attacks are magical, and she gains a +3 bonus to attack and damage rolls made with her weapons (included in the attack).

Spellcasting. Rei'Zel is a 13th level spellcaster. Her spellcasting modifier is Charisma (spell save DC 18) and can cast the following spells.

Cantrips (at will): mage hand, prestidigitation, ray of frost

(3/day each): animate dead, fireball, nondetection, counterspell

(2/day each): blight, greater invisibility, polymorph, fire shield

(1/day each): dominate person, finger of death, telekinesis

Vampire Weaknesses. Rei'Zel has the following flaws:

Stake through the Heart. If a piercing weapon made of wood is driven into her heart while she is incapacitated, she is paralyzed until the stake is removed. Rei'Zel wears full plate armor, so this is more difficult than one would assume...

Sunlight Hypersensitivity. While in sunlight, Rei'Zel takes 20 radiant damage at the start of her turn and has disadvantage on attack rolls and ability checks.

Forbiddance. Rei'Zel doesn't care if someone invites her into a home or not. She's a conqueror and laughs at the weaknesses of other vampires who are bound by such foolish beliefs. She hates garlic though and will refuse to feed upon any person who has had it in the past day, going so far as to spit out any blood upon tasting it and losing an action.

Actions

Multiattack. Rei'Zel makes three attacks. She can forgo making two attacks in this manner to instead take one other action, chosen from the options below or via her spellcasting feature.

Blood Snare Crossbow. Ranged Weapon Attack: +12 to hit, range 100/300 ft., one target. Hit: 17 (2d10 + 6) piercing damage. If the target is a creature, it must succeed on a DC 18 Strength saving throw or be pushed 30 ft. in a straight line away from Rei'Zel, or pulled 30 ft. toward her.

Flesh Rending Clutches. Melee Weapon Attack: +14 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 21 (2d12 + 8) slashing damage. If the target is a flesh and blood creature, it must succeed on a DC 18 Constitution saving throw or suffer a bleeding wound. While wounded in this manner, a creature loses 5 (1d10) hit points at the start of each of its turns. Each time a creature fails this save again, this damage increases by 5 (1d10) until the wound is closed. The wound can be closed by a creature within reach using an action to succeed on a DC 18 Wisdom (Medicine) check, or by receiving 20 hit points of magical healing in a single turn.

Shadow Step. Rei'Zel magically teleports to an unoccupied space she can see within 60 ft. that is in an area of dim light or darkness. Within the grounds of her Estate, Rei'Zel does not need line of sight for this ability.

Unholy Might (Recharge 5 - 6). Rei'Zel unleashes unholy power within her, empowering her until the end of her next turn. While so empowered, Rei'Zel has advantage on saving

throws, and when she scores a hit with an attack, she instead scores a critical hit

Legendary Actions

Rei'Zel can take 3 legendary actions, choosing from the options below. Only one legendary action option can be used at a time and only at the end of another creature's turn. She regains spent legendary actions at the start of her turn.

Strike. Rei'Zel makes a single weapon attack.

Spell. Rei'Zel casts a spell she can cast at will.

Shadow Step (Costs 2 Actions). Rei-Zel uses her Shadow Step action.

Unholy Might (Costs 3 Actions). Rei-Zel uses or recharges her Unholy Might action.



Appendix 2

ITEMS & EVENTS

Sun Drinker

Armor (Shield), very rare (requires attunement)
This pointed shield is painted an unearthly shade of matte black, so dark it seems as if it's absorbing the light around it. The only adornment is an iridescent mother of pearl inlay at the shield's center, creating the appearance of a fanged jaw. While holding the shield, you have a +3 bonus to your AC and resistance to radiant damage.

Additionally, as a bonus action while you wear the shield you may snuff out all sources of light in a 30 ft. radius centered on you, and fill the affected area with magical darkness for as long as you concentrate (as though concentrating on a spell). Once you have used this feature, you cannot use it again until you finish a long rest.

Flesh Rending Clutches

Wondrous item, legendary (requires attunement)
The heavy dark metal was sculpted in such a manner to emulate the forearms and talons of a black dragon. Even the finger guards end in wicked obsidian claws. While you wear these gauntlets, your unarmed strikes deal 1d12 slashing damage on a successful hit. Additionally, creatures hit by your unarmed strike must succeed on a DC 18 Constitution saving throw or suffer a bleeding wound. While wounded in this manner, a creature loses 5 (1d10) hit points at the start of each of its turns. Each time a creature fails this save again, this damage increases by 5 (1d10) until the wound is closed. The wound can be closed by a creature within reach using an action to succeed on a DC 18 Wisdom (Medicine) check, or by receiving 20 hit points of magical healing in a single turn.

Blood Snare

Weapon (heavy crossbow), requires attunement)
This heavy, two-handed crossbow is hewn from dark, umber wood and provides a +3 bonus to attack and damage rolls made with it. A length of chain is wrapped around a spool built into the weapon's stock. In addition to traditional bolts, the Blood Snare comes equipped with hooked projectiles or talon bolts. When you hit a creature with a bolt fired from the crossbow,

the target must succeed on a DC 18 Strength saving throw or be pushed 30 ft. in a straight line away from you, or pulled 30 ft. toward you.





Chapter 3

THE EVERLASTING NIGHT

"What good the ledgers of our past? Blood soaks every page written, and every page to come." LaCroix the Knight Captain

INTRODUCTION

Welcome to 'The Everlasting Night'. The Party has been barricaded inside the Scarlet Hearth for two weeks, preventing the Accursed King and his supporters from paying homage to their Patrons. As a result, a permanent night has fallen on Yon'Cath. In the immediate aftermath of the temple siege, open warfare erupted across Yon'Cath between the Legionnaires and the Accursed Guard.

After a few days, both factions seemingly retreated to their respective sides of the river. The outright combat has been replaced with a cold war. The bustling markets and bazaars of the bridges now play host to a multitude of incognito operatives from both Yonder and Cathrach. While the warrior's rest, the spies and

assassins play their games. All eyes, whether directly or indirectly, look toward the Scarlet Hearth.

It is time for the Party and the Knight Captain to make their next move, however, bloody chaos will certainly erupt the moment they are seen exiting the temple.

Prior to beginning this act, you'll want to resolve any conflicts and sidequests remaining from 'A Scarlet Mercy'. Additionally, you'll be served extra well as a storyteller if you make a giant map of Yon'Cath and divide the city up between the two forces, giving the PC's and Party members a major victory by holding the Scarlet Hearth.

SYNOPSIS

*"Warlock pacts? I've seen all kinds. We have drinking games based on which new pilgrim is screwed... but truthfully, I tried to save them all."
-Fayte the Shield Maiden*

In Act 1 of this adventure, the party will get a taste of a city during the cold war. The Knight Captain will task the party to scout out the first of the three bridges, possibly assisting with his upcoming assault by tipping the balance of the neutral rogue's guild. But first, they'll all have to find a way out of the temple without being noticed.

In Act 2, the Party will be needed to navigate the middle bridge, Stone Leg, as they work towards a hidden route into Cathrach. This will either play out in a tense, clandestine manner or all hell will have broken loose.

Chaos and open war are inevitable in Act 3, whether it's a result of the Party being discovered by an enemy or the Knight Captain beginning his assault. The Party must navigate the Black Span, the most hostile of the three bridges, in search of a safe and secret passage into Cathrach.



THE EVERLASTING NIGHT

Scan this QR code to listen to this adventure act's paired song from the Orchestral Version of the Red Opera Album by DiAmorte.



THE SETTING

"The Hearth is the keystone. By cutting this off, we turn the Accursed back into the regular, run of the mill, warlocks. This gives us the edge... for we've been killing them for ages.
~ LaCroix the Knight Captain

Since the last Act, it's time to place the Shadelands in a state of twilight and, throughout this adventure, permanent dark. Shadows run long from torches placed outside of homes, and many of them glow a shade of eerie green as their magic has been warped. A bitter cold whips through the street, not just in temperature, but in the icy glare that citizens shoot soldiers from either side.

Remember, these bridges are entire neighborhoods unto themselves. They are each a quarter-mile across and 100 yards wide, packed with tents, shacks, and lean-tos. A cold misty rain comes and goes in spurts during Everlasting Night, and as the party walks through the great stone bridges of Yon'Cath, describe the pitter-patter of rain hitting muted grey tarps above them. Many have begun to huddle in the neutral area between cities to maintain contact with relatives or friends on each side. Cramped spaces and a bleak outlook with jaded frustration is the mood on everyone's lips.

Patron's Pass, Stone Leg, and Black Span are featured heavily in this adventure. The Stretches, a series of rope-bridges that tie the three main bridges together, reach long-ways over the Obsidian Rush, allowing inter-bridge travel without having to enter either city. Rotted wood, frayed rope, and the risk of being shot run high along these bridges now—they've been overused immensely recently.

The heaviest concentration of Accursed King forces will likely be at the southernmost bridge, Patron's Pass, since that is closest to the Scarlet Hearth. However, while there will be fewer formal soldiers stationed at the northernmost bridge, Black Span, the bridge locals are more likely to be loyal to Dorian. Black Span is infamous for its dark and arcane dealings.

GM Note

The Bridges are excellent places to drop in loot and magical items. Take a moment to peruse the list and find a few items you like



ACT 1

While the Party has been hunkered down in the Scarlet Hearth, the Knight Captain has been communicating via sending stone with his Legionnaires outside. He had hoped that taking the temple would have crippled the Accursed King to the point he was forced to back down and possibly surrender. But although this move did in fact damage Dorian's power and influence, he is nowhere near the point of backing down. And the longer the party sits around, the more time the Accursed King has to plot new methods of reaching the Patrons.

The Knight Captain has his mindset on an all-out assault, whilst Fayte is resistant to this, feeling it will only result in pointless bloodshed. She posits that they should find Dorian's weakness, otherwise a frontal assault will just be like waves breaking against a rock. The Knight Captain is dead set on his assault. The Knight Captain's war began as a means to supplant Dorian, however as things have progressed, it's almost as if he just wants a War, regardless of purpose. He does, however, agree that perhaps Fayte and the party should attempt to uncover more about the nature of Dorian's power. Fayte asserts that they should try to contact Majin. LaCroix is very against this at first, but Fayte insists that if there's anyone who might know how to fix things and defeat Dorian, it's Majin. LaCroix concedes this point. The big problem is... Majin is in Cathrach.

But before any of that, the first thing they all have to do is exit the Scarlet Hearth. The temple has plenty of diverse and nondescript hooded robes the party can wear as disguises. Many are left over from sacrifices, or they're the "street" clothes of temple acolytes. The real trick is getting into the bridge markets without being seen exiting the temple.

GM Note

The Players are welcome here to come up with a plan. As a fallback, Fayte can call on her Patron and a brilliant blast of blinding light will appear above Yon'Cath. It will last only for a handful of seconds, so the party will need to run from the temple and get themselves immersed in the bridge crowds while everyone outside is shielding their eyes.

IF THE PARTY SET THE OLD ONE FREE:

Ahk Noh Ra's retribution will have been occurring outside this whole time. It manifests in periodic storms of flaming rocks falling from the sky. This only adds to the tension in the city. For the duration of Everlasting Night, while the party is outside, GM rolls a D20 every few minutes (at your discretion), and on a roll of 16-20, a quick shower of fiery rocks will fall from the sky. These can hit buildings, roads, and people. When this occurs, if the Party is in an affected area, they (and any other creatures in the area) must succeed on a DC 20 Dexterity saving throw or take 11 (2d10) bludgeoning damage and 11 (2d10) fire damage, or half as much on a success.

LaCroix, Fayte, and the Party will need to discreetly move through Patron's Pass. It might seem counter-intuitive, but clerics and missionaries are common here. They've set up tents and stand in the walking lanes, pleading with the populace to forsake the tainted powers of the "Heretical Patrons". The Party needs to find someone named Alios, a cleric/rogue, and a follower of the God of Thieves. With his help, the Legionnaires will have a much easier time crossing Patron's Pass to assault the Cathrach side.

GM Note

There are incognito operatives of both sides everywhere. As the party traverses the bridge markets, you should roll one or two checks to see if they get recognized. If Accursed King operatives recognize the party, they can either attack them, raise an alarm, or attempt to discreetly hurry away to inform the Accursed Guard. If the operative(s) choose to attack the party right then and there, GM should roll a check to see if any Legionnaire operatives are nearby to assist.

Soft cold rain peppers the party as they move through the crowds.

Fayte is upset. She does not approve of the Knight Captain's plan to engage in an all-out war. LaCroix offers a whispered attempt at assuaging her as they walk:

"My love, everything will be fine. The guilds will side with the Legionnaires. They always have, they're merchants and neutral. I know them, once I talk to them... they'll help us get you across and assist us in the siege!"

The eye roll and sigh from Fayte should nearly be audible. *"Don't call me that. I've told you a hundred times, LaCroix. And these guilds aren't as neutral as you always believe, and while we have the Scarlet Hearth, The King has the coffers. Getting across won't be free... or easy..."*

LaCroix's expression becomes hardened. "Don't call him the King, he is but a man. Dorian..."

The party will find Alios in a tent along the southern wall of the bridge. Alios and his people do not like LaCroix or Fayte, but they hate Dorian even more. The cleric of Mask is a scrawny, but handsome young human with angular features—in this form.

Alios is a shapechanger, a gift he's used to escape capture more than once. A survivalist and realist,

Alios can be roleplayed as a thief who enjoys the fatalistic challenge of futility. The fun, as it were, is in the challenge. It will be up to the party to strike a deal with Alios, and he tells them that the only way to discreetly get into Cathrach, is a hidden causeway underneath Black Span, the northern bridge. He requests that they employ stealth and secrecy in this endeavor as an offering to his God of Thieves. Alios will hand the Party a **Mark of Mask** and tell them to show it to a member of the Assassin's Guild in Black Span to secure passage on the hidden causeway.

The Party must now get to Black Span, which is at the far north end of the river. There are two viable routes: they can part ways with the Knight Captain and attempt to remain hidden by crossing the dangerous Stretches to the middle bridge, Stone Leg.

Or they can go into Yonder and walk up along the west bank of the river. If they go into Yonder, they



will have to pass through the checkpoint at the bridge end. This will require them to reveal their identities to the guards. There will be Accursed operatives watching this checkpoint, so opting for this path will guarantee an open conflict, not to mention it won't sit too well with Alios.

ENCOUNTER ENEMIES

In addition to potential run-ins with Accursed Guard, some other enemies will become an issue for the party once they are either discovered or the open battle begins:



Cathrach River Sentry

Medium humanoid, Adjust Alignment to fit Campaign

ARMOR CLASS 14
HIT POINTS 60 (11d8 + 11)
SPEED 30 FT

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
12(+1)	18(+4)	13(+1)	18(+4)	16(+3)	16(+3)

Saving Throws Wis +6, Cha +6

Skills Arcana +7, Perception +9

Senses darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 19

Languages Common, plus one other language

Challenge 5 (1,800 XP)

Spellcasting. The sentry is a 7th level spellcaster. Its spellcasting ability is Charisma (spell save DC 14, +6 to hit with spell attacks). It regains its expended spell slots when it finishes a short or long rest. It knows the following Warlock spells:

Cantrips (at will): eldritch blast, light

1st-4th level (2 4th-level slots): The sentry knows the following spells.

blight, dispel magic, fireball

ACTIONS

Rapier. Melee Weapon Attack: +7 to hit, reach 5 ft. one target. Hit: (8) 1d8+4 piercing damage.

Revealing Light (Recharge 5 – 6). The sentry emits bright light in a 90 ft. cone until the start of its next turn, which projects in a single direction for the duration. The sentry and its allies have advantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks to detect creatures in the affected area, and creatures in the affected area take an additional 4 (1d8) radiant damage on successful hits from attacks made by the sentry and its allies.

Accursed Summoner

Medium humanoid, Adjust Alignment to fit Campaign



ARMOR CLASS 16 (breastplate)
HIT POINTS 95 (18d8 + 14)
SPEED 30 FT

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
13(+1)	18(+4)	13(+1)	18(+4)	13(+1)	16(+3)

Saving Throws Con +5, Wis +5, Cha +7

Skills Perception +5, Persuasion +11,

Senses passive Perception 15

Languages Common plus one other language

Challenge 9 (5,000 XP)

Aura of Supremacy. The summoners exude an aura of supernatural authority in a 60 ft. radius sphere. While the summoner is not incapacitated, creatures conjured by the summoner in the affected area add the summoner's proficiency bonus (+4) to their attack rolls, saving throws, and ability checks.

Master of Horrors. The summoner can exert control over up to four summoned creatures at a time so long as it maintains concentration (as though concentrating on a spell). A creature controlled in this manner can be verbally commanded by the summoner (no action required), acts immediately after the summoner's turn, and follows the summoner's commands to the best of its ability. If the summoner's concentration is broken, it loses control over any creatures it has summoned, which become hostile to the summoner.

ACTIONS

Sling. Ranged Weapon Attack: +8 to hit, range 30/120 ft., one target. Hit: 6 (1d4+4) bludgeoning damage.

Summon Black Water Imps (3/day). The summoner conjures four mud mephit in four separate unoccupied spaces it can see within 60 ft. The mephit have the statistics of mud mephit, but deal an additional 9 (2d8) necrotic damage on successful hits with their weapon attacks. The mephit vanish after 1 hour or if they are slain.

Summon Gargoyle Brute (2/day). The summoner conjures two gargoyles in two separate unoccupied spaces it can see within 60 ft. The gargoyles have the statistics of ordinary gargoyles but can make an additional Claw attack as a bonus action on each of their turns. The gargoyles vanish after 10 minutes or if they are slain.

Summon Arclight Phoenix (1/day). The summoner conjures a fire elemental in the shape of a phoenix in a 10 ft. unoccupied square it can see within 60 ft. The phoenix has the statistics of a **fire elemental** but gains the following action.

Arclight Blast (Recharge 5 – 6). The phoenix unleashes a blast of superheated flame in a 60 ft. line that is 5 ft. wide. Creatures in the affected area must attempt a DC 14 Dexterity saving throw, taking 14 (4d6) fire and 14 (4d6) radiant damage on a failure, or half as much on a success.

ACT 2



PATH A - THE STRETCHES

This is the most direct route north, as well as the one that gives the best chance for secrecy. However, it is not without its fair share of danger. These rope and wood plank bridges connect Patron's Pass to Stone Leg, spanning hundreds of yards over the black waters of the Obsidian Rush. The Party must hurry, however, because it will only be a matter of time before LaCroix begins his assault.

Like Act 1, there should be random rolls to see if any operatives recognize Fayte or the Party. If so, the alarm is raised, and all chaos breaks loose.

The Party must pass a DC 12 Strength (Athletics) checks to cross the Stretches however, the DC is raised to 20 if they've been discovered and enemies

are shooting at them. If a Player fails, a party member can attempt to catch them by passing a DC 15 Dexterity (Acrobatics) Check. If they catch their teammate, they will most certainly draw attention, seeing as one Player will be dangling over the river. In this instance, GM rolls a D20, and on an 11-20, the dangling Player is recognized by an Accursed Guard on the eastern riverbank. If a Player falls into the river, the party can lower some rope to help them climb out. The Player must first pass a Swim check DC10. If they fail, they drown and can only be saved by the Lurker in the Deep. This Player will have the grisly death visions haunting them for the remainder of this Encounter. If the Party is discovered; open war will break out.

PATH B - THE WEST BANK

The Party goes with LaCroix to the Yonder side of the river. At the checkpoint, they must reveal their identities. The Legionnaires let them through, however, the alarm is raised by enemy operatives. LaCroix parts ways with Fayte and the Party to prepare for battle.

Accursed Guards will crowd the east bank and unleash wanton destruction. Fireballs and Lightning Orbs will be hurled across the river like a volley of magical artillery. The Players will have to pass DEX saves to avoid taking damage. They will also see flaming projectiles launched from Legionnaire Ballistas

returning fire toward Cathrach. Aberrations and Manifested Abominations will appear in the Party's way, having been summoned by the enemy Warlocks across the river. The Party will have to defend themselves as well as possibly defend Legionnaire ballista teams from these monstrosities.

As the party reaches the west end of the middle bridge, they will find the entire west bank between Stone Leg and Black Span has been consumed in magical fire, leaving them little choice but to venture out onto the bridge.

DEEPER INTO YONDER

This Chapter is meant to be a tour of the three bridges, however, Players are an unpredictable bunch. Instead of going around this fire via the bridge, they may decide they want to venture further west, walk a few blocks deeper into Yonder to go up and around the fire to come to Black Span from the west end. They are free to do this. If this is the path they choose, here is a challenge you can place in their path:

There aren't many folks about in the blocks near the river. Most are either hiding inside or have fled further west, away from the river and its conflict. The

party may find a shop open if the GM allows it, but will need to walk at least 3 blocks west to avoid the arcane fire scorching the riverbank. Then 6 blocks north to get to the street that leads back east to the northern bridge, Black Span. At some point, the party will find themselves in a deserted stretch of road, and that is when Iorfaan Shimbaac and his cronies (number equal to party size) will step out of the alleys. Iorfaan is a hulking brass Dragonborn barbarian. He leads the Brutes Guild and is a bit disgruntled that there's all this fighting and his organization has

apparently been left out of it. He somewhat blames Fayette and the party for this.

"It's like no one respects the professional merit of a proper thug these days! Everyone runnin' around doin' their own fightin' and killin' and whatnot. It's bloody amateur hour out here!"

Iorfaan is a bit pissed that LaCroix forgot to pay-up his protection fee and also never informed Iorfaan of their plan. Iorfaan is keen to take out his frustration

on the players, and demands they settle up debts equal to (seventh-five percent of their current total party gold). If the party refuses, they will have to fight Iorfaan's thugs. Iorfaan will order his thugs not to kill the party, just rough 'em up a bit and take their money. See appendix for stats on **Brutes Guild Thug**. Remind the party that Iorfaan is a loose ally of LaCroix, and they may want to opt for non-lethal damage here. Iorfaan will not participate in the fight. Both he and his thugs will back down once it becomes apparent, they can't win the fight.

STONE LEG

Both paths will ultimately lead to Stone Leg, the middle bridge. The Stretches will dump the party right in the middle of the bridge. If they came up the West Bank, they will have to head inward. Stone Leg is the largest, most diverse, and most crowded of the three Great Bridges. Even if the battle has begun, the party will need to try to disappear within the crowd. Stone Leg is a miniature melting pot of cultures, with tents selling culinary fare from all over the world. Many of the locals will be going on about their business as all the damage is happening on either side of the river. The Party can potentially find some new clothes or hideout for a few minutes in a food tent to lose any tailing enemies. Before the party can cross the Stretches that connect Stone Leg and Black Span, Fayette tells them they need to find the Ranger Guild that unofficially runs this bridge. If they try to cross without this Clan's permission, even in the middle of an open battle, they'll be shot down just on principle.

The leader of this guild is called Snow, and she runs the smuggling trade that creates the immense variety of spices, drugs, and meats available on this bridge. Snow only cares about coin, and to the highest bidder, she'll help. As a long-lived wood elf, she's seen plenty of would-be kings come and go. She doesn't much care who wins if her business thrives.

If the Party has made it to this point without any alarms being raised, LaCroix will begin his assault as the party searches for Snow. The crisscrossed overhead volley of ballista fire and magical ordinance will commence. Incognito operatives on both sides reveal themselves, possibly fighting openly with each other

on the bridge. The Party may see some White-Cloaked Rangers intervening, killing both Legionnaires and Accursed to quell the violence within their territory. The Party may be forced to let some Legionnaires die in order to gain access to Snow.

Snow will be quite agitated about all the chaos ensuing outside. "It's bad for business." And she's annoyed because she's certain the Party had something to do with it. The Party will have to assure her that their ultimate goal is to end the unrest in Yon'Cath permanently.

Snow will offer two deals to earn passage across the Stretches:

Deal One is the Party handing over half of all their money. For a few seconds, she peers at them through a miniature spyglass, the lens is green with an eye etched into it. After she lowers the spyglass, she will recite exactly how much money the party has: ("You are carrying 500 gold, 143 silver, and 32 copper pieces.") Snow won't settle for anything less than half.

Deal Two is for the Party to carry some merchandise across to Black Span for her. The catch is, it's in a heavy chest that will require two Players to carry it together as they cross the dangerous Stretches.

The rope bridge controlled by Snow turns out to be in much better shape than the earlier ones. However, the party will still have to weather ranged assaults from Accursed Guard on the east bank. And if they are bringing Snow's chest across, the Players carrying it will have disadvantage on checks.

Act 2 ends when the Party reaches Black Span.

ACT 3

Fires will be raging on both sides of the river as the Party reaches the Black Span. The battle has intensified, the Knight Captain is making a push across Patron's Pass, and it may even seem as if the Cathrach forces are more focused on the Legionnaires than the party. But make no mistake, Black Span is the strongest aligned with the Accursed King. Security, wards, anti-magic circles, mimics, and more stalk the bridges and taverns built both on and under the bridge. In a city literally full of arcane emporiums and magical boutiques, there are some wares still too obscure for the "proper" storefronts. That is the caliber of illicit merchandise that can be found here.

A pair of cloaked rangers, their faces mostly concealed under hoods, linger near the end of the rope bridge. If the Party has the chest from Snow, these rangers will take delivery. They may be able to offer a bit of guidance toward finding the Assassins guild if properly motivated.

Fayte knows that Black Span is run by a loose partnership between sorcerers and assassins. The head sorcerer is an orc named Ulka Resh. He is a scarred and ancient grey-orc, well into his elderly years. Hobbling around via a gnarled wooden staff and often coughing up blood, he has been to every existential plane. He has no personal interest in the current political conflict, and the Players probably can't buy him through simple words alone. In fact, he may already have been bought by the Accursed King. But if not, perhaps the Players can barter some form of arcane concealment. Something so powerful even the Accursed Guard posted at the bridge checkpoint won't be able to see through it.

The Party can search for the Assassin's Guild on their own, however, Ulka Resh can easily put the party in touch with them if persuaded... though there's always the risk he'll decide to attack the party. Simply asking around for the location of the Assassins Guild is a good way to catch a knife in the back. This will take some creativity and subtlety from the Party. DMs should reward ingenuity and the Players who lean into the spycraft element of it all.

The Assassins are led by a gnomish woman named Mingani Lilt. She is dangerous and quite deadly if crossed, however, she has a solid contract with Alios and if the Party shows her the Mark of Mask, she will

be obliged to help. Ultimately, this is due to Alios being the true leader, with her being a second in command and running it all when he isn't calling the shots.

The Assassins Guild headquarters hangs below Black Span, bolted to the underside of the bridge. Whether the Party locates a contact on their own, or if Resh assists them, they will be taken to a spot toward the middle of the bridge, near the north wall. A large false stone is moved aside, revealing a ladder down into the Guild.

From the Assassin's hideout, they can be taken to a terrifyingly narrow, hidden causeway built into the northern side of the bridge. The Party will have to press their backs flat against the stone and shimmy forward, staying under the lip of stone overhead so the guards at the bridge checkpoint don't see them. The causeway becomes a tunnel underneath the Cathrach streets. The tunnel ends at some old stairs that lead up to a door that opens into a secluded alley, three blocks east of the river.

The sounds of raging battle echo behind them. Fayte reiterates how urgent it is that they must find Majin. If the party were to look up at this moment, they might catch a glimpse of the Accursed King himself flying across the black sky toward the fighting.

And thus, ends Everlasting Night.



WEAVING THREADS

SOCIAL

Each of the bridges holds an important social encounter. While the party may wish to fight or threaten the leaders of each bridge, keep in mind these are people who might respect the Knight Captain and/or the Accursed King... but they don't fear either one. These are strong NPCs.

Ulka Resh can be swayed by either side, and it may come down to who gets to him first. There can be a race against the clock element. An agent of the Accursed King is en-route to make a deal with Resh. If the Party gets there before her, they may have an easier time securing his aid. If the deal has been struck before the Party arrives, Resh and his bodyguards may attack them on site.

Sidequest Potential: Each of the guild leaders desires some aspect of legitimacy. If the characters wish to talk

about true treason and replacing the government—the characters at the bridges will vie for position and cut deals about the future of the Shadelands (with them in it, of course). Before the battle begins, let the characters have the ability to loop everyone back in and see what else they can get from these conspirators.



COMBAT

Much of 'The Everlasting Night' should be spent avoiding combat until the right moments. Early fights can land the party in trouble and, in this module, you want to play up the importance of discretion rather than valor. Being discovered early puts the party at a massive disadvantage. Once the battle for the bridges begins, then the party can toss down and cut loose, before it's back to sneaking.

Sidequest Potential: Nothing is stopping the characters from taking time to aid the Legionnaires in their battle for the bridges. Securing the bridges for the Knight Captain will cut off the Cathrach side from more than just magic and put them in full desperation as fresh food and water will also start becoming scarce. The Knight Captain will have a severe upper hand in later battles should the party choose this.



EXPLORATION

The three bridges are rife with exploration opportunities. The module is going to be tense and quiet... until everything goes wild. But before then, the party can find many stores and oddities within the bridges. If your party is the wandering type, it is a good chance to sprinkle in some custom stores and magical places of otherworldly wonder.

Sidequest Potential: Alios is a cleric for the God of Thieves and Trickery whose purpose to warn travelers about going into becoming a Warlock. A curious group might wonder why the God of Thieves even cares about such an endeavor; something vastly more befitting for more light-based Gods.

There is indeed a story, and it turns out if the party wishes to explore further—they can uncover a divine plot! Alios has been using his spot on Patron's Pass to assassinate clerics of other faiths, simply to eliminate divine competition. It's a bit ruthless, but even the Gods have grudges to settle. This is also a good chance to run the Ascension Gambit Sidequest.





Side Quest

ASCENSION GAMBIT

INTRODUCTION

Ascension Gambit is a (5e) scenario written by Gehenna Gaming for The Red Opera module from Apotheosis Studios.

This scenario takes place within the Shadelands and starts in the city of Yon'Cath. However, it can take place in a city or town of the GM's creation so long as it is within the Shadelands and integrates the key people, places, and events described in this book.

Everyone knows what Warlocks want, but none of the factions want to let another achieve it first. When

Warlocks in Yon'Cath approach ascension, aiming to replace a Patron and become like a god themselves, the others rush to stop them and prevent the resulting swing in power. In the Shadelands, the Patrons are merely a hop, skip, and a jump away. Who's to say we can't add another to the mix? Would introducing another God destabilize the religious order across the realms?

These are the exact questions Ascension Gambit seeks to answer.

SYNOPSIS

Cults have sprung up throughout Yon'Cath and across the Shadelands, looking to elevate their leaders to godhood and create a new patron with whom to seal their pacts. One such cult, the Faceless Ones, defies a mysterious Patron slowly gaining popularity across the city. What began as a small, devout following has turned into a religious extremist movement, following not a god but a psionic monstrosity, called an unformed one, manipulating their thoughts and dreams. The more victims that pledge themselves to this obsessed unformed one, the more power it gains.

This campaign is divided into the following parts:

Act 1 - A Long Rest

The players begin by staying the night at the Hole in the Wall Inn & Tavern, either together as a party or as complete strangers on their own paths of adventure. The players rest their heads in their rooms after meeting tavern customers and are suddenly interrupted by attacks from strange worm creatures. Following the attack, they meet LaCroix, the Knight Captain, who requests an investigation by the party. This investigation leads to the discovery and altercation with an infected Yon'Cath citizen.

Act 2 - Bizarre Bazaar

The party explores some of the darker areas of Yon'Cath while investigating the source of all the trouble. They will be able to peruse a marketplace where any number of enchanted items can be found. A strange traveling merchant with a bloated gut is discovered, who suspiciously has anything the adventurers' desire. This merchant is severely infected with worm, and the altercation turns into a chase toward an old warehouse.

Act 3 - The Showdown

The adventurers find themselves on the trail of a dangerous cult operating beneath the city. The Warlocks whose pacts had been broken and creatures who have created thralls of the citizens lead to the tunnels underneath the warehouse where an unformed one named Thulduss has made a pact with Gosoliad resides. Thulduss has the power to break the pacts of the thralls they capture, adding their patron's power to themselves.

ACT 1 – A LONG REST

The players begin in the Warlock twin-city of Yon’Cath. They may or may not be traveling together, but the one thing they have in common is they are at Hole in the Wall Tavern & Inn. While they rest, they come under attack in a vulnerable state and band together, seeking answers.

Goals

1. Immerse into the tavern setting and interact with the exciting citizens of Yon’Cath.
2. Interact with a Warlock who is drowning his sorrows in a flagon of ale for his lost Patron.
3. Survive the nocturnal attack of worms and infected townsfolk.
4. Meet with LaCroix, the Knight Captain.

It is a busy night at Hole in the Wall Tavern & Inn, a four-level structure near the center of Yon’Cath frequented by locals for ales. The Inn itself houses travelers from every corner of the world and beyond, as people make a pilgrimage to break or forge a pact.

Luhlia, the half-orc barmaid, is bouncing from table to table to try and keep up. Her slender frame slips gracefully between the many circular tables scattered around the room, each seating five to six demanding clients in the large open concept ground floor. From the kitchen, meals are expedited at an alarming rate with dishes that smell exquisite yet as foreign as the players have ever seen.

One of the guests is a handsome fellow, despite having far too many layers of dirt on his skin. As time passes, he becomes more and more rude and belligerent. However, Luhlia eventually gives him an evil eye that makes him cower and deflate.

At the bar, a dwarven man named **Rhyian** is sitting in a slumped fashion holding a mug as an occasional tear escapes his eyes falling into his red lager. Should the players inquire, he will gently push them away and mutter about losing his Patron.

Eventually, the travelers head to their rooms to bed down for the evening. Everything seems fairly normal, and the rooms are adorned with simple furnishings: A bed, a simple cabinet for clothes, hooks for coats or capes on the walls, and a small candle holder. Paintings of several powerful patrons seen in the halls are also in a few of the rooms themselves. Some of the rooms are even named after the Patrons as if they were local celebrities. There is a small **Totem** that rests on each nightstand. If inspected, they seem wholly sealed and are not magical. Shaking them, they feel solid. The only way to detect if anything is genuinely off is if they can detect psionic energy. Even detecting life does not penetrate the shell of the totem figurine.

As the players sleep, they may each make a passive perception check at difficulty 16. Those that fail may make a check again after those that passed, this time at difficulty 19. Those who fail the check don’t notice a thing when the totem begins to crack, but their dreams become unusually frightening as if a Patron is trying to wake them.

Those who passed the check realize that the small totem has been broken and feel something on their face, crawling towards their eyes or ears. As they attempt to begin removing it, tendrils grab on to the eyelid, nose, mouth, or anything else it can to get leverage to haul its body into the mucus membrane, as it is a protoplasmic worm. Removing the worm is a difficulty 10. Those players who fail will need the help of other players to stop the worm from digging in completely.

Once they are crushed or killed by the adventurers, they will likely exit their rooms and see if the attack is over or what the damage and situation is. This is an excellent time to get the party together officially as the other guests are not adventurers. From the other doors down the hall, as well as from the floors below, the players can hear screaming and sounds of fighting.

Several of the guests are dead in their rooms, having failed to survive the encounter. Or at least they appear dead. One of the dead has half a worm sticking out of his crushed eye, having taken each other out. If inspected, some bodies are infected yet catatonic, and their faces begin to change. Any distinguishing features, such as ears, eyes, noses, and mouths, begin to fade and blend into an androgynous blank slate, like an unidentifiable mannequin. Some of the

GM Note

Dialogue Examples:

“My patron... I’ve been replaced.”

“I never heard of a patron giving up on a Warlock.”

“I feel like I lost part of my very heart, and... I’m weaker for it.”

rooms will show signs of a struggle, but the guests are gone. They may find a broken window in one of these rooms, though no corpse lies in the street. The dirty, rude man from the bar lies in the corner of his room, holding his head and swearing up a storm. Not long after, something in his head bursts through his nostril, about the size of a guinea pig. Much larger than the worm the adventurers killed. It scurries about the room looking to escape. The players may attempt to kill it, though it is an AC-18 to hit. After one round, it escapes into the night through a crack in the wall.

Those infected tenants whose faces are now unidentifiable can either run from the tavern amidst all the action, attack the party in a mindless frenzy, or be gathered and bound together for precaution, brought to the lower level of the inn. Not long after the incident, **LaCroix, The Knight Captain** arrives. One of the surviving guests describes what transpired, stuttering and shaking, terrified by the experience. A few townspeople will have gathered at this point, attracted by the noise and excitement, and will laugh and mock them for being ridiculous. LaCroix silences them and asks the adventurers for their story.

LaCroix is a busy man, and his forces are spread thin. Once he's heard the tale and how the adventurers helped or handled themselves in the aftermath, he deputizes them, putting them in charge of getting to the source of this, and offers a substantial reward. One of his officers sees a broken totem and says he has seen them around town. A merchant was selling them. If the players do not suggest it, LaCroix requests they find this merchant in the morning. Specifically, suggesting that they start with the arcane bazaar at the northern bridge of Yon'Cath, the Black Span.

The staff at the inn watch over the tenants as they layout bedrolls on the tavern's ground floor and close the establishment so they can all rest safely until dawn arrives and the rooms can be inspected for further trouble.

Places

Hole in the Wall Tavern & Inn

A four-story building of smooth, light gray stone, located on the Yonder side of Yon'Cath. Ever since it was first built, the windows of the building are large and circular. The citizens of Yon'Cath joked that it appeared the windows were simply holes in the walls, and the name stuck.

Key NPCs:

Rhyian

100-year-old male dwarf and customer of the Hole in the Wall Tavern & Inn (emphasis on tavern).

Rhyian is a Warlock who is lamenting the loss of his dear Patron, wearing nondescript black robes and a broken chain necklace.

- **Roleplay Hints:** This dwarf has been drinking all day! Rhyian slurs his words and is very emotional. Not completely inconsolable, players can roll a charisma check or buy him an ale to calm him down (Difficulty Class 15.)
- **Motivation:** Rhyian wants to wallow in his depression and sorrows, hopefully with a small audience of empathetic strangers. He will tell his sad story of losing connection with his Patron to anyone who will listen.

LaCroix, the Knight Captain

See LaCroix section in The Red Opera.

- **Motivation:** Deputize brave and capable adventurers to look into the matter and protect the city at all costs. Not willing to provide resources to help in the investigation, but offering titles and rewards to the party after.

Other NPCs

The Hole in the Wall Tavern & Inn is a busy tavern with travelers of all races and classes. Customers are here for good times, bitter drinks, and a place to rest. Feel free to embellish and add your own flair to the diverse crowd at the tavern.

Luhlia, the half-orc barmaid

A young woman who runs the tavern side of the Hole in the Wall Tavern & Inn. She is quick-witted and knows how to keep unruly customers in check. When Luhlia isn't lugging barrels from the basement up to the bar, she is bussing empty flagons away from thirsty patrons to help keep their spirits up with plenty of ale.

Important Items

Totem

The totems represent a goat-headed man with a large stomach sitting cross-legged and pointing upwards. An inscription on the bottom reads that it is for "good luck."

Deputy Badges

The badges handed out by the Knight Captain are of a shield configuration with a linked chain around the edges and a burning fire in the center, which glows, displaying the authority of the watch even at night.

ACT 2 – BIZARRE BAZAAR

With newly acquired authority by order of the Knight Captain, the party is now at the height of a major investigation. Looking into these worms and totems may need a little help from Warlock merchants at the Arcane Bazaar. The adventurers will get to explore the shops and merchants in a bustling bazaar, and each shop owner may have a bit of expertise, and perhaps some items, to help the players with their task.

Goals

1. Peruse the Arcane Bazaar.
2. Investigate the worm and totems.
3. Get useful information and items from Warlock merchants.
4. Discover and confront the merchant cultist.

The player characters search the city for the shady merchant selling these worm-infested totems but get more than they bargained for. This is a good chance for the players to explore Yon’Cath and immerse themselves in its culture and unique offerings, if they haven’t already, or visit new locales they may not have seen so far.

It is essential for the players to gain their footing and familiarize themselves with the setting, actively plugging themselves into it and having the authority to make decisions. This will help them feel like they’re in control of the investigation, as well as get further into the mystery.

As dawn arrives, encourage the players to leave the inn and explore the market district of Yon’Cath. There is a wide variety of strange and unusual shops in the Arcane Bazaar; many items for sale being rare, abhorrent, or forbidden outside the Shadelands. Since the worms are unformed spawn, **Psionic Wares** is a great place to visit for valuable information. Another option is **The Nameless Necromancy Shop**, so that answers may be obtained from the dead if possible. Details about these shops and the unique Warlocks who run them can be found at the end of this Act.

Khouryn Brickfoot will quickly approach the party as they make their way through the Arcane Bazaar. The dwarf proprietor of The Cracked Pact is partaking in some arcane shopping herself. Upon noticing the party, she will approach them as she chews on a cigar to discuss that there have been several Warlocks who have accused her of breaking their

pacts unwillingly and have reported this wrongdoing to the authorities. She has been lucky enough to have alibis, but after the attack at the Hole in the Wall tavern, she is curious if it is related. If questioned, she may reveal that whoever is doing this likely has a replica of Gosoliad’s reliquary.

GM Note

This is a good alternative entry point to this adventure. Should your players not want to align with LaCroix, or you aren’t ready to introduce him, you can introduce the scenario with Khouryn and ignore the plot hooks involving the Knight Captain.

Give the players time to peruse and shop, but once they exit the Bazaar, have them encounter a wooden stand with wheels that fold up so the proprietor can travel from city to city if needed. From the top of the stand hangs a crude sign scrawled with the words Wantful Things. The merchant himself is a rather rotund man with a massive gut, so large it doesn’t seem physically possible. Here, mixed into his other odds and ends, the players should spy the small totems on display for low prices (DC 12). He looks them each in the eye and tells them exactly what they want to hear as if he can read their minds. He pulls out trinkets and items that fit and reflect what each character wants, though each player sees the items differently.

If they bring up anything about the attack, he will suddenly make a break for it, heading toward a run-down large storage building where other cultists are.

Should the players stop, tackle, or otherwise assault him, his stomach explodes with wriggling worms living and incubating inside him. The worm will rush to attack the party in a wave, while others go after random people on the street. The party will encounter the **Mass of Protoplasmic Worms** (see Appendix). Use the attack on surrounding townsfolk with a few individual worms to give the encounter a sense of chaos and uncertainty. The infected townsfolk can also surprise attack from behind the party. As this

panic breaks out, the merchant will try to escape to the hideout.

Should the players manage to kill or capture the merchant, have some of the worms slither their way toward the same warehouse to lead them there (Survival check DC 16).

Places:

Arcane Bazaar

Just before the northernmost Black Span bridge is a darkened alley lined with tables, tents, and cramped shops. At the Arcane Bazaar, a Warlock can find any number of arcane and mystical items sold by merchants of all kinds.

Nameless Necromancer Shop

A merchant tent that deals with magical items and tomes related to necromancy. The shop itself is a tent made with textiles of many bright colors. Tables are covered with various books, operating tools, and Necromantia. The sickly smell of rotting flesh is veiled by sweet burning incense and the shopkeeper's perfume.

Psionic Wares

A humble table covered with very costly psionic and enchanted items. A green glow emitting from the table's surface reflects against the merchant's white beard, who slowly adjusts the items and patiently waits for customers.

Wantful Things

A rickety traveling display cart containing totems and anything an adventurer desires. This cart has not been seen very often in the Arcane Bazaar until lately. Various items hang on towering poles, which seem much more interesting the more one looks at them.

Old Warehouse

An old building in disrepair that once was used as a waystation for parcels and boxes on route to be delivered to or from Yon'Cath. Now barely used outside of the occasional squatter and younglings up to no good. After the encounter with the Suspicious Merchant, the party may chase him to this run-down building.

Key NPCs:

Khouryn Brickfoot:

Middle-aged dwarf and proprietor of The Cracked Pact; see Khouryn Brickfoot section in The Red Opera. In this scenario, she has been accused of breaking pacts without the consent of the victimized Warlocks.

- **Roleplay Hints:** Khouryn has a raspy voice from many years of smoking cigars and throwing back ale at the tavern. She has a bit of

a wise-cracking attitude, which can turn to no-nonsense aggression when dealing with anyone too big for their britches.

- **Motivation:** Inform the party that she is innocent of breaking their pacts unwillingly and telling them about the replica of Gosoliad's reliquary.

Shanti, the Necromancer

A 30-year-old female Tiefling and owner of the Nameless Necromancer Shop. She dresses in exotic scarves and sheer robes as if unaffected by the elements. Strapped to her face is an intricately designed wooden death mask carved with the image of a skull. Should the players seek Shanti's counsel, she can summon the spirits of the deceased at the inn, or even the cultists or the merchant if they are killed by the player for answers. All for a price, of course.

- **Roleplay Hints:** Shanti moves around the party like a predator about to strike. She speaks with a soft voice and a Cheshire cat grin. She has a deep fascination with death and gets bored quickly when the conversation doesn't circle back to subjects concerning her favorite subject.
- **Motivation:** Willing to trade the party's life energy for a Field Journal of Necromantic Parasites, which describes various parasites used in arcane methods of reanimating cadavers or creating mindless servants. Every player character must bleed 1 HP into a canopic jar of swirling blood to get the book.

Dirg'ant, the Psionic Warlock

A 700-year-old non-binary dark Elf and owner of Psionic Wares. A Warlock who deals in psionics via their patron. This Drow is ancient and wizened, wearing enchanted gold armor that no longer fits their frail aging body. Dirg'ant has extremely long white hair that drags on the floor. Use Dirg'ant if the players get entirely lost, as they can identify the Unformed One resonance in the psionic imprint from the worm.

- **Roleplay Hints:** They talk very slowly and methodically, using pregnant pauses to punctuate the wisdom of their words. Dirg'ant is patient, methodical, and very observant, which is an important note for potential thieves.
- **Motivation:** Dirg'ant has been around for a very long time and has an encyclopedic knowledge of all things' Psionic. They are eager to share their wisdom with people who show any amount of passionate curiosity. Should the party inquire about the worms, Dirg'ant will have much

to share regarding the psionic nature of the Unformed One.

Suspicious Merchant

A 50-year-old male human and owner of Wantful Things, the traveling totem cart. A suspicious merchant with a massive, protruding gut, dressed in stained rags. Once a traveler peddling wares, this merchant found himself set upon by **Thulduss, the Unformed One** (see Act 3) in an alleyway. Completely under the thrall of this menace, he has lost his identity as sections of his brain were fed upon by Thulduss in a ravenous state.

- **Roleplay Hints:** He never gives a name and speaks in hushed tones as if he is letting his customers in on a valuable secret. Every sentence or two, the merchant hiccups and retches as if he is trying very hard to control persistent nausea. Loud and boisterous, he will do whatever it takes to outperform every other merchant on the street in an attempt to peddle his product.
- **Motivation:** Convince the party to purchase an *Enchanted Totem of Wanting*, tricking them into thinking the item is something completely different and significant to them on a personal level. Lie, cheat, swindle, manipulate, and gaslight anyone and everyone to push these figurines.

Important Items

Field Journal of Necromantic Parasites

Bound in an unusually slick black hide covered with a texture of small bulbous pearls across its surface. This field journal is the result of the years-long study of various parasitic creatures that have necromantic properties. The most important chapter to the party describes infectious protoplasmic worms used to control a victim's mind while mutating their physical appearance.

Enchanted Totem of Wanting

These objects morph themselves into the object of any person's desire through a cloaking illusion. It is perceived to have a profoundly personal and emotional connection to the observer. In reality, it is a carved totem containing protoplasmic worms.



ACT 3 – THE SERVANT OF GOSOLIAD

Depending on how the last Act resolves, the players find themselves at the Old Warehouse, which is the entrance to an underground series of tunnels deep below the city. They fight their way through traps and sentinels to get to Thulduss, the Unformed One, at the heart of the scourge of Yon'Cath.

Goals

1. Fight the cultists
2. Defeat the unformed one
3. Explore the cavern temple for treasure
4. Report back to Lacroix, the Knight Captain, or Khouryn

Upon entering the warehouse, two cultists immediately attack the party. One with a mask draws a sword, and the other begins to ready a spell. However, the spell caster seems lethargic and will go last regardless of the initiative order.

Once defeated, if the players remove the sword-wielding cultist's mask, they discover its skin is covered with ooze and turning gray. Their face has begun to change with tendrils replacing the lips and mouth in a half-mutated state.

The players can either use passive perception (DC10) to discover an opening in the tunnels, or the GM can make the opening obvious to the players. They see that some dirt and hay have been cleared in a path away from some large crates. Once they move the crates, the party sees a wooden door cut into the floor, descending a staircase in the rock, carved by manual labor.

It is dark, yet there are torches by the entrance for use. The tunnels appear to have been created by spell casting as the rock seems burned through, creating shiny obsidian that reflects the torchlight. At the bottom of the stairs, the path forks to the left and right.

A path to the right leads to a large cavern where people are lay scattered about the floor. Some still in nightclothes can be recognized as patrons of the Hole in the Wall from the first act. They are in a comatose state and writhing in agony as their bodies begin the change. If the players enter this room to inspect the victims, initiate combat as an intellect devourer descends from the ceiling.

If the players enter the cavern, they will discover the cavern is a dead end after combat, and the only path

forward is the other direction. As they venture further down the left path, have the party hear chanting from ahead. A large number of masked cultists approach out of what looks like a temple in a chamber directly ahead. They come down the main hall towards the players in a trance-like state, some carrying a body of a woman whose head is splayed open, brain removed. Whether the players pass Stealth checks or not, the cultists will ignore them unless attacked.

Once clear, the players can quietly enter the main throne room of **Thulduss the Unformed One** (see Appendix). Across the room hanging above a throne suspended by a chain, a golden Reliquary with an emerald crystal glowing brightly at its center, illuminating the entire cavern. A breeze from seemingly nowhere blows through the room, carrying whispers from Gosoliad, penetrating the players' minds. Unless the party passes an intelligence saving throw (DC 16), fears and insecurities cause them to hesitate. While the party is distracted by the voices, Thulduss will appear from behind them, near the cavern's entrance.

Have the party roll initiative, but Thulduss gets an attack of opportunity if any players fail their saving throw. Play upon the chaos and misdirection Gosoliad causes. Players' spells seem to fizzle or randomly change target location, and illusionary killers appear to strike the players then vanish. Warlock magic seems particularly volatile, hitting friends more often than they do Thulduss.

GM Note

If the players destroy the reliquary, Gosoliad's influence over the encounter ceases. This disruption of power puts Thulduss at a roll disadvantage, as they panic at their loss of control. The game master may roll 4D10 primal magic damage against Thulduss as the primal magics they sought to control turn on them.

Once Thulduss is defeated, the players hear the screams of the cultists in their chambers. Those looking in that direction will see 30 of them rush out of the room and up towards the surface tunnels to escape (to the safety of the nearest colony). If the players search the cavern temple, award them with gold, treasures (given out at the game masters prerogative). The worms within the bodies of the cultists and comatose victims are still thriving. The party can choose what to do with these infected and comatose victims with the help of Yon'Cath citizens.

Places:

Old Warehouse

See Act 2

Key NPCs:

Thulduss the Unformed One

A wrathful creature of impossible dimensions that may at one point have been humanoid. Undulating shapes writhing beneath a tight-fitting robe. Its head is a long and leathery flagellum covered with gaping mouths all shouting dark incantations and obscenities. This creature communicates both verbally through its mouths but also psychically perhaps via the incantations screamed nonsensically from its head. It has tentacle arms that move furiously. Thick muscular legs are supported by overgrown cloven hooves. Thulduss became obsessed with the one broken path Warlock in Yon'Cath, Khouryn Brickfoot. With numerous failed attempts to capture the dwarf, they instead probed her mind from below the streets and sent their cultists to discover the secrets of the pact. Eventually, they reached out to Gosoliad herself and became a new disciple. Gosoliad cares so little for the Warlocks who reach out; she did not discover the new disciple was an unformed one. Thulduss has used their worm brood to be placed in the city by their chief disciple "the merchant" to infect the city's people and Warlocks to enter the underground for them to break their pacts and obtain new and experimental levels of power.

- **Roleplay hints:** Thulduss has a deep raspy voice even when projecting telepathically. They act as a curious scientist regarding magic and wish to break or dissect things to find how they work.
- **Motivation:** With each pact Thulduss breaks, with their eidetic memory, they can swap between pact features with relative ease and can do so without a short rest due to unformed one physiology.

Cultists

Citizens of Yon'Cath who have been either mentally dominated by Thulduss or are slowly undergoing the worm's metamorphosis they were infected by. The latter have begun wearing masks and clothes covering their skin to hide the budding tendrils on their face and slick slime found on the epidermis of the unformed one race.

- **Roleplay hints:** Many are tired from putting in non-stop hours of labor.
- **Motivation:** They are utterly devoted and will do any ruthless action to appease their god Thulduss.

Important Items

Thulduss's reliquary

Replicating the means to become a broken path Warlock, Thulduss kept this relic but vainly displayed it, not knowing its destruction would cause calamity. If collected after defeating Thulduss, the Warlock who holds it will have access to pact features for the Archfey and the Fiend up to their level and may switch between them after a long rest.

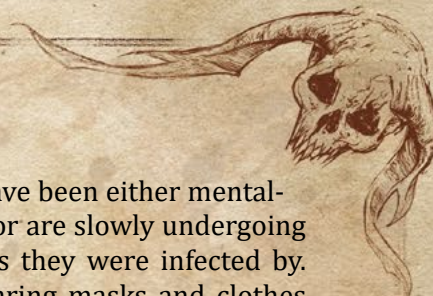
Conclusion

With Thulduss defeated, the cultists rush towards the surface, and the knights and traveling adventurers of Yon'Cath see them pour out of the Old Warehouse. These groups strike down many; however, players can track those who get away toward a mountain known for its extensive cave system.

When the players report to the knight captain, they are thanked and rewarded. Should any players have lost their bond with their patron, Khouryn can restore it or bond them with another.

THE END

**Thank you for participating in
"Ascension Gambit"**



Appendix 1

NPC & CREATURE STATISTICS

Faceless One

Cultists who have been changing into a proto-unformed one.

ARMOR CLASS 8
HIT POINTS 20
SPEED 20 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
10	12	8	15	13	14

Damage Immunities Poison, psychic
Damage Resistances Magic Resistant
Condition Immunities None

The Suspicious Merchant

Same stats as faceless one, with the addition of the worm in his stomach.

Mass of Protoplasmic Worms

A pile of slimy and wriggling worms.

ARMOR CLASS 1
HIT POINTS 12 HP per player (i.e., 48 HP for four players facing the encounter)
SPEED 10 ft., burrow 20 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
3	12	10	2	2	1

Damage Immunities Poison, psychic, necrotic
Damage Resistances Magic Resistant
Condition Immunities: Blinded, Confused, Frightened

Actions

Squirming Shriek. Every creature within 30 feet of the Mass of Protoplasmic Worms must make a DC 15 Constitution saving throw or take 5 points of necrotic damage.

Thulduss, the Unformed One

Psionic monstrosity with a flagellum head, tentacle arms, and cloven hooves

ARMOR CLASS 14
HIT POINTS 80
SPEED 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
12	11	12	19	17	17

Damage Immunities Poison, psychic
Damage Resistances Magic Resistant
Condition Immunities Blinded, Confused, Frightened

Actions

At will: Detect thoughts (any one creature 30 feet around), Levitate (20 ft. up to 500 lbs or self.)

Pact Breaker. Each round on his turn, Thulduss targets one hostile Warlock in a 30-foot radius to break the bond with their Patron. DC 10 intelligence saving throw. Hit results in 1d4 psychic damage and immediate severed connection with Patron.

Flagellum Melee Attack. A focused attack on one creature of choice with a reach of 6 feet; +6 to hit. Hit: 15 (2d10 + 4) psychic damage.

Mind Blast (Cantrip) - See D&D 5e

Destructive Wave - See D&D 5e

Contagion - See D&D 5e





Chapter 4

ASHES AND SORROW

"After much deliberation and plenty of blood-soaked turnovers, the old city lords realized the only way to ensure they'd have a Librarian who wouldn't die on the job is hire one who was already dead."— Master Ridgewell Becket, Assistant Librarian of Athenaeum Arcana: Deceased in Body, Alive in Spirit

INTRODUCTION

'Ashes and Sorrow' represents the first act of a new storyline. Since the Players have begun in the Shadelands, they've dealt with the fallout of the Accursed King. They're also horribly guilty of treason at this point despite noble intentions. The next three acts shift the focus from the Knight Captain over to Majin the Betrayer. Understanding Majin's motivations will be key to making sure they come off less

as a mustache-twirling alien villain. At this point, all anyone knows about this character is that they are a friend to Fayte and a very powerful Warlock next to the Accursed King.

This act is a quiet act (literally), and the mood can be enhanced by playing the game via candlelight, with hushed whispers as the Players slink through the city streets and do an investigation with Majin in the great library.

SYNOPSIS

"Knowledge is undeniably quite valuable... most of it falls under a category I call: true, but utterly useless." — Majin the Betrayer

In the first act of the adventure, the Players will sneak through Cathrach to locate Majin. Hunted almost instantly by agents of the King, the party should feel the ever-looming threat of pressure at all times. Despite being hunted, the party will find many shops were still open for business and rather welcoming. Warlocks are used to being hunted, after all, so nobody has any real problems selling to the other side. Including Majin, who the party will make it to by the end.

The second act is an arcane library research encounter that features many different texts, effects, and enchanted curses for the party. The Players will have fun exploring different books and learning how they can help them with the task at hand (whilst picking up bits of lore along the way). Majin's goal is to guide the Players (and Fayte) to realize that she needs to open the Well of Souls further. If they can't draw her to that conclusion, they need to leave some breadcrumbs.

The finale of 'Ashes and Sorrow' takes place with a somber journey to the Well of Souls. If Majin feels they have the party willing to try, they will avoid the hunters. If, however, the party still seems a bit sketchy about their motives, Majin will lend a hand and obliterate the hunters pursuing the party from the first act.

THE SETTING

*"Silence! Damn you! SILENCE!!!"
—Lady Helena Whitestone, Head Librarian of the Athenaeum Arcanus: Quite Possibly Undead*

The Shield Maiden and Party find themselves behind the guard lines on the Cathrach side of the river. They are now officially within the Accursed King's domain. While black gothic architecture is common in Yonder, it appears to be practically mandatory here in Cathrach. The Shield Maiden informs the party that their contact, Majin, should be waiting for them three blocks east. The streets are all but deserted. Tendrils of smoke from dozens of uncontrolled fires drift up

above toward the Aurora lights in the sky. Ash begins to fall like snow. The screams and shouts of violent conflict have all but faded away. After all the mayhem on the bridges, the relative quiet of this place is unsettling. Every so often, they hear an explosion in the distance while they move through the streets. Rain continues to fall heavily upon them, which makes some sounds seem distant—and others right behind them.



ASHES AND SORROW

Scan this QR code to listen to this adventure act's paired song from the Orchestral Version of the Red Opera Album by DiAmorte.

ACT 1



Faint whispers with no discernable origin trail after the party as they walk. Feet splash in small puddles as they notice pitch black shadows with narrow red eyes staring at them from perches on buildings. In fleeting moments, any attempt to directly look back or interact with the shadows causes them to dissipate and vanish. What first appears to be heavy snowfall, turns out in fact to be ash. A result of the countless fires, both arcane and natural, raging throughout the city.

They pass dark stone buildings where magical torches illuminate runes describing the nature of the establishments within, such as Dead Man's Den, The Emerald Promise, Esme's Apothecary, The Little Abyss... most of them appear to be suppliers of arcane implements.

If the party wants to resupply at a shop, **Esme's Apothecary** appears to be open. They can find whatever goods the GM feels are available. Esme is a craggy old witch, but pleasant enough to paying customers. As the party browses her wares, she laments the intercity fighting and how much relationships have deteriorated between the Warlock factions, but also praises Dorian (Accursed King) for "holding it all together at the seams." If the party is rude or threatening to her in any way, Esme snaps her fingers and they find themselves suddenly outside the shop, a plain stone wall where the door used to be.

The party arrives at the meeting place, a dimly lit intersection. No one appears to be there. The ash in the air is thickening.

After a few in-game minutes, or immediately if a party member does anything to draw attention to themselves, figures emerge from pitch black alleys into the light of the arcane streetlamp. The party sees four Drow warlocks all dressed in black. Each one holds a red-tinted blade in one hand and a chain leading to a collar around the neck of a large Draegloth in the other. The warlock in the middle steps forward. Her face is covered in white runic tattoos.

She says, *"Tsk tsk... you all have been stirring up quite a bit of trouble, haven't you? All the interesting torture is reserved for traitors... I can't wait."*

Before anyone can do anything, there is a flash of green light down a nearby alleyway. Majin's voice

echoes through the shadows, urging the Players to run. Fayte wastes no time and begins chasing the ghostly green flames.

"Traitors always run..."

GM Note

Using the Chase Mechanics; engage in a 5-round chase through Cathrach.

The Warlock hunters have no problems or qualms about using dimensional doors, shadow steps, grasping black tentacles, or other spells to stay afoot of the party (and keep up with any of the party's tricks). Yet every time they get close, an arcane oddity will prevent their daggers from striking true. A shadow will betray them, gravity will alter slightly, and a trash pile will animate and gnaw at their feet.

There are no stats for this chase encounter because the goal is to build tension. Fayte will always warn them against fighting members of the guard this strong, and Dexterity (Stealth) checks are the way to go. Give the Players skill checks appropriate to their method of running at a DC of 25. Once three characters have hit their goal over the five rounds—they pull ahead in that method. (I.e. if the rogue hits his acrobatics check three times in a row, then his impressive parkour has helped the party get away). If the party critically fails, then have them lose an important object off them—the Warlocks grab their magical dagger seconds before Majin blasts them off.

Regardless of success or failure, after five rounds, the party will find themselves racing into a giant circle surrounded by green flames that teleport them to a safe location where Majin greets the party with a big smile: *"Evening Friends!"*

Majin is a Tiefling who dresses as if they were a monk. Red and white robes flow off them, but their hands are wrapped in black martial arts tape, and in all cases, they wear a simple red cloth as a mask that covers the lower half of their face.

To the Shield Maiden, they add, "*Fayte, you're looking well... all things considered.*"

Fayte's response is cordial but not overly warm.

Majin:

"Charming as ever... well, I think as ever. My memory has been dodgy recently. Regardless, it's chilly out and that lot back there is likely to be the most hospitable group we run across, so we'd best get a move on if we want to prevent the utter collapse of this entire damned city."

If the Player asks why Majin cares or what they get out of it, Majin says:

"I am nothing if not a practical creature. This havoc... this chaos... it's impractical, inefficient, regressive, and worst of all, it's harmful to the Shadelands. Make no mistake; I am curious beyond measure, aren't you? I am here to help the Shadelands. Now, we're wasting time and as I've alluded to, there are far worse things out here at night. Things that won't be so easily scared off with parlor tricks."

As the party walks, Majin monologues

"The veil between worlds has always been thin here. That's what makes this place so special. However, lately, 'thin' doesn't quite describe it. 'Porous' would be a much more apt term. These days, it's less of a veil and more of a loose-knit shawl with countless holes for things to slip through. Dorian... you know him as the Accursed King, was working quite hard to hold it all together..."

Majin looks somewhat mournful:

"He wasn't always like this. He was... hopeful. I fear the effort of all his machinations has taken a dire toll. As his mind slips, so too does his grip on the puppet strings of power... and the Shadelands suffer for it."

If Players ask where they're going, Majin answers:

"Athenaeum Arcana... the Library."

If they ask 'why':

"The concept of keeping immense conflicting powers in balance with each other is not new or unique to the Shadelands. Here, we call it the Dance of Elements. All the little mystical forces of magic and nature... reality and unreality... push and pull and swirl around each other in relative harmony. Or, at least, that's how it's supposed to be. The Shadelands are fracturing, being pulled apart at the seams. We need to stop it, but before we can stop it, we have to learn how to. Fayte and I have been studying together for some time about

the Shadelands curiosities. There has to be some focal point, some Patron, or someplace where we can put fresh eyes on old lore. Hence: the library."

GM Note

It is up to your discretion whether or not the party encounters any unfriendliness along the way to the library. If you want to keep things moving, the presence of Majin can act as a deterrent for any would-be assailants



ACT 2



Sitting atop a raised platform of stone steps is a cylindrical building wreathed in black columns and topped with a black and white marble dome. They see the words "Athenaeum Arcana" carved into the stone. Majin walks up the six steps, turning around to sit down on the top step before pulling a pipe from their robes and snapping fingers to light it. They take a few puffs, blows a smoke ring, and then nods toward the entrance.

Majin:

"In you go. Remember, we're looking for insight into the history of the Shadelands... why Warlock Patrons favor this place... I don't know if they'll have anything specifically about Dorian, or a magical book about restoring balance, heh."

Give the Players a chance to respond. If none of them protest, have Fayte ask if Majin is still on the Librarian's bad side after the last time they met

Majin brushes some falling ash off their shoulder:

"That's a story for another time Fayte, and let's just air out all our mental breakdowns why don't we?" He sighs. *"For better or worse, I hate books. I'm not a wizard and libraries are a place where you can learn all the ever-so-useful history of snails. I prefer to just cut a deal for what I need... and I tried to cut a deal with the head librarian."* You can drop a hint of a slight blush matching Majin's red mask, and Fayte will laugh at this and usher the party in.

If the Players press any further, Majin can offer this:

"Look for Emmeline De Vin. She might have penned a few helpful grimoires... then again, I could be mixing her up with someone else entirely."

If the party asks what happened to her, Majin says:

"I believe she died a horrible death being torn apart by a pack of demons." This surprisingly is the truth. The reasons behind it, however, are more complicated and Majin skirts around the issue. However, if pressed... a party, a first date, several alchemical concoctions later and that party got well out of hand.

THE LIBRARY

As the party ventures deeper, they enter a dimly lit portion of the library where bookshelves stretch up and back into shadows, making them seem infinite in size. Each shelf has a thick layer of dust on them which has been disturbed here and there by other visitors. The size of the building from outside completely betrayed the amount of knowledge the walls truly contained.

Directly in front of them is a large stone desk which holds a stack of apparently blank papers, a wooden box with a coin slot, and the word "donations" scrawled across it, along with a massive old book with several chains locking it down.

The person seated behind the desk is translucent, with the slightest hint of blue shimmer, bearing a well-kept beard and short hair. He is dressed like a battle cleric, with monk's robes underneath a plate metal pauldrons and breastplate. Looking closer, the party can see the cause of his death appears to be the horrific gash running from his left shoulder, rending clear through his breastplate, and down to his right hip.

GM Note

Establish a turn order here. You can either roll the initiative or let the Players choose.

Regarding the party the ghost gives a pleasant smile and speaks in a hushed tone:

"Welcome, friends. I am Master Ridgewell Beckett, Assistant Librarian of the Athenaeum Arcana. I am happy to help you find the knowledge you seek, however, mind your volume. The Head Librarian gets terribly upset when visitors are too loud. How can I help you?"

At this point, open the floor to the players for questions or exploration. Any Player who speaks, walks, or does anything that would cause noise must a Dexterity

(Stealth) Check (Recommended DC18, but this can fluctuate at DM's discretion. If you think the Player is making an effort to whisper and be quiet, advantage can be granted. If they are loud, you may give disadvantage.)

Stealth Checks: Upon 3 failed stealth checks, the Head Librarian will attack. The Players must defeat her before continuing. Thematically, the goal of this encounter is to do investigation quietly while a terrifying Lich is judging the party.

Ridgewell points at a large book in the center of the desk: *"You can ask the Grand Ledger for books on a distinct subject, written in a certain era, or penned by a specific scribe. But be wary, friends. Knowledge comes at a price."*

GM Note

On each Player's turn, they can summon a book and open it to gain the knowledge within. Every book will have a Curse and Knowledge Gained, and additionally, in later acts will grant certain advantages. The Curse will affect either the Player who opens the book or the whole party. Start by reading the Knowledge Gained aloud. And then as that passage is finished, the curse takes effect. It is up to your discretion whether to explain how each book has a curse, or to let them figure it out themselves.

Removal of Curses:

Within the confines of the Library, the remove curse spell will only temporarily subdue the effects. It is up to the storyteller's discretion when the effects return. Outside of the Library, the remove curse spell will function normally.

The curses can also be removed by the Librarian if the Players make a monetary donation to the library in the coin box on the desk. It is the DM's discretion whether to share that information or not.

If Lady Helena Whitestone is defeated, Master Ridgewell Beckett, now the de facto Head Librarian, will be so relieved that he will remove any book curse simply if the Players ask him to.

GM Note

Book List: Based on how the party asks for books, the entire list below, or a portion of it can be provided for them to choose from.

Children of the Shadelands - by Gigi Whisperlips

The Dance of Elements - by Emmeline De Vin

Nature's Dance - by Dagney Ferral

A Philosophical Study of Warlocks - by Emmeline De Vin

The Shadelands: An Arcane History - by Gredlig Guglin

Patrons of Yon'Cath: A History of Gods & Monsters - By Emmeline De Vin

The Accursed King: A Portrait - by Shaelgyth Smede

Screams of the Shadelands - by Emmeline De Vin

Black Pact: A Bloody History - by Kazir LeGau

GM Note

The party is free to leave the library whenever they feel they've gleaned enough information to bring back to Majin. Of course, dealing with the curses may involve the players making noise—which causes the Head Librarian (her stats are at the end of this act) to poke her head around if they fail their stealth checks.

It's okay to allow a little comedy as the party searches for information.

BOOK EFFECTS



Children of the Shadelands

- By Gigi Whisperlips

Knowledge Gained

There is always a way out of every problem in the Shadelands. Patrons lurk around every corner, under every bed, within every shadow just waiting for the chance to grant us mortals power in exchange for a piece of our eternal soul. If you find yourself in that rare instance, desperate for aid, but with none in sight... just reach out with your mind, with your soul! Rem Exius is not a physical place! It is a state of mind! Help will come to those to ask for it.

Curse of the Paper Familiar

The book sprouts wings and flies up to perch on the current Player's shoulder like a parrot. On the upside, the Player will have advantage on any Intelligence checks while using the book. If the Player character wants to ask a question to any other the Player or NPC, they have to ask the book familiar first. If they don't ask the book their question first, the book nips at their ear, dealing 7 piercing damage. The book is bound to the Player until they find a way to break the curse.

The Dance of Elements

- By Emmeline De Vin

Knowledge Gained

The lights in the sky are gorgeous, the frosted forest is breathtaking, and the display of magical prowess in the city is nothing short of miraculous... But I cannot merely sit back and enjoy the beautiful symphony of otherworldly forces that permeates this place. I must find the source of this beauty, for if I do not, my heart shall explode. I hear tales of a Well... a Well not of water... but a Well filled with something much more vital to the health of the Shadelands.

Curse of the Mind Swap

Assign each Player a number (E.G. 4 Players: Player 1, Player 2, Player 3, and Player 4). Player 1's mind is now inside Player 2's body. Player 2's mind is now inside Player 3's body, etc. The last Player's mind is now inside Player 1's body.

Nature's Dance

- By Dagney Ferral

Knowledge Gained

The heathens and pagans frolic beneath the painted sky. Wine is drunk, food is shared, and blood is spilled.

They congregate along the jagged coastline of ashen rock to throw their offerings into the inky black depths below. I keep my distance, watching from the southern edge of the celebration. I have no fear of these savages. But the closer I get to that coastline, the heavier the air becomes. I taste copper in my mouth. My chest grows tight. This will be the last time I attend such a gathering. The quaint beauty of the surrounding forest is much more to my taste.

Curse of Many Hands

When the active Player performs a spell or attacks with a weapon, the action will proceed as normal. But when the action is complete, their hands will pop off and scurry away like spiders. New hands will instantly grow back. The spider-hands will be intent on causing mischief and may follow after the party. The hand needs its fingers to walk, so most items will drop once it pops off. However, items such as rings and anything the hand could possibly hold with just a curled-up pinky finger will stay with the hand unless stopped by the player.

A Philosophical Study of Warlocks

- By Emmeline De Vin

Knowledge Gained

It astounds me how few Warlocks question the source and intrinsic nature of the power they've been given. Very rarely do I receive anything more than a blank stare when I ask them what their Patron is getting out of the deal. Poor fools. Those who are least informed have likely struck the worst deals. I know what my power will cost me in the end. That is why I must undo it. That is why I must find Rem Exius. The Well is there. I know it.

Curse of the Gorgon

The active Player is permanently petrified. At the start of each of their turns, they may attempt a DC 18 Constitution saving throw, freeing themselves from the petrification on a success.

The Shadelands: An Arcane History

- By Gredig Guglin

Knowledge Gained

I find it maddening how many of these heretics look for the origins of the power in this place. It doesn't come from the sea or the earth beneath our feet, you fools! The Patrons who so graciously share their power did not arrive from some distant shore! They come from

places beyond the grasp of the physical realm. There is no physical origin. They have blessed this patch of land, and we should be thankful. Those who search for this so-called Well of Souls should be cast out... if not sacrificed in offering to our benevolent Patrons.

Curse of Amplification

The Player can't keep their voice low, and the sounds of any movements they make are amplified as if a microphone hovered overhead. Disadvantage on Dexterity (Stealth) checks. On a failed check, the player's voice is so loud it instantly summons the Head Librarian, regardless of how many strikes the party had left.

Patrons of Yon'Cath: A History of Gods & Monsters - By Emmeline De Vin

Knowledge Gained

The Patrons come here from realms not bound by corporeal form. But our world is very much bound to the physical. Ergo, it all had to start from some physical point. A place where the Shadowfell, the Feywild, and all other Planes of existence converge. Dorian knows of it. I am certain. He built his empire here because the Patrons were here. It has something to do with the Nameless Black Sea. It's why he built his stronghold along the coast, putting a stop to the pagan rituals that used to occur there.

Curse of the Rainy Day

A tiny rain cloud materializes above the Player's head, soaking them in a torrential downpour that follows wherever they go. The Player has disadvantage on Dexterity (Stealth checks), melee weapon and spell attacks, and when dealing fire damage, instead deals half damage. The Player gains advantage on Charisma ability checks due to sympathy from others who see them standing in the rain

The Accursed King: A Portrait - By Shaelgyth Smede

Knowledge Gained

In summation, Dorian deserves his 'Accursed' moniker but not for the reason intended by those who bestowed it upon him. He is not the Accursed King because he is some infernal beast. No, he is Accursed because he has damned himself in sacrifice to save us all. King Dorian is the selfless hero that will protect the Shadelands from annihilation. Those who cast aspersions his way can never know the pain he's endured for us. They will never know the depths of his sacrifice.

Curse of the Forgotten

The party immediately forgets the Cursed Player's name and all details about them. All the party knows is the Player is a member of their party, but can't remember anything else. If the cursed Player reminds them of who they are, the party will forget again in 30 seconds. Any party member who tries to assist or aid the cursed Player in any way will have disadvantage on ability checks.

Screams of the Shadelands - By Emmeline De Vin

Knowledge Gained

The seams of reality have begun to tear. It may take years... or days. This will likely be my final opus. I have discovered Dorian's secret. Gods above, it is so much worse than I'd feared. I have no choice but to follow his path... to walk the black waters, to enter Rem Exius. There is no glory at the end of this road, only pain and death. I fear only an impossible sacrifice can save the Shadelands. I say impossible because the Celestials have made it quite clear they want no part of us.

Curse of the Old One

The active Player morphs into an octopus of roughly the same size as their original form. The Player must pass a DC 19 Wisdom (Insight) to see if the party can understand the wet, guttural speech coming out of their hidden mouth whenever they try to talk. Advantage on DEX checks. Disadvantage on CHA & CON. If the Player is in combat in this form, they have disadvantage on all attacks, but now have an extra action on each of their turns.

Black Pact: A Bloody History - By Kazir LeGau

Knowledge Gained

It is a common misconception that Warlocks only maintain one pact with one Patron. This is likely true for most, however, those willing to stretch their souls to the breaking point can always take on more power. As long as they draw breath, and even after in some cases, there is always more power to be drawn from the Well.

Curse of the Phantom

The active Player's body loses its corporeal nature, becoming wispy and translucent. The Player is now a ghost and must pass a DC 17 Charisma check every time they wish to physically interact with something or someone, or the interaction fails. If in combat, the Player has disadvantage on attack rolls. Enemies also have disadvantage on attack rolls against the Player.

Lady Helena Whitestone

Medium undead, lawful evil

ARMOR CLASS 17 (natural armor)
HIT POINTS 187 (29d8 + 87)
SPEED 30 ft.

STR 11(+0) DEX 16(+3) CON 16(+3) INT 23(+6) WIS 14(+2) CHA 16(+3)

Saving Throws Con +9, Int +12, Wis +8 Cha +9

Skills Arcana +12, History +18, Religion +12, Perception +8

Damage Resistances Cold, Lightning, Necrotic, Bludgeoning, Piercing, and Slashing From Nonmagical Attacks

Damage Immunities Poison

Condition Immunities Charmed, Exhaustion, Frightened, Paralyzed, Poisoned

Senses truesight 120 ft., passive Perception 18

Languages Common plus four other languages

Challenge 19 (22,000 XP)

Legendary Resistance (3/Day). If the lich fails a saving throw, it can choose to succeed instead.

Turn Resistance. The lich has advantage on saving throws against any effect that turns undead.

Silence. As a bonus action on each of her turns, Lady Helena may cast silence as a 5th level spell without the need for any components.

Spellcasting. Lady Whitestone is a 16th level spellcaster. Her spellcasting ability is Intelligence (spell save DC 20, +12 to hit with spell attacks). She has the following spells prepared.

Cantrips (at will): mage hand, prestidigitation, ray of frost

1st level (4 slots): detect magic, magic missile, shield, thunderwave

2nd level (3 slots): detect thoughts, invisibility, acid arrow, mirror image

3rd level (3 slots): animate dead, counterspell, dispel magic, fly

4th level (3 slots): blight, dimension door

5th level (3 slots): cloudkill, scrying

6th level (1 slot): disintegrate, globe of invulnerability

7th level (1 slot): finger of death, forcecage

8th level (1 slot): dominate monster, power word stun

ACTIONS

Paralyzing Touch. *Melee Spell Attack:* +12 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. Hit: 10 (3d6) cold damage.

The target must succeed on a DC 20 Constitution saving throw or be paralyzed for 1 minute. The target can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on itself on a success.

Deadly Glare. Ranged Spell Attack: +12 to hit, range 120 ft., one creature. Hit: 55 (10d10) necrotic damage.

LEGENDARY ACTIONS

Lady Helena can take 3 legendary actions, choosing from the list below. Only one legendary action option may be used at a time, and only at the end of another

creature's turn. Lady Helena regains spent legendary actions at the start of her turns.

Cast a Spell. Lady Helena casts a spell of 3rd level or lower.

Paralyzing Touch (Costs 2 Actions). Lady Helena uses her Paralyzing Touch.

Siphon Life (Costs 3 Actions). Lady Helena emits a pulse of necrotic power in a 30 ft. radius sphere centered on her. Each living creature in the affected area must succeed on a DC 20 Constitution saving throw or take 21 (6d6) necrotic damage and Lady Helena magically regains a number of hit points equal to half the total damage dealt (rounded down).



ACT 3

Once the party feels they have done enough research, they exit the Library to find Majin still waiting on the steps. A dusting of gray ash coats the ground like fresh-fallen snow. The smell of smoke and fire clogs the air.

"So, what did you learn?"

The key phrases Majin needs to hear are either **Well of Souls** or **Rem Exius**. If the party read about them but didn't mention anything, Majin needs to either coax it out of them or send them back into the Library. If they mention the Well, it's like a lightning bolt of memory to Majin. Their demeanor becomes grim as they gaze north.

"So, the Well of Souls might be in danger or broken. Bring the books, there are enough notes in there for us to use. Just make sure you return them, Helena is known to put curses on her books."

In true form, the books the Players bring with them do have many arcane details about the Well of Souls after its discovery and study... but many stories are contradictory in nature. One thing remains true in all of them: it is a place where power from a Patron's pact takes form and flows back to them. An ethereal well of threads.

Why the Well is broken or how, is as of yet unrevealed, even though Majin knows it is because of their own hand. For decades now, Majin has been adding more Patron's to the well and adding more layers—beyond what any mortal King could sustain. The means to save the well is to rebalance it by making it larger. This is a critical part of Majin's plan, and they rely on the party to come up with this idea on their own. Majin will make the right nudge at the right time, and the party doesn't need to know this plan yet. However, Fayte and Majin have been studying Warlocks for some time and she will naturally grow concerned that something is wrong with her and her silent patron, perhaps even feeling that she is the cause of the Shadelands chaos.

If the party clearly doesn't trust Majin and is even hostile, have the Drow Warlocks from the first act reappear and strike a critical blow to Majin. Fayte will rush to save her friend, and Majin will use their Warlock magic to eradicate the hunters as the party

fights alongside them. It is all staged, and if Majin can avoid using this wretched trick, they will.

Majin starts heading toward the north coast. The party neither sees nor hears any other living things while walking the streets. For such a populous city, on the heels of such a chaotic event, the current quietness is deafening. Fayte notices their trajectory is uncomfortably close to the Accursed King's citadel and grimly laments, "Has it really come to this?"

The party reaches the coast, an elevated ridgeline of jagged obsidian rocks. The Impossible Spire looms over them like a gnarled black, leafless tree. Majin looks out into the darkness, staring at something the party can't see.

"So, into Rem Exius we go... I'd like to apologize in advance for this next part..."



WEAVING THREADS

SOCIAL

Majin is an enigma. When the Players try to roll insight checks, they always are left with the feeling that regardless of whether what they are saying is true or not, Majin believes what they are saying is true. Majin does not explicitly participate in any combat with the party unless you, the GM feel, they're needed as a solution to get the party out of a bad situation. When pressed on why they don't help, Majin is nonchalant. They could say they were curious to see how the party would fare. If threatened by the party, Majin casually says they'd be happy to just leave and let them fend for themselves. Fayte begrudgingly acknowledges they need Majin's help to navigate the city.

Sidequest Potential: Engaging in further conversation with Majin is entirely possible. Being in the form of a mortal (still trying to work out the minor details) makes for some interesting dilemmas and urges (and a love for some foods). Learning more about Majin the human is helpful for later acts.



COMBAT

'Ashes and Sorrow' is likely the most combat-light chapter of this entire campaign. It's meant to be a palate cleanser, a chance to breathe. If you feel your Players would prefer more action, there are plenty of opportunities for an extra encounter as they walk the streets of Cathrach. This is a group that has essentially enraged half of Yon'Cath. Accursed King loyalists are likely out in force searching for the party.

Sidequest Potential: For more combat the Library is available. The Players are not meant to venture into such a dangerous place, and an easy fix is to have anyone who tries to pass by the ghost be instantly teleported outside. If you want to expand on this encounter and let the party explore the Library more, make it dangerous. Hundreds of mimics posing as books. Hostile ghosts and specters of long-dead scribes looking for a fight. Books enchanted with even more dangerous curses, or sentient books that unleash defensive spells at mortals who come too close.



EXPLORATION

There is plenty of potential for exploration in the Cathrach side of Yon'Cath. Feel free to let the Players pick locks and enter homes in the central district to avoid the hunters, and get a taste of the vibrantly colorful, and occult life that is lived within the city.

Sidequest Potential: While exploring the streets of Cathrach, your players may overhear a loud argument from inside a nearby building. Upon entering the building, they may encounter Borla, the leader of the Stonemason's Guild, who will ask their assistance in investigating his quarry outside of Cathrach (see the Lifeblood adventure path).







CINDERED HOUSE

Side Quest

LIFEBLOOD

INTRODUCTION

"This city was built on the sacrifices of so many Warlocks before us. Those folks were heroes, martyrs who gave us the Yon'Cath that we know. My job is to make sure that city stays safe, fortified. Understand?" — Borla Steadwell, Leader of the Yon'Cath Stonemason's Guild

'Lifeblood' presents an optional sidequest that takes the Players out of Yon'Cath and into the Shadelands during a quiet portion of the story at the start of Chapter 4.

In 'Lifeblood,' it's important to remember that Borla

does not begin the story as an evil antagonist. He's merely an opportunistic businessman (perhaps evil in its own right, but not the soul-consuming sadist he becomes in Parts II and III). When the players meet him, he will hide that he has consumed his Patron, and will try to speak to the party only in terms of their explicit business deal, keeping them at arm's length to maintain his privacy.

This sidequest should help to breathe life into the Shadelands beyond Yon'Cath, so lean heavily into your environment descriptions. Be sure to describe each area in detail, and focus on how the area is different from Yon'Cath to draw a contrast between the city itself and the world surrounding it.

SYNOPSIS

"A soul is a funny, fickle little thing. You can't touch it. You can't see or hear it. But you can steal it. You can consume it. And oh, are they delicious." — Ammitia, Patron of Soul Thieves

In Act I, the Players meet Borla and are sent to investigate the quarry beneath the Cinderead House. There, they meet Borla's sister, Moadne, who is dying from an encounter with the Crimson Water. The players will have some light puzzle-solving near the end, but this act is primarily investigation and setting the stage.

Act II sees the players meeting again with Borla, this

time in The Cinderead House, where he sends them to earn a boon from The Lurker in The Deep in Twixtfel Bog. There, the players encounter the familiar Patron and play a game with him to earn his favor before returning to Borla.

Act III will see the Players entering the Vermillion Waterways. Here, the eldritch horror aspect of the Blood Shards is played up as the Players delve deep into the labyrinthine tunnels. This culminates with the revelation that Borla has been consuming Patrons, and seeks to use the Heart of Souls to consume as many as possible. The Players are left with one option: Borla must die. Afterward, however, the decision on what to do with the Heart of Souls falls to them.

THE SETTING

"Oh yeah, Cindy's a nice enough place, eh? Keeps the miners happy, anyway. Place to sleep an' eat." — Moadne Steadwell, Stonemason, owner, and operator of The Cinderead House Quarry

Though the Players begin their journey in Yon'Cath and return to it several times, the most interesting elements of this adventure should be the locations unique to it: The Cinderead House, Twixtfel Bog, the Vermillion Waterways, and The Red Deep.

The Cinderead House is a long-standing inn, built above the naturally occurring cave system which helped give it its name. Cinderstone, the black stone used in the construction of Yon'Cath, is so dark it absorbs light (as well as magic). This grants Yon'Cath

a semblance of structure, and an anchor to reality when the veil thins. Twixtfel Bog lies to the east of Yon'Cath and exists as a coastal, murky mire where twisted, wooden trees and acrid smells permeate.

The Vermillion Waterways are a vast network of underground rivers beneath the Shadelands, purifying the salty waters of the Nameless Black Sea, and giving life to the land. Much of what's known about these places come from myth and legend.

At the center of the Vermillion Waterways lies The Red Deep, a hidden chamber of Blood Shards, with a single, massive crystal at its center: The Heart of Souls. This is what some of the first Warlocks in the Shadelands gave their souls to to grant it the power required to keep the Waterways alive.

BORLA STEADWELL

"Aye, I'm a Warlock too, no surprise there. My patron's one o'the smaller ones, sure, but she's got quite the bite." — Borla Steadwell, Leader of the Yon'Cath Stonemason's Guild

Borla is, on the surface, a simple Glau. A powerful entrepreneur with a genuine love for his work, and a great deal of respect for his city and its origins. He owes his livelihood to Yon'Cath, and so many of its residents owe their livelihood to the work Borla does as the Leader of the Stonemason's Guild.

Borla came to the twin cities with his sister, Moadne, during the early days. He had fled his life as, in his mind, a woefully-underappreciated laborer in Sweet Mist Hollow with the hopes of striking it rich. When he arrived, he wasted no time seeking to establish himself as a lynchpin within the community.

He started by exploring the Shadelands around Yon'Cath and happened upon a peculiar rock formation in the east. He soon discovered the stones there were infused with arcane energies that seeped out from the nameless black sea.

Borla and Moadne set up a small mining operation. They built The Cinderead House, where they formed the Stonemason's Guild. The guild would eventually supply the city of Yon'Cath with the magical cinderstone that comprises most of its otherworldly architecture.

Of course, it's nigh impossible for one to grow so influential in Yon'Cath without striking a pact with a Patron in the process. It didn't take long for Borla's ambitious efforts to draw the attention of Ammitia, a Patron often associated with greed and gluttony. She sensed the potential within him and saw him as someone who could help broaden her influence. And so, she offered him a pact—she would ensure that nobody who labored for the guild ever went hungry, and in exchange, Borla would serve her interests, and bring her fledgling Warlocks laboring for the guild.

This arrangement lasted for many years. For those would-be Warlocks coming to the Shadelands looking for pacts, the guild became known as a place to secure both a Patron and steady pay. It was beneficial to everyone involved, but Borla... well, his ambition grew into a ravenous hunger for power and influence.

Borla fell in love with Yon'Cath over the years, and he admired those original settlers. He took a particular

interest in the youthful Warlocks who Legend says gave their lives to this place in some mysterious ritual, consumed by the Shadelands itself. Their souls fused with the underground channels near the coast—now known as The Vermillion Waterways—filtering the seawater. More specifically, the legend states these souls are held within an artifact called the Heart of Souls, rumored to reside in a chamber called The Red Deep, rooted near the furthest depths of the Waterways

Borla tirelessly studied this legend, but could never discern precisely where The Red Deep was located, let alone how to get there alive. What he did learn, however, was a portion of the ritual that allowed him to consume another's soul and imbibe their power. And so, he arranged a meeting with Ammitia, ambushing her with the magic of the ritual, and consuming her soul, gaining not only her power but the power from her pacts as well.

Reasoning that he should avoid too much attention from The Accursed King, Borla returned his focus to the guild and its workers. That is until one day he realized he hadn't heard a word from his sister at the Cinderead House in over a week.

Roleplaying Hints

Borla isn't outright evil—he's an emotionally-driven, opportunistic survivor. So, while he's always looking out for his own self-interest, at the beginning of this story, he is not malicious, though he may come off as arrogant, self-important, and quick-tempered.

Borla cares about himself, his sister, and the Stonemasons Guild. He is quite proud of the guild and of all the work he's put into it. He sees it as a testament to how far he's come since his life as a common laborer in Sweet Mist Hollow. Moadne is the only person he views as a potential equal. Being his only family, she has remained his one trusted confidant. When he realizes that something has happened to her, he comes unraveled, which is why he's willing to trust the party

In turn, Borla wants the party to trust him but will keep them at arm's length. Borla is quick to lie and skilled in deception. Insight checks to see if he is lying should be made at disadvantage.

Borla is an Autumn Glau, stocky in frame, with fiery-red hair and mahogany skin, both a Warlock and a businessman. He and his sister are designed to offer the players a glimpse into Glau culture, which is contrasted strongly against the kind of person Borla has become. Moadne is more in-tune with her cultural roots, and so Borla will tolerate cultural tradition in her name.

Borla will be present at the court hearing in Chapter 7 of The Red Opera if the players do not complete the Lifeblood sidequest, and the loss of his sister will be devastating to him, making earning his trust a difficult obstacle to overcome. However, if your players conclude the Lifeblood sidequest, Borla will be dead, and Moadne will take his place in the courtroom.

Borla Steadwell

Leader of the Stonemason's Guild

Legendary Actions

Borla Steadwell can take 2 legendary actions from the list below. Only one legendary action option may be used at a time, and only at the end of another creature's turn. Borla regains used legendary actions at the start of his turn.

Soul Consumption. If a creature takes damage on their turn from Borla's Soul Drain ability, Borla heals for half of the damage dealt.

Wrathful Retribution. When an enemy lands a successful attack against him, Borla may immediately attack a nearby creature. Blinded by rage, Borla makes this attack at disadvantage.

Cast a Spell (Costs 2 Actions). Borla casts a spell from his list of known spells, using a spell slot as normal.

Lair Actions

On initiative count 20 (losing initiative ties). This action only activates if Borla Steadwell is fighting in The Red Deep.

Revitalize (only while holding the Heart of Souls). Borla absorbs the energy from the souls lost to the Obsidian Rush, flowing through the Vermillion Waterways, healing for 5d8 hit points.

Empower (only while holding the Heart of Souls). Borla focuses the energy from the Heart of Souls, empowering his Soul Drain ability, granting it an additional 2d6 necrotic damage.

Change Soul Form. Borla takes the form of creatures whose souls he has consumed, using their actions as his. This lasts for 5 hours, or until he dismisses it or chooses a different soul form.

- **Lurker (2/day).** Gain the Tentacle attack and +5 strength.
- **Ammitia (2/day).** Gain 2 additional spell slots.

ACT 1

At the beginning of **Chapter 4: Ashes and Sorrow, Act I**, the players have just reached Cathrach. Ash from the fires at the bridges falls on the eastern half of the city like snow, and players can still hear the distant sounds of the chaos they left behind.

Fayte informs the party that her contact must be nearby, but he may not be expecting "a crowd." She insists that, while she goes to look for her contact, the party should try to do what they can to learn about Dorian—his supporters, his reach, his influence, and anything they can find about the source of his power. After a thoughtful pause, she remembers Borla and the Stonemason's Guild.

She tells the party that Borla has been in Yon'Cath for years, since its earliest days. As the founder of the Stonemason's Guild, he would certainly have a plethora of information at his fingertips from doing business with nearly everyone there was to do business

within Yon'Cath, including occasional repair work to the Impossible Spire.

After giving the party directions to the Stonemason's Guildhall, Fayte reminds the party that Borla is both a Warlock and a businessman and that they should expect that to ask a favor of him, he'll ask a favor in return. Fayte then leaves to find Majin, and the players are left to explore Cathrach until they find the Stonemason's Guildhall.

Stonemason's Guildhall

The Guildhall is a massive stone building with incredible architecture, serving as both home and hearth to Borla as well as a testament to the craftsmanship of the guild. As the party enters the Guildhall, they get their first good look at Borla, who pushes past them to return to his seat behind an ornate stone desk, littered with documents, ledgers, and wax-sealed envelopes.

GM Note

If this is the first time the party is encountering the Glau, be sure to play up the description of Borla as being elf-like, yet unlike any Elf they've ever seen. Encourage them to ask questions about the Glau - Borla is receptive to this, though his opinion of the Glau is mostly that they're stuck in their ways.

As Borla seats himself, his eyes fall to the ledger on his desk, scanning the document while speaking to the party. His voice sounds shaky and distracted, like he's having a hard time focusing.

"Alright, now let's see where we are. Which buildings do you own, and in what quarter of the city? As you've seen out there, it's all a mess, and we're a little behind schedule with our most recent shipment. I can't make any promises, but hopefully by the end of the week."

If the party doesn't respond to this or they interject during Borla's speech, Borla will look up and realize that the party is not, in fact, building owners.

"Awh, git outta here, ya filthy beggars. Can't you see I'm at my wit's end trying to do my job here? Wait a minute—you aren't beggars... You're them adventurin' types, aren't ya?"

Borla will get as far as introductions before interrupting any further discussion than this with, *"I don't suppose you're lookin' for work, are ya? My sister runs the quarry out at The Cindered House, and I 'aven't heard from her in days. If you wouldn't mind goin' and checkin' on her, you'd bring me a whole lot of peace of mind, and get the guild one step closer to repairing the damage to the city."*

A successful Perception check will allow members of the party to notice that, as Borla speaks about his sister, he nervously fidgets with a ring on his right hand. He will ignore and avoid questions about the ring, changing the subject of conversation back to whether or not the party will help him, and what they want in exchange. If the party asks for information on Dorian, Borla will be more than happy to exchange that information for them to check on his sister.

Once the party agrees to the task, Borla will provide them with a map guiding them to The Cindered House east of Yon'Cath. "When you get there, look for Moadne.

She's a Glau like me, but bright green hair and the kindest smile to come out of Sweet Mist Hollow. Thank you."

Let the party do any sort of shopping that they'd like to do in the streets of Cathrach before their journey. Be sure to emphasize the slow, quiet nature of the atmosphere, so as not to create too strong a sense of urgency to return, as the sidequest they're about to embark on is likely to keep them out of the city for a while.

Journey to The Cindered House

The journey to The Cindered House takes only a day, provided the party does not stop for longer than a short rest.

GM Note

To make this journey interesting, feel free to leverage these optional Journey Rules.

Have your party roll initiative at the beginning of the journey. In initiative order, allow the players to make Skill Checks of their choice, narrating what they do to help further the journey, like a Perception check to stay alert, or a Survival check to keep them on the safest path.

The party must achieve 5 successes before they reach 5 failures. If they reach 5 failures, they still make it to The Cindered House, but they arrive with 1 level of exhaustion.

The Cindered House is a surprisingly large inn that sits on an isthmus that crosses a great lake of placid dark water. Despite the frigid temperature of the Shadelands and the stillness of the lake, the water is not frozen over. If they listen closely, the party can hear the faint, awkward clicking of machinery malfunctioning from deep underground.

Inside The Cindered House

When entering, the stench of rotting food overwhelms their senses immediately. The opening foyer is large with stairs leading up and a kitchen just beyond a wooden bar. To the right, the party notices a massive elevator platform hanging over a deep, carved shaft.

The foyer is filled with tables, chairs, benches, and a counter. Seated at every table is a group of miners—large, burly, capable hands—along with engineers—whose narrow frames and focus-locked glances imply a great sense for mechanical knowledge.

Each person, however, sits unmoving as though frozen in time. Some lifting cups to their mouths, some biting into now-soured legs of meat or sandwiches. Their bodies are still warm, but they appear to be in a catatonic state, as though their consciousness—or, perhaps, their souls—have vacated their bodies, now serving as mere husks.

The Players can make a Knowledge or Nature check to determine how long they've been frozen based on the age of the spoiled food. If successful, the party understands that these people went catatonic about a week ago.

Allow the party to explore this floor and the top floor, and describe the abject horror of people frozen in time, like living husks that stare off into the distance. Perhaps a single tear slides down the dirty, chiseled face of one.

The elevator platform is not active, and attempting to take it down is impossible. When the players make their way upstairs, they will find, in a small office, Borla's sister, Moadne: a spring Glau with bright green hair and matching eyes. She sits at a desk that mirrors Borla's in size, shape, and design, though its papers are in order, and there is a handful of knick-knacks and decorations adorning it. Her gaze is locked on the door, and when players enter the room, they may mistake her middle-distance stare as being eye contact. After a few in-game minutes of the players exploring this office and the rest of the top floor, which is mostly communal bunkrooms occupied by another shift of miners and engineers, they hear a soft, raspy voice:

"H-help..."

The party can track down this voice to Moadne, who can speak, but only just. Her eyes remain locked on her office door, and her expression does not change from emotionlessly studious, but her lips part and her voice crawls out of her throat with great effort.

"The... water... w-we dug t... t-too deep..."

Moadne will not be able to answer any questions the party asks. Instead, she will only be able to repeat the phrase:

"L-lift key... in d-desk... water... r-red water... danger... G-give to... Borla..."

After this, she is no longer capable of speaking: she becomes fully catatonic, like the rest of the miners and engineers.

Once the players have finished exploring the rest of The Cinder House, they can enter the elevator and use Moadne's key, leading them down into the quarry.

The Cinderstone Quarry

The quarry is composed of the same inky, smooth stone often seen in the towers of Yon'Cath. A successful Arcana or Nature check will reveal the stone's magical properties: It helps anchor an area to reality, immunizing it to the thinning of the veil. Despite offering a clear reflection on its surface, it seems to absorb almost all light.

Even players who have darkvision will have a hard time navigating the quarry, as the darkness of the stone combined with its strange reflective property makes it difficult to tell the difference between solid ground and a cliff. There are two torches at the base of the elevator shaft which can be lifted and taken throughout the quarry, but the light shed from the torches is dimmed. The party will need to be careful as they navigate the quarry, careful not to step off any ledges.

Throughout the quarry, players will encounter large digging machines, and their catatonic operators, and miners, frozen with pickaxes in hand. Each miner and engineer carry a jar of drinking water with them. Because it's difficult to see where they're going, the party may walk face-first into a miner staring back at them helplessly.

As the party continues down the quarry, a sense of dread and fatigue will set in. A successful Wisdom check will tell players that the further in they go, the worse those feelings become. Eventually, they will discover a small cave at the quarry's floor—the most recent dig site. That dread and fatigue feeling worsens considerably at the mere sight of the cave. The players can no longer ignore this feeling, and they can tell that the cave is the source of this feeling.

When the players enter the cave, their exhaustion level increases by 1. The Crimson Water has taken hold, and it will only get worse the longer they stay down here. The cave seems somehow darker than the rest of the quarry. The smell of blood, or something like it, fills their nostrils. The air tastes like iron and saltwater.

Eventually, the players locate the source of the sensation: at the center of a large, carved-out, circular room, a deep scar-like crack has marred the floor. A red, viscous, slightly transparent liquid seeps out of it. It's more escaping than oozing, defying gravity as it slowly drips upward. High on the ceiling, a large pool of this liquid has collected, shifting in shape slowly, as though jostled by an unseen force. Droplets float gently—or perhaps sinisterly—upwards, taking their place among the rest.

The players can determine this is the source of trouble, the red water Moadne had mentioned. Next to the crack is a miner with a load of stone. Piled in front of him are more stones, covering a part of the crack. A successful Insight check reveals she was trying to seal the crack. However, there are no more loose stones. There's only the miner, her stones, her pickaxe, her jar of water, a nearby mining machine, and a retaining wall built along the western wall of the room.

Players have several options to seal the crack and must complete at least two of them to seal it. The below list is not comprehensive, and you should allow players to come up with creative solutions.

Smash the retaining wall.

Strength DC: 20

Rocks spill forth from the wall, covering a portion of the crack.

Mine the wall.

Strength DC: 18

Grab a pickaxe and break away some loose rocks from the wall to cover the crack with.

Use the mining machine.

Investigation or Dexterity DC: 18

You operate the mining machine's complex controls to push some large rocks onto the crack.

Once the players have completed two methods of sealing the crack, the water stops seeping out, and they feel the fatigue stop growing within them. The water on the ceiling stops shifting, becoming almost inert. This does not remove the gained level of exhaustion. They must leave the cave to be rid of it. The players can use the miner's water jar to collect some of the Crimson Water. There is nothing more to do in the quarry.

The miners they pass on their way back to the lift begin to recover, albeit slowly. They seem dazed and exhausted. When the party gets off the lift on the main floor of The Cindered House, miners and engineers are cleaning up the tables. The smell of rotted food mixes with the smell of powerful alchemical cleaning agents swishing around in buckets throughout the room. One of the engineers adjusts their goggles to look at the party before saying,

"Ms. Moadne wants to see ye in her office, she does."

Back in Moadne's Office

When the party enters Moadne's office, they may be surprised to find Borla there as well, his arms thrown around Moadne, and her face buried in his shoulder.

"Where've you been?! I rubbed the ring every hour of every day, but couldn't get ya—I damn near lost me mind!"

"Oh Borla, I tried. I couldn't move my damned hands. Or anythin', for that matter."

At this point, Moadne notices the party over Borla's shoulder.

"Then, these fine folks showed up—an' thank the patrons they did—did you find the water?"

When the party produces the glass bottle, Borla will snatch it from their hands and stare at it with fascination. With a successful Perception check, the party overhears him muttering to himself, *"It can't be..."*

Borla secretly pieces together what this revelation means: The Heart of Souls is real. And if the water reached all the way here, to the quarry, then the Heart of Souls, and its resting place, The Red Deep, likely exist at the center of the Vermillion Waterways—the network of underground rivers which provide fresh water to all of the Shadelands, purifying the water coming in from the Nameless Black Sea through the Obsidian Rush. The power of the Heart of Souls is within his grasp. He just needs a little help.

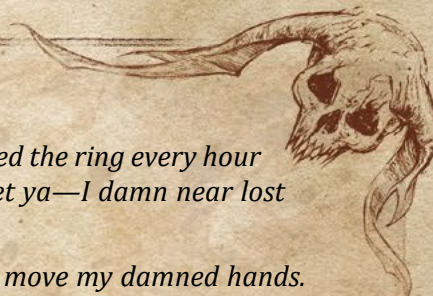
"Well, if this is what I think it is, I'm afraid there's more work to be done. This 'ere is Crimson Water, seepin' out from the Vermillion Waterways. It's purified, but the waterways are lined with Blood Shards—little crystals which house all the souls lost in the Rush."

Give the players a chance to ask questions and learn the history of the Vermillion Waterways. If the party asks how Borla got here so fast, he will explain that he and Moadne both possess a magic ring—Rings of Arrival—which allows for magical one-way transportation, provided both rings can be activated. If the party asks about the Heart of Souls, Borla will go out of his way to lie about it, claiming it's cursed.

"The Heart of Souls is a terrible, terrible artifact. It consumes the souls of those poor fools who fall into the Rush. Worst of all, it corrupts anything it touches. That's why they had to bury it, y'know? Deep down beneath Yon'Cath."

A successful Insight check gives the players a sense that he's not saying everything he knows, and despite that being the truth, Borla will take offense at that implication.

When the party is satisfied with their understanding of the history, and of what's at stake, Borla will ask



for a private moment to catch up with his sister and ask them to leave the room. Let the players sit in this silence, giving them a chance to talk amongst themselves. Encourage roleplay: If the party speaks too loudly, Borla may poke his head out from her office and insist they be quiet, that he can't hear himself think.

After a few in-game minutes, or right before the party has a chance to concoct a solid plan, Borla emerges with another map. He strides over to the party with confidence and urgency. He slams the paper onto his desk and pokes his thick finger on the far eastern side of the Shadelands map.

"This 'ere is Twixtfel Bog. It's a nasty place, about two days' travel, but it's your best bet to get in contact with that fishy patron, what with the Scarlet Hearth under

siege at the moment. Fishy's an interesting fellow, likes games an awful lot. You'll find him sittin' around some table, cards or dice in hand, I'm sure.

You're gonna need his help gettin' through the Rush and into the Vermillion Waterways without drownin', or gettin' beat to death along the rocks, or gettin' eaten alive by some gods-forsaken water creature."

Here, let the players ask questions about what lies ahead before closing out this part of the sidequest. Moadne offers to prepare them a room in The Cindered House if the party needs a long rest. If they don't need a long rest and prefer to move on to Twixtfel Bog immediately, they may do that instead.

ACT 2

Now that the party is rested, they can set out to Twixtfel Bog. During this journey, Borla will be scrying on the party to learn the location of the Lurker in the Deep, as well as to discern how much they know. After the party has left, he will gather belongings left in The Cindered House—loose strands of hair, nails, scales, anything he can find—to aid him in this spell.

Once each day, have a player who may have left something behind make a Wisdom saving throw. Do not explain why they make this saving throw. The DC for this saving throw is 28. If they succeed, they get the feeling that they're being watched, but it's unknown from where, or by whom.

Twixtfel Bog

As the players continue, the acrid smell of stagnant water, peat, and rotting wood grows stronger, until they find themselves in Twixtfel Bog. Tall, knotted trees loom overhead, and the frost-tipped blades of long grass crunch beneath their feet. The water bubbles and shifts and the occasional ripple of who-knows-what crawls across the surface.

Twixtfel Bog is home to many mossy islands, all interconnected by stone bridges. It's unknown who made the bridges, but many of them appear to have been untouched for decades, if not centuries. The sounds of shiver crickets and war toads reverberate among the weepy trees.

As the party navigates further into Twixtfel Bog, have them begin making Perception checks, searching for any indication of the Lurker in the Deep. On a success, they hear a conversation from a given direction, and on each success after, the conversation gets louder. After 3 successes, the party comes upon a large, crescent-shaped island.

The Lurker in the Deep

Once the party sets foot on the island, the fog hanging over it magically clears, and they see a beautiful, large, wooden table, with three Slaadi—one red, one blue, and one green—seated around it. The head of the table faces the empty portion of the crescent-shape of the island, where a massive catfish-like face pokes out of the water. Two smooth tentacles also protrude from the water, serving as hands for the catfish creature, which the party recognizes as The Lurker in the Deep. The Lurker and Slaadi look up from their game to the party.

The red and blue Slaadi babble at each other, nervous about the party's presence, upset over the interruption in their game, before the green Slaadi gives them both an intense look, presumably communicating to them via telepathy. With a successful Nature check, players will recognize that the Slaadi are incredibly violent creatures from the chaos plane, and seeing them here, simply playing a game with a horrifying tentacle fish patron, is deeply unsettling.

The red and blue Slaadi go silent in response to the green Slaad's glare before the Lurker in the Deep addresses the party in a cheerful, low-pitched, wet-sounding voice:

"Why, hello, friends!"

The players may respond here and ask the Lurker what they mean, but they will ignore the party's questions.

"Yes, yes, well, why don't you have a seat and join us in a game. In fact, yes—tell you what—you win this game, and you can have what you've come here for. Oh, this is going to be so fun."

The Slaadi, who understand what's being said, appear to get agitated with the Lurker in the Deep's invitation to the party, but he waves a tentacle to silence them. Based on their muffled protests, the party can infer that the silence is not voluntary.

"We're playing Feeding Frenzy. I have plenty of dice. Come, come—stay awhile, play a few rounds. Don't mind my friends here—" The Lurker in the Deep turns to face the silenced Slaadi before continuing, "—they're sore losers sometimes, but we know what happens to sore losers, don't we?"

The red and blue Slaadi get a fearful look in their eye, and their protests cease. The green Slaad simply rolls her eyes, insisting to get on with the game.

If the party wants to earn the favor of the Lurker in the Deep, they'll need to win a game of Feeding Frenzy.

Feeding Frenzy

In Feeding Frenzy, each player is a "fish" trying to eat other fish and survive a feeding frenzy. The players face off against each other as well as the Slaadi in this free-for-all game. The Lurker in the Deep will summon more Slaadi as needed so that there is 1 fewer Slaad than there are players.

The game begins with all participants rolling 1d20 to determine the size of their fish. Players who are proficient with dice as part of the gaming set may add their proficiency bonus to this roll (taking their size up to 20 at maximum). Immediately after all participants have rolled their fish size, the Lurker in the Deep rolls their own d20 as the "frenzy die." Whichever participant's fish size is closest to the frenzy die roll without going over may take their turn first. In the event of a tie, choose at random. From there, the play goes in clockwise order around the table.

On a participant's turn, they may eat a fish if it is at least 5 sizes smaller than them (e.g., if your fish size is 15, you may eat any fish whose size is 10 or lower). When a participant "eats" another fish, that fish is eliminated from the game, and the eater may add the size of that fish to their own size value. If a participant cannot eat a fish on their turn, their size decreases by 1, and their turn ends. Fish who shrink to size 0 starve to death. Fish that are larger than size 20 are always too large to eat, and fish that go over size 30 are too big to swim, and so they die.

The goal of the game is to end a round with as many points as possible. You earn 1 point for eating another fish, 1 point for surviving the end of a round, and 1 point for finishing a round as the biggest fish remaining.

After 3 rounds, if a player has the most points, the players get the boon of the Lurker in the Deep, and the player with the most points gets a Slaadhide Cloak (see Appendix). If the players do not win, the Lurker in the Deep is likely to grant them a boon purely for being good and honest gamblers.

GM Note

If you want your players to win, consider having the green Slaad spontaneously transform into a gray Slaad and attempt to attack the party, only to be immediately banished to the chaos plane by the Lurker in the Deep, leaving the Slaadi with one fewer player.

Once the players have finished the game of Feeding Frenzy, the Lurker in the Deep will grant them the boon they seek—safe passage through the Obsidian Rush and into the Vermillion Waterways.

"Thank you all so much for playing. I rarely get visitors out here, and with everything going on in the city, well... I'm pleased to keep my distance. But, it looks like you all are heading back there anyway. Here, let me help you along."

Without warning, the party is instantly teleported back to an alley in Yon'Cath, standing in a large puddle, soaking wet.

ACT 3

The finale of Lifeblood is where things get considerably more intense and violent. Borla, knowing how close he is to the Heart of Souls, will become more determined than ever, shifting to being cold and calculated. He has been using the players to achieve his own goals, intending to betray the party from the beginning.

During the events of Act III, Borla secretly travels to Twixtfel Bog and consumes the Lurker in the Deep, gaining their power. He uses this power to find his way into The Vermillion Waterways, following the party like a shadow, only revealing himself for the final battle in The Red Deep.

When the party arrives in Yon'Cath at the beginning of Act III, they should make their way to the Guildhall.

The Stonemason's Guildhall

When the party arrives, Borla greets them excitedly, elevated beyond his typical emotional baseline.

"You've made it back! Much faster than I'd thought, too! Tell me... Did you get Fishy's blessing?"

Borla will ask plenty of questions. Give the party a chance to explain, but remember, if he was successful in scrying during Act II, Borla already knows everything that happened. He's only asking to establish plausible deniability.

Once the party has explained, Borla will be all-too-eager to send them back out into the world, and beneath the Obsidian Rush.

"That's all great news! Now, we can stop the Heart of Souls—destroy it, even. But we must be quick. Now that the quarry is back up and running, the risks of someone else discovering the artifact are too great.

Head down to Patron's Pass and find an excuse to 'fall' into the Obsidian Rush. Fishy should take over from there."

Borla will quickly usher them out of the Guildhall, so he can begin his nefarious plan. Once Borla is alone, he will teleport to Twixtfel Bog and consume The Lurker in the Deep.

Patron's Pass

Patron's Pass is still the host to an ongoing battle between the Legionnaires and the Accursed Guard. The party will either need to fight their way towards the

bridge's center or sneak their way in by shimmying along the side of the bridge. Whatever strategy they use, they must wind up over the side of the bridge, and into the Obsidian Rush.

Once they've fallen into the Rush, the water overtakes them. Darkness befalls their vision, and the strong current pulls them toward the Scarlet Hearth, and into the cracks and crevices beneath the water. The Lurker in the Deep's boon will protect the players from the effects of the visions that typically come with entering the waters of the Rush. Eventually, the party members lose consciousness and awake in The Vermillion Waterways.

The Vermillion Waterways

The Vermillion Waterways are treacherous to navigate. The walls of this labyrinthine network of caverns are lined with sharp, red crystals. Some sections are completely underwater, with strong currents that threaten to rake players against the sharp walls, or suck them into an unknown chamber, never to be seen again. Further, the water is filled with aggressive soul sharks: sentient creatures who eat those unfortunate enough to fall into the Rush and not die along the way.

Players will wander through the Vermillion Waterways hazards until they reach the door to The Red Deep.

GM Note

The players will have no idea where to go but know they're looking for The Red Deep. Allow them to wander aimlessly through the tunnels, bringing them in contact with 2 soul sharks in underwater combat, along with other hazards. When several in-game hours have passed, they can happen upon the door to The Red Deep.

The door to The Red Deep is a massive, circular stone door. A small, waist-high monolith stands in front of the door, with a sharp, pointed tip protruding out

from a small bowl-shaped indentation at the top of the monolith.

Inscribed upon the Monolith in Deep Speech, the text reads:

***"Of the fierce, I am hot;
Of the cruel, I am cold.
Blue in the king,
But red in the bold."***

The solution to this riddle, "blood," should indicate to the party that they will each need to deposit their blood into the monolith's bowl as a form of sacrifice. Players will place their hands on the pointed part of the monolith and cut themselves, taking an amount of damage equal to one hit dice. As each player does this, the blood flows into the bowl, then drains out of it, as though the monolith were drinking it. Once each player has made the sacrifice, the massive, circular stone door will roll out of the way, revealing the entrance to The Red Deep.

The Red Deep

Inside The Red Deep, they see a crimson crystal glowing, sitting atop a plinth in the center of the room. The amorphous stone walls around them are colored in blood red and dark gray, with eerie almost-humanoid shaped contours. The red light emanating from the crystal pulsates slowly, like a heart-beat. With each pulse, the sound of rushing water reverberates throughout the chamber.

As the party enters the chamber, give them just enough time to take in the spectacle before the stone door seals behind them. When they turn to look back, they see a grinning Borla.

"Thank you so much..."

Borla extends his arm, and it transforms into a tentacle. He reaches out, plucks the Heart of Souls from the plinth, and pulls it close. As he holds the crystal to his chest, it glows with a bright, blinding red light, and Borla appears to be absorbing the energy. He clutches it tight as he addresses the party.

"You fools. Once I've had my fill of each one of your souls, I'll be unstoppable. Ammitia, and Fishy... they were only the beginning. I'm going to eat every soul and patron in Yon'Cath. Not even Dorian will be able to stop me."

Borla then attacks the party. He is much more powerful when holding the Heart, which grants him extra Lair Actions. Borla will not stop this fight, flee, or surrender. Lust for power has consumed him in the

GM Note

Make it obvious that the Heart of Souls is making Borla stronger, and try to get the party to attempt to take it from him. Then, let the secondary function of this combat be keeping the Heart of Souls away from him. Borla will do everything he can to get it back. Have Borla make a contested Strength check to rip it from the hands of a creature within range of his Tentacle attack. Try to keep the tension high with this mechanic.

same way that he consumed Ammitia and the Lurker in the Deep.

Once Borla is defeated, he drops his Ring of Arrival (see Appendix). His soul (along with those he consumed and held in his dark reliquaries) is captured by the Heart of Souls. Borla's soul is trapped permanently, however, the party may choose to free any of the other souls. Freeing Ammitia will allow any of the players to gain a level as a Soul Thief Warlock. Freeing the Lurker in the Deep will grant the party passage out of The Red Deep. Freeing the souls of any fallen party members will immediately resurrect them.

After the party frees the Lurker in the Deep, they will be returned to the streets of Yon'Cath, in the same alley the Lurker sent them to previously.

If the players return to the Stonemason's Guild, they will find Moadne there, already hard at work taking over the business. She will offer her Ring of Arrival to them, as she no longer has any use for it, and the sight of it brings her only sorrow. She produces it from her pocket, no longer able to bear wearing it.

From here, the players may begin Chapter 4 of The Red Opera. The responsibility of running the Stonemason's Guild will fall to Moadne, who will return during Chapter 7 to aid the party.

THE END

**Thank you for participating in
"Lifblood"**

Appendix 1

NPC & CREATURE STATISTICS

Soul Shark

Medium monstrosity, unaligned

ARMOR CLASS 15 (natural armor)
HIT POINTS 150 (12d10 + 84)
SPEED 0 ft., swim 60 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
24(+7)	14(+2)	24(+7)	1(-5)	12(+1)	7(-2)

Saving Throws Con +10, Int -2, Wis +4, Cha +1

Damage Resistances necrotic; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks

Condition Immunities prone

Senses Truesight, 60 ft., passive Perception 13

Languages none

Challenge 6 (2,300 XP)

Blood Frenzy. The soul shark has advantage on melee attack rolls against any creature that doesn't have max HP.

Water Breathing. The soul shark can only breathe underwater.

Actions

Spirit Bite. Melee Weapon Attack: +10 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 22 (3d10 + 7) piercing damage plus 7 (2d6) necrotic damage. The target's hit point maximum is reduced by an amount equal to the necrotic damage taken, and the soul shark regains hit points equal to that amount. The reduction lasts until the target finishes a long rest. The target dies if this effect reduces its hit point maximum to 0.

Borla Steadwell, Soul Thief Warlock

Medium humanoid, neutral evil

ARMOR CLASS 17 (Half plate)
HIT POINTS 170 (20d8 + 80)
SPEED 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
15(+2)	19(+4)	18(+4)	18(+4)	17(+3)	22(+6)

Saving Throws Con +8, Int +8, Wis +7, Cha +10

Damage Resistances poison, necrotic; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks

Condition Immunities charmed

Senses Darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 13

Languages Common, Deep Speech, Undercommon, Celestial

Challenge 10 (5,900 XP)

Elemental Affinity (poison). As a Glau, Borla is resistant to poison damage. Additionally, Borla can alter the damage type of any spell, attack, or ability to this damage type.

Spellcasting. Borla is an 11th-level spellcaster. His spellcasting ability is Charisma (spell save DC 18, +10 to hit with spell attacks). He regains his expended spell slots when he finishes a short or long rest. He has the following Warlock spells prepared:

Cantrips (at will): eldritch blast, mage hand, true strike

1st-5th level (3 slots): charm person, expeditious retreat, hellish rebuke, enthrall, hold person, counterspell, vampiric touch, banishment, blight, hold monster, scrying.

Mystic Arcanum. Borla may also cast the below spell once per long rest as if using his Spellcasting feature.

6th level (1/long rest): *circle of death*

Actions

Multiattack. Borla makes two attacks, only one of which can be a Soul Drain attack.

Soul Drain. Borla drains the soul of a target creature. To resist this, the character must make a Charisma Saving Throw with a DC of 14. On a failed save, the creature's soul is drained, and it takes 3d6 necrotic damage. If the creature dies from this attack, its soul is trapped in one of Borla's dark reliquaries, and the dead humanoid it came from can't be revived until Borla is defeated or releases the soul.

Tentacle (Lurker soul form only). Melee Weapon Attack: +9 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. Hit: 16 (3d6 + 5) slashing damage.

Warhammer. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 7 (1d8 + 3) bludgeoning damage, or 8 (1d10 + 3) bludgeoning damage if used with two hands to make a melee attack, plus 3 (1d6) necrotic damage.

Legendary Actions

Borla Steadwell can take 2 legendary actions, choosing from the list below. Only one legendary action option may be used at a time, and only at the end of another creature's turn. Borla Steadwell regains used legendary actions at the start of his turn.

Soul Consumption. If a creature takes damage on their turn from Borla's Soul Drain ability, Borla heals for half of the damage dealt.

Wrathful Retribution. When an enemy lands a successful attack against him, Borla may immediately attack against a nearby creature. Blinded by rage, Borla makes this attack at disadvantage.

Cast a Spell (Costs 2 Actions). Borla casts a spell from his list of known spells, using a spell slot as normal.

Lair Actions

On initiative count 20 (losing initiative ties). This action only activates if Borla Steadwell is fighting in The Red Deep.

Revitalize (only while holding the Heart of Souls). Borla takes in the energy from the souls lost to the Obsidian Rush, flowing through the Vermillion Waterways. He heals for 5d8 hit points.

Empower (only while holding the Heart of Souls). Borla focuses the energy from the Heart of Souls, empowering his Soul Drain ability, granting it an additional 2d6 necrotic damage.

Change Soul Form. Borla can take on the soul form of creatures whose souls he has consumed, using their actions as his. This lasts for 5 hours, or until he dismisses it or chooses a different soul form.

- **Lurker (2/day).** Gain the Tentacle attack, and +5 strength.
- **Ammitia (2/day).** Gain 2 additional spell slots.



Appendix 2

MAGIC ITEMS

Heart of Souls

Wondrous item (crystal), artifact (requires attunement by a Soul Thief Warlock)

This artifact counts as an extra dark reliquary for an attuned Soul Thief Warlock. Additionally, it has the following traits:

Empower. Your Soul Drain ability is empowered, granting it an additional 2d6 necrotic damage.

Sentience. The Heart of Souls is neutral evil, with Intelligence 13, Wisdom 12, and Charisma 17.

Personality. The Heart of Souls speaks in the voice of Borla Steadwell, a Glau'bjurn who was once a powerful Soul Thief Warlock. He shows a strong desire for the Heart of Souls to capture more souls, and for the attuned user to grow in power.

In Yon'Cath's earliest days, a group of Warlocks gathered in a mysterious chamber beneath the city, where they sacrificed their souls to the Shadelands itself, creating the Heart of Souls. This artifact purified the water from the Obsidian Rush, creating the Vermillion Waterways. But what other power might it hold?

Slaadhide Cloak

Wondrous item (shoulders), very rare (requires attunement)

This cloak is made from the hide of a gray Slaadi and gives a very subtle vibration beneath the rubbery, leathery texture.

Magic Resistance. The attuned wearer gains advantage on saving throws against spells and other magical effects, as well as resistance to acid, cold, fire, lightning, and thunder damage.

*"We know what happens to sore losers, don't we?"
The Lurker in The Deep*

Rings of Arrival

Wondrous items (2 rings), legendary (requires attunement)

This pair of ornate rings bears the crest of the Steadwell family of Glau'bjurn. Each ring holds a unique stone—one, a fiery topaz, and the other, a blue-green apatite.

One-way Teleport. As a bonus action, a wearer can rub the ring with their thumb, activating it. Once activated, the other ring will warm, alerting its wearer that the paired

ring has been activated. If the second attuned user also activates their ring using a bonus action, the first attuned user is immediately teleported to an open space within 5 ft. of the second attuned user. This ability can be used once per day for each ring.

Borla and Moadne came to Yon'Cath with nothing but each other. These rings bound them together for so long, granting each a sense of safety—like they were never truly alone or out of reach.





Chapter 5

LOVESONG OF THE DAMNED

"I've brought her flowers, daggers, heads of men, and truffles. None have worked, but I'm feeling confident about this Warhammer."— LaCroix the Knight Captain

INTRODUCTION

The halfway point. The rising tension. The stakes. Welcome to Act 5, 'Lovesong of the Damned'. In this adventure, Majin's plan (for better or worse) will come to fruition and set the snowball for the later acts. How this looks, will be up to the Players. In this act, Majin will finally get Fayte to make a pact with her 'divine' Patron (which is just Majin). In exchange, she'll have nearly unlimited power from the Well of Souls for a time.

All Majin needs in order to win is for Fayte to make the pact and plea to the Well of Souls for more power.

Once this is done, Majin will benefit no matter the outcome of the Red Opera. However, should this event not come to pass—Majin will have to spend the rest of the opera licking their wounds and wondering what went wrong. Their goal is not to force anyone's hand, no overt blackmail, no wickedly evil speeches—but by leading a horse to water.

To do this, the party will enter the dungeon where the Well of Souls is housed and solve several traps to gain access to the chamber. Once there, the party should use the books from the last act to decipher what is wrong, and what needs to be fixed.

SYNOPSIS

"Let's be real. Everyone complains about upside-down stairs until they find out about the power you gain by walking them. Then it's all 'move out of the way.'"
— Majin the Betrayer

The first act features Majin leading the group through Rem Exius, the temple that houses the Well of Souls. While he's been there before, the layout is constantly shifting. It's a new path to the Well every time he comes.

Through exploration in the second act, Majin and the Shield Maiden explain that the Accursed King was human once, and Fayte and he had a bit of a fling.

Once at the Well of Souls in the third act, the party can use books from the prior adventure to provide valuable insight. Namely, that there are simply too many Patrons with their threads woven through and far too many Warlocks in the world. Each of them engaging in minuscule transactions for petty power. With voices of Patrons being drowned out, the solution to their problem appears to be "healing" the Well. At this point, Fayte demands of Majin that they open the Well to its fullest so she can communicate with her (dead) Patron directly. Unknowingly making a pact with the Well itself, Majin's plan comes to fruition—and they grant Fayte what she demands



LOVESONG OF THE DAMNED
Scan this QR code to listen to this adventure act's paired song from the Orchestral Version of the Red Opera Album by DiAmorte.

THE SETTING

"I've often wondered just what sets apart a Patron from a God. Is it just a matter of numbers? What if we are all destined to become deities ourselves?"

— Fayette the Shield Maiden

Rem Exius will be the setting over these next two Chapters. First, we descend beneath the Obsidian Rush into the jagged arcane mysteries in the Well. Then in 'Fayette's Aria', the party will escape back into the Shadelands from the other side of the planes.

Because of this, the setting of the Shadelands takes a backseat. The war is still happening however, the

party is just lost in a place where time doesn't move at the same rate for them. As the storyteller, you'll need to advance changes to the city of Yon'Cath in secret while the party is in the Well of Souls and other Planes for a bit.

Partly set between the Astral Plane and the Material Plane, Rem Exius is a spot where thought travels through. Whispers of beings from beyond flow in, dreams of mortals flow out. Euclidean geometry and architectures from every region or time of the world can be featured (but save those from the Player's pasts for the third act).



ACT 1

Majin threads a path between the jagged icy rocks, and miraculously steps out on top of the black water lapping against the shore. Turning back to the party, their eyes glow while they summon them forward onto the sea—which they can now walk upon. After walking upon the black ocean for one hour, Majin halts the party and silently counts the waves, waiting. With a curt nod, they look toward the sky where the stars are almost moving as if aligning. Majin then takes a step forward and falls, not into the water, but rather they fall into another plane of existence.

Describe the overwhelming sense of vertigo as the characters each take a step forward and fall downward, tumbling forward, but then standing straight up as if nothing happened. If they look down, they will see the stars and aurora lights of the night sky below them. It's as if they are standing on the underside of the nameless black sea.

A white stone staircase rises before them. If the party looks up (down?) they will see it extends about a quarter-mile, where it switches back at a landing. The thing is, this landing and the connected length of stairs are upside down. Or they're right side up and it's the party that is currently upside down. The second, inverted length of stairs leads another half mile and then connects to the flat plane of twinkling black diamonds. It's then that the party sees the temple. Rem Exius hangs down from the ceiling above (below?) them. It is a massive Labyrinth made of many varying types of stone. Much of it is black, but there is plenty of white, gray, and tan too. The architecture is inconsistent, as if it'd been cobbled together by dozens of builders from wildly different realities.

"Here's what we know," Majin says as they begin climbing the steps. *"The King was the first in the Shadelands to discover the Well. Lost in torment and willing to do anything, he journeyed out into the sea to pay the ultimate price. Many Warlocks have tried and failed to find this place. Most fail. And of those that make it here, even fewer manage to reach the Well. He and I are two of the lucky ones..."*

"The Well of Souls exists not in the Material Plane, but in several all at once. A combination of the Shadowfell, Feywild, Astral Plane, the Elementals, the Abyss, and who knows what else. It's a bit of a mess. The current theory is that no one created it with any sense of intent. There doesn't seem to be markers, or instruction

manuals, or ancient elvish runes that hint at an intentional construction. Rather, we think it spawned through one pact at a time. The first Patron made a pact with the first warlock and subverted the divine magic between God and follower."

As they reach the top of the stairs, Majin looks at first like they are tumbling over, but then falls gracefully upward to the inverted landing. Their feet find purchase and they look up (down?) at the party expectantly. Transitioning the landing grants the same vertigo as "falling" through the ocean. Gravity reverses, and they now stand at the top of a long staircase looking down at the Labyrinth below.

"So, they subverted the cycle of life and death. When a cleric or a faithful dies, they are meant to go to the afterlife, and... well, you know the deal. Our theory is that each pact made with a Patron added another thread, another pathway in the Astral realm. Power flows from the Patron to wherever it needs to go, and power flows back to the Patron when deeds are performed. In the Material Planes, it's the Shadelands. In the Feywild, the Veil. Inside the Elemental Planes, you'll find bleed as well."

Fayte will look back up at the ocean ceiling and the stars beyond it and reassure any party members. "Majin has proven himself to be, perhaps, the foremost expert on Patrons and their pacts. Which means they've spent plenty of time plucking secrets from other Warlocks. It's why the Patrons call them Majin the Betrayer... because every time they're in here, we learn something new."

Majin nods. "The problem is... getting in here. With an infinite pool of possibilities, it's a little different each time. I have failed plenty of attempts, and... cracked the code a few. We will journey through three trials, and likely journey out through three more. Teleportation won't work here, and divination magic is often fuddled. I don't know all the answers of this place, but I can offer you one major bit of assistance as you travel: If there is a particular Patron you wish to speak to... while here, I know which thread to tug on." Majin reveals a tattered and worn notebook, which they then tuck back inside their robes.

As they step down to the plane of black diamond, the temple rising a few hundred yards away, Majin spreads their arms, "Welcome to Rem Exius."

Let the party take a rest and plan their journey into the Labyrinth at this point. You can have Majin and

Fayte explain as much or as little as you wish about the Well of Souls. As the sentient manifestation of the Well itself, Majin is at their prime power within this place. All they need is Fayte (who is still unaware that Majin is her Patron), to start making requests of them while here... but Majin does need to get to the Well first. For all their power and knowledge about the Well of Souls, it is still a place of infinite possibility. Mortals and Gods must still solve the labyrinth themselves. Even if Majin truly wants the party to succeed here (which they do), the absolute best they can do is get them on a shortcut path filled with traps and dangers with three trials. It's a lot better than spending a hundred years wandering aimlessly.

When the party is ready, they may enter Rem Exius. The front entrance is a large, wide opening in the wall, flanked by towering statues of devilish fiends and divine humanoid creatures. As they step through the threshold, the party may be surprised to find they are not in some narrow stone hallway as they might expect to find in a Labyrinth. They stand on a ledge overlooking a massive cavernous chamber. The walls are a checkered pattern of black and white bricks. Dozens upon dozens of brick staircases crisscross to form a honeycomb of paths. They see several doors built into the walls, accessible via circuitous stair routes. One door in particular stands out, located directly across and higher up near the ceiling: large, black, wooden, bound within a shining steel frame, with three keyholes. No matter of force or magic can bypass this door. Majin can point this door out and explain they need to find three keys.



GM Note

You will be building the next events from the ten segments listed below. Give the Players a choice, for example, they can take the stairs upward to the left, downward to the right, or downward straight ahead. There may be traps on the staircases. There may be dangers behind the doors along the landings between staircases. You can either pre-determine these or randomize the order. All of the keys found in the rooms are equal. The Party needs three of them.

As always, scale these encounters down according to your party's level and size. Golems can be half-finished, brick elementals could have already shattered some travelers moments before, and even traps could stall before firing in order to lower

Segments

1. Artificer's Shop

Nothing happens on the staircase. At the next landing, two staircases are branching off in different directions and a door built into the wall. The door is locked but can be picked. Behind the door is what looks like an artificer's workshop. It is filled with workbenches, tools, gears, and bits of machinery. There are a few interesting weapons on the workbenches. Next to each one is some scribbled notes on what the weapon is supposed to do. See details in the Appendix under **Artificer Items**.

There are crates stacked against the back wall with sheets thrown over them. If the party pulls off the sheets, they will find a supposedly non-functioning Mechanical Golem; a boxy tin-can automaton with a steel exhaust grill screwed into its chest and two lightless eyes. If the party takes any hostile action toward the golem or attempts to take anything from the room - including the Artificer Items - the golem will activate and attack. When the golem is defeated, it will slump forward, revealing a "wind up" key sticking out of its back. If the Players take the key, they will find it fits in the locks on the exit door.

Mechanical Golem

Huge Construct, unaligned

ARMOR CLASS 20 (natural armor)
HIT POINTS 275 (22d12 + 132)
SPEED 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
24(+7)	9(-1)	22(+6)	3(-4)	11(+0)	1(-5)

Damage Immunities Poison, Psychic

Damage Resistances Bludgeoning, Slashing, Piercing from Non-magical Attacks

Damage Vulnerabilities fire

Condition Immunities Charmed, Exhaustion, Frightened, Paralyzed, Petrified, Poisoned, Stunned, unconscious

Senses darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 10

Languages Understands the languages of its creator but cannot speak

Challenge 17 (18,000 XP)

Immutable Form. The golem is immune to any spell or effect that would alter its form.

Spell Resistance. The golem automatically succeeds on saving throw against spells and magical effects and takes half damage from spells.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The golem makes two Piston Punch attacks.

Piston Punch. Melee Weapon Attack: +13 to hit, reach 15 ft., one target. Hit: 40 (6d10 + 7) bludgeoning damage. If the target is a creature, the golem may push it 15 ft. away from or pull it 15 ft. toward the golem in a straight line.

Forearm Blunderbuss. Ranged Weapon Attack: +13 to hit, range 30/60 ft., each target in a 30 ft. cone. Hit: 21 (4d6 + 7) piercing and 14 (4d6) fire.

Steam Burn (Recharge 5 - 6). The golem expels a 15ft cone of boiling steam from its chest. Each creature in the affected area must succeed on a DC 21 Constitution saving throw or take 54 (12d8) fire damage and be permanently blinded. A successful save halves the damage and prevents being blinded

2. False Stair

A cluster of steps near the middle of the staircase is merely visual illusions. There's nothing there. The Players will step right through and possibly fall unless they succeed on a DC 20 Dexterity saving throw. On a failure, the Player falls 20 Ft. and lands on a different staircase or a door landing below the party.

3. Mirror Room

No traps are triggered on the staircase leading here but there is a door on the landing which is unlocked. It opens into a room filled with suits of armor, decorative vases, bronze statues, and a shelf nailed into the wall

with a few scrolls on it. There is a chest-high pedestal in the room's center which a silver key resets upon. The walls are coated in mirrors of different shapes and sizes ranging from quite small to as big as a door.

Upon inspection, the Players will see nothing out of the ordinary in the reflections. If the party tries to touch or interact with anything in the room, their hands will pass right through the objects. These are all illusions. If the Player touches or throws anything at a mirror, it will pass through as if it were a window. If they find a mirror large enough to fit through, a Player can enter the mirror, grab the key off the pedestal within and come back. If they examine the room further, particularly the scrolls on the shelf, they may find the **Song of Tranquility** (See Appendix)

4. Boulder

When the party hits halfway down the stairs, regardless of whether they're going up or down, a boulder appears from thin air, drops on the top of this staircase, and starts rolling down. Players who don't get out of the way by passing a DC 21 Dexterity saving throw or take 55 (10d10) bludgeoning damage, and be knocked prone (potentially falling down the stairs in the process).

5. Living Wall

As the Players near the next landing, the wall next to the stairs sprouts a dozen arms of fluid brick and attempts to grapple the party. The Player must succeed on a DC 22 Strength saving throw or be pulled into the wall. The Players pulled into the wall will drop into a sparse room and find themselves looking up at Elementals made of the same black and white bricks as the building (Number of Elementals should equal number of The Players).

GM Note

Create an initiative order that has the Players in the room and the elementals take their turns before the Players still on the stairs. While in the room the Players and the elementals fight. The Players on the stairs can rush to the landing. There is no door; however, upon inspection, they will find a sizeable section of the wall looks newer, less sturdy, than the rest. They will have to deal 50 points of physical damage to make this chunk of wall crumble. Then they can enter the room and join their friends in the fight. There is a key inside one of the elementals, which can be revealed via damage during the fight, or if the Players choose to break them open after they've been defeated.

Brick Elemental

Huge elemental, neutral

ARMOR CLASS 20 (natural armor)
HIT POINTS 283 (21d12 + 147)
SPEED 30 ft., burrow 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
27(+8)	12(+1)	25(+7)	3(-4)	11(+0)	5(-3)

Saving Throws Con +12, Cha +2

Damage Immunities Poison

Damage Resistances Bludgeoning, Slashing, Piercing from Non-magical Attacks

Condition Immunities Exhaustion, Paralyzed, Petrified, Poisoned, Stunned, Unconscious

Senses tremorsense 60 ft., passive Perception 10

Challenge 14 (11,500)

Immutable Form. The elemental is immune to any spell or effect that would alter its form.

Robust Architecture. If the elemental takes 10 or less damage from a single attack or instance of damage, it instead takes no damage.

Sturdy Foundation. The elemental cannot be pushed, pulled, or magically teleported unless it allows it.

ACTIONS

Multitack. The elemental makes two slam attacks. It then uses either its Brickwork or Repair action.

Slam. Melee Weapon Attack: +13 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. Hit: 22 (4d6 + 8) bludgeoning damage. If the target is a creature, it is grappled (Escape DC 21).

Brickwork. The elemental integrates a creature it is grappling into the structure of its body. A creature so integrated becomes restrained (Escape DC 21). While the elemental has a creature restrained in this manner, the elemental takes only half the damage dealt to it, and a creature of its choice restrained in this manner takes the other half.

Repair. The elemental magically regains 22 (4d10) hit points.

6. Wall Spikes

Sharp spikes extend out from the wall. The Player must pass a Dexterity saving throw or take 17 (2d10+10) piercing damage, or half as much on a success.

7. Portal Door

The Party makes their way across the adjoining staircase without incident. There is a door on the landing which, when opened, reveals another identical cavernous room full of stairs. If they step through, they will find they've just stepped through a portal that takes them through a door to another landing at the far end of the same cavern. If a Player stands with part of themselves on one side and part on the other and inspects the door frame (the portal itself), they will see between dimensions where the silver key hovers. They can then reach out and take it.

8. Crumbles

As the party walks, the stairs begin to crack and crumble. Depending on where they are in the staircase (closer to the next landing or closer to the one they came from) they can attempt a DC 21 Dexterity saving throw to leap to safety. Failed attempts result in the Players falling onto a lower staircase or another landing.

9. Manners Room

Party traverses the adjoining staircase without incident. The door on this landing has an iron knocker and a large, ornamental handle. The door is locked. If someone attempts to pick the lock, the keyhole will eat the lock picks. The iron door handle morphs into a face that glares up at the party. "Excuse you! Is it too much to ask for some Gods-damned decency?!"

The party must use good manners to enter this room. Ask politely and use the door knocker, then the door swings open. They will find what looks like a wizard's study hosting a desk full of papers that look like a mad man's been scribbling on them. If the party examines closer, they'll see the papers just say Rudeness! Rudeness Everywhere! repeated thousands of times. Every page is signed by Grandmaster Laurent Northcott. A breastplate, two gauntlets, an axe, and a sword are mounted on the wall. There are comfy chairs and large glass front cabinets that look to contain interesting trinkets. Most notably, a silver key hangs on a hook inside one cabinet. However, the thing that immediately jumps out to everyone is that every piece of furniture has a face, and is giving them a distrustful glare.

If the party respectfully conducts themselves, the furniture will assist them with information as well as unlocking the cabinets so they make take the key, and possibly and an additional trinket or two. If the party is rude, the first warning will be one of the gauntlets flying off the wall and smacks them. If the party goes too far, the gauntlets will each grab

a weapon and attack. They may find two additional items of note in this room: **Coin of Destiny** and the **Belt of Righteousness** (See Appendix)

10. Sticky Steps

As the party ascends/descends a staircase, they feel their feet start sticking to the steps with more and more force. At the midway point, their feet will be completely stuck to the stairs. A tar-like substance will have appeared. They have to find some way of freeing themselves via magic or possibly cutting away at the tar. Or they can just leave their shoes behind.

GM Note

Feel free to shorten or stretch the number of staircases as you see fit. You may want to fast-track them, or you can have them climb one staircase... nothing happens... then go up or down another... nothing happens... Plug in the segments above at your own pace.

Once the Party has three keys (it doesn't matter which three), they can open the large door and advance to the next Act.

ACT 2

Behind the large steel and black wood door is a long, high-ceiling hallway that looks much more like something expected in a labyrinth. As they venture inward, the party might begin to see astral creatures and other monsters... but Majin is able to guide them away from many pitfalls. As Majin leads them through corridors and under several tunnels, have them and Fayte occasionally drop hints about the Accursed King.

Here in the sanctity of the Well, Fayte is a little more open-lipped about their former relationship, and the origin of the Shadelands. Even to the point where she might become exasperated over the idea that the King tried to pin all his emotional baggage onto her. Even though she has left the King and changed her role in the Shadelands, she still remembers him for the man he was. Treason or not, she believes he's still in there.

The second act of this adventure is a good section to reveal bits of the character bios, or have Majin answer multiverse questions of the party. As the storyteller, nobody will have better answers about the workings of your universe than you; it's safe to assume Majin knows a few secrets. If you wish to reveal a cosmic metaplot to your party, this is the perfect adventure and chapter in which to do so.

Once you feel the party has had enough roleplay and are ready for the next test, begin by funneling the group into a long, narrow corridor. If they look up, it will appear as if they are walking beneath a familiar river of inky black water.

Whispers and Shadows

As you walk down the long, claustrophobic stairway into the room, a sour mixture of disease and cinder

enters your nose, the narrow way opens into a large, charred room, so dark and empty, you almost pray for the security of confined space.

At first, the only notable feature of the room you see is a massive statue against the opposite wall. The statue bears a slug-like torso, six feet wide, and a doorway is nestled into it. You can see a tunnel beyond. However, a black iron grate blocks the way. The statue rises ten feet until it narrows into a tentacle where the head should be. This head-tentacle has no eyes but does have a nose and a large mouth, sculpted into an eternal scream. Four additional tentacles branch outward from the stone torso. Each arm-tentacle holds a stone torch of intense green flame.

The hairs on your arms stand on end as your look down to notice the fine mixture of blackened bone fragments highlighted by a sickly, pallid yellowed color from where the fire has not touched. The remnant coals crackle like enfeebled twigs underfoot. The sight and smell inspire vivid visions of the countless, nameless souls discarded like refuse, and it seems that not all were dead when they were dropped here.

As your vision adjusts, you note the source of decay coming from the bodies that have yet to be cleansed by the flames. A blackish, viscus regurgitate expels, flowing down in charred curdles from their rotting mouths. Some bodies - cracked and blistered - are seen shriveled inwards on themselves, while others are positioned up against the walls with broken nails, attempting to climb up the smooth ebon interiors uselessly.

A strong wind current comes from the tunnel beyond the grate, and it almost sounds like whispers surrounding

you. After a few moments, the "wind" begins to form audible words, and you realize it is not the wind:

"We are home - you are home - join us in the warm darkness..."

GM Note

Everyone has darkvision! We know that's the case in most games, and the upcoming Shadow Encounter seems pointless if the party's black-and-white vision weakens the effect. This darkness should be supernaturally thick, and you may hint that regular darkvision fails to function. Those with enhanced darkvision (through magic or pacts) however, might find themselves with a unique edge.

The party's shadows, cast against the back wall by the green torches, have sprung to life. As they peel themselves off the wall, they become more than simple silhouettes. Features and details are drawn until they become inky black replicas of each party member and Fayette. If everyone fails their perception check, they are surprised in the first round of attack.

Majin casts no shadow here. During the frantic event that follows, offer additional high-DC Wisdom (Perception) checks to any Player insightful enough to specifically ask.

GM Note

The shadows are carbon copies of each Player, with all the same stats and abilities. The one difference is each shadow only has half the HP of the corresponding Player.

The whispered voices become a desperate shriek as the shadows attack, "No light! Only darkness! No light! Only darkness!"

The shadows will focus on any Player who is generating light.

The brighter the light cast, the stronger the shadows become. Whilst a shadow can be destroyed, do not remove them from the initiative order. When their turn comes around again, a new version of the same shadow emerges from the wall.

Only when all the lights have been extinguished and the Players are in perfect darkness, will the shadows relent, and the Players will hear a whispered: "Thank you..."

The shadows are victims of those who were sent to the Nothing. The infinite sea of peace and silence, an eternal void that makes up the Obsidian Rush. In the end, they just want quiet. The grate in the statue's torso opens and the party can advance to Act 3.



ACT 3

The party emerges from the dank tunnel into a wide, long hallway. The ground is like firm black sand and the air is fresh again. The walls stretch hundreds of feet upwards, leading to a sky of jagged spider web of iridescent Auroras. Majin will seem much more confident, offering definitive directions at Labyrinth intersections, *"We go left here. Then right at the next one. Then straight for a hundred yards."*

As they venture deeper, they will start seeing ghosts of all types of peoples and creatures drifting by. The ghosts ignore the party, with some moving with a purpose toward some unknown destination and others lazily floating along with no particular goal. They may pass a group of ghosts re-enacting the events of their respective demises. Perhaps the party even passes some familiar faces, people they've encountered (and killed) in earlier chapters.

GM Note

You are welcome to shorten or extend this portion of the temple as you see fit. You can have them reach the Well of Souls without incident or you can drop in more rooms, puzzles, or fights. The Dragons can be fought at low tier, by adding in more area-of-effect traps that can damage the dragons by moving them into those squares—or forgoing combat and running them as riddles instead.

Eventually, the glowing streaks of light in the sky will dissipate, giving way to a more familiar canvas of shining stars against a black backdrop. The party comes to the end of the Labyrinth. The ground ends at a sheer cliff and there are no more walls. They are looking out at an infinite starry expanse. At ground level, there are hundreds of small flat rocks, hovering like lily pads in the air. Most are big enough to hold just one or two people at a time. The openings between these platforms are about five to ten feet wide. About three hundred yards out, there is one

quite massive rock platform. It holds an enormous structure, easily as big if not bigger than the Scarlet Hearth, which looks like a pillar of frozen waves sculpted from glass and diamond swirling around each other. *"The Well is in there,"* Majin says.

The floating rocks are sturdy and easily hold whatever weight is set on them. Once the party begins walking and hopping rocks toward the Well, a thunderous sound resonates throughout the space. It sounds like two bestial roars layered on top of each other. One is harsh and guttural and the other is breathy, almost a hiss.

Trails of chalky, white smoke rise from the endless abyss below and coalesce in the sky. Very small bits of glass start chipping off the towering pillar and forming together. The party watches as two dragons: one made of snowy white smoke and one made from millions of tiny shards of mirrored glass materialized between themselves and the Well.

Roll Initiative

Deataigh the Smoke Dragon and Scath'an the Glass Dragon do not roll initiative. One of the two of them will take a turn immediately following each Player's turn. Which dragon attacks and which ability they use is determined by the actions of the Player. The dragons should attempt to mirror the Player Characters' movements, keeping themselves between the players and the Well. Whenever a Player attempts a physical attack, Scath'an will retaliate in kind: melee for melee, ranged for ranged. Whenever a Player casts a spell attack, Deataigh will immediately retaliate with their own spell attack. When a Player heals themselves, Deataigh will heal itself. When a Player heals a party member, Deataigh will heal Scath'an. Clever parties will use the forced inverted movements to lure the dragons into area of affect abilities or to their (temporary) demise.



Scath'an the Glass Dragon

Gargantuan dragon, neutral

ARMOR CLASS 20 (natural armor)
HIT POINTS 385 (22d20 + 154)
SPEED 30 ft., fly 50 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
27(+8)	10(+0)	25(+7)	16(+3)	13(+1)	21(+5)

Saving Throws Str +14, Con +13, Wis +7, Cha +11

Skills Perception +7, Persuasion +11

Damage Resistances radiant; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagic weapons

Condition Immunities exhaustion, stunned, unconscious

Senses darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 17

Languages Common, Draconic

Challenge 22 (41,000 XP)

Blinding Glare. When completely within an area of bright light, Scath'an shines with a blinding light. While Scath'an so shines, enemy creatures that can see it have disadvantage on attack rolls against Scath'an.

Mirrored Scales. Scath'an is coated in scales like reflective shards of glass. When Scath'an is hit by a melee attack by a creature within 5 ft., the attacker takes 11 (2d10) slashing damage.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The dragon makes three attacks, two with its claws and one with its bite.

Bite. Melee Weapon Attack: +14 to hit, reach 15 ft. One target. Hit: 47 (6d12 + 8) piercing damage. If the target is a creature, it must succeed on a DC 22 Constitution saving throw or instead be critically hit.

Claw. Melee Weapon Attack: +14 to hit, reach 10 ft. One target. Hit: 15 (2d6 + 8) slashing damage.

Glass Breath (Recharge 5 - 6). Scath'an unleashes a terrible roar, spewing hundreds of tiny razor-sharp shards of glass in a 60 ft. cone. Each creature in the affected area must succeed on a DC 22 Dexterity saving throw or take slashing damage equal to half their hit point maximum, or half as much on a success. Additionally, a creature that fails this saving throw by 10 or more has their hit point maximum reduced to their current hit points. This effect only ends if an affected creature receives the benefits of a DC 20 Wisdom (Medicine) check, or a greater restoration or heal spell.

REACTIONS

Spell Reflection (Recharge 5-6). As a reaction to when Scath'an is targeted with a spell from a creature it can see, Scath can change the target to instead be a creature of its choice that it can see within 60 ft.



Deataigh the Smoke Dragon

Gargantuan Dragon, lawful neutral

ARMOR CLASS 23 (natural armor)
HIT POINTS 250 (20d20 + 40)
SPEED 60 ft., fly 60 ft. (hover)

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
13(+1)	20(+5)	15(+2)	26(+8)	23(+6)	21(+5)



Saving Throws Dex +11, Con +8, Int +14, Wis +12

Skills Stealth +11, Perception +12

Damage Resistances acid, fire, lightning, thunder; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical weapons

Condition Immunities exhaustion, frightened, grappled, paralyzed, petrified, prone, restrained

Senses darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 22

Languages Common, Draconic

Challenge 22 (41,000 XP)

Gloom Shroud. As a bonus action, the dragon can emit a shroud of smoke in a 30 ft. radius sphere centered on it, which lasts until the dragon uses this action again or becomes incapacitated. The affected area is heavily obscured for creatures other than the dragon.

Smoke Form. The dragon is composed of ethereal smoke, allowing it to move through other creatures as if they were difficult terrain.

ACTIONS

Bite. Melee Weapon Attack: +11 to hit, reach 15 ft. One target. Hit: 24 (3d12 + 5) piercing damage and 18 (4d8) fire damage.

Claw. Melee Weapon Attack: +11 to hit, reach 10 ft. One target. Hit: 12 (2d6 + 5) slashing damage.

Wind Whip. Melee Spell Attack: +14 against to hit, reach 120ft., one target. Hit: 44 (8d8 +8) bludgeoning damage and the target must succeed on a DC 22 Strength saving throw or be thrown 30 ft. away from the dragon in a straight line, landing prone.

Mindsplitter Breath (Recharge 5 - 6). The dragon unleashes a horrible shriek in a 90 ft. cone which rends both mind and body. Each creature in the affected area must succeed on a DC 22 Constitution saving throw or take 55 (10d10) thunder damage. Additionally, on a failed save a creature must succeed on a DC 22 Intelligence saving throw or be incapacitated until the end of its next turn.

Life From Death. A creature of the dragon's choice regains 21 (6d6) hit points. This amount is doubled if a creature within 120 ft. of the target failed a death saving throw that round

Once the two dragons are defeated, an opening appears in the mirrored, diamond cocoon surrounding the Well. The Party may now enter. If they do any exploring of the rocky platforms near where the dragons died, they may find two rings: One of glass and one of white steel. These can be found under Remnant Rings in the Appendix.

WELL OF SOULS

The Well of Souls is a gigantic cylinder formed from dozens of pillars tethered together. The pillars are all hewn from wildly different materials: black obsidian, gnarled wood, rusted iron, white marble, even bone. It is all held together by the magic of multiple schools. The Well seems broken at first sight and very unstable, with multiple glowing cracks cutting jagged scars across its exterior. It even looks like some chunks of the building materials have broken off and lie scattered about the chamber.

Occasionally a bolt of raw arcane energy will burst from a crack. There is a constant, almost deafening rush of wind. Upon listening closely, the party will realize that it is not wind. It is a chorus of voices, otherworldly Patrons shouting and screaming from within. They demand time, power, loyalty, sacrifice, and souls... anything that might entice a mortal to strike a bargain. Listening even more closely and the party may hear the specific details of pacts and deals that others have made. It is pure, disorienting chaos.

There have been far too many Patrons, far too many people who have figured out the secret of the Well, and far too many warlocks for someone like the Accursed King to keep something like this in check all by himself.

At this stage of the encounter, Majin is not helpful. They can only answer with vague statements like "What do you think we should do?" or "Would you like me to summon a Patron for you?" Majin's poor help is due to the fact he can't answer this for the Players and Fayte. They need them to ask of their own choosing.

Using the books from the library encounter, the party can take up different points in the chamber and study the Well, looking for parts that are broken or solutions to fix it. Allow the Players to attempt either a DC 22 Intelligence (Arcana, History, of Religion) of their choosing. (with advantage if they have a book). They can learn info about the Well, namely, that the Well is out of balance with energies. It's missing Radiant energy entirely, and it's very difficult to find a Celestial being that would grant a pact... if not nigh impossible.

For each additional success the party achieves in researching, grant them an additional fact about the Well of Souls: It's been overused, there have been too many Patrons added, Warlocks demand power constantly across the multiverse, Gods have begun to notice... Many secrets can be gleaned. If the entire party succeeds, they can learn Majin's secret: Majin is intrinsically tied to the Well of Souls.

Regardless, Fayte will view this as her chance. She will demand that Majin summon her Patron so she can plead for the power to stop all this.

Majin grants her this pact, even though her Patron never reveals itself (the party might catch on that something is amiss here), and finally has free will to take control of the Well. Suddenly, Majin's feigned exhaustion fades and they stand, eyes glowing the same unnatural color as the well. The crackling, warped bolts of energy begin to bend to their will.

"And so the pact is sealed," Majin says. "Arise, Shield Maiden."

Describe as much of the visual spectacle as possible, but don't overtly state that Majin is the well itself, or that he's Fayte's Patron. If the Players don't figure that out now, they likely will later. And so, something entirely new is born here. Fayte has become one of the first celestial warlocks, and the party has the potential to join this pact formed right here and now (only if they correctly see Majin's secret here and they ask). If Fayte manages to grow and ascend, she could very well become the patron for all celestial warlocks forevermore. They can, of course, form pacts with other Patrons later in this place, if they haven't done so already in previous chapters.

GM Note

How you want to handle celestial warlocks is up to your existing campaign. If they already do not exist, then this is a great opportunity to start weaving them in with Fayte. If they already do exist, then consider having this moment take place out of time, and Majin's Mural (shown in the next act) writes Fayte in as the first. Or, simply ignore that and do what works for your campaign! What's important is that Fayte's patron was celestial and it was the last bit of energy Majin needed to solidify a real deal with.

Majin tells Fayte (and any who join the same pact), *"Now heal that damned Well."*

With a wave of her hand, Fayte can manipulate the threads running through the well, straightening them.

She can realign the crumbling stonework and seal the leaks. As the Well heals, warm energy washes over the party. Their wounds heal. They feel clean, like they've just stepped out of the bath. They are rested as if they've just woken from a peaceful night's sleep.

They receive all the effects of a Long Rest.

Act 3 closes as Fayte tests out her new powers, crying tears of joy because she has finally completed her pilgrimage and connected with her Patron. With her newfound power, she believes she can fix the Shadelands... permanently. If the party prevents Fayte from making the pact here, then Majin will be rendered frozen; unwilling to leave the Well. The

Shadelands will continue to deteriorate, and they will need to convince the King to come and heal the Well. The rest of the Red Opera still plays out, only without Majin. Skip the next chapter where the secrets of Majin are learned and go right to Act 7 where Fayte and the Party go to the Accursed Kings Court.

Majin will simply wait for everything to fall apart further and they won't compromise their plan of ensuring that they have free choice. When the chaos of later acts happens, they will reach out telepathically and give them a second chance. Refuse that, and the players will default to the "Do nothing" ending unless they pull off truly heroic feats that only you, the storyteller, can determine.



WEAVING THREADS

SOCIAL

Without many NPCs to engage in dialogue with, this adventure will be difficult for social-based characters and parties. To help facilitate them, play up the secrets and information about Warlock Pacts. Perhaps they hear a transaction between two ghosts or even see something tragic (like a child forming a pact with an abyssal who will discard the kid). And there's always the option to stuff this place full of more spirits. Souls forever tethered to the Well.

Sidequest Potential: The party might wonder if they could become Patrons themselves. Based on their level, such an act might be feasible: With Majin's help. If the characters head down this path, it will involve those becoming Warlocks to Majin... but they could begin a pyramid scheme and become Patrons

themselves by using the Well. An idea most interesting to Majin, because after they have the Well, they must still figure out the true nature of Death. This can be further played out if the party had been asked by other Warlocks to say incantations for them, or collect things from the Well on their behalf.



COMBAT

Rem Exius features some combat versus traps and other creatures, but it is easily expandable. As an infinite dungeon, you can make the Well of Souls adventure as large as you wish.

Sidequest Potential: The party can use combat to force their way into areas of the Labyrinth they weren't meant to go in. Thus, learning secrets (or even gaining treasure) from Patrons that have stored it there. Feel free to loop back in prior Patrons the party has dealt with in earlier acts so they can rob them and their guardians if you wish.



EXPLORATION

Roleplaying out the nature of the dungeon is key for the exploration. Having an entire place dedicated to learning secrets is an information broker's dream (see social), so make sure the Players have some time to see the potential.

This is Majin's home, and the more the characters explore, the more they should notice traits of Majin around in the nooks and crannies of the Labyrinth. While their secret is unlikely to be revealed, this one place where the party should begin questioning how much Majin knows about them with all these secrets.

Sidequest Potential: Dipping into another realm! The Well of Souls doesn't just connect the Shadelands to the multiverse, but other planes of existence as well. If you've had an itch to run a sidequest adventure on another plane of existence, have the characters slip through into that realm instead of a presented encounter. We've included one option that takes players into the world of Emberwind.







Side Quest

SECRETS OF THE RIFT

INTRODUCTION

Magic can come as a talent or gift. Some are born with a natural proclivity for the mystic arts, while others gain this boon through ambition and determination. In the Shadelands, power often comes from a Patron. If you want to dabble in the arcane, you need only find a creature willing and able to grant the means.

But there are many other sources of power. The multiverse contains infinite dimensions. Gaze into the Well of Souls, and you can see those dimensions piled on top of one another, vying to occupy the same

space and time. Warlocks in the Shadelands view the Well as a bridge, a way to communicate with beings on the other side.

Those with more imagination recognized the potential of the bridge itself. Set a log on fire, and you get heat. Ignite the binding between two worlds, and the release of energy is spectacular. But, of course, a burning log will eventually be reduced to ash. What happens to the multiverse when you incinerate the barriers of the astral veil?

SYNOPSIS

Opening the Well of Souls has destabilized the interdimensional barriers in Rem Exius, unleashing a wave of cosmic energy that inadvertently pulls Fayte and the players into another plane.

Act 1 of this sidequest kicks in a bit prematurely at the very end of Chapter 5. As Fayte and the Players “heal” the well, a rift tears through the fabric of reality right on top of them, sucking them into an unknown dimension.

In Act 2, the players must navigate a foreign land trying to find a way to get back home.

In Act 3, the players will witness the destructive power of Rift magic, and see the toll that it has taken on the world of Axia. They will also learn that the damage could ripple through other dimensions if they do not stop the Mages.

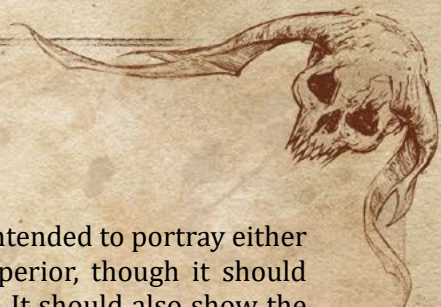
THE SETTING

This adventure takes place on Summit, a floating mountain located in the world of Axia. There is an abandoned Clockwork City hidden inside the mountain, and several cities and smaller villages scattered along its slopes.

Axia is defined by its relationship to the Rift, which has done irreparable harm to the structure of the world. Practitioners of Rift Magic are able to open Rifts that allow them to summon energy—and monsters—from alternate dimensions to power their spells. However, doing so has eroded the foundations of reality. Opening the Rift releases a toxic purple mist known as the Miasma, and the events of doing

such have split the land into a series of fragmented and floating continents.

Unfortunately, that destruction has not lessened the Rift Mages’ thirst for power. The effects of Rift magic are not well understood, so the Mages continue to conduct experiments with the Rift, unknowingly risking further damage to theirs and other dimensions in the process.



ADVENTURE HOOKS

This module is meant to examine the benefits – and pitfalls – of different forms of magic. Parallels can be drawn between the Rift Keepers of Axia and the Warlocks of Yon’Cath. While the latter receive their powers from a Patron, the former have learned to tap into naturally occurring reserves of energy to fuel their magic. However, both methods carry a heavy price.

As a result, the denizens of Axia take a more scientific approach to the arcane, forming guilds and conducting regimented experiments to enhance their magical abilities and their understanding of natural forces. For Warlocks, on the other hand, magical abilities are at least partly a matter of faith, insofar as they are based on a relationship with a more powerful being.

“Secrets of the Rift” is not intended to portray either approach as inherently superior, though it should raise questions about both. It should also show the dangers of unchecked ambition. Just as a Warlock can sell their soul to the wrong Patron and become corrupted, so too can a Mage become reckless and ignore the safeguards put in place to prevent them from doing harm.

The story should shed new light on the events playing out in Yon’Cath, and on events that may have occurred in Axia’s past. The Clockwork City represents the pinnacle of scientific progress, but the civilization that built it has vanished. Their technological achievements may not have been enough to save them from the power of the Mages.

ACT 1

Fayte and the players are given no time to enjoy their accomplishments. As the Well is opened, arcs of reality distorting energy burst forth in every direction, culminating in an all-consuming flash of impossibly bright violet light.

When the light fades, Majin finds herself alone. Their key chess pieces, namely Fayte and the party, which they’ve worked so hard to maneuver into place, have just vanished into thin air. A howl of primal rage bellows from them.

As the violet light surrounding Fayte and the players fade, they almost hear a furious scream in the back of their minds. Taking in their surroundings, they find themselves in a sand-colored, hexagonal hallway with bronze tracks embedded in the floor. Strange runes are etched into the metal, while the walls are perfectly smooth, to the point that the players could not separate even a single hexagonal brick.

Choose a random player, and have everyone roll a low difficult perception check to notice the 6-inch centipede-like creature clinging to their back. This is a Slither-mimic, a creature that can tap into the psyche of nearby beings. If it believes it has a chance to win in a fight, it will fight. If not, it may try to flee. The Slither-mimic’s last defense, when feeling like their own death is imminent, is to permanently shape-shift into an inanimate object. The form of

this object is determined by the scan of its assailant’s mind, in an attempt to look like something they wouldn’t destroy.

Fayte looks confused for a brief moment but remains composed, if a bit sassy, *“Oh, Majin’s decided to abandon us to our own little adventure. Fun.”*

Seeing as the party is inside a hallway, and Rem Exius has shown itself to be quite versatile in its appearance, it would be fair to wonder if they’ve simply been transported to another section of the temple. Fayte will be skeptical of this theory, *“That could very well be possible, but the pit in my stomach is telling me otherwise... Or I could just be hungry. It has been a long day after all... I really fancy black bean soup and rice right about now.”*

Nevertheless, she brushes the idea of food aside and insists they start walking to try and figure out where they are. The hallway seems to stretch on endlessly in either direction, with other hallways branching off as the players explore. Any rooms they find have been picked clean, and are largely empty. However, they may contain clockwork mechanisms, most of which are inactive and seem too complex to work out or even consider fixing. The ones that do work requires people to manually operate them, but are simple in the results: opening doors, moving trams, elevators, or other minor but useful architectural features. This

is done by simple machines of gears, cranks, pulleys, and levers. The complex surfaces will be imprinted with intricate patterns that resemble the wiring of a modern circuit board, with empty nodes that look like they should be holding something.

Eventually, the party hears the all too familiar sounds of monsters clashing: snarling, growling, hissing, the meaty chunk of a weapon striking hide, the subsequent shriek of pain.

Turning the corner, the party sees the source of this violent cacophony. Several creatures resembling the type that was clinging to the player's back. One critical differentiation, however, is that half of the creatures are much larger than six inches, standing about three feet tall and stretching twelve to sixteen feet in length. At the moment they are all focused on a lone figure who appears to be a human man. His clothes are simple, practical, but well made; the type of drab but efficient attire one might wear for an archeological expedition. He lashes out with the pickaxe in his hands, successfully striking a lunging monster in the center of its head. The other creatures let out wet snarls and move in.

Fayte will spring into action to lend aid. Assuming the players follow suit: **Roll Initiative!**

GM Note

The ensuing encounter is against a pack of Slither-spines and Slither-mimics. The number of each is up to the storyteller, but a low-to-medium difficulty is recommended for this encounter. The man is Jonas Krell, and he can be played as a rogue equal to the level of the party.

When the encounter ends, Jonas will thank the party and introduce himself. If there are races other than humans in the party, Jonas will pause and sound exhausted.

"Oh great. Another group has been spat through a Rift. This always happens now and then, come along, come along."

A breakdown of information Jonas can willingly provide:

- The players are in a world called Axia, specifically an ancient clockwork city hidden within the floating mountain of Summit. The world of Axia split during the Unraveling, and the fractures

and quakes have grown in the decades since. However, the people of Axia don't know what caused the cataclysm.

- Jonas is a member of the Scions' Guild in Sparkstone, a large city located at the mountain's peak.
- While his people have spent years exploring the Clockwork City, it remains a mystery who built it. All records of the time before the Unraveling have been lost.
- Jonas is investigating an earthquake that occurred several hours ago. The Scions are worried that the Rift Keepers may be conducting experiments inside the mountain.
- The Scions and the Rift Keepers are at odds. The Scions use scientific means to investigate the physical world, while the Rift Keepers use magic siphoned from the rifts to bend it to their will.
- Rift magic was discovered around the time of the Unraveling, although the connection between the two is not well understood.
- The monsters they just encountered come from the space between planes. They start in infancy as Slither-mimics. The shape-shifting is a defense mechanism, albeit an imperfect one since they cannot change back. Slither-spines are the adults who have managed to live and grow long enough to "lock-in" their natural form.
- Though powerful, the Rifts have a destabilizing effect on the world around them. And while the monsters that come through are a nuisance, they are not the worst side effect. The creatures often carry a parasitic fungus with them that can latch on to the organic matter in this world, mutating and corrupting it.
- The Rift Keepers have no concern over these dangerous side effects and have recklessly moved forward with their research with no regard for the consequences for Axia.

GM Note

The earthquake was triggered by the players' actions with the Well of Souls, which opened several Rifts throughout the area, including the one that the players used to enter Axia. However, Jonas does not have that information.

Jonas offers to lead the party out of the Clockwork City and take them to Sparkstone, the city at the mountain's peak. He hopes the Scion leadership will have the means to get the party back home. He may or may not let it slip that the Rift Keepers could very well help with this, however, they are "devious" and "not to be trusted." As Jonas gathers his things, point out he seems to be leaving behind what appears to be a tattered notebook. When asked about it, he will remark, *"That's not a notebook. It's one of the Slithermimics. You can touch it. It's harmless now. If they transform into an inanimate object, they get stuck that way."*

GM Note

List a few more seemingly random inanimate objects lying around. Perhaps some characters will recognize items that were pulled from themselves.

Fayte may take it for herself, thinking Majin will find it interesting to study.

The party reaches a fissure in the mountain that allows them to climb out of the tunnels and onto the outer slope of the mountain. The slopes are lush and green, with dense forest near the base. The cloud line below the floating mountain is thin, purplish, and resembles smog more than natural clouds. If the players look down, they will see that the world below is completely fractured, with rivers of lava running across the land as the continents drift apart and float into the air.

A curious contraption stands near the fissure. It looks like a small round carriage supported by four spider-like, mechanical legs. A rectangular trailer on treads is attached to the back of the contraption via cable.

Jonas explains, *"This is my crawler. Makes getting up and down the mountain fast and easy. You all can hop in the cargo hold, and I'll get us to Sparkstone. Oh, and I think it's best if you don't display any magical abilities until I've explained the situation. Don't want people thinking you're going to attack now."*

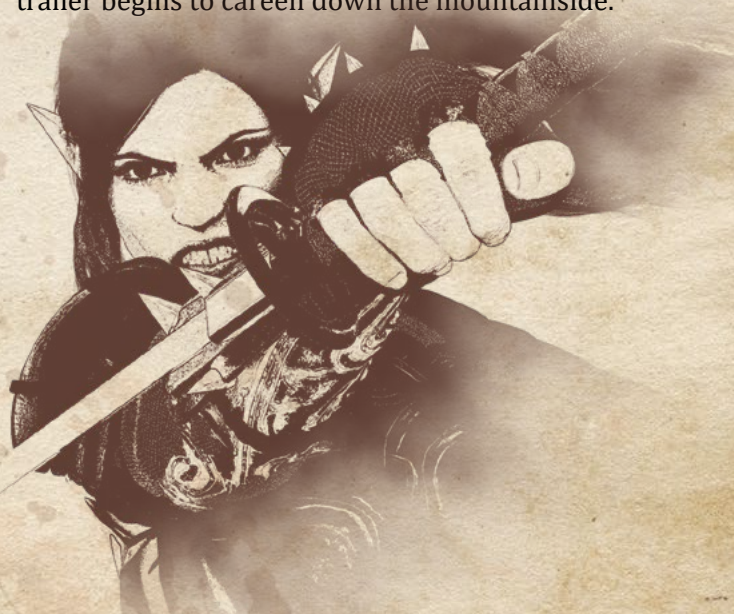
The cargo hold is akin to a livestock trailer, with a row of small chest high windows running along the sides. The latch on the door is flimsy, and not something that could be secured against the powers of

the player characters. Once everyone is secured inside, Jonas will start up his mechanical crawler and begin to travel up the slope. The ride is bumpy and jostling. Describe the relatively serene scenery, the vibrant, well-forested slope. Perhaps they can see the roofs of a quaint village near the mountain's base.

During the travel, have Fayte strike up a conversation to check in with the characters and see how they are faring. She will try to calm and encourage anyone who seems to need it. After checking each player, she sighs herself. "There are similarities between the fractured people here and back in the Shadelands. A mirroring. If only we could help, but the Shadelands needs us, and Majin is probably screaming up a storm for us to get back. Perhaps we could offer advice." Give the players a chance to theory craft on the advice they could give to try and help the place, but if they go too wild, Fayte will remind them that they don't have long, as they hope to get back home as soon as possible.

After half an hour of travel, the ground begins to tremble unexpectedly. The trembling progresses to violent shaking as the quake amplifies. Jonas can be seen furiously working the controls of his crawler. There is a thunderous cracking sound as the ground beneath begins to split from left to right. A thin mist of purple vapor erupts from the newly forming fissure. All players must make a difficult CON save. On a failure, the noxious mist deals 2d6 poison damage and they fall unconscious. Fayte should fail this save.

The moment this effect takes hold, the jostling of the crawler and trailer amplifies significantly. And without warning, the cord connecting the two snaps. The trailer begins to careen down the mountainside.



ACT 2

The trailer is now hurtling down the slope of the mountain. The players are welcome to try whatever means of slowing their pace they can think of, however, the difficulty of the checks should be high. The unconscious players remain passed out on the trailer floor.

GM Note

Introducing a "real-time" element to this sequence, giving players only a few seconds to make decisions, is a possible way to inject urgency and tension.

At some point, the trailer comes to a stop. Either it slows to a roll at the mountain base or it crashes into a tree or boulder. The effects of the mist wear off and the unconscious players awaken.

Taking stock of their surroundings, the players should find that they've gone quite a way down the mountain. Far back up the slope, they may be able to see a new and massive horizontally running fissure, a few trails of purple mist still drifting upward. There is no sign of Jonas.

A quick survey of their surroundings should reveal a nearby road. It leads off into a dense cluster of trees with a few building roofs and chimneys peaking over the top. A figure emerges, running up the road toward the party.

She is also human and is wearing a dark purple overcoat and matching scarf. As she rushes forward, the party can see the concern on her face morph into shock as she takes in the sight of the players. She slows to a walk, now approaching with caution, *"You are not from Axia... who are you people?"*

This woman is Riza Skycroft, and she is a Rift Keeper. She will be positively thrilled to learn that the players have come from another world via the Rifts. Sizing the players up, she will hone in on any Warlocks or wizards in the group, *"You possess magic, but your magic does come from the Rift, does it? Your magic comes from... somewhere else. So fascinating!"*

Riza will ask the players about how and why they came to Axia. She is open to helping them return home, in exchange for them telling her more about the nature of their magical powers. In the likely event that

Jonas or the Scions are mentioned, Riza's expression will darken. She has no hesitation launching into a tirade on how the Scions are, from her perspective, out of control tyrants trying to control and subjugate the denizens of Summit and Axia. They don't want the Rift Keepers using magic, because they want to keep them under heel. If a player counters by repeating Jonas' expressed concerns over the Rift magic side effects, Riza retorts, *"All power comes at a price. Do you mean to tell them there is NO cost for the power you wield? Yes, there are risks, but the alternative is we sit idly by while our world dies, all while the Scions tinker away in their workshops ignoring the plight of our people".*

There are few other pieces of information Riza is willing to reveal:

- Rift Mages are able to create Rifts in the fabric of reality and can draw energy from the Rift to generate various effects. The Rifts are gateways to other planes of reality.
- Rift Mages can travel through the Rift, though they always emerge somewhere else in Axia. The process of Rift travel is called Rift Jumping. Jumping is extremely dangerous and Riza admits that she does not know how to do it. If pressed, she will express frustration about the fact that the more senior Rift Keepers left her behind when they jumped and made her walk to the ritual site, as it "builds character." She waves off and refuses to answer any follow-up questions about this "Site".
- She can suggest that the party could use a Rift to return and that the other Rift Keepers might be willing to help.

Fayte sits back and remains quiet for the period of discussion, allowing the party to make the decisions. At this point, the party can go with Riza. Or try to head back up the mountain toward Sparkstone, looking for Jonas along the way.

Go with Riza

If the players elect to go with Riza, she will put on a cheery and friendly demeanor. As they walk, she asks many questions of the players, particularly the magic users. She appears to find everything they say utterly fascinating as she leads them back toward the buildings in the woods. They are revealed to be brick structures, looking more like a cluster

of modest industrial workshops than a village. The buildings are in good shape, despite the place having an eerie, deserted feel to it.

"There's a hidden entrance to the Clockwork City over in that building." Riza explains, "The quickest way to catch up with the others is to cut through the mountain's interior."

She slides open a barn-style door, revealing an open floor workshop. There are tables laden with various materials and items one might use for an arcane ritual. She heads to the table at the back and pushes it a few feet to the side, revealing a trap door. Beneath the door is a short, well-lit staircase that descends into a rough-hewn tunnel. The dirt-walled tunnel leads inward for about one hundred yards before spilling into one of the hexagonal walled hallways of the Clockwork City. After leading the players down a few hallways, Riza will be unpleasantly surprised to find her intended path blocked by rubble. After a moment of visible frustration, she will insist she knows another way around. From this point, skip to the section: **The Clockwork City**.

Search for Jonas

If the party chooses to go back for Jonas, Riza will not hide her revulsion. She'll spit on the ground and curse the players for aligning with the "Oppressors" as she runs off, creating a burst of purple smoke to cover her retreat.

The mountain slope is relatively gentle, and the party should not have much trouble climbing up the stretch they fell in the trailer. When they reach the newly formed fissure that split them from Jonas, they will see his crawler parked nearby. It's four legs appear to have been driven extra deep into the ground as if to securely anchor itself to the mountainside. There is no sign of Jonas, except for a rope ladder tied to the crawler that disappears down into the fissure.

Climbing down the ladder, the players will find it ends in one of the hexagonal hallways of the Clockwork City. There is only one way to go as the other is closed off with rubble from the quake (Skip to **The Clockwork City**).

The Clockwork City

Whether the players stuck with Riza or climbed down the rope ladder looking for Jonas, they will eventually end up in the same place: **The Control Chamber**.

This section can be as long or as short as the GM wants. The players will move through the hallways and rooms, either following a trail left by Jonas or

following Riza's lead. Whether they encounter any monsters or members of the opposite faction is up to the storyteller.

At some point, the players should find themselves stepping into a large, cavernous chamber. Copper pipes run along the walls and across the ceiling. Tall double doors on the opposite wall appear to be the only other way out of this room. At multiple points along the walls, there are angled panels with various levers and nobs.

If the players were searching for Jonas, they will find him in this room studying one of the control panels. He will be relieved to see the players are alive and explain his excitement over finding this previously undiscovered chamber.

If the players are with Riza, she will partially be excited and discovering this chamber, but also anxious at the potential of being delayed in meeting up with the other Rift Keepers.

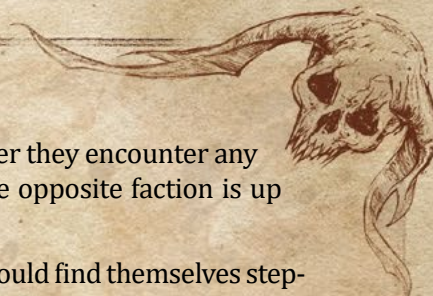
The Control Chamber

The party needs to get the tall double doors open. Some key points to make on the room's description:

- Set within the doors are six number wheels, three on each side.
- There is one short line of lettered runes etched into the door. Once deciphered, they read *Nothing Shall Pass*
- There are three levers on either side of the door. Pulling them has no reaction at first.
- The largest control panel in the room has one lever that's much larger than the others. A two-foot-wide hole has been built into the console next to it. The interior of the hole is pure darkness. A lightning symbol has been carved into the console next to the lever. And a carving of what almost looks like a centipede rings the hole.
- There is a four-foot length of pipe that has come loose from one wall. It lays idly on the floor. If one were to trace the path of this pipeline, it would lead to the door.

Three things need to happen to get the door open:

1. A Slither-mimic or any by-product of the Rift must be dropped into the intake hole. Once done, the pipes and machinery in the chamber begin to hum with life. Once this happens, steam can be heard whistling from the open end of the pipe that's missing a section.
2. The loose length of pipe must be reattached or at least held in place to allow the steam power to travel to the door.



3. The door code is 000000, which is equal to “Nothing” as in, “Nothing Shall Pass”

If the party is having trouble with the first step, the GM can include a short, easy encounter with more Slither-mimics and possibly Slither-spines here. The goal would be to have one of them inadvertently fall into the intake hole, which makes the machinery come alive.

Jonas and Riza will be able to offer help in their own unique ways, depending on who is accompanying the party. Jonas can decipher the door runes thanks to all his study of this city, and perhaps he has a device that can detect the unique energies of the Rift. That device will start going off the charts when it scans the intake hole.

Riza may be able to assist through her magic. She reaches out into the Rift, granting her the sight to read the runes. Likewise, her sensitivity to the Rift energies will draw her toward the intake hole.

GM Note

Regardless of who the party goes with Fayte will joke, “Two sides of the same coin at one another’s throats, ahh, familiarity!” There is a short chuckle, “As someone who straddles the line between two bullheaded men who have caused the same thing back home... This will end in death and destruction... Do what I did. Find a bunch of handy, friendly adventurers, and hire their help!”

Once the machinery has been activated, the pipe fixed, and the doors opened, the party may progress into the next room.

The Treasure Room

The room beyond is smaller than the control chamber. The walls are lined with metal shelves laden with many unfamiliar bits and pieces of clockwork machinery. One set of shelves holds dozens of copper, bronze, and gold ingots. Supported by a stand in the center of the room is a bronze spear. Familiar clockwork circuitry runs up along the shaft ending below the glimmering double prongs at the top.

If the party is with Jonas, he will be absolutely beside himself with joy at this discovery. He doesn’t focus on any one thing in particular, but rather will want to bring all of it, or at least as much as can be transported with him.

If the party is with Riza, she will ignore everything on the shelves. She only has eyes for the spear. Stats for the **Spear of Balance** are found in the **Appendix**. If players also want the Spear of Balance, feel free to engage in combat or social combat using the **Rift Keeper** stats in the **Appendix**.

When the party is ready to move on, they should find a relatively quick and straight path through the tunnels, coming to an open doorway. Stars twinkle in the night sky beyond.

Act 3 begins when the party exits the Clockwork City.

ACT 3

The party exits the tunnel into a dense section of forest. Not far ahead, they can make out a clearing with the smoldering remains of several old huts. It looks as if it might have once been a quaint peasant village. There is a flat, stone disc in the center of the clearing that is of Clockwork design, with eight metal pylons rising out of the stone at equal intervals around the edge. Each pylon is generating a beam of violet energy that is targeted on a massive Rift that hovers about six feet above the disc's center. Keen-eyed observers may notice a small hole directly beneath the Rift.

Rift Keepers, all clad in dark purple robes, scurry from one makeshift table to another to check notes and take readings from scientific instruments. There is frantic energy to the bustling of it all. Voices are

raised in anger, frustration, and fear. The Rift appears to be anything but stable, flickering in and out of existence, and crackling with chaotic energy.

How the players approach this scene will largely hinge on whether they’ve aligned themselves with Jonas or Riza.

Jonas

Jonas will be immediately tense, almost afraid. He will want to hide in the trees to observe the Rift Keepers, perhaps even try to sneak by them so he can get back to Sparkstone and alert the other Scions. Regardless of what strategy the party attempts, their cover will be blown before they have a chance to leave. At the most inopportune moment, the party is bathed in

bright light and a voice screams out, "Intruders! My brethren, we have intruders among us!"

Behind the party, they will see Riza glaring at them with malice, the light is emanating from her outstretched hand. If the players did not bring the spear with them, she will have it clutched in her other hand.

Riza

Riza will be excited and beaming with pride at the site before them. She will triumphantly lead the party into the clearing, announcing their arrival. The other Rift Keepers will cease their activity to stare at the newcomers. Any non-human players that are also magic users will be the focus of many wide-eyed stares and hushed whispers.

In both scenarios, the party is approached by an older man dressed in robes that are exceedingly intricate and fine, showing he has more status than the rest. This is Astriss Gale, High Guardian of the Rift Keepers.

If Jonas is present, Astriss will order two guards to keep an eye on *"The Scion"* and to *"Kill him if he makes an aggressive move."*

Again, in both scenarios, Astriss will begin speaking to the players in a pleasant enough manner. Much like Riza was, he will be excited when he realizes the players come from another world, and will immediately ask a series of questions that the players are free to answer as they see fit. Astriss will take frantic notes throughout the conversation, and will be particularly interested in the subject of Patrons, and whether or not he can secure one for himself. If the players ask about his research, he will be dismissive, saying that it is far too advanced to explain to the uneducated. He will not take offense if the players ask about his methods, implying that he does only what is necessary to preserve the future of the people.

When asked if he can send them back to Rem Exius, Astriss will say honestly that he is not sure, but that he is willing to try if the players can meet his price. He wants to meet a Patron. Any Patron. He may argue that if he and his brethren were able to draw power from another source, they would not need to exploit the Rift energies, thus removing the nasty side effects of those methods.

Their first obstacle is stabilizing the Rift enough to allow for inter-dimensional travel. **The Spear of Balance** solves this issue when placed in the hole at the disc's center. The prongs emit a frequency that can hold the Rift steady. The second obstacle is they need something to serve as an Anchor to Yon'Cath. A magical

artifact that originates from the Shadelands should do the trick. Astriss will insist it requires two artifacts.

GM Note

Astriss only says it requires two as he wants the second one for himself. This will hopefully allow him to visit Yon'Cath on his own at a later date. A contested Deception roll should occur for this information to be.

How this plays out is entirely up to the players and how they interact with Astriss. If at any point, he feels there is nothing useful to be gained from the players, he will order his people to attack them. If the players arrived with Riza, this is the point when Jonas will be led out to the clearing in shackles. Astriss explains they caught this Scion spy snooping around.

In both scenarios, Astriss has the intention to use Jonas as bait, regardless of what is said. A Rift as powerful as is required to send the party home will always draw some of the monsters that live between the dimensions. Jonas is to be placed beneath the Rift to draw them out, so the Rift Keepers may capture and/or kill them for study. Astriss will also try to argue that pulling them out on this end ensures they don't spill through into the players' realm.

GM Note

Fayte actively advocates against using Jonas as bait. Not only is it an underhanded tactic, but it is also immoral and against her beliefs. There is no way she can be persuaded and, despite her talking out and trying to convince the Rift Keepers, they are unswayed and ultimately ignore her.

Astriss will not wait for a decision from the players to begin the Rift opening ritual. Of course, any hostile actions taken by the players will result in the Rift Keepers attacking. He has no intention of letting them leave as there is too much knowledge and power to be harvested.

If the players try to stop him, Riza and other Rift Keepers will be quick to get in their way, protecting the ritual. Astriss's real plan is to open a Rift that will drop the players into a magically warded holding cell, making them his prisoners. However, as the ritual unfolds, something peculiar happens. The Rift opens, and for a second, it looks as if things are going just the way Astriss had planned. However, the image flickers and then morphs into the chamber outside the Well of Souls in Rem Exius. A familiar blue-faced Tiefling appears in the portal.

Majin bellows, *"What in the nine bloody hells do you all think you are doing?!"* To the players and Fayte, they add, *"Quit playing around with these nobodies and get in here!"*

At this point, all hell breaks loose. Slither-spines and Slither-mimics begin to fall out of the Rift. Jonas will be devoured despite Fayte trying to protect him if no one else tries to help and the Rift Keepers will attack the party. The monsters may attack any side, however, they are more likely to attack the players as the Rift Keepers have means of exerting minor levels of control over them. Of course, a few Rift Keepers won't be as adept with that skill, and the Slither-spine they try to control will turn on them.

As the battle rages, Astriss should prove to be a formidable opponent (Use the Rift Keeper Stats). When it best suits the moment, Majin will grow frustrated and come through the Rift himself. They help to draw the attention of Astriss, proving as quite the challenge whilst also keeping the Rift open for the party.

If the players successfully defeat all other enemies, Astriss will let out a curse, vowing to exact vengeance, not just on the players, but their entire world. With that, he will vanish.

If the players kill Astriss, then he crumples to the ground, screaming and cursing at the party with his last breaths. Majin rolls his eyes, annoyed with the theatrics, and waves for the party to hurry up. *"Unfortunately, death is but a temporary footnote. Resurrection magic is quite vexing."*

Whether it is learned from a still-living Jonas, Riza, Rift Keeper, or read out of a notebook, the players learn that the Rift can be permanently closed if the pylons are destroyed. The Rift will remain open for just a few seconds after, so they will have to be quick about it. The fate of the Spear of Balance is up to the players and the storyteller. Some other potential loot from the ritual site could be:

- A small sack of **Clockwork Marbles**
- **Glassguard Cloaks**
- **Glasslaive Axe** (A gift from Jonas)

The adventure ends when the party successfully makes it back to Rem Exius. The link to Axia has now been severed, but knowledge cannot be so easily undone. It will only be a matter of time before someone tries to open the door again.

But who will be bold enough to make the first attempt? The Rift Keepers of Axia now know that it is possible to travel to other dimensions, and they may go searching for new worlds to plunder once they are finished with their own.

However, the players have also returned with dangerous and forbidden secrets—and there are many more still waiting to be uncovered...

THE END

Thank you for participating in
"Secrets of the Rift"



Appendix 1

CREATURE STATISTICS

Slither-mimic

A small creature that resembles a 6-10-inch centipede. Its coloring is a shade of purple so dark it is almost black. These creatures are juveniles and will eventually grow into Slither-spines. However, the main defense mechanism is they can scan the thoughts of nearby creatures and transform into something they feel would not be a threat to preserve their lives. The problem is, if they transform into an inanimate object, they become permanently stuck that way, essentially becoming brain-dead to a degree.

It is recommended to use the Slither-spine stats and cut all modifiers in half.

Slither-spine

The Slither-spine looks like a Slither-mimic, except they are anywhere from 12 to 16 feet in length, with a segmented body and hard chitin plating. The Slither-spine is a Large creature rather than a Small one. Its body is also covered in sharp quills that can be fired in short bursts.

The Slither-spine will try to grapple players and crush them in its many legs. It has a barbed tongue that it can use to grapple players and drag them into melee range.

Large Aberration, Chaotic Neutral

ARMOR CLASS 17
HP 154
SPEED 30 ft

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
16(+3)	14(+2)	20(+5)	12(+1)	14(+2)	10(+0)

Saving Throws CON+9, STR+2, DEX+4, INT+1

Damage Resistance Acid

Damage Immunities Poison

Senses Passive Perception 12, Blindsight 90ft

Magic Dampening Aura. Any spells cast within 10ft of the monster are made with disadvantage.

Siege Monster. Slither-spine attacks deal double damage to inanimate objects and buildings.

Spider Climb. Slither-spine can walk up walls and across ceilings as if it were normal ground.

Actions

Bite. +12 to hit. Deals 22(3d12) piercing damage. The target must make a CON save or become **poisoned**.

Barb Snare. Range 30ft. Slither-spine fires three barbs. Each barb creates a small, temporary rift upon impact. These can all be directed at one target or split between multiple targets. +9 to hit. Deals 12(2d6+8) piercing. On a hit, target(s) must make a STR save (DC18) or be pulled through the miniature rift to an unoccupied space next to the Slither-spine.

Envelope. Range 10ft. The Slither-spine rears up and attempts to wrap six pairs of sharp, pointed legs. The target must make a DEX save (DC19) to avoid. On a failure, the target is **grappled** tight. The pointed legs puncture the target, dealing 18(6d6) piercing damage. On subsequent turns, the target can attempt to break free. Every turn they remain grappled, the Slither-spine secretes a corrosive slime from its underbelly onto the target, dealing 10(2d8) acid damage.

Rift Keeper

Medium humanoid, lawful neutral

ARMOR CLASS 16
HIT POINTS 84
SPEED 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
10(+0)	14(+2)	14(+2)	20(+5)	16(+3)	12(+1)

Saving Throws WIS+7, INT+4, DEX+4

Senses Passive Perception 13

Senses darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 24

Languages Common

Actions

Melee Attack. +10 to hit. Deals 13(2d8+4) slashing or bludgeoning damage

Rift Bolt. +8 to hit. Range 60ft. Deals 21(3d8+8) force damage

Tether Monster. Rift Keeper attempts to exert mental control over a Slither-spine within 30ft that they can see. The monster must pass an INT save against DC19, or they will succumb to the whims of the Rift Keeper. The monster can attempt to break this hold again at the end of each turn.

Rift Skip. *Bonus Action.* Open a small temporary Rift, allowing Rift Keeper to teleport to an unoccupied space that they can see up to 60ft away.

Appendix 2

ITEMS

Clockwork Marbles

Tiny balls of copper and circuitry found within the Clockwork City. They act as air purifiers, creating a safe zone of breathable air roughly six feet in diameter. They cannot be used to breathe underwater but will ward off airborne toxins and dangerous gases. The Crystals also emit a soft purple light that can be used to illuminate dark areas. These objects are linked to Axia, and the players can use them as an anchor should they ever wish to return via a portal. Throwing one into the Rift will create a gateway to Axia, but the process will destroy it so each can only be used once.

Properties: Illuminates 30ft with low-light. Purifies toxins from the surrounding air. Can also be used to cast Dimension Door once before it becomes inert, losing all properties forever.

Glassguard Cloak

The Glassguard Cloak is a magical accessory that sends a Spell through the Rift to redirect it from one target to another. To do so, the Cloak creates a Rift in front of the wearer, which swallows the original Spell. The Cloak then opens a second Rift next to its new target, from which the Spell emerges and connects. The Cloak can only redirect a Spell with a single target, and that target must be the wearer.

Properties: +1 AC. The wearer gains "Reaction: Once per day, redirect a spell that targets only you to another target within 15 ft."

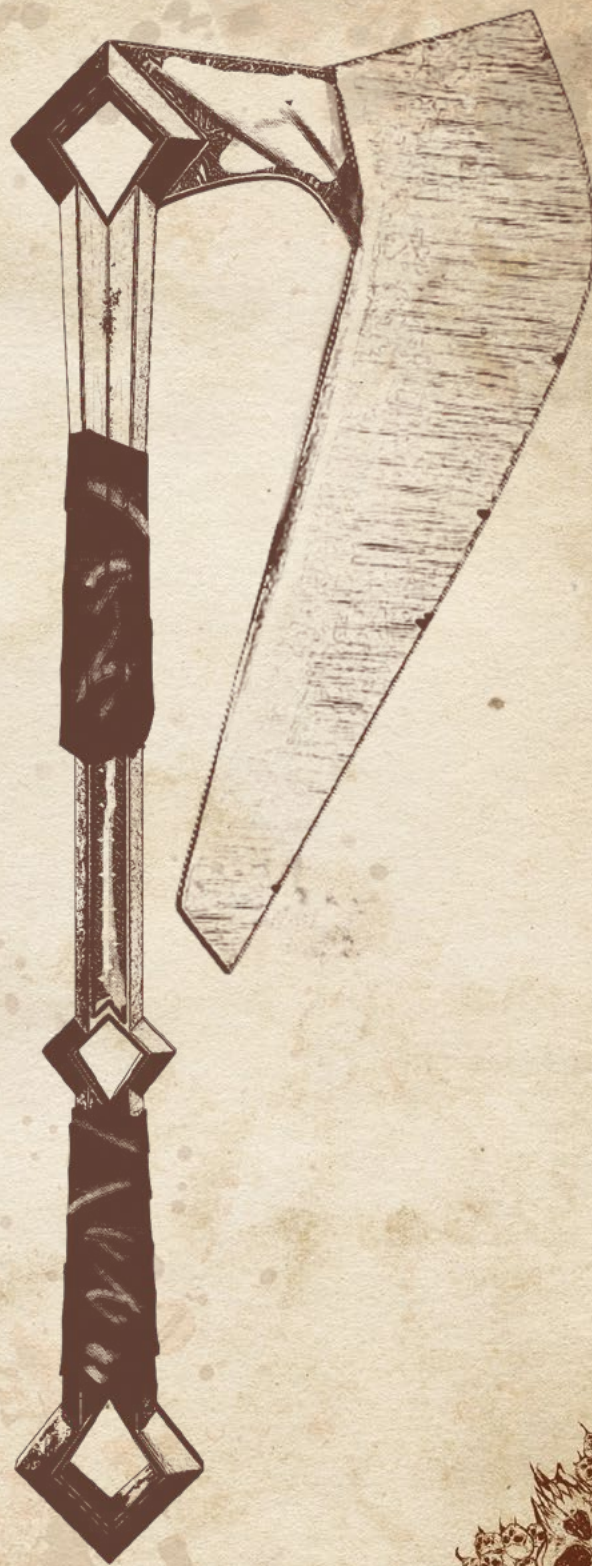
Glasslaive Axe

The Glasslaive Axe is a magical weapon that automatically returns to the player when it is thrown. It can also be thrown through the Rift to strike enemies behind cover. In those instances, the Axe enters a Rift as it is thrown, and then emerges from a second Rift that appears next to its intended target.

Properties: Handaxe, returning weapon. Light. Thrown. Deals 1d8 slashing. Provides +2 to hit and +4 to damage when used as a melee weapon. When using Rifts, the axe ignores cover and the thrower does not require line of sight. This ability may be used three times per long rest.

Spear of Balance

A six-foot spear of bronze with two sharp prongs. Unfamiliar circuitry runs along the shaft. Provides a +2 bonus to hit. Deals an extra 1d8 force damage. Spear emits a stabilizing field around its wielder that prevents the weapon holder from being knocked prone or forcibly moved.





Chapter 6

FAYTE'S ARIA

"I've always wondered why the first person to discover the Well of Souls called it that. Did he just gaze into the abyss of eldritch energies connecting Patron to Warlock and decided he could drink from it? If so... maybe people can be clever." —Majin the Betrayer

INTRODUCTION

'Fayte's Aria' should serve as a kind of interlude to the adventure. A time when the party can catch their breath and start making better sense of the Opera that's unfolding all around them.

Majin will take them on a tour deeper into the Well of Souls where they have been chronicling the stories of anyone, and anything, that's passed through the Well: Patrons, Gods, Fayte, Dorian, and even the Players (now that they've arrived).

Once they've seen Majin's Mural, they may be left with more questions than answers, but this will serve as a moment to let the Players share their backstories (truthfully, or with some spin of course).

What can the Players do with all this knowledge they've been blessed with? Before them, who else could have possibly known about this place? Dorian of course. The Accursed King. The keeper of the Well. After witnessing the swirling, torrential overload of power in the previous Act, it should be no wonder why he went mad.

It's all under control now, however. It's all now in Fayte's capable hands. At least, she seems to believe so. Her conviction is stronger than it's ever been.

After following along Majin's detour in the Well of Souls, the party will need to exit the Labyrinth and return to Yon'Cath.

SYNOPSIS

*"Even though my time is spent in the Scarlet Hearth, I can feel the similarities, the connection, the desperation that ties these places together."
—Fayte the Shield Maiden*

The first act is the aftermath of the realignment at the Well of Souls. The party can see clearly that Fayte is different. Infused with power after connecting with her Patron in a fashion that no warlock has ever enjoyed (being so very close to the source of all pacts). She eagerly wants to reunite with Dorian now that she seemingly carries the burden of maintaining the Well, to see if he's changed, if he can be truly saved from his madness.

But Majin isn't quite done with her—or the party. In the second act, after regrouping and resting, they will insist that the party take a detour through a different wing of Rem Exius. Fayte is powerless to resist the call of her Patron. Majin leads them to a grand mural carved in stone. Not only are the well-known stories

of the Shadelands and the Gods themselves on full display, but the Players' stories as well... if they look closely enough.

Or maybe it's all a trick, part of Majin's grand experiment, to see if mortals would lie when given the chance.

Act 3 involves their escape from Rem Exius. The party may very well want to venture back here some other time, to speak with Patrons, to study the Mural again (as Majin has). But for now, Fayte will remind them that the war may still be going on, that people may still be dying, that Dorian can now be reasoned with. She's sure of it.



FAYTE'S ARIA

Scan this QR code to listen to this adventure act's paired song from the Orchestral Version of the Red Opera Album by DiAmorte.

THE SETTING

“At least you could spend a few thousand years here and never really get bored. It changes as the realms change, so there is always a discovery to be had—even if food can be scarce.”

— Majin the Betrayer

Once more centered away from Yon’Cath, inside Rem Exius, between the planes of existence... ‘Fayte’s Aria’ is a chapter of the Red Opera that further illustrates the immensity, complexity, and ultimate importance of this place. Here, in the Shadelands, lit by the Elemental Dance, caressed by the ever-flowing waters of the Rush, the Well of Souls should truly feel like a monumental set piece.

Majin’s Mural is the highlight of this act’s setting. It can only be accessed by a passage from the Well’s main chamber, leading onto a bridge that spans the void. As they cross it, the lights from the Well’s chambers dim, and the lights of the Aurora Borealis gain focus, but here it is brighter and purer, undiluted perhaps by the light of the city. And further still, they arrive at the mural. On one side of the bridge, a waterfall, and on the other, a sheer cliff face, but with an enormous mural carved into it, depicting all of the elemental planes, the pantheons of Gods throughout every realm looming tall across idyllic scenery, bestowing their blessings to meager mortals.



ACT 1

It should be clear to the Players that Fayte has changed. A radiance surrounds her, and Majin couldn't be happier. Fayte will say that, with these new-found powers swelling in her, she understands now why Dorian has fallen from his path. It is a heavy burden, aligning the power of Patrons as it flows through the Well, and she's ready to carry it for him now. She wants to leave as soon as possible, to see how Dorian has been affected, and to see how the battle fares with the Knight Captain. Perhaps the two sides can find peace.

But Majin has other plans, for now. While they're all here, why not take a little detour on their way out. There is still much to explore. Majin wants to show the party something. Majin wants them to... understand.

Majin says, *"There is a place here, something no one has ever seen. A tapestry. It's just this way."* Because Majin is her Patron, Fayte will be powerless to resist (again, the Players may not have figured this out yet, so keep dropping as many hints as you can).

Rather than leading them out the way they came—the expansive void littered with steppingstones—a new passage has been revealed, all due to the broken rubble of the Well's pillars being realigned. As the party ventures a little deeper through the labyrinth along this new path, aberrant beasts lurking in the shadows slink away or even appear to bow at their passing. The sound of rushing waters can be heard ahead, and the path soon becomes a bridge.

They have arrived at Majin's Mural. Describe the seemingly endless carvings in the sheer cliff face along one side—depicting all the stories of gods and Patrons and those who've passed through the Well—and the ever-flowing waterfall on the other, materializing from nothing above and tumbling into nothing below. Allow the Players to ask if they can find so-and-so renowned figure, reward them with knowledge that they can glean from studying the mural. Retell the rise and fall of Gods and heroes.

But perhaps most importantly, on Majin's mural, the Players will find Dorian, Fayte, and themselves. For anyone who has ever passed through the Well (Gods and Patrons powers are a part of them after all) appears on Majin's Mural.



ACT 2



This is a chance for your Players to see the stories of their party comrades. Since you, as the GM, have read each of the Player's "Letter Home," you should describe the carvings on the mural cryptically, allowing the Player to choose how much or how little they wish to expose or leave unexplained. These moments can last as long or as little as the party dictates, of course. But by describing the life of one character as it's depicted on the mural, you will likely entice the other Players to dig a little further, or perhaps even resolve conflicts among them (or create new ones).

When it comes to Fayette's story on the Mural, the players can watch as it branching trees write themselves in real-time into the stone...then at times crumble away (only to be rewritten a different way). This happens for hours on end. Her past is set in stone, but the future for her seems to constantly be branching and wild (much like a players would be); but always has a hint of tragedy near the end. Any divination magic or players with abilities that reflect foretelling might gain a more clear prophecy of the multiple endings that await them, or perhaps advantage on a dice roll dealing with divination.

If the Players ask whether Majin's story is carved upon the mural, they will always fail a perception check because it is not there. If they ask why, Majin will try to play it off, responding with something to the effect of *"Why would I make note of myself? Through the Well, I've observed so many things and studied others. If I wanted to study myself, I'd look in a mirror or keep a diary. Or both."*

Although it seems short, and that there is no 'action', this part of Chapter 6 may require a lot of time, both in-game and out. Keep in mind the longer the Players spend in the Well of Souls gleaning information from Majin's Mural, the longer the battle rages back in Yon'Cath. After some time has passed, when you think the Players have learned all they can for now - or perhaps missed enough opportunities to learn or even failed enough times in the attempt - have Fayette remind them of LaCroix's plan, and their need to visit The Accursed King now that the Well is realigned.

To pass some time and also to distract the players from nosy questions, Majin can conjure a large table laden with a hearty feast. The players can rest, eat, drink, and maybe play a game? Majin is, perhaps unsurprisingly,

a big fan of games (and food). Here are a few options (in order from more simple to more complex):

Beggar's Bluff

Each player antes 10 gold. Then they all roll a secret d4. This roll determines their odds for the next roll. Each player will have a chance to raise the stakes, match, or fold. Players who rolled a 4 get to roll a d12, those who rolled a 3 get a d10, those with a 2 get a d8, and those who rolled a 1 get a d6. Everyone rolls their respective die and the high number takes the pot. On a tie, the tied players re-roll.

Rock Bottom

Everyone starts with the same (small) amount of money in front of them. They each roll a secret d12. Then there is a round of betting. Then they roll a d8. Another round of betting. The dice are revealed. Highest total "wins". However, the game doesn't end until someone "loses" all their money. That player actually wins the whole game, taking every gold piece on the table.

Commander's Gamble

This is a one vs. one game. Larger groups should pair off in an elimination tournament fashion. Each player is a "Commander" with three soldiers represented by a d20, a d12, and a d6. There are three rounds of combat and best two of three wins the battle. Each die can only be rolled once per battle. The Player chooses the order they roll in. Players do not reveal which die they are rolling until after it is rolled. A Player can roll two die in one round to enhance their chances of victory, but this guarantees a loss in another round. Example battle:

Round 1

Player A rolls d20, scoring 13

Player B rolls d12, scoring 10

Round 2

Player A rolls d12 and d6, scoring 11

Player B rolls d20, scoring 14

Round 3

Player A has no roll

Player B rolls d6, scoring 2

Player B won 2 of 3, winning the battle.

ACT 3

At this point, there are likely three defining scenarios:

1. The party has figured out who/what Majin truly is (the well itself, and Fayte's 'new' Patron) and feels that is too much power so they are planning to resist Majin's ascension.

They are leaning toward wanting to regroup with the Knight Captain, armed with this new knowledge. Maybe he can figure out a way to end this insanity! To save his love interest the Shield Maiden from the 'trap' she's fallen into.

2. The party has figured out Majin, and they feel they want to be a part of their ascension.

Swearing pacts to them or otherwise choosing to go along with it, for now. They are leaning toward wanting to confront Dorian the Accursed King and somehow setting the Shadelands aright.

3. The party still hasn't figured out Majin's secret power/identity.

But that's all right - they are perhaps intrigued by the potential power they can gain by revisiting the Well and manipulating its secrets. Now they want to truly put the nail in the Accursed King's coffin and steal his powers over the Well for themselves, and so they move to accompany Fayte to him with this ulterior motive in mind.

This chapter is not so much about running an encounter as it is about the Player's making a crucial choice now that even more of the truth has become apparent. In any case, this is a turning point in the campaign. But all paths should point to a desire to confront the Accursed King. Whether that be to gain knowledge about their perceived enemy, put an end to him once and for all, help the Shield Maiden save him, or any other reason.

Now that the Well is realigned and fixed (for the moment), the Players themselves should be curious about how the war is going back in Yon'Cath.



WEAVING THREADS

SOCIAL

With plenty of opportunities for conversation, re-reading all the character bios is probably a good idea before this adventure. The party will have many questions about Fayte and why Fayte wishes to return to Dorian's side—even if she's fallen out of love. Maybe she's reconsidering. Maybe she never truly stopped loving the Accursed King, only couldn't love what he was becoming... Either way. The other social bits that can happen deal with spying on other warlocks in the world. Who knows what kind of secrets the party can obtain for future blackmail?

Sidequest Potential: Liar's Night is a popular festival centered around Halloween. Masks, deception, and lies run the show—along with trickery. If the party

can convince Majin to show them, Majin can reveal a Liar's Night ball with NPCs from the character's past and what they are up to. This can serve as some fun fan service for past campaigns the characters have been in or a bit of hanging mystery for what's to come.



COMBAT

No combat is scripted for Chapter 6. The Players will have to seek it out on their own as part of a sidequest. This adventure is about taking a rest from combat and making choices. If the Players want it, sidequests are always a possibility.

Sidequest Potential: During the journey along the new path from the Well, one form of monster seems to appear more often than others: The iconic Mimic. Of course, the Players won't know that the mimic is here, but in an astral plane filled with dreams and flowing thoughts, Mimics are a natural inhabitant—albeit young. Let the party encounter a few Mimics learning to change form and steal from the thoughts of people before entering the Material Plane.



EXPLORATION

Exploration does not just revolve around revealing tiles on the map. Here, we explore the characters' pasts, Majin's mural, and other revelations about Fayte. As the storyteller, spend as much of this session as you wish to go over the motives of the Opera and the various characters (including the PC's pasts)!

Sidequest Potential: Playing matchmaker. When Majin has the party near their mural or elsewhere in the Well of Souls, let the party start hearing the desperation of a would-be Warlock's futile attempts at necromancy to bring back his sister. His wishes travel along the threads and enter the Obsidian Rush, flowing through. Let the Players pick which Patron those wishes end up on. Who will answer that kid's call? Inadvertently, this also showcases the influence that Majin has over the realm. And, it can serve as an enticement to power if the Players later choose to side with Majin or try to seize the Well for themselves.







Chapter 7

THEME OF THE BETRAYER

"Can you not feel the winds of change? Centuries of history about to be erased with but a whisper." — Majin the Betrayer

INTRODUCTION

Returning to Yon'Cath, the party will learn the state of the Shadelands as they are thrust into social chess within the Accursed King's court. 'Theme of the Betrayer' focuses on the shifting nature of power as Majin and Fayte have both been upgraded. Fayte now holds the ability to change the tide of the war herself, and now she needs the political influence to do so. While Majin has found in her, and the party, the pieces they can move along the board as they please...

Designed as a court-based session, you are going to have a variety of NPCs for the party to engage with. A quick storytelling trick is to write down: Sleepy, Drowsy, Grumpy, Happy, Bashful, Sneezzy, and Curious down on a sheet of paper. Any time an NPC is talking,

drag your finger down the list and grab one of those emotions to channel. It will help increase diversity in your characters.

This chapter will rely heavily on improv storytelling. The dialogue trees are not scripted out (intentionally so), because at this point the party of characters should have their own motive. Luckily for us storytellers, we can probably guess where the Player characters are leaning at this stage and choose to either flip the script or funnel them along their path. The sidequest Performance In Tatters has been included at the end of the chapter and can be played out during this chapter...

SYNOPSIS

*"The Shadelands was built on bones of those who hated Warlocks, and I've no problem adding LaCroix to the pile. What's this rumor about Fayte traveling with him?"
— Dorian the Accursed King*

Act 1 returns the characters to Yon'Cath. Weeks have gone by while the characters were in another realm, and what began as a relatively straightforward conflict between two clearly defined sides has splintered into a many-faction, multifaceted affair. Enough time has passed that other nations have even begun to get engaged. The journey of Act 1 is heading into the citadel and introducing the characters found within the Court—namely the Accursed King.

In Act 2, the party will be given the objective of recruiting political and merchant support for Fayte. Unlike the Knight Captain, Fayte's coup is less about betraying the King (though it could be), and more

about restoring balance. Their challenge is that each other person senses a chance to ascend or earn favor.

No political dealings in Yon'Cath would be complete without involving Patrons. Patrons featured earlier in the campaign return, furious about their access in the Scarlet Hearth being cut off, and lay demands that are vast in scope. Some may be particularly angry at the party. Perhaps when the party made deals with them in Chapter 2, the Patrons didn't realize this would result in sacrificial offerings being cut off.

Much like the merchants, guardsmen, and nobles—the party's goal is to recruit as much as they can.

At the end of the adventure, we will tally up the political points earned in each camp and see who rises on top.



THEME OF THE BETRAYER

Scan this QR code to listen to this adventure act's paired song from the Orchestral Version of the Red Opera Album by DiAmorte.

THE SETTING



"My reverence for life will surely mean your end. Pity that you won't see your treason in the same light."

— Dorian the Accursed King

Returned from Rem Exius, the party stands back on the surface of the Nameless Black Sea and gazes upon a very changed Yon'Cath. Most notably, there are fewer buildings and more smoldering pyres where buildings used to be. Military encampments now dot the horizon to the south as other nations have arrived, hungry for new power and influence. The sharks smell blood. Warfare is raging through the countryside. Given the nature of the Shadelands, this conflict is more akin to modern warfare. White Dragons from the Iceborne Imperium fly overhead like an air force, making flanking runs on Warlocks who perform artillery strikes with eldritch blast. Religious zealots of the Radiant Brigade march across the tundra, seeking to stamp out any infernal Warlock "heretics" they may find. The few clerics and healers that exist are in high demand, and often have to run for their lives from assassins who are hired to kill them.

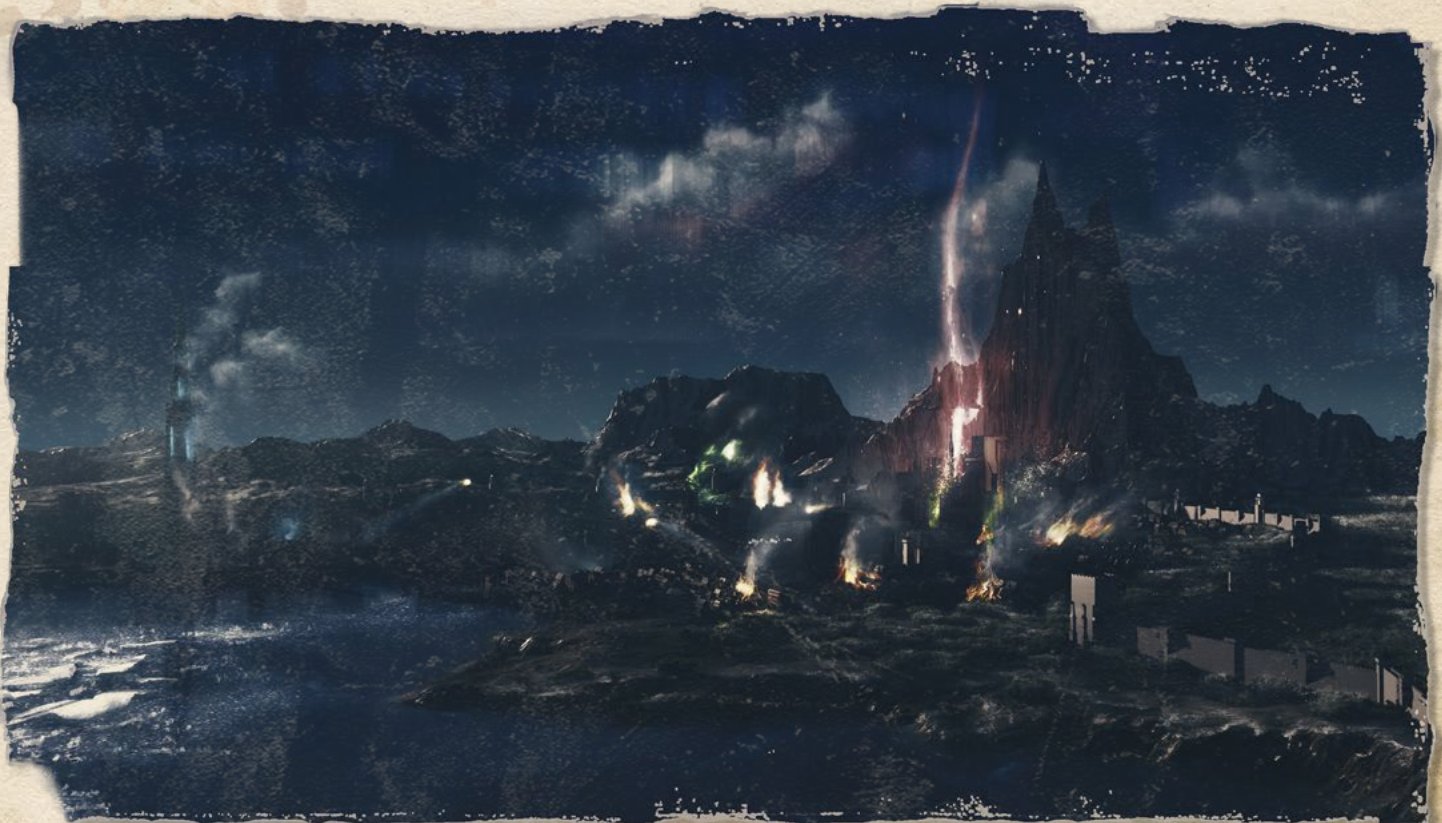
Within this chaos, the Accursed King is having emergency sessions within the Impossible Spire.

Overlooking the world, merchants, guild leaders, generals, and nobility scream at each other as old alliances break and new ones are forged. Every bit of balance in the Shadelands has tipped, and even the Spire feels as if it is about to tumble. Instead of finding opulence and avarice, Dorian's court is practical, stark, and ominous.

No alcohol can be found within the Impossible Spire (something which many nobles grouse about), and the food consists entirely of seeds from various fruits, namely pomegranates. Many within the hall suffer from hunger, as the King prefers to keep his men on the streets fed rather than the spoiled nobles within. Describe the King's halls as sparse, but always smelling of spices with an aroma of cinnamon on the air.

GM Note

In the time the party has been away, Dorian has, for the most part, reforged his alliances with the Patrons. The Accursed Guards now have their full spell capabilities restored from here on out.



ACT 1

Standing on the Nameless Black Sea, the party (and newly empowered Fayte), will be greeted with the reality that time has not moved linearly for them. The Shadelands is violently erupting in conflict from all sides. Banners from other nations to the south dot the horizons. Other magical forces have stepped onto the battlefield, such as arcane wizard guilds, or mercenary sorcerers—perhaps to test their mettle, perhaps to bury old grudges. No war would be complete without the presence of deities demanding their clerics forge a path in battle or help the innocent. Called to the crusade of the Shadelands, witch hunts take place in the streets. With no chance of survival to the north of them, the armies of Yon’Cath are caught in a crucible of conflict with no way out other than victory.

As the party walks the water back to the city, Majin and Fayte insist they go to the Impossible Spire to confront Dorian. *“We go as diplomats... request an audience with the Accursed King. This is not an assault.”*

The characters might be itching to unleash their powers and make an impact on the battlefield, but they will be whisked away—forcibly if needed—into court. As tempting as it may be to race off to war, the party could best be served by helping Fayte pull her political clout back together. She is, after all, practically the governor of the Shadelands, and she needs the support now more than ever.

If the argument becomes focused on saving the Knight Captain or finishing the mission he gave them, Fayte’s response is *“LaCroix would agree that we should press on, if he were here. We’re already half-way to the Spire, and we’ve lost enough time.”* Or, more bluntly, *“Look around you! Clearly, his plan’s gone to shit! We all have more pressing matters now, LaCroix included.”*

The party reaches the shoreline, climbing over the ridge of jagged black rock. When they step down onto the city street, as if on cue, Amadan, the Patron of Gambled Souls will step out from the shadows. He has no weapon drawn, no arcane energy crackling in their eyes, their hands held out in a peaceful manner.

“Finally! I’ve been stuck waiting here for over a week... My Lord and King, Dorian, Savior of the Shadelands, would like to formally invite you all to a gathering he’s hosting.”

Amadan is featured in the Patron chapter and has many complicated motivations, but ultimately is

loyal to the King. He sees this as a chance to make a gamble with Fayte (and perhaps the party) so he can finally best her—entirely unaware of the full stakes. Use this window as a storyteller to provide a contrary look into Patrons and Warlocks through Amadan by playing up that risks are involved in everything. The Patron of Gambled Souls should provide a sarcastic take on events, often casting the party and the legionnaires in a less than stellar light. No matter what though, Amadan is not hostile, nor even Fayte’s true enemy. Just another Patron who wants to add their two cents in and get in on the action before it’s too late. As such, Amadan entirely wishes to be their herald into the Impossible Spire—and the group doesn’t have much choice in that manner.

The Impossible Spire is guarded by several layers of Prismatic Effects to shield it from the outside battle. Whilst the party might expect the sentries stationed about the Spire to cast wary or even hostile glares toward them, this is not the case. The other Accursed Guards appear surprisingly relieved to see Fayte. For the past several days, the King has demanded the audience of many (even the opposition) for them to hash out what is happening. So much has changed in the short time the party has been gone.

In the stark, vast, stone halls, dozens of leaders are ripping the carcass of the Shadelands political scene apart for their own benefit. When a nation is crumbling, people do not come to save it, but rather conquer it, and here is no different.

When the party enters: Have a bard pause and give each character a personalized announcement into court. Their past deeds, their name, what they’ve done, and where they come from if possible. Play up a little showmanship and do your best to curry favor with the PCs. If the party thanks the Bard or offers to tip him, give the P’s advantage on any rolls to learn information about who-is-who for the rest of the act. Little deeds go a long way here.

Dorian the Accursed King sits on his short throne that flows with the waters from the Obsidian Rush. Nothing in his chambers suggests he is an elaborate or rich man, but a practical warrior who is pious in nature. His long hair is tied neatly with a red bow that fastens midway down his back. The King’s most notable features are his leather gloves and his eyes. Black leather gloves that absorb the light around

them are in stark contrast to his hazel eyes that cut through the room, one of which is blind. Behind those eyes, is a calculating mind that is neither insane nor mad, but rather filled with a cold fury of curiosity. No insight check is needed to understand what the King is thinking: *How do I get out of this mess?*

Fayte and Majin will excuse themselves from the party to go speak to the King, but before leaving, Fayte will implore the characters to figure out who is here and shake hands. Once she talks to Dorian, they'll have a plan.

GM Note

NPCs: The following list contains significant NPCs for the party to influence later in this act. It is highly recommended that there be at least 7-8. In the first act, spend the time to simply introduce them. If you have existing NPCs from another nation or outside forces from past campaigns you wish to use feel free! Quiven Luxx is a crucial presence and Cordelia, Alios, Ulka Resh, Snow, and Mingani Lilt are recommended for use as they represent some of the Shadelands political muscles that the party has interacted with.

You can move right to Part 2: 'Political Chess' and introduce the NPC's as the characters meet them, or give them the information upfront about who-is-who. Save the longer bio for when the players actually converse.

Cordelia

Female Elf, Captain of the Accursed Guard: Cordelia is a fit woman, almost Aasamir in nature, with knee-high plated armor boots and a blue French military coat. The threads of magic are woven into every fiber, and it certainly enhances her beauty. Politically, Cordelia is the right hand of the Accursed King and the General for the Shadelands armies. While they have been losing of late, it is a testament and a marvel to her skill that they've held on for this long against odds that continue to grow against them. She's a quick-witted woman who isn't afraid to swear in court, and even make jovial light of their situation. It may come as a surprise to the party to learn that her Patron is a Satyr Arch-Fey. While Cordelia is loyal to Dorian, she recognizes that his time on the throne is coming to an end. If he abdicates the throne, she is willing to step up and preserve his legacy and hang the traitorous Knight Captain.

Quiven Luxx

Male Elf, Field Marshal of the Legionnaires: The pointed tip of his right ear is missing. His face looks as battle-hardened and weary as is possible for a nigh-immortal elf. He is not clad in full regalia but wears modest navy robes fastened with a golden brooch bearing the Legionnaire Signet. Fayte would be quite stunned to see him here, as he is one of LaCroix's highest-ranking officers. He will come to her and the party to explain himself before them all have a chance to confront him. He states he is here representing the interests of the Legionnaires. If pressed further, he will reveal he considers himself loyal to the Knight Captain's cause, however, he fears LaCroix, the man, has allowed himself to be consumed by personal feelings and rage. Quiven is concerned LaCroix is no longer making the best decisions for the long term well-being of their people. *"I was a Warlock-bastard doing bastard things before LaCroix was even born. But I left that life and followed him because I believed in him. I believed in his cause... I still do. But the fact is, I will be here, the Shadelands will be here, long after his short human life is spent. Someone has to ensure the safety of the people."*

Alios

Cleric of Mask, Guild Leader of Patron's Pass: The party will recognize Alios from their earlier adventures, and it is no surprise that the cunning cleric of thieves is having a field day here. Since the party last saw him, Alios has had his guild assassinate or taken over anyone with a passing interest in Patron's Pass. That bridge (even on both sides and in some of the other nations' armies) is entirely his—along with the entire rogue's and assassin's guild. His motive for being here is simple curiosity and a desire to keep other religions out of the Shadelands... but he's open to negotiations on that. Alios knows he has territory, guild, and information for sale, so he's here to barter and broker to the right bidder. Not the highest. As Cleric of Mask, Alios doesn't care who has the most coin (he'll steal it from them if he really wants), but rather, who can make the world a more colorful and interesting place. Who will tip the scales of balance and put the beggar as the king? At the start of this adventure, Alios has chosen no side. He may have a sarcastic comment or two for the party, seeing as their last interaction ended with him expressing his desire for this matter to be handled with a degree of secrecy. He waves vaguely toward the battered and bruised city below and quips. *"So, that's your idea of stealth, is it?"*

Ulka Resh

Male Orc, Guild Leader of the Black Span: Resh still has his gnarled wooden staff with him to help get around, and a handkerchief stuffed in his dark trouser pocket,

just peeking out. His dark blue clothing makes this warlock's scarred ancient grey skin seem slightly paler, or perhaps more silver. He has softened his hard-line stance as a supporter of the King but is still loyal. Currently, this orc is eyeing up support for Cordelia or even another martial nation to help restore some balance here. His larger concern is that of the Patrons themselves and the arcane energies swirling around the Shadelands. Resh is a member of the court who sense that something is different in Fayte and Majin, and is worried about what happens when kingdoms of wizard's war. Often all that is left is a desert, and he's seen that once before. Resh has no interest in being King but desires a strong ruler who is willing to bring martial law, even if it is the Knight Captain. Much of his demeanor toward the party will be determined by how their last interaction went.

GM Note

If things went so bad that it involved combat and the possible death of Resh, his successor would be present... and perhaps eager to thank those who cleared the path for him/her to rise to power

Snow

Female Wood Elf Ranger, Guild Leader of Stone's Leg: Her dark complexion and near ivory-black hair helps her sharp, frosty blue eyes to be accentuated whilst a smirk nags at the corner of her mouth. She dons the white cloak that is standard to her rangers, the white shirt, leather trousers, and brown boots are nearly hidden underneath. Unlike the other two guild leaders, Snow has a little more ambition. As the center of commerce, culture, and life that gives Yon'Cath the vibrant culture that it's known for—Snow wants to be queen. The way she sees it, the Shadelands should not be ruled by a single party, but rather several parties in council to represent the diverse world they live in. She'll admit that could lead to a bogged down council that does nothing but argue, but it is better than everyone relying upon one person to balance the whims of all the Patrons. Snow has been hard at work building support with other nations and offered up many trade deals already. At the start of this act, Snow has her own ambitions but will support the Knight Captain.

Mingani Lilt

Female Gnome, Leader of the Assassins Guild: A short but slim woman with a bronzed complexion, a red-tinted nose, and a scar running from the left-top of her neck almost to the left corner of her lips. Her dirty blonde hair covers the collar of her dark red tunic, the sleeves tucked into leather gloves and brown pants into black leather boots. She was one of the last people to see the party before they supposedly disappeared. She speaks closely to Alios for a moment with the utmost respect and, the Players may find out that he is the head honcho of the Guild she leads, she just handles tasks when he can't call the shots. All this turmoil seems to be thoroughly amusing to her. She may very well be the warmest and welcoming to the party. She's tickled to see them alive and presents comments as such, "I would've bet me whole purse that you all was dead."

Torrad Lightmaker

Male Kaldenkind, Representative for the Rustic Bloods, the loose collection of rural communities. A six-and-a-half-foot tall, humanoid, bear with white fur that carries a slight blue tint. He wears dark green harem pants which are tucked into brown boots with fur lining the top, and a small jacket that covers just his shoulders and the upper half of his back, the edges lined with thick fur. Whilst a Warlock himself, he represents the smaller settlements from the outer tundra's, the forests, the mountains. These are places that have successfully achieved relative peace and balance with the Shadelands. They are not big fans of Yon'Cath in general and are especially upset with the current chaotic state of affairs. The leaders of Yon'Cath are too greedy and power-hungry in their eyes. "The peace and balance that we who are living outside of Yon'Cath have managed to cultivate... We don't want our homes, our lives, destroyed."

Milicent Canterfeld

Female Human, Bursar for the Scarlet Hearth: She wears the red robes of a temple fanatic, but her face screams "Accountant". Her hair is pulled back so tight it looks like it's straining to stay in place. She's wearing thick, round glasses and carrying a hefty ledger and, yet again, here is someone surprisingly pleased to see the party. After assaulting, commandeering, and then shuttering her temple, anyone would think she'd hate the party, but she fawns over Fayte. Even drops hints that she might want Fayte to take a ruling position over the Shadelands. "Oh yes yes yes... that little misunderstanding. It's all Rush under the Bridge, if you will. No sense getting all worked up over a little spilled blood. We've more important matters to discuss."

Master Ridgewell Becket

Male Ghost, Librarian: The Party and Ridgewell would be surprised to see each other. He's just happy to be floating out and about and not all cooped up in the library.

Iorfaan Shimbaac

Male Dragonborn Barbarian, Leader of the Brute's Guild in Yonder: A hulking mass of brass-colored scales. Iorfaan and his loosely organized army of muscle-for-hire thugs don't care who "wins" this conflict, as long as there are fights to be had and his people are getting paid to have them.

Vywin L'Aanise

Female Elf, Vice Admiral of the Iceborne Imperium: Her skin is so pale it is almost blue, only amplified by the dark blue and white mottled cloak with a silver trim, which shelters a pale iron breastplate. Her nation borders the Shadelands to the northwest. They appreciate order, despise chaos. Yon'Cath in general and this current conflict in particular, are a source of frustration for them. The chaos of the Shadelands often bleeds into their territory. The white dragons prowling the skies above are under her command. Vywin will be looking to support whoever she feels offers the best chance of bringing lasting peace to this realm.

Khouryn Brickfoot

Female Dwarf, Proprietor of the Cracked Pact: She peers over opaque black spectacles, forever chewing on an unlit cigar, a smug grin permanently fixed to her face. Her grey shirt is untied at the top and half-tucked into brown pants, which cover the leather straps of her closed-toe brown sandals. She and Majin are not fans of each other. They find her practice of breaking and swapping Patron deals utterly offensive.

Mazokai the Just

Male Aasimar, High General of the Radiant Brigade: Clad in full plate, gleaming silver and gold, it is painfully obvious that this man is Paladin. The Radiant Brigade is a radically religious militant faction. They come from a place far to the south but have long viewed the Shadelands as an unseemly bruise on the world's face. When news of turmoil began to trickle out into the neighboring lands, he saw an opportunity to 'cleanse' the Shadelands and led his army north. He is exactly what one might expect from a hardline Lawful Good crusader. He is much more likely to align with LaCroix and will almost certainly stand against whatever plan Dorian enacts simply on principle.

Borla

(Only present if the party did NOT complete the Lifeblood sidequest)

An Autumn Glau, Leader of the Stonemason's Guild. A short and stocky man with copper-colored skin, bright orange eyes, and blood-colored hair. He's clad in fine, expensive-looking clothes of white and forest green, and a dark, hooded robe, though he rarely pulls the hood up. He wears the symbol of Ammitia, his Warlock Patron, around his neck. He seems distraught and distant when spoken to - a result of having recently discovered that his sister, who was his right-hand in the Guild, was found dead under mysterious circumstances. This has caused him both emotional trauma and business problems, as she ran the quarry beneath the Cindered House, from which all of his stone is carved and collected. He clearly doesn't want to be here right now. He's got many clients who are in need of stonework and repairs thanks to the massive war that's been raging in Yon'Cath, and his time is as valuable as it is limited.

Moadne

(Only present if the party DID complete the Lifeblood sidequest, killing Borla)

A Spring Glau, Leader of the Stonemason's Guild. Tall for a Glau, her dark brown skin contrasts starkly against her pale pink hair and viridian eyes. Despite being the leader of a Guild through which vast quantities of money passes, her clothes are that of a craftsman, or a laborer: a recently-washed shirt and pants, a black apron with more pockets than one could ever imagine having a use for. Moadne seems stressed, and if the party speaks to her, she will recognize them from the Cindered House. She'll be apologetic for her brother, and appreciative of the party for effectively saving her life. She will align herself to the party by default.

Xael

(From 'Under The Bleeding Moon' sidequest)

Xael is a noble Wizard who oversees rare earth materials for material components. Owning a vast interplanar mining operation makes his family a powerful figure. Particularly with his tenuous alliance in the Blackmourn family. If the party passed on his call for aid, then Xael will vote against them. Unable to be swayed by magical effects due to Rei'zel's blood. Conversely, if he is now an Undying Warlock, then Xael can help them navigate these political waters. If Rei'zel is still alive, she and her sister can appear by his side here and remain neutral.

Once the introductions have been made, it's time for the political wheeling and dealing to begin:



PART 2 - POLITICAL CHESS

Even though the court might be filled with thirty-to-forty more nobles—these are the key characters that influence whatever outcome the Players of this Opera are working toward (refer to the three scenarios in Chapter 6, page 209). Fayte and Majin will return from the King, revealing to the Players he is not as mad as he seems, but they aren't convinced just yet. This entire meeting is a chance for them to solidify the future of the Shadelands under a banner, and even if Fayte hasn't made up her mind yet, now is the time.

Splitting up, Fayte and Majin will go speak to the peanut gallery and some in other nations, and the party is tasked with recruiting everyone to Fayte's side... or as many as possible. If the party pays attention to Majin and Fayte, it is easily discovered that Fayte is met with profound curiosity. Majin however, is met with polite deferral. Fayte represents opportunity and new doors being opened, while Majin represents raw power. Power is something that everyone desires but is apprehensive about asking for.

GM Note

Group Dice Rolls: We feature group dice rolls in this encounter. Rather than have one Player at the party roll at the table, we demand that all 4, 5, or even 10 (if you're crazy) of the Players you have roll. Against your set DC, you simply ask, "Who beat a 15?" and tally it up. If more than 50% of the table makes it... then the party beats the threshold. It's a fast and easy way for everyone to be involved. Each party member is doing something different during the roll, and you can recap the results with quick narration. One member might be watching for subtle signs of lying, while another might be scouting the room for allies, and a third may be doing the talking, while the fourth is fact-checking that noble's credentials. Meanwhile, on the NPCs side, they have their group of people doing the same (although they only roll one dice, because the GM doesn't need more work).

The encounter works as such: There are multiple characters to recruit with different political alignments. Together or separately, the party must convince them to join their side and lend actual support to Fayte. However, they are not alone. Others are also seeking power and will try to convince the same characters to join their camps. Everyone is used to

sweet honeyed words and empty platitudes, so it truly comes down to how well things can be sold.

Political Combat should take ten-rounds at most, and each round is about a half-hour of conversation, wining, and dining.

Each round, the party can make an opposed Wisdom (Insight) Check, opposed Charisma (Deception) check, or an opposed 'Social' roll (be it Persuasion or Intimidation, etc.). If more than half of the party beat the opposed check, then that NPC tips to their camp regardless of who they are. If the majority of the party failed, the NPC will remain unconvinced and the party may try again in a future round.

Courtesan speed-dating as it were.

Meanwhile, secretly, roll 2 dice (one for the Knight Captain and one for the King) and note down the results to see which of the three camps that NPC chooses to support. If the Knight Captain or King roll a higher number than anyone at the table did, then their 'team' converts that NPC.

To sum it up: Each round the party talks to an NPC, while other NPCs talk to each other. Even if the party recruits someone in one round, they could lose that person's support in subsequent rounds. With seven parties to convince and ten rounds, they have some wiggle room—but not much. The Players attempting to use magic will find it ill-advised in the court setting and automatically fail that round, and lose permanent support from that NPC no matter what.

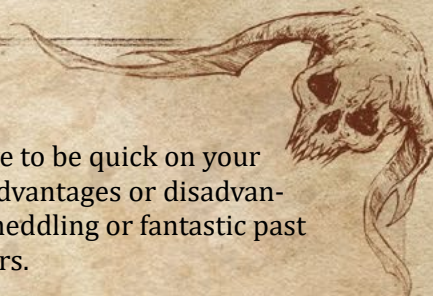
The party may attempt to thrust the group Bard forward and have them make all social rolls for the entire group, and this is indeed their time to shine. If they are hitting exceptional social rolls, feel free to roleplay the NPCs really getting along with that person... and even suggesting that they should be king. "You don't need those friends of yours to rule with you, in fact, let's just isolate them off to the side and put you as king above all." If you make the party fear their friend doing too well, they should be more inclined to get involved.

When the party finishes their tenth round, the King will stand and reveal that mortals aren't the only ones with a voice in the Shadelands, and Act 2 will begin. To wrap up Act 1, tally up the score between: The Knight Captain, the Accursed King, and Fayte. It is entirely possible the party fails

here, and all support goes to a different faction. If anyone critically fails during their roll, interrupt court and let that scene play out.

Lastly, while there is a dice mechanic to determine where the mortals fall, the Players may attempt other cunning ideas to recruit them (or even eliminate

the competition). You'll have to be quick on your feet, but feel free to grant advantages or disadvantages to rolls based on PC meddling or fantastic past relationships with characters.



ACT 2

The Accursed King rises over the room and lets it be known that all mere mortals are not the only ones who get to determine the fate of the Shadelands. The Patrons must also have a voice at this court. As fragments of light from the Aurora, seeping in through every window, avatars of the Patrons flow through. Use the same Patrons found in the Scarlet Hearth, or any other relevant ones the party has encountered.

To change each Patron's mind or recruit them to Fayte's side, use the same mechanic as above and roleplay with the Patrons. However: Each Patron has a large goal they wish to achieve in the unforeseeable future. Ranging from planting seeds for an entire forest to harvesting souls from Purgatory. In order to pull a Patron's support over to their side, the party must achieve the same rolls over ten rounds, but also play matchmaker with a Patron to one of the other NPCs who can perform the deed.

The Players may feel as if they are scurrying around the court trying to get things done at a breakneck speed. Running around between Patrons, nobles, guild leaders, and soldiers, the party has found themselves stuck in a social dance. This is a good feeling for the encounter and should be encouraged. Feel free to slice in bits of comedy between serious moments, perhaps Alios demands that he'll lead a raid team into Purgatory for souls in exchange for exactly

three-hundred-and-twenty-six grapes plucked from the King's garden by midnight. One Player will have to race to fetch said grapes. If this has been a low-tier campaign, it might feel right in line with what the party expects. Yet if this has been run as a high-tier campaign, sending the level twenty Wizard on a grape-fetching spree is going to get a few chuckles.

Below are a list of Patrons and what task they wish to have achieved. When Act 2 is concluded after ten rounds of social jousting, the Players earn 1 vote for every mortal they've recruited and 2 votes for every Patron on their side. The Players can get a Patron matched with a mortal that isn't on their side, and that Patron will still lend their support—and steal the mortal as well. That would be 3 points. Let the Player's scheme and mastermind all the clever ways to game this system and enjoy themselves. They are playing Kingmaker after all.

Once midnight strikes, the factions will all coalesce around their chosen representatives: The Knight Captain's representative, the Accursed King, and Fayte. The faction with the most votes will start earning legs up on the battle ahead, although no faction is wiped out entirely. If Fayte ends up with zero support, the next mission will continue with her (and the party) serving as traitors to the King and forced into service.

THE PATRONS

Archfey

One of the Fey creatures of the DM's choosing from around the feast table in the Scarlet Hearth. They don't much care what happens to Yon'Cath, but are more concerned with the wellbeing of the forests and wildlife of the Shadelands. This Patron and Tauthog 'Lightmaker' are natural allies and enlisting one will go a long way toward getting the other on their side.

Fiend

The same chalk-white Tiefling with hollow black eyes from before. Her demeanor toward the party will be cold indifference, only interested in furthering her own ambitions. This will be the same no matter what (if any) interactions transpired between them in Chapter 2. Even if they struck a deal with her back in the Hearth, she won't care. *"But what have you done for me lately?"* Her wants are the same. She wants power. She wants souls.

Hexblade

Leth'ka the Guardian is present. If the party duelled with her, she may have a quip about how she hopes they've learned how to fight in the time they've been away. Or if the party never entered her chamber in the Hearth, she will size them up as she's always looking for a new challenge. The Hexblade Patron's goals remain the same: a desire for greater and greater challenges, for legendary combat achievements, metaphorical feathers in the cap.

Old Ones

Ahk Noh Ra will be represented by a figure completely covered in a large cloak. Getting up close, the party will see a Yuan-Ti Pureblood woman with an eye tattooed on her forehead. She and Ahk Noh Ra want the establishment of Yon'Cath overthrown. They want to build a new order. If the party freed him, she will be grateful and more open to making a

deal. If the party did not free him, that will likely be a stipulation of gaining her support. She will require the party to free him when they reenter the Hearth.

Lurker in the Deep

The Great Fish is represented by a Water Genasi Male, dressed like a cross between a warlock and a pirate. He is older and quite grizzled in appearance. Like most of the others, he is very open to allying if a party member has a pact with his Patron. If not, he is still relatively warm and jovial, and simply looking for whatever opportunity is in the best interests for his Patron.

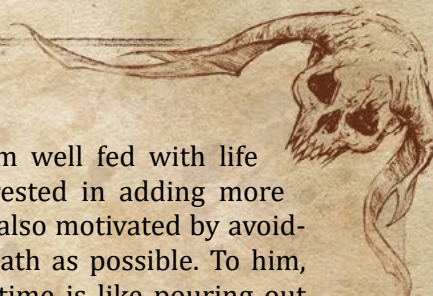
Undying

The Green Dragonborn is there. However, his robes are resplendent and clean. He looks much younger and healthier than he did in the Hearth. The turmoil

of recent days has left him well fed with life essence. He's always interested in adding more "time" to his coffers but is also motivated by avoiding as much premature death as possible. To him, people dying before their time is like pouring out fresh water in the desert. *"What a tragic waste..."*

Genie

Amadan will offer his services to Fayte if she can best him in a gamble of the party's choosing. However, he will stress that sometimes Warlocks need to learn lessons the hard way, and the constant breaking of pacts is something that needs to be eliminated. The gamble can be anything from dice to a political game. Or even which of the two Blackmourn sisters Xael will be stuck dancing with.



ACT 3

The third Act should serve as a chance for the party to regroup after the social interactions at court, take stock of their allies and knowledge, and come up with a plan that will utilize as much of their resources as possible to achieve their collective goal.

At the end of the Accursed King's court, Dorian will rise and proclaim, *"Heroes are what's needed now, and I understand there are some true Heroes in our midst."*

He makes a point of staring at the Players. All gathered will follow his gaze, until the entire court is staring. Dorian continues, *"We began this journey at odds with each other. But I hope now you can see, all I want is what's best for this land. I want peace. I want order. But as long as the Scarlet Hearth is closed off to us, chaos will rain down until nothing is left but rubble and corpses. At first light, every Warlock I have left will march on the Hearth. We will take the temple from that wretched heathen, LaCroix."* Fayte gives the King a withering look, but Dorian hardly withers. It is clear they have much more to discuss.

"Then we will perform a grand ritual of appeasement. Begging the Great Patrons to save the Shadelands. Who better to lead this charge than the mighty Heroes who tamed the Well of Souls?"

Dorian's supporters give a cheer.

"I am not so blind that I expect you to suddenly become my dearest friends. In fact, I wouldn't be surprised if you downright hated me. But we are ALL doomed if we don't retake the Hearth. A collaborative effort is our best chance to save the Shadelands. Everyone here is my guest for the night, regardless of your intentions on the morrow. But come dawn, I will be taking control of the Scarlet Hearth. I advise you to either help me or get out of my way."

The court ends. The Players will be guided to a suite of lavish rooms within the Impossible Spire to rest and recoup for the evening. It is here where they will need to discuss everything they know, lay all their cards on the table. The most important matter to settle: Do they side with the Accursed King to crush the Knight Captain's rebellion for good and reinstate Dorian as the city's keeper? Do they honor their comrade LaCroix and tell him that - now having seen the Well remade from within - they can end the invasions of aberrations once and for all? Or do they

side with Majin (assuming they've figured out his secret by now) to throw everyone and everything - Patrons, kings, heroes, and villains - onto the fire and forge a new world of complete control? And whatever they're choosing, how will they achieve that goal with so many watching? As the GM, this is your time to guide the Players to write out a detailed plan of where they plan to move, who they intend to visit, what they intend to do and say once they arrive. Remind them that the King promised them a fighting force at their command.

Once the plan is in place, the Players finally sink into a restless sleep. This is the time when any pacts they've forged come back to haunt them. Their Patrons want what's theirs. Now is the time to earn back whatever powers and gifts have been given. As the DM, now that you know their plans, do what you can to ensure the Patrons' demands throw a wrench into them whenever possible.



WEAVING THREADS



SOCIAL

Easily the mainstay of this encounter, social encounters can be a challenge to run due to so many names and personalities whizzing by. A whiteboard or a piece of paper showcasing which NPC is loyal to whom during the court can make things easier for you to run. Especially as loyalties start shifting around. Giving each NPC a dedicated and a bit over the top mood will help set them apart from each other to the Players.

Sidequest Potential: To add lethality to this encounter, either have the party become assassins to rid others out of court via poison. Sleight of Hand checks would be required in addition to the other mechanics. On the

flip side, someone else could be a poisoner, and the party might find themselves in a game of clue trying to figure out which NPC is the killer.



COMBAT

Epic combat and cool dragon fights are teased and happening right outside of the adventuring party that is stuck in court. You can either play this up as torture or as a relief for the party. Either way, no physical combat is scheduled as part of this act. Social is another matter entirely.

Sidequest Potential: Duels are a valid way to incorporate physical combat in this adventure. Should the party try magic or other assassination tricks, they might find themselves in a one-on-one duel versus a high ranking member of the Accursed Guard or the Legionnaire's of the Fallen. If you wish to explore this opportunity, showcase a few other duels between NPCs to settle a debt or curry favor. Winning a duel might grant the party advantage on the social rolls to recruit someone.



EXPLORATION

Court settings in a static location make traditional exploration very difficult. Instead, bring a variety of the world to the Players. Have nobles wearing strange fashion from different cultures, or people speaking in languages unknown to the party. There is a larger world than just the Shadelands, and only you know what that world is. Don't shy away from thrusting in other nations you feel would meddle in the Shadelands into this scene.

Sidequest Potential: Carving up territory via maps is a time-honored tradition among conquerors. When trying to get the favor of either mortals or Patrons, the party could encounter one from an other country... that is interested in conquest. Seeing a map of the world and carving up an unfamiliar nation falls under exploration—and maybe someday they'll get to visit.







Side Quest

THE PERFORMANCE IN TATTERS

INTRODUCTION

As the party comes to a close, a strange invitation is delivered that, when brought to the Accursed King, creates panic amongst guests and patrons alike. A powerful Patron known as The Stranger in Tatters is coming to perform a play of Eldritch truth that will devastate all of those present, and they are coming tonight. The party must become actors or all will be subject to his dark power.

Designed as a terrifying roleplaying session with horrific eldritch combat, the PCs will have to create a play to perform for this Stranger, then will have to fight for control over their sanity as they delve into his horrific dimension.

SYNOPSIS

In Act 1, the players will encounter a strange man in tatters walking away from Yalek's Reach, a cart in tow bearing a peculiar symbol. Upon adventuring into the town, they will discover it wracked by madness with two local alchemists who have gone crazy turning people into statues.

Act 2 takes place just before the end of Act 7 in the main story of The Red Opera, where The Accursed King receives a letter that The Stranger in Tatters is coming to his Court. Even the Patrons panic at these words. The

players are forced into a position where they must perform a show for this Strange in Tatters to prevent his performance of madness from taking place.

In Act 3, the Great Old One, The Tattered Stranger arrives, and Eldritch anomalies accompany him. The players put on their play and afterward, are offered a position in his troupe. Should they decline, they are thrust into an eldritch landscape to battle for their sanity against the Stranger in Tatters himself. Should they accept, their minds are forfeit to the Eldritch Truth.

ACT 1 – THE STRANGER'S WAKE

This Act can take place any time before Chapter 7: Theme of the Betrayer begins. Although best used after Chapter 1: Welcome to the Shadelands where the players will meet Goken when they further explore south.

The Cry for Help

The players will encounter Goken, a round, jovial dwarf who will ask the players to visit his brother, Zan, in the nearby town of Yalek's Reach. He will tell the players his brother is a renowned Alchemist and has requested the reagents that Goken has gathered. In exchange for helping him, the players will receive $\frac{1}{4}$ of the reagents that, he assures, his brother will turn into three exceptional potions of Eldritch Enhancement (which will double the damage of Eldritch blast for 1 minute). Goken is honest with the players, and they can bargain with him with a successful DC 16 Persuasion check to get half the

reagents. If the players inquire further, they will find out Goken is an Archfey Warlock, and his brother, Zan, is an alchemist who specializes in creating 'impossible' creations despite never making a pact himself. Regardless, Goken will give the players a map to Yalek's Reach.

The Stranger

The road to Yalek's Reach is quite simple with the directions from Goken; however, there are strange anomalies in the distance, almost like an aurora borealis but it is colored yellow and brown about 25km away. A successful Arcana check of DC 20 will reveal that the strange lights and physical manifestations of magic are from a spell, cast no more than half a day ago. If the players check their map, they will note the town is right under the strange lights.

Shortly after noticing, they will be greeted on the road by a peculiar sight. Coming up the way is a circus cart, painted vibrant yellow, with a brown symbol upon the sides and front. The carriage moves with nothing drawing it and almost hovers off the ground whilst being led by a figure. They stand at around 6'2, wearing yellow and brown robes, with their hood pulled up, and a plain white pallid mask with no expression hiding their face. They amble with a slight hunch and carries a large walking stick.

Unbeknownst to the players, this figure is the Great Old One Patron, the Strange in Tatters, and he has just performed his eldritch play in the town of Yalek's Reach.

GM Note

When roleplaying The Stranger in Tatters, speak with a monotone voice but gesture as if you are center stage in a play, acting as a mime of sorts. He is eloquent in speech and very formal. If a player passes an insight check of DC 22, they will note a faint sinister tone behind his voice.

He will stop upon seeing the players, *"My dear travelers, dost though seek the town of Yalek's Reach perhaps?"*

Regardless of the player's answer, he will express disappointment either because they do not want to see his play, or that they have missed it. Have him state something along the lines of, *"My most humble apologies, but the performance has been concluded."* He will be genuinely sad that they have missed his show.

The Stranger will question the players on their motivations, and ask what they seek in life. He will tell them he has ways of making their time easier, dreams to unfold around the stage that is existence, and other cryptic statements that involve stage metaphors. In turn, he will tell them that he is just a stranger trying to perform for those who will watch and that he has recently concluded his most recent performance, but it will take some time to put on another one. If they push, he plans to perform for the Accursed King at a gala of his one day soon.

If the players were respectful to the individual, told the truth, and/or expressed interest in the show, he will offer them a medallion (a stone pendant

about palm-sized) brandishing his mark. This Medallion will have intense magical energies and will always return to the party if thrown away. If the players are rude or unkind, the Stranger will tell them that he wishes to change their wills and leave a medallion on the ground, ending up in a PC's pocket. If the players attack him, he will summon a grand cloud of yellow smoke and vanish, with the words *"I will remember you,"* with a Medallion appearing around the neck of the player who attacked him.

A Town of Madness

Upon arriving in the town of Yalek's Reach, they will see a horrific sight. Townsfolk screaming and running, others curled up in different positions and violence in the street. If the players investigate, they will see a yellow glaze in the eyes of every townsfolk; they have all gone insane. Take your time to explain the chaos of this scene, really let your players experience the horror that is this location. You may choose to have townsfolk attack them if you wish, but most of the banter should involve the lines *"I have seen it! I now understand,"* followed by their raucous insane laughter.

If the players want to find anyone who looks sane, have them attempt a DC 20 investigation check, where they will find one man who has been casting protective spells on himself. If they try to question this man, they will discover his name is Jakkis, and all of this was because of "that damned play." Jakkis is unhinged and will reveal he arrived late to a strange performance in the town square. He will describe the Stranger from before and how this play made everyone mad, everyone. It was a show he could not explain, but he will mention that he saw himself on stage briefly. He warns the PCs to run, and that he will also do so.

The Alchemist

If the players search for Zan's house or ask Jakkis to tell them, they will discover a cottage on the other side of town. Upon entering the estate, they will notice all sorts of alchemical ingredients that have spilled over; you may choose if any potions are salvageable by the party. The house is in disarray, and a maniacal laugh followed by screams are coming from the upstairs room.

Upstairs, they will discover Zan, whose grey bread and wild eyes show his current mental state, strapping a Dragonborn Warlock, wearing the robes of the Accursed Guard, to a table and is about to inject them with a strange liquid. Around him in this makeshift laboratory are 8 (4 if middle tier, 1 if low tier)

statues that are perfect recreations of people of various races. Zan has been turning people into statues. A DC 15 stealth check is required to stay hidden. If the players do nothing, Zan will inject the woman with the serum forcing a slow and painful transformation into a statue.

If Zan sees the players, he will exclaim, *"I have seen it! I now understand! The formula works! Come, witness it! Be the new stage of evolution!"* With that, he will attack, causing the statues to come to life around him and follow his commands.

Once Zan is defeated and interrogated, he will reveal he saw "The Performance in Tatters" and understood what was needed. That this stone chemical is the next stage of evolution and other crackpot statements. He does not know a way to reverse this effect either, but he wouldn't want to anyway given his current state.

Assuming the Dragonborn is safe or a remove curse spell is used on the other non-shattered statues, it will reveal they are also quite mad. This moment should exist to unnerve your players at the horrors

of this performance, do not let them have a moment of calm while in this town.

The players will decide the fate of the town, and they may choose whatever outcome they wish. This insanity cannot be cured, not without immense help. For instance, the players may try to quarantine the area, find a powerful Warlock to undo the madness, or use their wish later in the adventure to cure this town. Be creative in the solution, and do not make it as simple as a remove curse spell. It should be almost impossible to remove this affliction, leaving them with a hard decision about what to do with the victims of this horror.

If the players return to Goken and tell him of his brother's fate, he will not believe them, but if convinced, he will break down. He will offer the players a worldly good of his for giving him the information, and ask them to do anything to stop this from happening again. He provides them the Eldritch Enchantment potions for completing this task.

ACT 2- THE TATTERED MESSAGE

This Act should take place immediately after Dorian's speech but, before the players retire to their rooms in Chapter 7: Theme of the Betrayer.

The Messenger

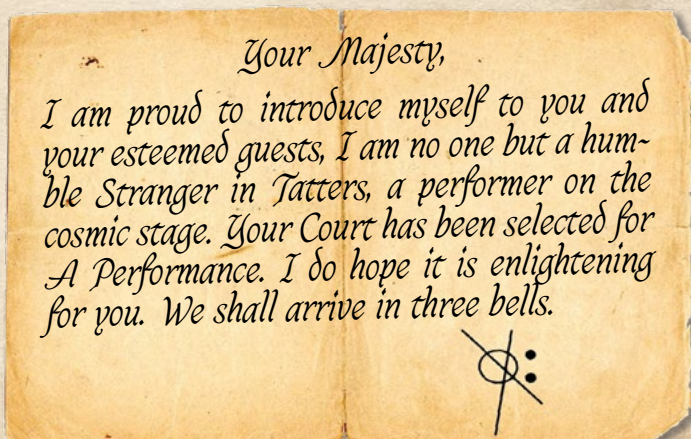
Dorian is about to close Court when the doors of his estate fly open with a thud. Standing behind the open door is an individual in yellow rags bowing his head low, holding a letter sealed with ink. One of Dorian's guards inquisitively approaches the individual who entered, who bends lower, handing the letter over, then departing. Dorian opens the letter and begins to read, his mood dropping the further he gets, and the patrons in the room watch him closely.

As he reads, the letter murmurs will start throughout the Court, and the Medallion the players have will begin to glow. All of the Patrons know the Stranger in Tatters, and many fear this old one.

Dorian will thoughtfully look at the crowd, *"We have a performance coming tonight, a Performance in Tatters. We are..."* he will notice the glowing in the shape of the Stranger's sign coming from the players, and his gaze fixates on the group, *"come with me,"* he will command to them.

As Dorian leads the players across the room, every patron in the place puts up defensive spells and channeling magic, all except for Ank Noh Ra's advocate, who seems indifferent. Dorian makes his way to refill his chalice from the Obsidian Rush, although he appears quite eloquent in this action, he is rather tense. He will question the players as to why they bear the Mark of this Old One. Whatever answer they give will not make him happy, insinuating they might have led his energy here. *"The play is one of madness put on by another Patron; he is quite powerful and can unbalance this world. We must find a solution."*

This will be odd for players to hear. If they inquire why he is so nervous about this Stranger, and why he



has not considered pacting with it, Dorian does fear becoming insane. He is not insane as some would think, these Old Ones are part of the reason he wants to regulate the Shadelands, as their power is near unobtainable and drives souls to insanity. Some patrons should not be welcome in his new world.

Just as he finishes speaking, An Koh Ra will enter the room. *"I know of him,"* the pureblood woman would say. If the players are on good terms with her, she will give the information freely; if not, she will demand a favor in return for it. If the PCs refuse, Dorian will offer her a boon out of panic.

She will explain that the Stranger in Tatters is a powerful Old One who spreads his influence through performances. Although he has a stipulation, he will not put on his show if others offer to entertain him. A play must be performed, by mortals. She will add if the party has been on good terms with her, *"although afterward, he will demand you become a member of his troupe, and you must fight for your sanity inside his realm."*

Dorian and the players will have a discussion, and he will tell them for the occupation of the Scarlet Hearth they are to be charged with this performance. They must put on a play for this eldritch horror.

When you can, encourage your players to talk about ideas for the performance, it can be a past adventure they had or even just the story of their lives up until now. Let them plan a show and take notes on what they need. Dorian gives them access to a variety of props, let them have fun with this one. They will need to perform it when the Stranger arrives.

Preparations

If the players question the other patrons about this Stranger they will give the following information and grant a boon if they have them as an ally.

Archfey – A brilliant performer capable of opening the mind but usually breaking it in the process. The fae will offer one player an advantage in resisting confusion for the duration of the Act.

Fiend – A dealer in souls capable of terrible power. Even the other fiends stay wary of these performances. They consider the Stranger "worse than us". He will offer one player a single-use attack of adding 2d10 fire damage.

Hexblade – She has heard stories of the strange dream plane this creature inhabits; when a performance is on, the mind must be fought. If players are on good terms with her, they will mention that there

are stories of people fighting themselves, and it is essential to destroy any effigy. She offers one player advantage to resist confusion for the duration of this Act.

Old One – The Yuan-ti pureblood speaks of not being too hasty. When this is all over, the Stranger can grant knowledge for free if entertained. Fighting him is a fool's errand. She will tell the players if they enter his realm to be ready to be insightful to the world around them.

Lurker in the Deep – He will be impressed by The Stranger's power and ability to command those around him. He warns the players not to have him perform, or else everyone present will suffer and die. He will bless the players for the duration of their play.

Undying – They are fully aware that the Stranger is a problem and has destroyed countless towns by inflicting madness upon the people. Staying grounded is key. He will offer the players one use of Revivify.

Once the players finish their preparations, an ominous humming starts from outside of the Court; the room will go silent as the great doors open, revealing the Stranger in Tatters ambling inside, his cart in tow.

Describe how the room itself begins to shift with Eldritch energies, how, when they stare at the Stranger, a mass of tentacles appears where his legs should be, how around his neck he wears a medallion bearing his symbol, but when they look away, he is back to normal. Dorian will warn the players not to attack him, and that it is probably unwise to accept deals from him.

GM Note

Your players may attack the Stranger, though this is a bad idea. If the Stranger is attacked, he will disappear in a puff of smoke, leaving his Sign in the air. This will earn them the ire of those in the room, and most, if not all, alliances made will break as no one wants to align with a group so frivolous. In Act 10, when the Great Old One's attack, the Stranger's Sign will be in the air. This double all damage from their attacks towards the party (and anyone in the Court) as they have all earned the ire of The Stranger in Tatters.

The Curtain Rises

Have Dorian welcome the newcomer, "Greetings Stranger," he says with a bow, "*We are so humbled by your invitation for a performance, that we wanted to do you kindness for all that you do in the Shadelands. We shall perform for you, please sit down, and enjoy (the name of the show the players chose).*"

"Proceed," the Stranger says. As he makes his way to the center of the room, he places his Medallion on the ground, and a miraculous brown and yellow stage manifests in the center of the Court. It is time for the party to perform their play.

Allow the players to act out their performance, and you should take notes as to what they use in their show. Do not throw this moment away; make sure you give the audience reactions, and describe how the Stranger watches and claps when appropriate. Call for checks when needed, performance checks for performing, acrobatics for great feats, nature for describing the harsh wilderness they trekked through, etc. Depending on how well they do the Stranger will comment based upon how they did.

GM Note

As a rule of thumb if you give them 10 skill checks, if they succeed 8 they get amazing, 6 they get Good, 4 they get satisfactory, 3 and below they get poor; you may always give them extra victories for creativity and putting on a good show and you should take away 2 points if they attacked him on the road.

If Amazing: The Stranger comments on how exemplary the show was, and that it would be his honor to have the players join his troupe. He will insist they see the enlightened way. Additionally, they will have Advantage on all Insight rolls for Act 3.

If Good: The Stranger comments the show was well done, he will offer them great truths to join his Eldritch Troupe.

If Satisfactory: The Stranger claps respectfully then comments the show was Satisfactory and demands they be taught the way of the stage properly by becoming stagehands in his show.

If Poor: The Stranger is insulted by such a mockery of the stage. He rises and declares he is going to show what a TRUE performance is. He immediately jumps the players into part 2 of this Act, but they have Disadvantage on all Insight rolls while inside, they also start the conflict at half their total hit points.

If the players accept the offer of the Stranger in Tatters, they are instantly given the patron powers equal to their level of the Artist Warlock, but, their minds have taken a toll; they suffer Disadvantage on wisdom checks and have their minds 'enlightened'. Come up with something your player now desires deeper than anything to an obsessive state. The GM has the right to compel the actions of the player when necessary.

If the players decline his offer to become one of his troupe, then the Stranger's energy will be unleashed, and the players' minds will instantly teleport to his Eldritch dimension.

ACT 3: TATTERED REALITY

The world changes and sputters, and soon the players find themselves in a new world, with no sky and no ground. They float over a void where the colors of yellow and brown weave in and out with constant shimmering change. Various landmasses float above the infinite void, in the center of this void is The Stranger in Tatters himself, now looking more like his true Eldritch self than ever. Gone are his robes and in its place, a creature of yellow light, masses of tendrils and disconnected arms, but still the Pallid mask sits upon his face, but with yellow light shining behind it.

In the skies and landmasses are other creatures of nightmarish energy. At this point, have the players do a perception check. With a DC 15, they will notice humanoid figures on each on (equal to the player number) platforms, with a DC 25 they will notice that these individuals look exactly like them.

On several platforms equal to the player number, the Stranger has created puppet dummies of them that are currently inactive. When a player steps on the platform containing a puppet, it will come to life with

their stat line, but with three differences. The first being they are at half health and will periodically gain health if the player who they are a puppet of is hurt (this counts even when they are inactive), second the puppets can traverse this plane as if there was no void below them. Third, they are immune to confusion. The Stranger will be providing support to his puppets as he is trying to claim their mind; once all puppets have been destroyed, The Stranger will stop the fight.

Additionally, the Stranger has various "Cast Members", who are creatures manifested in his power. You are free to use the Cast Member stats as provided, but it may be better to have them take the form of individuals from the performance the PCs put on just prior, and even better to use modified stats for whatever story they told. If they told a story about fighting a Red Dragon, have a Red Dragon be there. Use your best judgment for how many monsters to spawn in, or use 6 Cast Members.

Explain to the PCs that they feel a connection to this realm; something is draining their sanity. But, because of that, they can manipulate this plane of existence using their insight as a free action. This can be used for any number of effects, so set the DC equal to how hard you think it is! They can manifest bridges out of nowhere, weaken a monster's AC, make a second attack, gain the power to fly, transform into something great, revive an ally, etc. The crux of the fight is for the players to find solutions to obstacles that you will create during the battle using the Stranger's power **Shape Reality**.

They should be warned, the more they use this power, the weaker the grasp on reality comes. They will not know what the safe number is, so be thematic in your explanations of what to do. Each of them may perform **3 insight actions**.

- Reduce this number by 1 if they performed poorly
- Reduce this number by 1 if they attacked the Stranger
- Increase this number by 1 if they were respectful to the Stranger
- Increase this number by 1 if they received amazing on their performance

If they succeed a roll, it happens as expected or to a lesser extent. If they fail a roll, they suffer 2d10 psychic damage and lose their turn. If they attempt a roll that exceeds their number, they suffer 2d10 psychic damage, but it goes through. Each additional time they attempt it, the damage goes up by 1d10.

If the players fall into the abyss for any reason, they suffer 5d10 psychic damage and return to the start.

GM Note

Use the Puppets as close as you can to how a player would act. If you want to make the fight harder, allow the puppets to trigger other puppets. Once their effigy is defeated, explain how the PCs feel their sanity becomes secure. If a PC dies here, their mind is lost, and their body is under the direct control of the Stranger in Tatters. Though, they may be revived and resurrected while in this realm.

Insight in Tatters

Once they defeat themselves in puppet form, the Stranger will stop the fight, causing them to float around his Majesty, stating that their will is strong and that he appreciated the show. For such entertainment, he offers them one wish within his power or a piece of knowledge he knows, insight into a problem, or assistance at a later time. Allow them to ponder this. If they choose help later, the Stranger will appear to support the players against the Old Ones in Act 10.

Additionally, he offers them a boon, should they accept, he will turn the Medallion into The Stranger's Stage. Leaving them with the phrase "*my brother and sisters are coming from the stars, perform your final act when it is time.*"

When it is all over, the players return to their bodies with the stage gone and become conscious just in time to see the Stranger leaving with his cart in tow.

Dorian will thank them for their actions as will the other patrons, and they will proceed to their bed chambers.

THE END

**Thank you for participating in
"The Performance in Tatters"**

Appendix 1

NPC & CREATURE STATISTICS

Experiment

Humanoid turned into a statue

ARMOR CLASS 19
HIT POINTS 80
SPEED 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
16(+3)	9(-1)	18(+4)	12(+1)	12(+1)	15(+3)

Damage Immunities Poison

Damage Resistances Bludgeoning, Slashing, Piercing from Non-magical Attacks

Condition Immunities Exhaustion, Paralyzed, Petrified, Poisoned

Damage Weaknesses: Psychic

Actions

Melee Attack. The statues lurch forward striking with its stone fist. +7 to hit. Deals 3d8+4 bludgeoning damage.

Eldritch Blast. The statue manifests eldritch energy from its hands. +6 to hit, dealing 2d10+3 force damage

Zan the Mad Alchemist

Dwarf Alchemist turned mad

ARMOR CLASS 15
HIT POINTS 95
SPEED 25 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
12(+1)	14(+2)	18(+4)	20(+5)	10(+0)	20(+5)

Damage Immunities Poison

Condition Immunities Confusion

Mad Alchemist Each turn Zan may throw a vile and cast a spell

Actions

Throw Vile. Zan may throw a vile of one of the following:

Poison. The room fills with toxic fumes. Everyone in the room must succeed a DC 19 constitution check suffer 2d8 poison damage and have the poisoned status

Acid. An acidic vile, +9 to hit 4d8+5 force damage.

Enlightened Spellcasting: Zan has 12 mana to cast spells.

0 Mana: Eldritch Blast- +6 to hit 2d10+5 force damage

1 Mana: Healing Word, Ray of sickness

2 Mana: Flaming Sphere, Melf's Acid Arrow

3 Mana: Blight, Contagion

4 Mana: Cloudkill

At tier 3: Zan has 10 mana and his poison save DC is 17.

At tier 2: Zan has 8 mana, cannot cast tier 4 spells, and has a poison save DC of 15

At tier 1: Zan has 6 mana, cannot cast tier 4 spells, and has a poison save DC of 13

The Stranger in Tatters

The Old One of the Stage

ARMOR CLASS 30
HIT POINTS 3,000
SPEED ??

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
??	??	??	??	??	??

Condition Immunities Blinded, charmed, deafened, exhaustion, frightened, grappled, paralyzed, petrified, poisoned, prone, restrained, stunned

Damage Resistances bludging, piercing, and slashing from non-magical weapons, Psychic.

Curtain Call. The Stranger always goes last in initiative order

Master of the Stage. The Stranger may use two actions during each of his turns

Actions

Shape Reality. The Stranger alters the landscape of his domain in any way he sees fit.

The Abyss Gazes Back. The Stranger gazes at a particular individual with a glare, they must succeed a DC 25 Charisma save or become confused and suffer 3d10 psychic damage or half as much on a successful save

Cry of Madness. The Stranger sings a harrowing song, all confused targets must pass a DC 25 Charisma saving throw or suffer 6d10 Psychic damage or half as much on a successful save.

Summon Cast. The Stranger summons as Cast member

Puppeteer. a chosen puppet gains an additional attack with advantage on its next turn

Tendril Sweep. Tendrils emit from the Stranger, +15 to hit causing 1d8+5 bludgeoning damage and 3d10+6 psychic damage.

Touch of Confusion. +9 to hit. The Stranger lashes out with a beam of yellow light. If struck the target is Confused.

Aura of Insanity. Every foe within 60 feet of The Stranger must succeed a DC 25 Charisma saving throw, or suffer madness for 1 minute while under the effects of madness they cannot tell friend from foe. At the end of each of their turns, they may attempt a saving throw, if they succeed they are immune to this effect for a day.

Legendary Actions

The Stranger can perform 4 legendary actions that may be used on any player's turn.

Counter Spell Lv 9. one legendary action

Eldritch Focus. The Stranger may use one of his actions at any point during the fight.

Mad One's Blessing. All foes must attempt a DC 25 Charisma save or become confused.

GM Note

Lower the power level of The Stranger in Tatters by decreasing the spell save DC by 5 for each tier of play.

Cast Member

Eldritch servant to the Stranger in Tatters

ARMOR CLASS 15
HIT POINTS 70
SPEED 30 ft, flying

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
16(+3)	14(+2)	16(+3)	12(+1)	12(+1)	18(+4)

Condition Immunities Charmed, Confusion, Frightened

Damage Weaknesses Psychic

Actions

Performers Presence. When phantasmal killer or Eldritch blast is used they may make an additional normal attack

Eldritch Spellcaster. Cast members have a +8 to hit on their spells and a spell save DC of 16

Eldritch Blast. +8 to hit. Deals 310+6 psychic damage.

Rending Blow. +6 to hit, range 15 feet. 1d6+4 piercing damage, + 3d6 psychic damage.

Spells

At will: Phantasmal Killer, Mage Hand

Cone of Cold 1x per day

Power Word Stun 1x per day



Appendix 2

MAGIC ITEMS

The Stranger's Stage

Wondrous Magic Item

You have accepted the Stranger's blessing, with this hand-sized stone you carry bearing his mark you can create a wondrous centerpiece. Once per day you may throw this magic item on the ground to erect a 20x20 stage below you. While on this stage you have an advantage on all Charisma related challenges and deal additional damage based on your Charisma modifier while on this stage. A spotlight shines bright on you usually provoking enemies to look in your direction, while center stage you have resistance to slashing and bludgeoning damage.

If this item is lost it will return to you.

Eldritch Enhancement Potion

Created from strange regents to enhance the power of one's pact, this potion doubles the damage of the user's eldritch blast for one minute.

The Medallion of the Stranger

This medallion can be used to seek insight into a situation or improve your performance. By holding up the medallion you gain advantage on your next insight roll, but suffer disadvantage on your next wisdom save.

GM Note

If you wish, you can give the PC holding this eldritch item insight into situations at a cost. Feel free to use this plot device or not during your adventure.





Chapter 8

SAVIOR NEVERMORE, PT. 1: THE CONFRONTATION

"Malefic fonts corrupt my thoughts, 'twas light eclipsed by shade. As eulogies for the land begin, my mind is clear once again." — Dorian the Accursed King

INTRODUCTION

The time for talking is over. People are still dying in the streets. Horrific monstrosities prey on the mortals. A host of foreign nations are invading the Shadelands, hoping perhaps to carve out swathes of its power to bend to their will.

While it may be that the King acknowledges that all the Players, and Fayte, have done, was for the good of the Shadelands, he has insisted the Knight Captain MUST relinquish his hold on the Scarlet Hearth. LaCroix and his Legionnaires are meddling in affairs beyond their understanding.

The party must now head to the Temple. Without Majin. At this time, the Players will either be convinced that the King is worthy of controlling the Shadelands and maintaining the flow of pacts, and they will move to eliminate the Knight Captain or otherwise force him to stand down. OR they will still cling to their conviction that the Knight Captain is in the right, and at long last, they have the chance to report back and regroup with the Legion. In either scenario, a betrayal has been set in motion, and Majin is very pleased indeed.

The party moves through the war-torn streets of Yon'Cath toward the Scarlet Hearth.

SYNOPSIS

*"This time of madness shall be brought to an end. I'll mourn many things, but I'll mourn the passing of this moment the most."
— Majin the Betrayer*

For those players who may have missed combat, Chapter 8 should have enough action to satisfy. In the first act of 'Savior Nevermore I', the streets of Yon'Cath are embroiled in open conflict. The Accursed King has sent all the elite Accursed Guard he can spare to fight its way to the Scarlet Hearth. He wouldn't task just a handful of allies with this task, would he?

Feel free to freshen encounters up with whichever heraldic banners and thralls of the invaders you wish as the party fights their way back to the Scarlet Hearth in the second act. The Accursed Guard contingent may be taking its orders from the party, so they should feel empowered and unstoppable. Or, of course, the Players can utilize all they've learned from past acts in the Red Opera, let the Accursed Guard find its own way, and traverse some of the more hidden paths only they know. They can call in favors with NPC contacts they've made

along the way, or deviate as needed to settle any sidequests that have opened up. The sidequest At All Costs can take place here and is included after this chapter.

Act 3 of Savior Nevermore has them arrive at the entrance to The Scarlet Hearth. They must regain entry somehow. Deception? Force? Compromise? Will they take the Accursed Guard in with them? And once inside, they must plan exactly what it is they will do. Murder the legion in its sleep? Set a fire? Broker a peace treaty? Tell the Knight Captain all they know? Assassinate him?

Regardless of their way forward, suddenly, the Shadelands itself is rocked with a violent quake and shudder. Stepping onto the battlements, an eerie light rises from the blasted Well of Souls itself, distorting the Elemental Dance, ripping into the fabric. Something is not right...



SAVIOR NEVERMORE PART 1

Scan this QR code to listen to this adventure act's paired song from the Orchestral Version of the Red Opera Album by DiAmorte.

THE SETTING

*"I will defend this land to my dying breath.
Corrupted or no, the blood spilled can never be taken
back. We've gone too far. Your reign ends tonight."
— LaCroix the Knight Captain*

Yon'Cath is a city under siege on multiple sides from multiple invaders. While the party was delving into the Well of Souls, time passed rapidly. Describe a city worn down and breaking apart. Fires have gnawed at the edges of everything, some smoldering, and some still raging. Buildings have crumbled over or been gutted by boulders hurled by catapults. Siege weapons, battering rams, and supply carts have been rolled over to act as makeshift barricades or abandoned and stripped for parts, leaving a skeleton of what it once was. Littering between it all is the dead, everywhere. Soldiers, mostly, bearing the colors of the invading forces. And there are monsters too. Corpses of war-trolls and other monsters line the streets or slump against market stalls. Smoke and death hang in the air, inescapable.

As the party moves further from the Impossible Spire, the sounds of clashing steel and screams can be heard, the occasional crash as a building topples. The common folk of Yon'Cath have mostly barricaded

themselves indoors, huddling behind whatever able-bodied women and boys were left behind to defend them, frightened for their lives. The party can catch sight of some of these survivors darting amongst the wreckage, salvaging what they can - food or weaponry. If the party is inclined to ask, these people will tell them what they think of the war, and of those who are waging it, leaving them to suffer.

Approaching the Patron's Pass Bridge from the Cathrach side of the Obsidian Rush, it will be undeniably clear that the Scarlet Hearth has weathered the storms of war. It is here, after all, that the fighting started. Perhaps the party will recall their first sight of the grand, white pyramid wrapped in blood-red ivy. Now, most of the ivy has burned away, and the only red in sight is the blood smeared across the pavers of the bridge. Below the bridge and all around the temple, bodies of Legionnaires and Guard are skewered and broken by spears of black stone. The currents of the Obsidian Rush rise and fall indifferently, filled with the water-bloated corpses. Barricades along the Patron's Pass are thick, sections broken and reformed, only to be broken again. It has been going on for weeks now, and the paths through them will be winding.



ACT 1

Describe each Player's restless night. If applicable, have their Patrons make contact and either demand a task be completed alongside the main quest, or state their opinion of recent services rendered, or both. To draw the Players into these nightmares, you could describe how they sleepwalk to the ramparts and stare vapidly into the swirling Elemental Dance, seeing beyond into the realms of their Patrons. Or perhaps time stops suddenly as they turn down for the night, and they spend hours wildly searching the castle for the meaning, going mad, and encounter their Patron upon the Accursed King's throne.

However you decide, don't let the Players' last night of relative solitude go completely unspoiled. These are the Shadelands in times of war. Things are spiraling out of control. And this is a story about Warlocks and uncanny pacts with aberrant beings, after all. Remind them.

If the party decides to oppose Dorian, they may not wish to stay in the Spire until the morning. Fayte will be able to show them a discrete path out of the Spire and into the chaotic war-torn streets of the city.

If the party opts to stick around and work with the Accursed Guard, they will find three hundred warlock soldiers standing in formation, waiting for them in the Spire's courtyard. If the Players begin to inquire of the Marshals how they should lead these troops through the streets or ask for reports on the fighting, they'll have the chance to make perception checks to detect that some of the King's soldiers are holding grudges against their new "leaders". After all, up until today, the Players were considered their primary enemies after LaCroix. This is the Players' chance to root out any potential insurrection as the force moves through Yon'Cath and either get it under control somehow (delivering an inspiring speech or perhaps dismissing those soldiers who openly admit they wouldn't take orders) or not. Depending on the outcome, the Players either keep all three hundred soldiers or lose up to half their force! This can significantly impact what's to come.

This chapter is going to take a bit of planning on the DM's part. So much of what happens here will

have been set in motion by the Players' actions in Chapter 7. Keep track of whom is allied with whom. Before the party sets forth, what are the 'hot spots' in the city? What monsters and invaders are there in strength? What are the physical obstacles? How has the terrain changed? Are there any spells still in effect in the aftermath of the battle? Keep this information secret, but allow the party the chance to get hints if they decide to send scouts ahead.

For simplification sake, the party's plan should fall into one of two buckets. Either they will choose the most direct path, beelining through Cathrach straight to the hearth. Or they will attempt a more discreet, secretive route. Even if they're leading the Accursed Guards, they can send the majority on a direct path and have a few officers accompany them on the indirect path. The more direct path will undeniably be quite combat heavy. The indirect path could avoid much combat but will take longer, resulting in a more difficult challenge once they actually reach the Scarlet Hearth.

This chapter is an opportunity for the last tour through Yon'Cath, possibly seeing some familiar faces one last time. Plot this out as you see fit. The key beats are the Party leaving the Impossible Spire and fighting through chaos to reach the Scarlet Hearth. Regardless of what route the Players choose, there is going to be opposition.

Pick one of the NPCs or Patrons from the court that the party is at odds with. Mazokai and his Radiant Brigade would be an excellent fit for this moment. They would likely see the Impossible Spire and its denizens as the worst of the worst. The Brigade may have positioned themselves to confront the Accursed Guard Company as soon as they've exited the magical protections of the Spire. Right out the gate, we have a battle between an army of paladins and one of warlocks. Even if the party opted not to lead the Accursed Guard they would likely get caught up in this conflict.

ACT 2

In Act 2, here and now is the time to wrap up any loose ends and sidequests with contacts made. Feel free to create your own side scenarios to satisfy these, but the following descriptions of the open conflicts raging all around the party can provide some excellent branches where those to grow (or, of course, if you have other plans to spin these off into other campaigns, then go for it)!

The party finds itself right in the thick of things as the city goes mad around them. Maybe they're on their own. Maybe they're leading what's left of the Accursed Guard after the first confrontation. They've had a few minor hurdles, took out some lesser aberrations, maybe had to tussle with a cadre of pillaging raiders, but nothing too challenging for this band of epic warriors. But at some point, they will come to the Obsidian Rush. They could either be up north near Black Span, down south near Patron's Pass and the temple, or smack in the middle at Stone Leg.

Regardless, as they approach the riverbank, they will see Accursed Guards, Legionnaires, and Members of Various Guilds all fighting each other...

This is where another enemy faction will confront the party. It could be one of the guilds or fanatical followers of a Patron that the party upset. Nevertheless, they should hit the party hard. This should be an exceptionally difficult combat encounter that will tax them heavily. And should things start looking grim for the Players, it gives you an excellent opportunity to bring in an ally.

Feel free to use any variety of characters from the Appendix section, monsters, stat blocks, or whatever you deem appropriate for this combat. Given the subjective nature of parties and their tiers of play, we have not provided prescript encounters. With several factions they could be fighting, the possibilities for encounters are endless; so, let your imagination run wild.

This is where any success they might have had in the court can pay off. For example, Snow may be utterly furious, blaming the Players for creating this chaos that threatens her business. An army of highly skilled rangers has the Players pinned down with volley after volley of arrows. But then the Assassins, the Brutes Guild, or Alios' rogues hop into the fray to aid the party - or hinder them even further. Now is the time for all loose threads to be tied off.

GM Note

To speed combat up and yet keep it grounded in the setting of Yon'Cath at war, describe how the different factions engage each other. Instead of rolling loads of dice and tracking nigh-infinite HP, simply allow advantage to any attack rolls when an allied force is nearby.

Additionally, now and then perhaps an ally pushes an enemy into range of an opportunity attack, but again keep it simple - a successful hit could just be the coup-de-gras on an already wounded enemy. The suggestion here is to keep these combat encounters as much "theater of the mind" as possible, providing only an overview map and a general description of the party's location.

Deadly Encounter

We have created 9 unique "Deadly Encounters" that you can choose from for this chapter's action. They are included in **Appendix 2.4** and there is a sidequest called At All Costs attached at the end of this chapter.



ACT 3

Act 3 begins when the party, at last, reaches Patron's Pass. They should feel exhausted one way or another, as should whatever remains of their fighting force. Describe how the day has been spent either through overt bloodshed or covert approach, and now the Elemental Dance dominates the Shadelands Skies, seeming brighter than usual...

The real challenge of Act 3 comes when they reach the gates of the temple, where a company of Legionnaires awaits. "Defend the temple" has been their entire purpose for weeks. They are tired but battle-hardened. They are determined to fulfill their mission. The party may even recognize some of them since they were the ones who helped these soldiers capture the temple in the first place. They can always attempt diplomacy at first, though if the party is with the Accursed Guard that is unlikely to go well. They might also attempt to sneak into the Hearth, as they did back in the beginning. The same methods of swimming or climbing are still available. Or they may have no choice but to fight their way through these former allies.

GM Note

This might be a good time to remind the Players that non-lethal damage is possible. As more Legionnaires witness the party's non-lethal approach, they may be more inclined to lay down their arms.

One way or another, the Players will have to make them stand down. Whether through diplomacy, capture, or bloodshed, Chapter 8 ends once the Players have regained control of the Scarlet Hearth.

The stats for the Legionnaires are included here and in the appendix. Based on the party choice, they may duel with the Knight Captain himself, but he should be forcibly pulled from combat by his higher-ranking men before death. Use as many legionnaires as you feel are needed to create a 'deadly' tier encounter. The

characters do have their allies and others with them in the fight, but those will happen off screen. To prevent any feelings of a 'robbed victory', remember that the Knight Captain does have access to those with Divination Magic and foretelling, so he knows ahead of time at what point he needs to retreat (if at all).

But there is no time to celebrate a hard-fought victory, as the foundations of the Hearth - the very Shadelands themselves - are rocked by powerful quakes and the Elemental Dance erupts in violent streaks of Red...

Legionnaire

Medium humanoid, neutral evil

ARMOR CLASS	18 (plate)
HIT POINTS	255 (30d8 + 120)
SPEED	30 FT

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
22(+6)	19(+4)	19(+4)	13(+1)	14(+2)	15(+2)

Saving Throws Dex +9, Wis +7

Skills Athletics +11, Perception +7

Condition Immunities frightened

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 17

Languages Common

Challenge 13 (10,000 XP)

Weapon Master. The legionnaire rolls an extra damage dice on all of its weapon attacks (included in the attack).

Tactical Teamwork. When the legionnaire is within 10 ft. of an ally and both it and the ally are not incapacitated, it has advantage on attack rolls and ability checks.

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The legionnaire makes three attacks. It can forgo making a single attack in this manner to instead take the Dash, Dodge, or Disengage action.

Longsword. Melee Weapon Attack: +11 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 15 (2d8+6) slashing damage.

Mighty Crossbow. Ranged Weapon Attack: +9 to hit, range 100/400 ft., one target. Hit: 17 (2d12 + 4) piercing damage.

WEAVING THREADS

SOCIAL

While Chapter 8 is indeed combat-heavy, the nature of this combat is strongly influenced by the social actions of the party. The story is nearing its climax, so if there are any “fan favorite” NPCs, now is the time to trot them out for one last appearance.

Sidequest Potential: The Party receives word that an NPC friend is under duress and they have to make a tough decision: delay reaching the Scarlet Hearth to rescue their friend, or abandon them.



COMBAT

Chapter 8 is almost entirely combat, While Act 1 helps determine what kind of help the Guard lends them, Acts 2 and 3 are all about difficult encounters at almost every turn through the city. Should your Players plan to bypass combat, you should still plan a challenging encounter for them to overcome to create the sense that there is no escape from the violence in the Shadelands right now. If your Players appreciate a good fight, then add some more!

Sidequest Potential: Besides Legionnaires, Accursed Guard, Guilds, power-hungry warlocks, outside forces, and otherworldly creatures to toss into the mix, Chapter 8 is all about resolving sidequests and relationships that were destined to come out bloody somehow... There are a few spots for sidequest potential in the next chapters, but at this time sidequests should be drawing to a close.

EXPLORATION

Depending on the amount of work you want to put in, the route to the Scarlet Hearth can be very inventive. It doesn't have to be a simple march down a few city blocks. Maybe the rubble from a toppled tower is blocking off the most direct path. Maybe a pack of demons is stalking the streets and the Players have to duck into a building for cover. Maybe they have to descend below the street and move through a series of tunnels to avoid mayhem above. Or do the opposite: climb to the top of one tower, and leap across to the top of another.







Side Quest

AT ALL COSTS

INTRODUCTION

Is right and wrong ever truly as simple as... right and wrong? Is a person either wholly good or wholly bad? No, of course not. We all exist across a spectrum of gray morality. At the back of our minds, we all know this to be true. Yet we can't stop ourselves from cataloging everyone we encounter as 'good' or 'bad'... 'hero' or 'villain'.

In Yon'Cath, there aren't many phrases more polarizing than "Accursed Guard". Depending on who you're talking to, a person may react to that phrase by spitting on the ground or perhaps their eyes will well with tears of pride. Hero or Villain. In the end, it's all a matter of perspective.

SETTING

This sidequest should take the place of Act 2 in Chapter 8 of The Red Opera. Yon'Cath has fallen into absolute chaos as rival factions wage open war. White dragons rule the skies, raining icy death down upon the city. Militant brigades of fanatical zealot's march

through the streets. The very fabric of reality itself is beginning to tear. The party begins this adventure at the Impossible Spire in Cathrach. The adventure ends when they reach the southern bridge of Patron's Pass.

SYNOPSIS

The party sets out from the Impossible Spire with a company of Accursed Guard Warlocks. Their goal is to cross the eastern half of the city and reach the Scarlet Hearth before the Shadelands are consumed in a world-ending cataclysm. Traversing the city, however, will not be easy. There is open war in the streets. Early in the story, the players were likely given the impression that the Accursed Guard are nothing more than a horde of murderous thugs. However, the players may now see that they are just people. While some do lean toward the dark, harboring nefarious intentions, many see themselves as defenders of the city... the real defenders of the city. Not like those Chest Thumping Legionnaires, who hide their oppressive authoritarian designs beneath a veneer of self-righteousness. Many of those within the Accursed Guard view themselves as champions of True Freedom. They wear the mantle of "Accursed" like the cliché Badge of Honour. Much like their King, they are "Accursed" in that they have chosen the difficult path of pain, struggle, and self-sacrifice for the good of Yon'Cath and its people.

The players will gain insight into this perspective through a Warlock named Elliot Sencha. Within the Accursed Guard, she holds the rank of Marshal,

commanding a regiment of 100, making her one of the highest-ranked Warlocks in the company of 300 that will depart the Impossible Spire with the players.

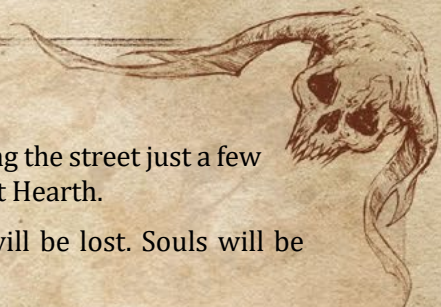
Cathrach, the eastern side of Yon'Cath, is a veritable jungle of tall, dark stone towers. We often think of Patrons as otherworldly beings that exist between the seams of reality. But the fact is, there are plenty of Patrons bound to our physical plane. Remember, they are not gods.

Mayhem and destruction surround the players and their company of Accursed Guard as they traverse the city. Partway through this march, a massive explosion will topple a nearby tower. When the dust settles, the players will find themselves separated from most of the company. Elliot and a small squad of Accursed Guard are nearby. The path forward is blocked by flaming debris and a long, jagged crater teeming with roiling arcane energy. This massive crack in the ground extends far, splitting off in multiple directions, making much of the city impassable. Elliot will tell the party she knows how to get around this, pointing to a cluster of large towers connected via perilous causeways hundreds of feet above the ground.

The party will have to ascend a tower, cross the bridges, passing through the upper chambers of a few other towers, and then descend one last tower. Along the way, they will encounter some disgruntled Patrons, who will each demand a steep price for passage through their respective towers. This adventure

ends with the players reaching the street just a few blocks away from the Scarlet Hearth.

Blood will be shed. Lives will be lost. Souls will be forsaken.



ADVENTURE HOOKS

This is a Tier 4 module that will bring the players face to face with several powerful and malevolent entities. Fighting the Patrons is an option, of course, albeit a perilous one. However, most Patrons are likely to be satisfied by gaining a new pact with a powerful Warlock. The catch is these are not kind masters. The toll these pacts take on a soul is great, especially for those leaning toward the lighter side of morality. Elliot will be eager to bear that burden for the good of the others, often at much personal cost.

If the players try to slow things down with drawn-out combat or attempt to take on these difficult

pacts themselves, Elliot and her squadmates will insist it is more important the players keep moving forward, "For the good of all." Killing one of these fiendish Patrons or a player carrying the weight of these oppressive pacts will mean nothing if the Shadelands is obliterated.

Regarding Fayte, the GM may decide whether she remains with the players or is split from them by the adventure's opening events. (to be reunited on the other side).

WHATEVER IT TAKES

"Your job is to stop the annihilation of the Shadelands. Our job is to get you there alive. So, let us do our job." - Elliot Sencha

Split the Company

The players and their company of three hundred Accursed Guard maneuver through the streets of Cathrach toward the Scarlet Hearth. The sounds of chaotic battles echo through the forest of towering black stone citadels that make up the east half of Yon'Cath.

Columns of smoke drift toward the sky where the white dragons of the Ice borne Imperium circle, looking for their next targets. To the south, a chorus of voices rises in a unified battle chant. The Radiant Brigade is close. The dragons hear it too, and they turn toward the sound. Streams of freezing breath burst from their maws. And in return, the players can see massive glowing orbs hurtling through the sky. One such orb makes contact with a dragon, and the creature disappears in an explosion of golden energy.

An Accursed Guard from the rear of the company shrieks, "INCOMING!" Looking up, the players will see one of these orbs that missed its intended draconic target, bearing down on their position. The company scatters as the orb hits the base of a nearby

tower. The golden energy explodes upward through the tower as it begins to topple over. Have all players make a medium-to-difficult DEX save. On a failure, they are hit with a bit of the molten gold energy and take 1d12+8 radiant damage and are knocked prone.

As the energy courses through the collapsing tower, it seems to be reacting with something inside. Its color darkens to burnt orange. The tower, now infused with ochre light, hits the ground, and rather than burst apart into rubble, it cuts through the street like a hot knife through butter. Bits of stone explode in every direction. Where the street once was, now resides a veritable canyon filled with roiling orange energy. Jagged cracks, teeming with energy, extend out from the fissure in every direction. The ochre energy makes contact with another tower and quickly spreads up its length like an infection before it too collapses. This spiderwebbed canyon of destruction now lies between the players and their destination.

Taking stock of their immediate surroundings, the players will see a group of six Accursed Guard nearby. The shortest of them approaches the players with purpose. She pulls back her burgundy hood, revealing herself to be part Elf and part halfling, essentially looking like a slightly taller than average halfling with pointed ears. Her dark brown hair has been

pulled back into two buns. She has a row of a half dozen earrings in her left ear. She looks quite youthful... except for her eyes. Her eyes look a few decades older than the rest of her face, and the skin around them is noticeably darker and more weathered.

Players who pass a low difficulty perception check will recognize her to be one of the three highest-ranking Warlocks in the company. Even if the players and she spoke before leaving the Impossible Spire, she will introduce herself again, and then the other five Warlocks.

"I'm Elliot Sencha. This is Caulder, Mazrac, Ansen, Kjor, and Thalla."

Caulder is a black Dragonborn male. Mazrac is a red Tiefling female. Ansen is a Human male. Kjor is a Kaldenkind female. Thalla is a Winter Glau female.

GM Note

This adventure is scripted so that most, if not all, these Warlocks will die. Feel free to amend their fates as best fits the story being told.

Almost immediately, cracks from the fissure will start expanding toward the party. Elliot will point up and say, *"That's our way around this."* She is pointing to a series of causeways suspended four hundred feet about the street, connecting a dozen different towers. The closest tower in this network is just a few yards away. However, it looks to have taken some damage and a heavy crimson miasma is seeping out from the cracks in the black stone. *"We need to get to the top of that tower that looks like it's bleeding."*

Any sarcastic remarks a player may make about entering a "bleeding tower" will go right over Elliot's head. She is a very literal person, taking most things at "face value." It can be easy to assume someone like this is naive or lacking intelligence. This is not the case with Elliot. She is simply a very earnest individual who has a crystal clear understanding of who she is and what she wants.

There is precious little time to make a decision here. The golden light spewing fissure has already stretched over a thousand feet ahead of the party. Any attempts to teleport to a location across the fissure will fail, and the caster will take 2d6 radiant

damage. The street beneath the player's feet starts to crumble, driving them toward the tower's entrance.

The Bleeding Tower

The interior of the tower is cavernous and eerily quiet, and every surface is hewn from the same black cinderstone. A staircase winds around the cylindrical wall of the tower, disappearing into the darkness above. Half a dozen black stone statues are arranged in a circle on the ground floor, each one depicting a different demonic humanoid. The same red miasma drips down from unseen origins, forming sizzling puddles. The substance seems to be in constant flux between a liquid and gaseous state. If anyone comes into contact with the substance, they must pass a CON save or take 2d6 necrotic damage.

Elliot indicates they have to climb up the stairs to the top of the tower, where they can cross the causeway to the next tower over. As the party ascends, consider throwing random DEX saves at them to avoid the miasma or a piece of falling debris.

"Best keep your wits about you," Elliot advises, "This collection of towers is home to a pack of real bastards. They're not from our world, not originally. They showed up in the Shadelands some years back and started indiscriminately killing and eating every person they laid eyes on. Dorian, he came to terms with them, found a balanced arrangement that allowed them to slake their bloodlust without causing rampant destruction. I guess it's better than outright slaughter, but gods, I can't tell you how often we in the Guard have to deal with their followers causing trouble. It is almost as if every cruel, sadistic bastard in the Shadelands eventually finds their way into a pact with the Desolate Ones, as we call them."

As the party nears the top chamber of this tower, they hear the sound of metal clinking together. There is no rhythm to the lazy, random cadence of the noise. Reaching the top of the tower, they find themselves on an open landing, shaped like a crescent that takes up half the space. The vaulted roof is twenty-five feet above this landing. Dozens of long black chains hang from the ceiling, the cause of the clinking sound. There is a massive crack in the roof, and the jagged edges glow with golden light. To the party's left is a precipitous drop down the length of the tower to the ground floor. Directly in front of them is an archway. The causeway to the next tower is plainly visible. To their right, the landing extends to the wall. Against the wall sits a massive black throne, and seated there is a figure that, if standing, would likely be well

over ten feet tall. His skin is white as pearl, and he's draped in a high-collared robe. His features are almost elvish in nature; however, his bulbous head is completely smooth and hairless and his pointed ears are longer and thinner. His narrow eyes glow red, and the front of his face is totally smooth, with no visible nose or mouth. The most noticeable feature, however, is the enormous slash that runs from his right shoulder to his left hip. The wound glows with golden light and appears to have almost severed him in half. The red miasma pours out of him, forming rivers of smoking blood that run in every direction.

Have the players roll perception with low-to-medium difficulty. Those who succeed will notice a presence within their minds. It's strange, the players do not feel pain themselves but perceive there is someone inside their heads who is in a great deal of pain.

"*Mensic the Slaver*," one of the other Warlocks will utter. At this, Mensic's eyes will glow brighter. Everyone hears the word "*Die*" screamed within their heads. A length of black chain will fly through the air, strike the one that spoke and wrap them up. Before anyone can react, the heavy chain will pull them over the edge of the landing, where they fall to their death at the bottom of the tower. More chains fly toward the party. Elliot shrieks, "*NO!*" and as a wave of thunderous energy bursts from her hands, her eyes weep tears of black ooze. Her spell scatters the chains across the floor.

Roll Initiative.

Mensic is weakened by his wound and cannot move. Physical attacks against him will have advantage. Mensic's stat block can be found in the Appendix. Throughout the fight, remember the players will have to avoid the red miasma, and chain attacks can come from any direction. Once his physical body is killed, Mensic will attempt to enter the minds of the party to save his consciousness.

The players, Elliot, and her surviving Warlocks, all feel intense pain and pressure as Mensic invades everyone's consciousness. Just when it seems as if he will succeed, Elliot will shout, "*I offer myself to you, Great Patron Mensic!*"

The pain and pressure will dissipate. Elliot drops to her knees but quickly rises, screwing a stoic expression onto her face. If asked about what exactly just happened, she will simply state, "*I followed the examples of our King. I made a deal.*" She refuses to expound further. If a player chooses to roll an insight or perception check, they may notice a series of jagged black lines,

like cracks in glass, have appeared along one of her forearms. With her head held high, she leads the party toward the bridge that leads to the next tower.

Area Loot: Living Chain (see Appendix)

GM Note

It is very possible a player may try to enter into a pact with Mensic or the other Patrons that will follow. They are more than welcome to. In fact, the GM could decide one of the Patrons in this side quest will not be satiated with just Elliot and will require one of the PC's as well. The three Patrons in this side quest are exceptionally evil, so a good-aligned player who pledges loyalty to them will have to deal with the consequences. If a player accepts a pact with Mensic, they may add the Shred Psyche ability to their stats and a +1 to INT. However, they will also have Mensic's brand, runes tattooed so tightly together that from afar they look like solid black bands, appear around their wrists.

Hellish Horticulture

The walk across the bridge is uneventful. The sounds of battle and destruction are more muted this high up. Four hundred feet below, the street is a river of molten orange-gold energy. The cylindrical upper chamber of the tower ahead is walled almost completely with glass. Two great crossed arches divide the glass walls into four rounded quarter sections. The glass is mostly fogged over.

Stepping into the chamber, the party will find themselves in what appears to be a greenhouse filled with exotic and unfamiliar plant life. The temperature is a great deal warmer than the outside world. The Accursed Guard move in cautiously, most of them careful not to get too close to any of the vegetation. Elliot is not so careful. She marches right up to a crimson colored shrub and picks off a handful of leaves, stuffing them into a pouch on her belt. "*Makes a tea called **Red Relief** that kicks you right in the pants,*" she explains. If asked whose domain this is, one of the Warlocks will answer, "*Aegrote the Despoiler.*"

The diameter of this circular chamber is sixty feet. Across from where the players entered, is another door that leads to the next causeway. The door is locked. As soon as someone touches it, the other door (the one the party entered through) will also close

and lock. The doors cannot be opened. The glass walls cannot be broken. The door is covered in paintings of plants and flowers in exquisite detail. If a player that makes a point of examining the door, passing a low difficulty check, will notice that the plant painted just above the door handle was made to look wilted and dead. There are two ways to get the door to unlock: splash water or shine a light on the painting of the wilted plant. The painting will change in real time, the flowers perking up and gaining vibrant color. Shortly after entering this chamber, pick two of the Accursed Guard (besides Elliot) to get close to a plant with blue-green buds near the door they came from.

Roll Initiative.

The buds will release a cloud of spores into the Warlocks' faces. Their eyes will fill with a blue-green light, and they will attack the others in the party. A cluster of vines, leaves, and flowers on the ceiling will merge, forming a large humanoid face. It resembles Mensic, with the long thin pointed ears and bulbous head. However, this face has a nose and a mouth which it uses to cackle incessantly throughout the encounter. The face can be targeted and easily destroyed however this does no real damage to Aegrote and he will simply reform his face with more vegetation in another area of the room and continue to laugh. If the infected Warlocks get close to anyone, they can attempt to spread infection by breathing into their face. The target must pass a medium-to-difficult CON save to resist the infection. Those infected take 2d10+10 poison damage upon initial infection and then 2d10 additional damage every turn. The effects can be cured when the infected is the target of Cure Disease or three healing spells. This information can be shared with the players if any succeed on a difficult Nature check. **This is an infection, not a curse.** Meanwhile, the blue-green buds will continue to release bursts of spores into the air. At the start of every player's turn, have them roll a CON save to see if the spores affect them. Start the difficulty low and increase it slightly every round.



GM Note

If things begin to look dire for the party, Elliot will whisper a prayer to Aegrote offering to take him on as yet another Patron in exchange for sparing the party. Aegrote will accept this offer, unlocking the doors for the party. The infected will be cured of the effects of the spores, however, whichever Accursed Guard has the lowest HP should succumb to the sickness and collapse, dead.

When the party successfully unlocks the door, they can run out of the room and onto the next bridge. Any infected Warlocks will remain in the tower. This will cause Elliot to stop. She will offer herself to Aegrote in exchange for their release, taking on his pact as well. Upon making this deal, the black cracks in her skin will expand along her arm, up to her neck.

GM Note

If a player takes a pact with Aegrote, they may add the Madness Spores ability to their stats, resistance to poison damage, and gain proficiency with Nature and Medicine (if they don't already have it). Aegrote's brand will appear as a tattoo of the blue-green flower bud on the back of their hands.

Don't Look Down

The frigid wind lashes about as the party steps onto the causeway. This next bridge does not lead directly to a tower, but rather to a platform suspended in the air with three more causeways branching off to three other towers. The intersecting platform is thirty feet across and is covered with a roof supported by six columns making it look something like a gazebo. The gazebo is a few feet higher, meaning each bridge rises at a slight incline. A figure stands on each of the three branching off bridges. Each one is a Warlock with runic tattoos covering the right half of their face, a sword in one hand, and a coiled black whip in the other. Elliot or one of the remaining Accursed Guard explains, "*Disciples of Letuu... the Ravager,*"

A new initiative order can be rolled or the one from Aegrote's chamber can be maintained. However, grant advantage to the initiative rolls for the Disciples when adding them to the turn order. Their whips are magical and quite versatile. When used, the length of the whip can be extended at will up to 90 feet. These Disciples can use their whips to:

1. Directly attack an enemy
2. Pull an enemy off the bridge
3. Lasso one of the columns in the central 'gazebo' allowing them to swing around from bridge to bridge

The **Disciple of Letuu** stats can be found in the **Appendix**.

GM Note

Except for Elliot, most if not all the remaining Accursed Guard should perish during this fight.

When the fight appears to be nearing its end, regardless of which side is winning, a bone-chilling battle cry will cut through the cold wind. A large figure soars down from the sky above. She is a humanoid, ten feet tall, with dark red skin completely covered in white runic tattoos. Her ears are long, thin, pointed like Mensic's. However, she does have a mouth and nose. Her short black hair is pulled up into a top knot. Two leathery red wings extend from her back. Each muscular arm wields an identical battle axe. The blades of the weapons are black steel with serrated edges. The handles are each one giant single femur bone of some unknown creature. Letuu the Ravager has entered the fray. All of the other Accursed Guard dying

GM Note

If ever matters look bleak for the party, Elliot will, yet again, offer herself to the Patron. However, Letuu will want more than just Elliot. She can be appeased in a few ways:

1. All the surviving Accursed Guard, in addition to Elliot, take her as a Patron. Roll a check for each individual to see if they accept.
2. Elliot sacrifices any of her Accursed Guard that do not yield to Letuu.
3. One of the players also takes on a pact with Letuu

will also motivate Elliot to offer a pact. Letuu will accept her offer and consider the total loss of her Warlocks as a suitable sacrifice.

Area Loot: Ravager Whip (see Appendix)

GM Note

If a player takes a pact with Letuu, they gain a +1 to STR and the Death Wave ability. Letuu's brand will appear as runes tattooed all over the right side of the player's face.

Upon making this pact, Elliot will appear visibly weakened. The black cracks will be visible where she has exposed skin, including her face. She will shrug off any attempts to help her and stomp forward with purpose. From here, the party will encounter no more hurdles as they cross the bridges. Elliot leads them to a tower whose cavernous, gothic interior appears abandoned. The one adornment is hundreds of black stone spikes protruding from the walls. As the party descends, they will see dozens upon dozens of skeletal humanoid remains, skewered on these spikes. Elliot leads the party down to the ground floor and out the tower door.

The cacophony of chaotic battle from multiple fronts greets the party as they emerge onto the street. Fortunately, their ultimate destination is close. Patron's Pass and the Scarlet Hearth are in sight, just a few blocks away.

Upon reaching the street, Elliot will drop to her knees with a gasp of pain. A thin black ichor drips from some of the cracks in her skin. She, again, waves off any attempt to offer aid. Instead, she will toss over the pouch with the tea leaves. *"Chew on those to regain some strength... now go!"* she will insist, *"I got you here! Now go save the Shadelands... while there's some of it left worth saving!"*

If asked about her condition, she will only offer, *"There's a war raging inside me. A growing darkness. I will overcome this trial as I have overcome so many before.... Now GO!"*

She will ignore any further questions, simply screaming at the party to *"Go! Go finish the job!"*

From here, the story picks up again with Act 3 of Chapter 8 of The Red Opera. If the GM chose to have Fayette separated from the party at the start, she will meet back up with the players at this point.

THE END

Thank you for participating in "At All Costs"

Appendix 1

NPC & CREATURE STATISTICS

Elliot Sencha

Warlock, Accursed Guard

ARMOR CLASS 18
HP 350
SPEED 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
16(+3)	18(+4)	14(+2)	14(+2)	16(+3)	20(+5)

Actions - 2 per turn

Enchanted Short Sword. Range 5ft. +12 to hit. Deals 2d8+10 slashing plus 2d8 force damage.

Random Dagger. Range 20/60. +10 to hit. Elliot throws a dagger laden with arcane energy. Deals 2d6+6 piercing plus 2d6 bonus damage. Bonus damage type is random, determined by rolling 1d4: 1 is Cold, 2 is Fire, 3 is Lightning, 4 is Thunder.

Features & Traits

Misty Escape, Beguiling Defenses, Eldritch Master

Lucky. When you roll a 1 on the d20 for an attack roll, ability check, or saving throw, you can reroll the die and must use the new roll.

Brave. You have advantage on saving throws against being frightened

Eldritch Invocations

Eldritch Spear, Beast Speech, Lance of Lethargy, Repelling Blast, Bewitching Whispers, Ascendant Step, Trickster's Escape, Witch Sight

Spells

At Will

Cantrips: Eldritch Blast, Shape Water, Thorn Whip, Mage Hand, Blade Ward, Create Bonfire, Prestidigitation

1st Level: Speak with Animals

2nd Level: Levitate

1 Use Per Long Rest

4th Level: Freedom of Movement

6th Level: Mental Prison

7th Level: Crown of Stars

8th Level: Power Word Stun

9th Level: True Polymorph

PACT MAGIC - Four 5th Level Slot Counter Spell, Dispel Magic, Elemental Bane, Fly, Misty Step, Wall of Light, Witch Bolt

Elliot's Warlock Squad

Caulder, Mazrac, Ansen, K'jor, Thalls

ARMOR CLASS 17
HP 100
SPEED 30 ft

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
16(+3)	18(+4)	14(+2)	14(+2)	16(+3)	20(+5)

Actions - 1 per turn

Melee Attack. Range 5ft. +10 to hit. Deals 1d10+10 slashing, piercing, or bludgeoning damage.

Eldritch Blast. Range 300ft. 4 beams. Each beam deals 1d10 force damage.

Bonus Actions. Misty Step, Hex

Other Spells

Prestidigitation, Mage Hand, Lightning Lure, Thunderclap

Letuu the Ravager

Humanoid Creature, Warlock Patron, Origin Unknown

ARMOR CLASS 20
HP 500
SPEED Flying 60ft, Walking 30ft

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
22(+6)	21(+5)	20(+5)	12(+1)	10(+0)	13(+1)

Actions - 3 per turn

Axe Strike. Range 10ft. +13 to hit. Deals 2d10+15 slashing damage. The target must make a STR save (DC18) or be knocked prone.

Death Wave. Range 90ft. Letuu swings her axe, unleashing an arc of black energy 15ft across. The target and any creature within 5ft of either side of them must pass a CON save (DC18) or take 4d8+8 necrotic damage and be pushed 10ft backward. On a successful save, target(s) take half damage and are not pushed.

Battlecry. Range 30ft cone. Letuu lets out an ear-splitting scream to weaken and intimidate her enemies. All enemies within the target cone must pass a WIS save (DC18) or take 3d6+6 thunder damage and become **Frightened** of Letuu.

Letuu's Disciple

Warlock

ARMOR CLASS 17
HP 175
SPEED Walking 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
20(+5)	19(+4)	17(+3)	11(+0)	10(+0)	18(+4)

Actions - 2 per turn

Sword Attack. Range 5ft. +11 to hit. Deals 3d8+6 piercing damage.

Whip Strike. Range 90ft. +10 to hit. Deals 2d10+8 slashing damage

Whip Lash. Range 90ft. +9 to hit. The whip wraps around the target's arm or leg. As a **bonus action**, Disciple can attempt to pull target off their feet. Requires a contested STR roll. At the start of the target's turn, they can attempt a STR or DEX save (DC16) to free themselves from the whip.

Relocate. Requires the whip to be wrapped around a target's limb. The disciple can attempt to pull the target up to 15ft closer. The target must pass a STR save (DC16) to resist the pull.

Eldritch Blast. Range 300ft. 4 beams. Each beam deals 1d10 force damage.

Mensic the Slaver

Humanoid Creature, Warlock Patron, Origin Unknown

ARMOR CLASS 18
HP 225 (in his injured state)
SPEED 0ft (in his injured state)

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
11(+0)	14(+2)	16(+3)	22(+6)	20(+5)	18(+4)

Immune Psychic

Resistant Necrotic

Actions - 3 per turn

Chain Whip. A living length of black chain strikes at the target. +11 to hit. Deals 4d6+6 bludgeoning damage

Chain Bind. Mensic tries to wrap up an enemy with his chains. Target may attempt either a STR or DEX save to resist (DC17). On a failure, the target is held in place and cannot use their arms or legs. At the start of their turn, the bound target can attempt to free themselves with a STR save.

Shred Psyche. A small opening appears in the center of Mensic's forehead, releasing a jagged arc of red energy to strike a single target. The target must pass an INT save (DC19) or suffer 4d10 psychic damage and fall unconscious until the start of their next turn.

Spells - +13 spell attack & 19 Save DC

At Will

Chaos Bolt. Cast at 4th level

Chill Touch. Cast at 5th level

Eldritch Blast. Cast at 17th level

Ice Knife. Cast at 5th level

Ray of Enfeeblement

Ray of Sickness. Cast at 4th level

3 Uses Per Encounter - (Costs 2 actions)

Antilife Shell, Control Winds, Dominate Person: Cast at 5th level, **Telekinesis**

1 Use Per Encounter - (Costs 3 actions)

Chaos Bolt. Cast at 9th level, **Blade Barrier, Eyebite**



Appendix 2

MAGICAL ITEMS AND ABILITIES

Living Chain

A 15-foot length of black iron chain.

The Living Chain bears a minimum level of sentience. All it needs is someone to tell it what to do. When it has selected its master, it prefers to travel wrapped around them in some fashion, rather than to slither along behind like a snake. In combat, the Living Chain is allowed one action and takes its turn at the same time as its master:

Strike. Range 15ft. To hit bonus is equal to the modifier of its master. Deals 2d6+8 bludgeoning damage

Bind. Range 15ft. The target must pass a STR or DEX save against the master's spell save DC or be wrapped up in the chain.

Madness Spores

May be used once per long rest.

A Warlock of Aegrote is marked by tattoos of blue-green flowers on the backs of their hands. However, these markings are not just for show. As an action, the Warlock may conjure a spray of Madness Spores from their hands and direct it in a 15-foot cone. All creatures within the cone must pass a CON save equal to the caster's spell save DC. On a failure, the creatures take 2d10+8 poison damage and are infected. On a successful save, creatures take half damage and are not infected. Infected creatures will attempt to attack the closest living thing they can, and will continue to take 1d10 additional poison damage every turn. If an infected creature is the recipient of the Cure Disease spell or two healing spells, the effects will end.

Ravager Whip

A whip made from three braided cords of black leather. When coiled, the whip is rather compact. But when unleashed, the whip can be magically extended mid-strike up to 90 feet in length. Range 90ft. To hit modifier is 9+DEX modifier. Deals 2d10+STR modifier slashing damage or the wielder can choose to deal no damage and instead wrap the whip around the body or limb of the target.

Red Relief

Crimson tea leaves.

Whether brewed into a tea or chewed raw, the Red Relief effects are quite potent. Upon consuming, a creature will regain half of their missing HP and half of their spent ability and spell slots. Specifically, this means half in each category. For example, if a caster is missing two level 4 and three level 1 spell slots, they would only regain one slot at each level. Or if a Battlemaster Fighter had used four of their five superiority die, they would regain two of them.

Shred Psyche

May be used once per long rest.

This ability is only available to Warlocks of Mensic. Costs 1 action. A small opening appears in the Warlock's forehead, and a burst of red lighting is unleashed on the target. The target must pass an INT save equal to the caster's spell save DC. On failure, the target takes 6d8 psychic damage and falls unconscious until the start of their next turn. On success, the target takes half damage and stays conscious.





Chapter 9

SAVIOR NEVERMORE, PT. 2: THE CONSUMING SHADOW

"You forced my hand to bring the end LaCroix. You never could see the forest through the trees."— Dorian the Accursed King

INTRODUCTION

The time for crucial choices is at hand in The Consuming Shadow. If timed correctly, the pacing of this adventure should take place midway through the battle for the Shadelands. During (or after) the Players capture the Scarlet Hearth from the Knight Captain (or if they turned on the King and betrayed him and Fayte), the first act begins. As the climax of The Red Opera, the pacing of this battle should feel grand and epic. Gravity is altered, buildings are crumbling, nations are warring, and reality itself is

starting to shred as the Well of Souls erupts. Majin and Fayte's newfound power is wielded at the behest of the Players—each choice resulting in the destruction of someone.

In this chapter, refresh yourself with the section "Final Consequences" at the beginning of the book. Certain characters will die within this chapter, and there is no avoiding their grim demise. The future of the Shadelands however, is for the Players to determine.

SYNOPSIS

"When the encroaching sky reflects the color of my intent, I suppose I'm the villain evermore. In truth, no matter the nation, the king, or the soldier—this story always repeats. Let's try something new shall we..."
— Majin the Betrayer

In "Savior Nevermore II": The Well of Souls erupts. Its eruption is how the entire chapter begins. Midway through the battle, the Aurora Borealis explodes in a cacophony of colors as the Well of Souls is fully unchained. Both the armies of the Accursed King and the Knight Captain task the characters with pulling out all the stops to prevent eldritch aberrations from running rampant. Yet bound by their Patrons, both sides continue the war—each seeking the other's head.

While the laws of physics in the Shadelands become a foreign concept, the Patrons from Those-Who-Wait-Beyond and other outer realm creatures dominate the sky, lured to the conflict and the thinning veil. Act 2 revolves around the Players battling side-by-side with any allies they've recruited to defend the Shadelands. Gigantic tentacles, upside down battles over the Obsidian Rush, and the frustration of two

sides who willingly fight to their death should push any tier character to their brink.

In the third act, Majin and the Shield Maiden finally return to the party and the battle during a short rest. Caught between several hard choices, Fayte seeks the council of her friends. The fighting needs to stop at all costs, or everyone will be destroyed, and she has the tools to ensure it. She could join the King, even with his doubts, and help him make a world for the Warlocks and Patrons—in doing so, the hunters, legionnaires, and others would be wiped out. Joining the Knight Captain would topple the current hierarchy and seal many Patrons back behind the veil and install a new government—and annihilate the King's forces and all loyal to him. Lastly, if the party is willing... have them kill her—and in her death end the cosmic horror. Savior Nevermore ends when the party has made their choice.



SAVIOR NEVERMORE PART 2
Scan this QR code to listen to this adventure act's paired song from the Orchestral Version of the Red Opera Album by DiAmorte.

THE SETTING

"Catering to outsiders and spirits hasn't made you immortal Dorian. Just a prick who forgets he's still a man. An insane man at that."

— *LaCroix the Knight Captain*

It's time to bring destruction to the Shadelands. Since the end of the last adventure, the party should have taken (or be in the process) of taking the Scarlet Hearth. High magic from other kingdoms and their armies litter the outskirts as they wait to usurp control from the kingdom of Warlocks. Scurrying in the streets, civilians caught in the middle of the war and those unfortunate souls without magic or skill with a blade, resign themselves to their death. Anyone able to evacuate has done so by now.

In a path that mirrors the Obsidian Rush, the sky tears itself asunder as a wash of red light glistens off the snow on the horizon. The kind of bloody, crimson, glowing red light that flickers with the fires of infernal planes and magic that should not exist. The ocean erupts above the Well of Souls as tendrils and strands

of eldritch energies spiral into a beacon towards the night sky. A wonderful sight to behold, eerie in its unearthly beauty and equally as terrifying, but mysterious in what it means. Yet coming to feed upon it, are the Great Old Ones. The eldest, and most alien, of the Patrons who care little for the Material Plane, creep in through the sky. Shadowy tentacles, eyes that appear in thin air, and a massive maw of the gigantic beast appear in the night sky—with many more of their children crawling out from within cracks in reality.

Joining the Great Old Ones on the field of battle are the Patrons of each respective side. With the Well of Soul's fate in the balance, each side demands that the King and the Knight Captain finish the battle. It's now or never. Even as reality begins to crumble in the Shadelands, the two sides seem locked in a feverish pitch of battle. Unable to listen to reason (or seemingly uncaring), old friends and allies find themselves caught up in the battle frenzy.

This is the backdrop where the characters make their stand.



ACT 1

As the party moves in to fully secure the Scarlet Hearth, the ground around them begins to tremble. Across the Shadelands, everything seems to pause for a moment and a quiet hangs in the air—cut by an ear-piercing shriek of alien speech echoing from the north... from a location the party is all too familiar with. If they look north, they will see beams of eldritch energy erupt from the Well of Souls and spiral up into the sky destroying anything unfortunate enough to get caught in their path. The party watches as a light beam cuts a gigantic White Dragon in half.

Regardless of which side the characters are on, or what NPCs they are near, all of them can make checks to determine what this means. If any of the characters still have a Library book from an earlier act (regardless of which it is), they will gain advantage on their check. For any that fail, it's pretty obvious that this isn't a good thing. For those who made their check, reveal that the Well of Souls has been unshackled, no longer bound by any rules. The party was led to believe "healing" the Well would settle things down... it may have allowed the Well to more effectively wreak havoc on reality.

Even if the characters think Majin is responsible for this, the truth is, they are not. Majin is along for the ride (and truly doesn't care) one way or another how things turn out. If the entire city is sacrificed to Those-Who-Wait-Beyond through the Well of Souls, they'll profit all the same. To them, it's just another eye-rolling annoyance of what Patrons and Warlocks both do with their power.

Once the information is revealed, the party will instantly encounter sights of lesser aberrations running amok and attacking any living creatures. Right off the bat, the party will have the choice of running into battle to save men on the King's side or the Knight Captain's side. The encounter is the same regardless of the choice, but the purpose is to set the stage: During this fight, they aren't the targets of the aberrations.

The warlocks are. Any warlock (or former warlock) that dies cannot be brought back to life.

The party will start the encounter by seeing Warlock messengers with flags racing to them from Yon'Cath, trying to send a beacon to the party. If the party fails to save all three members then they

won't get any instructions for the rest of the act. If they manage to save at least one, they will pass on a message to the party:

"Our Lord wants you to do what only you can, break the mirrors, slaughter the aberrations, and defend the Scarlet Hearth from outside threats. Our war must continue, but those heathens on the other side won't attack you unless you punch first. We may be in the very hells themselves right now, but we at least have some honor. Defend us, so we can kill each other. This grudge ends tonight..."

The party can (and probably will) react in many different ways to this. Including hanging up their swords and leaving town, letting the Great Old Ones devour everything. If the party chooses this path, you can safely ignore the rest of this chapter and move onto the epilogue (spoiler: everyone but Majin dies).

If the party chooses to stay and start defending the Hearth, then there are several waves of aberrations the party will have to deal with. Traditional defenses are meaningless because the creatures spawn from between cracks in reality, and reflective surfaces (including the character's swords). Their aim seems to be to tear down any edifices of other Patrons and bring down the Hearth, but any other chaos they cause is fine with them.

Your goal as a storyteller is to weaken the party up a little bit and build some tension. We've included some aberrations below for the party to fight. If the party is tier 4, show no mercy and have some of their claws appear inside the fighter's helmet to rip his own eyes out. You'll have to gauge your group's tension at the table on the fly. Perhaps one fight alone will be enough, others might need three horrific scenarios, and still, some groups really love large battles and want a full session. At the end, when you are ready to move onto act 2, do so after at least one fight, and when gravity starts to fail.

GM Note

Divine Intervention and Wish Spells

Tier 4 characters have some amazing spells at their disposal, and spells like Wish, Divine Intervention, or other godlike spells might make this final fight seem easy. If they worked correctly. As the Well of Souls has shattered, Arcane Energy fiddles with high-end spellcraft altering the outcomes of well-meaning spellcasters. A wish spell may go off, but rather than get what was intended instantly—the character may find himself having to suddenly negotiate with a Djinn or a Devil for the exact outcome he wants. Deities find their magic failing to reach their clerics, and resurrection spells simply fail to function (as their souls are getting devoured and shredded before ever making it to the afterlife).

The goal isn't to strip the characters of their powers, but rather twist and alter them. Have them work to a degree, but horrible and twisted. A resurrection spell might (for example) revive the creature as half his former self, or might fully restore him, but the character feels his soul slipping each round as if he's on a timer.

Deals with Patrons, however, are always on the table.



ENCOUNTER - THE SKY IS FALLING

The Well of Souls has erupted, sending beams of blinding arcane energy up towards the heavens. Jagged arcs of white lightning mar the starry night. And then the unthinkable happens... pieces of the sky begin to fall. Chunks of blackness dotted with stars hurtle toward the ground. A few of these sky-boulders land on Yon'Cath, smashing through buildings and shattering pavement. One touches down just off the west riverbank, near the temple. As the party watches, this piece of the sky begins to move... to stretch out... to stand up. And they realize what it actually is:

A giant.

Throughout the city, the giants stand up, each one almost thirty feet tall. Their skin looks like the night sky, black with speckled white dots. Their eyes glow greenish-blue. They wield clubs that look to be hewn from a solid crystalline material, the same eerie glowing colors as the Auroras above. This Twilight Giant on the western bank looks around, furious about being pulled down from his home. In a fit of panic, a soldier near the temple (either

Legionnaire or Accursed Guard) fires an attack at the giant. It pings off the giant harmlessly... however, the formerly unfocused and dazed giant is now very focused... on the Scarlet Hearth, the assumed origin of this affront.

GM Note

Roll initiative. You are free to add in a second or third giant, who will join their kin in combat if you think one is too easy. If you need to scale down, have the giants injured by the time they reach the party.

Twilight Giant

Huge Giant, Chaotic Neutral

ARMOR CLASS 20 (natural armor)
HIT POINTS 350
SPEED 50 FT

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
29(+9)	14(+2)	20(+5)	20(+5)	18(+4)	18(+4)

Saving Throws Con +11, Int +11, Wis +10

Skills Athletics +15, Perception +10

Damage Resistances psychic, necrotic

Damage Immunities bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing damage from nonmagical attacks

Condition Immunities charmed, frightened

Senses darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 20

Languages Common, giant, plus one other language

Challenge 18 (20,000 XP)

Amphibious. The giant breaths air and water.

Innate Spellcasting. The giant's innate spellcasting ability is Intelligence (spell save DC 18). It can innately cast the following spells, requiring no material components

At will: detect magic, feather fall, levitate, light

3/day each: harm, heal

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The giant makes three attacks. The giant can forgo making two of these attacks to instead cast a spell.

Aurora Light Club. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +15 to hit, reach 15 ft., one target. Hit: 22 (2d12 + 9) bludgeoning and 13 (2d12) radiant damage.

Star Beam. Ranged Spell Attack: +11 to hit, range 60/240 ft., one target. Hit: 35 (4d12 + 9) force damage.

Arcane Lightning (Recharge 5–6). The giant conjures a magical lightning bolt at a point it can see within 500 ft. of it. Each creature within 10 ft. of that point must make succeed on a DC 18 Dexterity saving throw or take 90 (20d8) lightning damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a success.

ENCOUNTER - WRETCHED REFLECTIONS

Once the giant(s) have been defeated, there is no time to rest. The party will hear a series of horrific shrieks from behind them, inside the Hearth. When they investigate, they will see human-sized aberrations crawling out of mirrors and other reflective surfaces. These chalky white creatures have two spindly legs, ending with taloned feet. Two lanky arms ending in long clawed fingers. A single eyeball sprouts from the neck where its head should be. Broad shoulders that taper to a narrow waist. More notable, however, is the large, wide mouth filled with rows of sharp teeth situated right in the center of their chests. The Void Maws have arrived, and they are hungry.

They pounce on nearby Legionnaires and Warlocks and the Party watches as one opens its mouth wide, and an inky black tongue lashes out from within, skewering a Legionnaire. A few of them converge on the party.

GM Note

Feel free to keep the initiative order from the giant fight. It's up to you how many you'd like the party to defeat before moving to Act 2.

Void Maw

Medium Aberration, Chaotic Evil

ARMOR CLASS 15 (natural armor)
HIT POINTS 105 (14d8 + 42)
SPEED 40 FT

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
22(+6)	15(+2)	16(+3)	11(+0)	10(+0)	8(-1)

Saving Throws Dex +5, Con +6

Skills Stealth +8, Perception +3

Damage Resistances Psychic, Necrotic

Damage Immunities Poison

Damage Vulnerabilities Radiant

Condition Immunities charmed, frightened

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 13

Languages Deep speech

Challenge 8 (3,900 XP)

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The maw makes three attacks.

Claw. *Melee Weapon attack:* +9 to hit. Reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 13 (3d6 + 3) slashing damage

Tongue Strike (Recharge 5 – 6). *Melee Weapon Attack:* +9 to hit. Reach 30 ft., one creature. Hit: (30) 4d12 + 6 piercing damage. On a successful hit, the target must succeed on a DC 17 Constitution saving throw or have a larval void maw implanted in its body. 2 (1d4) rounds later, a full mature void maw emerges from the target's body, taking 44 (8d10) necrotic damage as the void maw appears in the nearest unoccupied space. A larval void maw can be removed by a creature within reach using an action to succeed on a DC 17 Wisdom (Medicine) check to extract it.

Void Gaze. The aberration opens its chest mouth wide, revealing a seemingly endless black abyss with streaks of white light swirling. Each creature of the void maw's choice that it can see must succeed on a DC 17 Wisdom saving throw or be mesmerized by the void, becoming incapacitated for as long as the void maw concentrates (as though concentrating on a spell).

When either all the Void Maws have been killed or the fight has gone on for more than ten minutes, the air is split with the sound of cracking stones. The ground shakes. If there are any surviving Void Maws, they quickly slink back into the closest mirror, glass, or other reflective surfaces. Time for Act 2.

ACT 2



The temple bricks shudder as terrible sounds with no origin echo off the walls. Those-Who-Wait-Beyond grasps forth from several realities into the world as the Scarlet Hearth begins to shatter and break, gravity fading. Chunks of white stone begin to float upwards, drawing the parties to gaze to the gigantic eyes in the sky, staring down at them. Those-Who-Wait-Beyond knows who walked through the Well of Souls, who held the keys, who was near Fayte and Majin, and for some inexplicable alien reason, they've singled out the party and the Scarlet Hearth. At least that's what the party feels. Days later, any surviving soldier would tell the tale in a tavern where the great creatures from beyond singled them out, and them alone.

As this legendary encounter plays out, each round you will ask one Player what they did (or did not do) to become chosen by Those-Who-Wait-Beyond. The round you choose to ask that Player a question, no matter the answer, all of their rolls are made with Disadvantage. They may gain advantage on their rolls if they worship the old ones or are chosen by the entities.

To save the Hearth or fulfill the requests of either the King or the Captain, the party will engage the legendary beast. If they are low level or still in early tiers of play at this point, imbue them with extra strength from the Patrons they are saving in the hearth. If they are Tier Four, then the Patrons should be praying to them for help. This is the challenge to pull no punches.

Fayte looks to the party, "Even with my newfound power, I can't do this alone. I need you, my friends."

Energy will flow out from her, and into the party members, granting the party the means to hurt immortal entities that lie beyond. (This bonus can be left up to the storyteller. For low tier characters wildly swing their damage dice up, and for high tier characters you may wish to restore some spell slots only. Tailor this bonus to your group so the following fight is deadly. Without Fayte's blessing, it should be near impossible). This will temporarily weaken Fayte, putting the onus on the Players to defeat this threat.

The reversed gravity seems to be only affecting non-sentient things. Rocks, stone, dirt, trees, and water begin to slowly float upward. It's as if the Shadelands itself is being torn apart and dragged up. Dozens upon dozens of glowing blueish-purple tentacles descend from the shattered sky. After that comes a swarm of

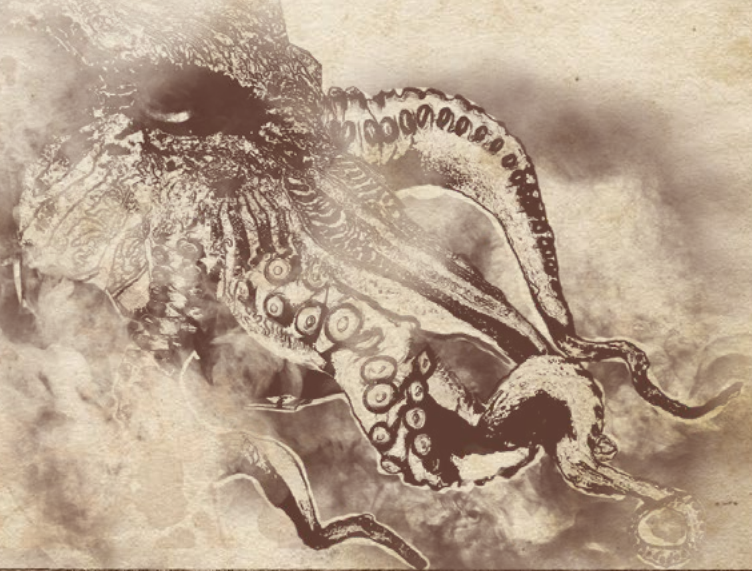
fist-sized creatures that resemble a disembodied eyeball with spider legs and leathery wings.

Each round the party engages with the tentacles and eyes descending from the sky, have them make a DC 20 Wisdom Saving Throw. On a success, they can pull their focus away from the abomination in the sky above and survey their surroundings. They see many Warlocks, legionnaires, wizards, clerics, fighters, and more across the countryside are engaged in similar means. While the two sides are still fighting each other, they aren't blind to the massive threat before them.

If they make their Wisdom Saving Throw, then allow that person (and only that character) a secret DC 20 Intelligence (Investigation) Check. If they make this second roll, then they will spot a Warlock floating up among the chaos, covered in blood, shrieking an endless string of forbidden incantations, their face twisted into a ghastly grin. These are fanatical cultists who want this Entity to consume the Shadelands. They are lending their power to the Entity, turning their bodies into anchors that help it enter our plane of existence. The characters might have to run across floating pillars, walls, or even fallen bodies to strike down one of these crazed cultists.

Doing so cuts the Entity's remaining hit points by half (eventually, the party will have to engage the creature, as you can only divide its HP in half so many times). Hunting the cultists is a perfect way to run the encounter for low-level characters while trying to survive the chaos above. The world... pauses when they defeat the creature's current lot of hit points.

Stats and Abilities for Those Who Wait Beyond can be found in the Appendix





ACT 3



As Those-Who-Wait-Beyond scream across the multiverse and are burned back from reality, Majin and Fayte arrive underneath the characters. Both bear several wounds from battle but are still upright, and both are wiping the ichor of eyeball off their clothes. In the skies above, elder Great Ones rip apart younger Great Ones who were just defeated by the party (and the armies). The chaos above mirrors the chaos happening in the Shadelands. The cacophony of violence is loud enough that the party practically has to shout as acrid rain riddles them all.

Waving them over, Fayte and Majin allow the party a brief Short Rest as they hunker underneath one

of Majin's spells. The fighting needs to stop and at this point, they don't have the time to play favorites anymore: Majin and Fayte reveal the stakes. Even if Fayte thought she could change the King, she can't. The Knight Captain is equally a zealot and will hunt warlocks forever. If they do nothing, every living thing within dozens of miles of this point will die. If Fayte sacrifices herself to the Well... the horrors above will cease, and the two sides will find a reason to make peace.

Lead into the conversation with Fayte's offer to sacrifice herself to the Well. Then, cut in with what each side means specifically with Majin's point of view.

Siding With the Accursed King:

"Destiny, is a tricky thing, friends. Same with choice. If Fayte lends her strength to the side of the Accursed King, then the Knight Captain and all his allies will be wiped out. Not without bloodshed of course, and losses on the King's side... even some you might have come to like. When the dust settles, the Great Old Ones will be brought to heel under the rule, and the Shadelands will forevermore be a place that's a little...stranger. There will never be another Knight Captain or Fayte to balance the scales, and the veil between worlds here will always be a fickle and trite thing. Luckily, it will be a great place to explore the planes... or cut a deal."

Siding With The Knight Captain:

"I think the world has seen enough horrors brought by Warlocks, and I have a feeling their memory runs deep and long. In fact, most Warlocks tend to be of the shorter-lived races, perhaps it's a little bit of perspective. If Fayte lends her strength to the Knight Captain, this will be the end of the King's rule... and the Warlocks of the Shadelands. The Legion of the Fallen's ranks will swell as Patrons are hunted down and murdered wholesale for their crimes. In time, the Legionnaires will leave the Shadelands and crusade out into the world—hunting down would be Warlocks who've crossed the line or have started to piece together secrets they shouldn't know. The Shadelands will be a quieter place, solemn, and sacred. A memorial to the war fought this day, and the lives lost."



Letting Fayte Sacrifice Herself:

"I'd... prefer it if we didn't lose someone so bright and full of potential. You see, the lot of you will all die should she perform this act of... martyrdom. The Knight Captain and the King, united in their hatred of... us. Will turn their armies and magics full force to annihilate us off this plane of existence. I might be able to survive... but I'm not so sure about all of you. The Shadelands will find a balance between Warlock and Patron after this. The King and the Captain, snapped free from their insanity by your sacrifices... bah, it would almost make everything we've done a waste, wouldn't it? Don't let her follow through with such naive ideas. Since when have mortals ever chosen martyrdom over self-preservation?"

Any Player cunning enough to ask for an Insight check doesn't even need to roll. Majin doesn't want the Players to let Fayte sacrifice herself because they can't divine that future. It would also foil their plans and they'd have to start all over again. They might not be sure of the specifics, but Majin seems completely fine with letting half (or all) of the Shadelands die today. The real truth is that with such a massive sacrifice and loss of life throwing the Well of Souls into Chaos, Majin realizes their full plan of putting a yoke around the pacts of all Warlocks.

Walking Away and Letting It Burn:

"That... is... an option, yes. I suppose it is. Might Fayte and I be able to accompany you? If we get far enough away, I suppose Those-Who-Wait-Beyond would let us rest. What... what plane of existence do you plan to hide out on again? Surely you weren't thinking that we could hide here... on this rock. Although, if you convinced enough clerics and other sorts to throw enough prayer and magic at them, they might go away. I mean, the Shadelands and everything for miles to come would be nothing but ash... but... ash does make good fertilizer."

The party will find many excuses to keep debating, hunting for spells, tricks, or other means to get around these choices. Their problem is time. Fayte will keep the party on their toes and remind them that they've got to make a choice. She will be distraught because there is merit to every choice and no matter what, someone has to lose. There just can't be a happy ending. If the party waits and waffles too long, start making it clear that the Shadelands are going to be annihilated (with them in it). Once the Players have made their choice, end the session and get ready for the final chapter.



WEAVING THREADS



SOCIAL

The main social component of this chapter takes place during the final act. When the Players make the ultimate choice over what they are going to do. The Players might engage in a little side-PVP with each other if they are torn with their different beliefs. Unlike other social encounters, they don't have time to let this one breath. Keep the pressure and the tension on with Fayte and Majin as the clock to annihilation ticks down.

Sidequest Potential: Between the second and third acts, it might not be clear what exactly the Players achieve by battling ancient horrors in the sky. To clarify this, you can have a sidequest during the battle where the PCs save Majin and Fayte several times as they race on horseback from the Spire to the Player

character's location. Every round that more than half the party succeeds on their rolls is a round the duo make it through unharmed. In the end, give the Players more time to talk and a longer rest if they helped Majin and Fayte along.



COMBAT

In the climax, if a character dies, remember that they have a letter that can be burnt for their revival. Otherwise, the combat in this fight should stay high-stakes. Don't cheat, but don't pull your punches. Death is already hard to achieve with all the saving throws.

Sidequest Potential: When fighting the Giants and Aberrations in the first part, there is a window there the party can break off to save others. A Shadelands Bard who refuses to leave is madly scribbling down the chronicle in his journal. Blind, but not crippled, the Bard has heard many tales—and is unfortunately about to be devoured. Should the Players save the Bard, they can be rewarded with a published work of their adventure at the end (if they live).



EXPLORATION

If your party enjoys the awe and wonder of exploration, you can weave in bits of it when the realms start to shatter. As the party is fighting Those-Who-Wait-Beyond, bring in sights and smells from other planes of existence. Some strange, some familiar... to showcase how cosmic these entities are.

Sidequest Potential: The cultists are a strange and wild turn of events. Neither loyal to the King or the Captain, these mortals followed the commands of their Patrons and threaten everything. Who are they? What is their motive? Exploring the cult is a valid quest. You can make the cult be anyone, but we went with The Cult of Anastriana. A cult of chaotic evil warlocks whose motive is exploring the outer reaches of reality regardless of the cost. In the right light, on the right day, they might even be cast as noble explorers or scientists. Today, they are scientists who've gone too far. Lured by the madness of their Patrons.







Chapter 10

VAE VICTIS

"Few things in life are more disappointing than watching events unfold exactly as you predicted they would..." — Majin the Betrayer

INTRODUCTION

The End Is Nigh. 'Vae Victis' is both the resolution and epilogue for the Red Opera. Unlike other chapters written, this chapter contains several different story possibilities. Your Players may have stuck pretty close to the script, or for all we know; their characters might be leading the armies of foreign nations to burn the Shadelands. The Players always throw kinks in the best-laid storyteller plans and we love them for it. Just remember to keep Tragedy and Cost as themes played in the forefront for whatever outcome the Players are on. The theme and tone of this Red Opera can be achieved no matter how far off the rails the campaign has gone, but as an architect of the story, it rests upon your shoulders to stick the landing.

If everything has gone to plan, however, then the party has settled on one of four choices—three of

them viable. If they choose to do nothing and watch the world burn, let them burn with it and close the book on their shocked faces. Inaction is just wasted opportunity after all. The world will be rent asunder and we showcase some means that you'll be able to narrate that as the Storyteller.

This final session is best run by candlelight, with soft music in the background. Even though there are a few grudge matches to be settled, the entire tone of this chapter is the light fading. The world of the Shadelands will be changed forever.

At the end of the adventure, crack open any remaining Letters Home, and read them out loud to the table (in the voice of Majin if you've been doing character voices), and burn them together.

SYNOPSIS

"I've never had enough power to change a battle until now. I could get used to this—if I survive..."
— *Fayte the Shield Maiden*

In the first act, we will resolve the current battle. The party and Fayte will play out one of their choices and engage in final combat. Fayte ultimately meets her demise after achieving their set goal, and the battle for the Shadelands comes to end.

In the second act, the characters will skip time a bit and wrap up loose ends in the Shadelands based on their choice and what has happened. As a non-combat act and a bit of an epilogue to the current story, you'll need to do some pre-planning with the party to write what happens. Keeping a note and a log of all the NPCs that need story resolutions will be helpful to provide proper closure.

Lastly, in the third act; we will touch on Majin. You'll read any remaining letters home and burn them

together. Depending on which choices the characters made and who died along the way... the party may find themselves brought back to life for another, yet unknown, adventure.



VAE VICTIS

Scan this QR code to listen to this adventure act's paired song from the Orchestral Version of the Red Opera Album by DiAmorte.



THE SETTING

“What of the world? The deed is done. This age ends, and another begins. Aren't you curious about what new ideas it brings? Or are we stuck animating the dead of a past age again to lament over our failures?” — Majin the Betrayer

The physical Shadelands itself will go from being a realm in the throes of chaos to several possible outcomes.

One possibility is the Shadelands becomes stranger, weirder, more colorful, and more welcoming to Warlocks. When they set about rebuilding the Shadelands, rather than use earthen architecture and designs—start spattering in otherworldly angles. Ruled by the Accursed King, who now has sway over all warlocks (via Majin) in the world, the city preps and readies for expansion. Patrons and spirits roam more freely, and the Shadelands becomes home for both interdimensional commerce, but also a place of terrifying mortal torment. The mind breaks easily when confronted with things less understood. Slowly but surely the population of the Shadelands fades from identifiable Warlocks into more inhuman types.

Another possibility is the Shadelands falling under the sway of the Knight Captain. Instead of being a place that welcomes the strange, they hunt it. Taking pride in being a defense against the worlds and other realities, the Shadelands becomes more militarized. Religions and other types of magic find themselves featured more prominently, and places like the Scarlet Hearth and Well of Souls are locked down. Any remaining Warlocks are shackled in both pact and service to the Knight Captain (and Majin ensures this is so). Around

the world, Legionnaires of the Fallen begin their crusade at locating other Warlocks and bringing them in. A task made vastly easier when their eldritch powers are yoked by Majin. Under the rule of the Knight Captain, the Shadelands becomes a military stronghold ready to invade other nations (or even other planes of existence) to kill hiding Patrons that break the law.

The third possibility (and most surprising) is if the Players and Fayte martyr themselves in the battle. When this is done the Shadelands will resume a balance found in the first chapter. A vibrant and colorful land filled with mystery, wonder, and hope at the beyond. The Knight Captain and King will set aside their differences and rebuild the city with a new framework from the ground up. Not having complete control over the Well, Majin is unable to yoke in every Patron's pact. He's earned power no doubt, and their experiment yielded results—but they're not out of the game just yet... And neither are the Players.

The final option is if the Players took a path of inaction or a path that deviates too far from destiny. The Shadelands are utterly destroyed and everyone inside is consumed by Those-Who-Wait-Beyond. For miles on end, everything is turned to ash. The Players may, or may not, find themselves in this wave of destruction. Should they die, there is no return—their souls are forever devoured by the Great Old Ones. After a time, Majin will sweep out their laboratory in the Well and fix the mural. The undisputed ruler and master of the Shadelands, Majin sits on the King's shattered throne and enjoys some peace and quiet; they've found a way to bring death to the world.

ACT 1

The Players Choose to Side With Accursed King:

Fayte may not be able to change who Dorian is, and the love that was once there has faded away. Despite this, Dorian is still one of their best hopes of keeping the Patrons in check. When dealing with the Great Old Ones above, he'll have the most say. Unfortunately, even though the Knight Captain is just—his end is now. Even if the Accursed King became too powerful, other nations and other deities could step in; but right now, they need his strength.

With their choice made, Fayte lends her strength (and the power of the Well via Majin) to the King's Warlocks. Across the battlefield, power flows into the King's men. With the tide of battle turning, the party and Fayte chase after the Knight Captain's position to capture (or kill) him [Refer to Appendix for the Knight Captain's stats and abilities for this fight]. Rain crashes down from above, giants still shadow the horizon, and horrors from above rip each other ashred.

Faced with the betrayal of Fayte, who would choose... this chaos over his love and stability, the Knight

Captain and his soldiers will kill Fayte in this battle [refer to Appendix for Knight Captain's stats and abilities]. During the fight, make Fayte the primary target for all attacks; and even take cheap shots if needed. The party can't resurrect her if she dies, but if the party does prevent her death—she will cut the throat of the Knight Captain. Once Fayte, the Knight Captain, or both are dead the call for retreat begins.

Unfortunately, the Legionnaires will be slaughtered down to the last and the sacrifice to the Well of Souls is complete. Fayte's power and choice allows Majin to seal off the eldritch beasts plaguing the Shadelands, and the Accursed King can restore power. Move onto Act 2.

The Players Choose to Side With Knight Captain:

The Knight Captain offers many sane reasons for the party to choose him. Once the choice is made, Fayte and Majin use their powers to deprive all the Warlocks of any powers they have. As the wave of energy washes over the battlefield, the Players and Fayte will charge the King's position while he is weak. Unfortunately for Fayte, the King has made many deals and many pacts—and not all of his power comes from Patrons [refer to Appendix for the Accursed Kings stats and abilities for this fight]. Using artifacts, he will hiss with hatred and curse her name a thousand ways while ripping her asunder in the battle. Prior to becoming the King, he was a warrior and has no intention of going down without a fight.

Saving Fayte during the battle with the King should be nigh impossible. Even if she hides and doesn't go into the fight, he and his men will race to find her. After all, she's the one who is meddling with their powers.

Once the King is defeated, the city's Warlocks and Patrons fall soon after. Powerless and now swimming upstream, it is a slaughter that runs the city red with their blood. Even the Obsidian Rush changes color to that of a deep crimson river. Fueled with enough energy and any rival they had removed, Majin banishes the otherworldly threats easily and hands the keys of the kingdom to the Knight Captain. If Fayte is still alive somehow, she will find herself heartbroken over how violent everything was. Move onto Act 2.

The Players Choose Self-Sacrifice:

Choosing for Fayte to sacrifice herself to the Well is the one outcome Majin least enjoys. Alas, they are still bound by their will and curious to see how this unfolds. Instead of a fight against either side, the party will take Fayte to the pool that sat beneath the now shattered Scarlet Hearth. Looking down, the

once black waters are now clear, and they can see the actual Well of Souls far below. Whether the Well is physically down there, or they are looking through a portal... it doesn't matter. The Well is ready to receive the ultimate sacrifice. The effects are instantaneous. Every otherworldly monstrosity and aberration dissipates. The sky returns to normal. All that is left are the mortals.

There will be no hiding this action from either LaCroix or Dorian. Everyone on every side will know it was the Party that killed the Shadelands' favored daughter.

Heartbroken, both the Knight Captain and the King demand the "Betrayers'" heads. They send everyone in their arsenal after Majin and the Player characters. Send everything you have and the kitchen sink to kill the party. Nothing about these encounters is fair, but you can run them on as long as you wish. The straightforward approach at this point is a fight between the party and wave after wave of various enemies. And it doesn't stop until each and every one of them is dead.

If the party is low level, it will probably be a very simple affair (all their help is now gone). If the party is at a high level, you don't have to let it end here. This might even be the start of a new campaign. The citizens of Yon'Cath will use everything to endlessly hunt the party, and it is only a matter of time before they meet their demise. Even if the party rallies forth and wins the battle over the King and Captain the Shadelands Patrons would still go after them. Although this would make for a wickedly cool campaign, and it might be worth exploring, it's easier to just give in and accept death. After all, it's not the end...

You'll move to Act 2 when you deem appropriate and narrate what happens, but the Player characters won't interact again until after you read their Letter's Home.

The Players Choose To Do Nothing:

In some fashion, the Players sometimes choose no-action. This takes many forms: the party could just leave, they could join an outside nation, or they could try a small political coup on their own. Leaving Fayte to her own devices spells doom for the Shadelands as she gives into fear and insanity from Those-Who-Wait-Beyond and opens the gates further to them. If everyone wants to watch the world burn, then so be it. There is no combat to be had when facing the full might of the eldritch horrors.

Mortals choose petty things and the cycle of life and death continues endlessly. Fayte brings an end to it all.

ACT 2

The Players Choose to Side With Accursed King:

After the battle is resolved, skip ahead a few weeks in the Shadelands. Give the party some much-needed rest and treat them as heroes in the King's court. By choosing the King's side he will offer them rank and nobility within the Shadelands and the party might find themselves gladly accepting land and responsibility.

Bit-by-bit, however, the Shadelands becomes more otherworldly. New temples are constructed, and more permanent planar gates are constructed. The vision of the King is that the Shadelands will serve as the de-facto home on the Material Plane for all Warlocks and creatures tied to the outside. Majin gladly enjoys their role in the court, where all Patrons and Warlocks find their deals going through them now.

Without a semblance of balance, the Shadelands slowly grow more-and-more inhumane. Resembling less a city of mortals and more a place of myth and weird walking the streets. How this plays out in your world with your party is up to them to shape, but slowly and surely keep removing mortal races from the table until the Shadelands is fully a city for Patrons. Patrons all paying homage to one King—and their strings being pulled by one entity.



The Players Choose to Side With Knight Captain:

Weeks roll by in the Shadelands as everything is rebuilt from the ground up. The party will be at the forefront of the Knight Captain's advisers and instrumental in helping rebuild the government. Every position from high to low needs to be filled once again, and there is a complete restructuring that needs to happen. It's even possible that the Knight Captain creates a democratic environment or a guild-led republic in the Shadelands. Let the party be involved in the final choices as to how the world is shaped—they've earned it.

As time marches on, the party will slowly realize that magic and Warlocks are heavily policed and pressed into service. Patrons and creatures from other worlds are rarely seen and slowly brought to heel within the Shadelands. Permanent Gates to other worlds are constructed, but with the sole intent of sending elite strike-forces through to kill Patron's that demand horrible sacrifices of their Warlocks. Once again in the world, Warlocks are distrusted, hunted, and hated.

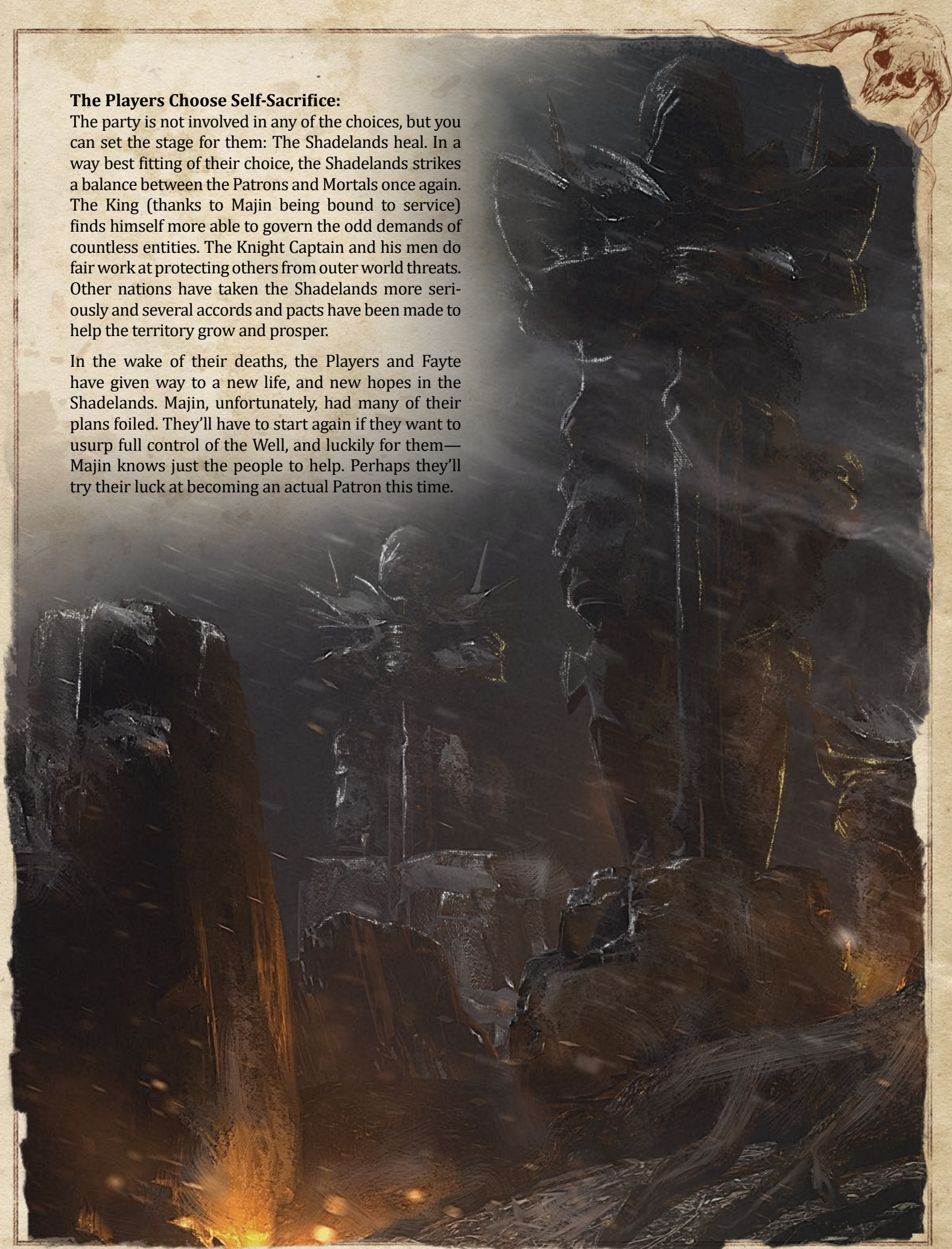
The Shadelands can serve as grounds for an entire new Planeswalking campaign, or a place to run an Inquisition out of a mix of both suits this ending well.



The Players Choose Self-Sacrifice:

The party is not involved in any of the choices, but you can set the stage for them: The Shadelands heal. In a way best fitting of their choice, the Shadelands strikes a balance between the Patrons and Mortals once again. The King (thanks to Majin being bound to service) finds himself more able to govern the odd demands of countless entities. The Knight Captain and his men do fair work at protecting others from outer world threats. Other nations have taken the Shadelands more seriously and several accords and pacts have been made to help the territory grow and prosper.

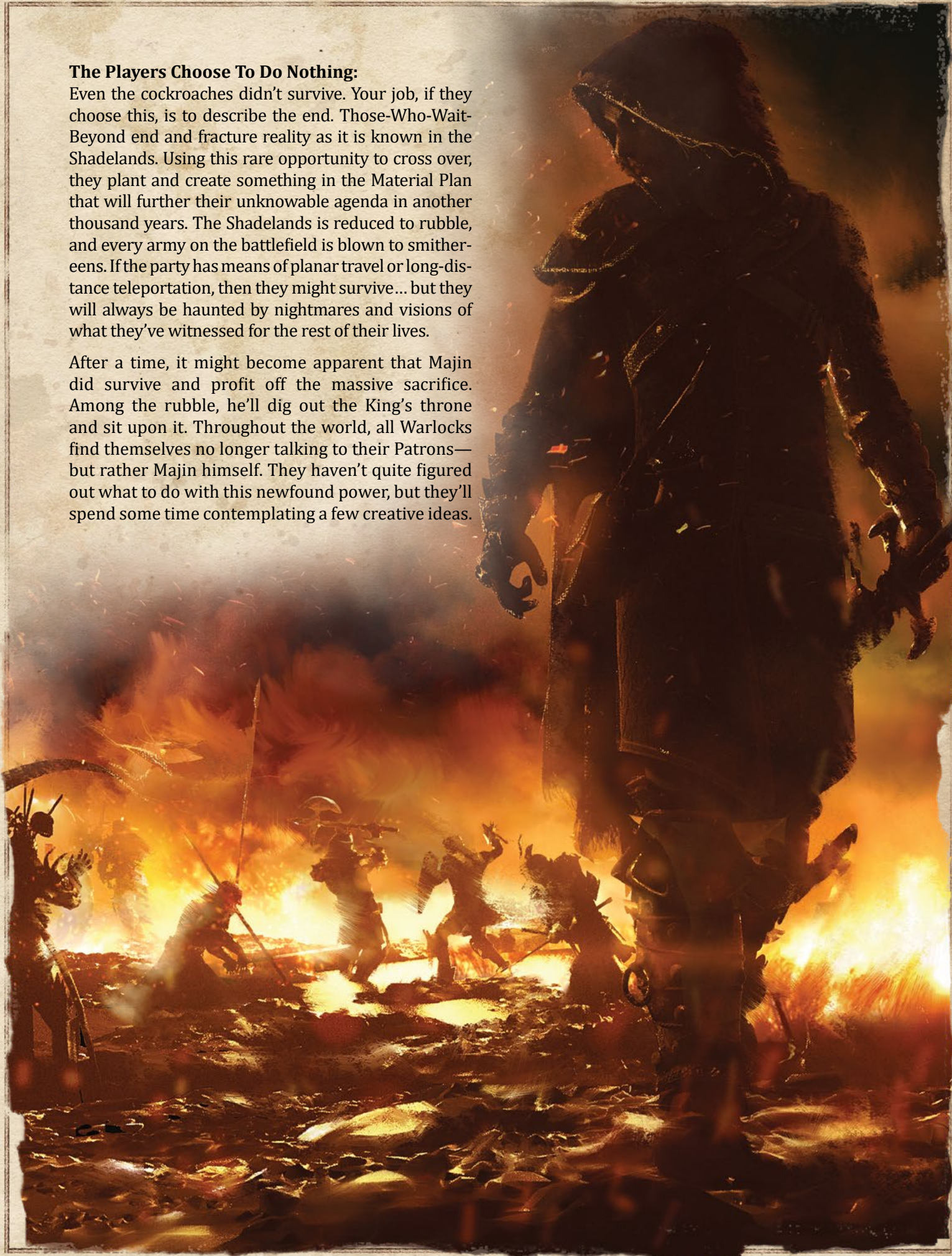
In the wake of their deaths, the Players and Fayte have given way to a new life, and new hopes in the Shadelands. Majin, unfortunately, had many of their plans foiled. They'll have to start again if they want to usurp full control of the Well, and luckily for them—Majin knows just the people to help. Perhaps they'll try their luck at becoming an actual Patron this time.



The Players Choose To Do Nothing:

Even the cockroaches didn't survive. Your job, if they choose this, is to describe the end. Those-Who-Wait-Beyond end and fracture reality as it is known in the Shadelands. Using this rare opportunity to cross over, they plant and create something in the Material Plan that will further their unknowable agenda in another thousand years. The Shadelands is reduced to rubble, and every army on the battlefield is blown to smithereens. If the party has means of planar travel or long-distance teleportation, then they might survive... but they will always be haunted by nightmares and visions of what they've witnessed for the rest of their lives.

After a time, it might become apparent that Majin did survive and profit off the massive sacrifice. Among the rubble, he'll dig out the King's throne and sit upon it. Throughout the world, all Warlocks find themselves no longer talking to their Patrons—but rather Majin himself. They haven't quite figured out what to do with this newfound power, but they'll spend some time contemplating a few creative ideas.



ACT 3



In Act 3, we have one job as Storytellers: Read the letters home. Going around the party, close the adventure off by reading the letter the PC's wrote at the start. When the letter is read, burn it on the candle or in a fireplace. As it turns to ash, go ahead and recap any loose ends from that the Player character. If the letter mentioned family, or loved ones, or a connection to the world—describe what happened to those people throughout the Red Opera. The world is not static and time marches on.

If the Player had already died and has no letter remaining... then for them is only silence and solace. Perhaps a drink in their honor, or narrate a scene of them alone in a bar by the warmth of the flame during a long night. They have no connection to the world anymore, and their fate is their own.

Lastly, for any characters that have died during the final act by picking self-sacrifice and foiling Majin's plans: After their letter is read, describe those mentioned in the letter feel the pull or call to the Shadelands and find themselves walking to meet Majin.

Near a small tree in the Thistlewood Forest, under a few feet of snow, they awake. Majin is standing over graves holding a basket filled with small gnarled humanoid plants and has just burned each of the letters. Majin summons the dead character's closest and loved ones to their side. There, they begin to weave to them the tale of poor forgotten souls who made a very interesting choice, but they'd like to try again...

While normally burning the Letter Home would revive the party members, it was Majin who always fueled this little trick. Burning the letters brought the target back to life, but made everyone who loved them forget the character. Since the party didn't exactly take the action Majin wanted... they aren't so keen to revive them. Their loved ones (or close allies) might prove more reliable to Majin's next attempt.

Perhaps as the party passes onto the afterlife, they can gain solace in knowing that Majin will keep trying again, and again. Majin hands their loved ones parchment and a pen... and has them write a letter to a loved one (thus bringing the cycle of people taking a pilgrimage to the Shadelands full circle, and providing an interesting hook for the next story).

"Well, that was an interesting endeavor wouldn't you say? Come. We've got more work to do."

Other characters who died in the final act, but choose options that benefited Majin will be resurrected as normal by burning their letters.

As for those in the party who achieved the goal of a Patron they cut a deal with during the campaign; should find themselves with a free level of Warlock (perhaps with Majin as a patron based on their outcome), or an Epic Level Boon that mimics a Warlock power based on a patron. If the party had hostile deals with Patrons, you can take an insidious action and replace one of their class levels with Warlock. That patron isn't done with them yet...

Either way, feel free as the Storyteller to break a few rules at the end of the Red Opera. Party members who died in the final act should be held dead—but their story continues in those who loved them. Those who survived should have to face the consequences (both good and bad) of their choices. Grant epic boons, remove levels, levy curses, and more because no matter what:

What adventures come next is determined by them.

From the bottom of our hearts, we hope you (and your Players) enjoy the Red Opera and the adventures that come after. Your connection to those around you is truly important, and hopefully, this story has brought everyone at your table closer together. Please reach out to any of us at Apotheosis Studios with your tales and how this Opera came to an end for you and your group. Your endings will determine the future of the Shadelands!

Thank you so much.

Everyone at Apotheosis Studios







Side Quest

TENTACLES IN THE DEEP

INTRODUCTION

What would you do if a Patron of abominable intent and profane heart bound you into a Warlock Pact against your will? Would you risk your eternal soul—and the souls of all those close to you—to break free of the creature’s vile grasp? Even if you had such an intent, how would you hope to kill such an abhorrent entity? How could you possibly muster the strength—and allies—necessary to slay an Eldritch God?

Domadred Steel, a swashbuckling hero of Jamison Stone’s *The Rune Chronicles*, is far from home and has seemingly run out of options. Falsely outlawed for treason in his native waters, Domadred, his crew, and their ship, the *Illusive Diamond*, have more stories in their wake than all the vessels in the Yon’Cath harbor combined.

Immediately before the events of *The Red Opera*’s main campaign, Domadred and his crew, during a deadly sea tempest in their native home of Terra, were tricked into a Patron Pact with A Great Old One to avoid near-certain death. The Patron, “upholding its side of the bargain,” transported Domadred and his ship out of the storm to the “safety” of Yon’Cath.

The Patron informed Domadred that the only way

for his crew to return to their homeworld was for Domadred to serve as an anchor for the Patron in this realm. To do so means Domadred must merge with the Eldritch horror deep within the Nameless Black Sea, north of Yon’Cath’s Obsidian Rush, and serve as its “Avatar” here in this physical plane. Domadred, however, has other plans...

This adventure is designed for Tier 4 characters (level 17 to 20) and serves as an epilogue to *The Red Opera*, providing a means for storytellers and players to experience what it takes to kill a Patron—and if the party survives the ordeal, reap their just rewards. Act 3 presents a profoundly difficult battle with Those Who Wait Beyond and should not be taken lightly.

This adventure also enables Players transport upon Domadred Steele’s ship, the *Illusive Diamond*, to any of the many planes of their choosing so they can embark on their next campaign and setting after they have completed *The Red Opera*!

So, grab your captain’s hat, a well-worn jolly roger, and a half-drunken bottle of whiskey, as you prepare to set sail for a nautical adventure of cosmic scope and horror—if you dare!

SETTING

This adventure takes place approximately one week after the main storyline of *The Red Opera*—and Yon’Cath will, depending on your players’ choices, be in one of several states of tranquility or turmoil. Use your best judgment regarding how much or how little Yon’Cath’s state affects the story. See “adventure hooks” below for additional ideas and suggestions.

Act 1 takes place in The Bloated Barnacle, a rustic themed inn and tavern that always seems to have hints of ships through the room, either as barrel tables, or fishing nets decorating the ceiling. The inn is primarily frequented by those who spend more of their days on the ocean than on land, or by those who want to change their usual tavern scenery. Depending on how the main campaign ended, the tavern will either be filled with legionaries if the

Players choose to side with Lacroix. Or filled with Warlocks and Dorian’s men if The Accursed King won. If a hybrid ending was chosen, it could be filled with all manner of entities, or even empty, depending on how you choose to end the main adventure and run this quest.

Domadred’s ship is located in the docks of the Obsidian Rush, as close as can be to The Bloated Barnacle, which is where Act 2 and 3 of this adventure takes place. The *Illusive Diamond* is a three-masted barquentine schooner with a crew of twenty, weary and battle-worn men. More details regarding the ship and its upcoming exploits upon the Nameless Black Sea will be found below.

SETTING

Domadred and his pirate crew have been cast ashore due to the duplicitous mechanizations of a Great Old One Patron known only as "Those Who Wait Beyond." Domadred his crew desperately wish to free themselves of their Patron pact but need help slaying the Patron lest be forced to comply with its demands of using Domadred as the Patron's "Avatar" in the physical world.

In Act 1, the party finds Domadred in The Bloated Barnacle drinking and gambling, lamenting his dire situation. Tempted by fame, fortune, or personal reasons, the party agrees to help Domadred, and just as the agreement is made, a mysterious elf battlemage named Vajra Ajey Virendra appears, claiming to have the same goal of defeating the vile Great Old One. Vajra says he works for another patron named The Mother of Mirrors (see page 81) and only through her divine help will Domadred be able to break his vile pact and return to his homeworld of Terra. Vajra says he will assist Domadred and the Party, asking only one thing in return: that he strikes the killing blow against the dark patron once it has been

weakened here in the physical plane. Domadred agrees and a deal is struck.

In Act 2, the party and Vajra are led by Domadred to his ship the *Illusive Diamond* and they set sail into the eerie and unknown waters of the Obsidian Rush and Nameless Black Sea. Here Domadred begins slipping into the madness of his patron, and the party and Vajra must assist the crew (skill challenges) in sailing the ship and fighting back tentacle creatures that emerge from the water.

In Act 3, the *Illusive Diamond* makes it to the appointed spot deep within the Nameless Black Sea, and Domadred falls into complete psychosis. The party then works alongside Vajra and helps protect the ship from the monstrous patron by assisting the crew in firing the ship's cannons at its emerging tentacles. The party must also weaken the Great Old One and expose its vulnerable point through magic and blade, thereby allowing Vajra to get deliver the final killing blow. Without the party's help, however, all will be lost, the ship will be destroyed, and her crew consumed by Those Who Wait Beyond.

ADVENTURE HOOKS

This adventure is written in such a way that any of The Red Opera's campaign ending are viable story hooks, however, here are a few key points to keep in mind.

The opportunity to kill a Patron for personal reasons, fame, or gold, should be a powerful call to adventure. There are many rewards for a party brave (or foolish) enough to attempt such a feat.

Irrespective of how the main storyline of The Red Opera ended for your party, characters may eventually want to depart Yon'Cath and prepare for their next campaign. If Yon'Cath is in chaos and burning, their departure will be in haste as refugees; but even if they are departing on good terms, safe travel on Domadred's ship the *Illusive Diamond* to any plane of their choosing is a very potent story hook, as well.

Lastly, if your characters are Warlocks of, or choose to work for, the Great Old Ones, they can "agree" to help Domadred, BUT in Act 3 of the adventure, can instead betray Domadred and Vajra. If this occurs, the Players will assist the evil Patron "Those Who Wait Beyond" take control of Domadred and his crew.

Lastly, if your characters are Warlocks of, or choose to work for, the Great Old Ones, they can "agree" to help Domadred, BUT in Act 3 of the adventure, can instead betray Domadred and Vajra. If this occurs, the Players will assist the evil Patron "Those Who Wait Beyond" take control of Domadred and his crew.

This is a very "non-cannon" ending and Game Masters will have to improvise a new ending but could serve as a unique adventure for players who wish to side with evil and take a *darker* path.



ACT 1: RUM AND SHADOWS

Before nightfall the party receives a letter, requesting help in breaking a pact with a malicious patron with who they have a history. A history that has loose ends and may still pose a threat, even if it is some time down the line. There is the promise of a reward, but the contents of such a thing aren't outright stated. All the party knows exactly, is that should they agree, to go to The Bloated Barnacle at nightfall.

And so, the night begins inside The Bloated Barnacle, a four-level structure close to the Obsidian Rush docks. Known for its wide selection of ales and atmospheric location, travelers of all stripes come to the inn to break or forge a pact—or in Domadred Steel's case, lament their imminent doom.

Wearing a wide-brimmed captain's hat, Domadred is clad in wealthy seafarer's attire whose native waters are unknown to even the most well-traveled adventurer. He wears a combination of cloth and leather armor, with a single plate mail pauldron on his right shoulder. At his hip is a medium-sized cutlass with a very ornate pommel and scabbard—worn as though he has great proficiency at wielding it. Domadred has striking blue eyes and long blond hair adorned with a multitude of braids and decorative beads which clink softly every time he moves.

If your players pass an Intelligence (History) DC 12 check, they will notice his specific style of clothing—long leather coat with red edging, and a blue vest with gold filigree—is not a nautical style native to ANY of the commonly known planes of existence.

Domadred is sitting at the table, drinking and gambling with a group of rough-looking men. After laying down a winning hand and taking the pot, several of the men stand up, clearly looking to fight. Domadred stands up quickly to pocket his winnings, saying,

"My good men, no need to take offense, I have separated you from your gold fairly—besides," Domadred leans in, his face growing grim, *"If you have an issue, you can always take it up with my new companions here."*

A few men speak up, clearly interested until they look in the direction Domadred swung his arm and, upon seeing the party who helped drive the Great Old Ones, the entire table falls quiet. Domadred tips his hat with a coy flourish, departing with his winnings.

He eyes the party up and down on approach before speaking. *"I'd wager my ship, the Illusive Diamond, fastest vessel in these accursed waters, that you all wish to become both famous and wealthy."*

After leading the party to a personal secluded table in the back of the inn, some salty sailor-inspired banter can occur between Domadred and your party. Here he laments his and his crew's dire situation as described in the Introduction and Synopses of being hoodwinked into a Patron pact against his will and forced to do the bidding of a vile Patron.

Whether the party brings it up first, or Domadred reaches the end of how he and his crew were cheated into a pact, he reveals in a hushed voice that the first reward that the party will gain the moniker of "Great Old One Killer". If, for some reason, they aren't interested, he has gold to spare and will barter with them for nearly any amount. The time frame, however, he laments.

"I have until sunrise tomorrow to meet my Patrons demands, lest he says he consumes my soul—so better to give my treasure to you, then die with it in the hold of my ship."

As your party and Domadred are hammering out the finer details of exactly what 'killing a Great Old One' entails, a mysterious elf walks up to the group.

While the party debate with Domadred on how to kill a Great Old One, a mysterious elf approaches from across the room, ducking into the personal alcove. Chuckling, he speaks in an unknown accent, *"I do applaud your enthusiasm, however, if you truly think you all can defeat an omnipresent, gargantuan aberration of apocalyptic might and madness by yourselves—you truly deserve to have your souls devoured by its horrid maw of void and suffering."*

The elf has a wry smile upon his striking face. If your party can pass an Arcane Check DC 20, they can tell the man radiates magic and power akin to a sorcerer, but in a way not native to this plane.

He has sapphire blue eyes and ultramarine hair, with the sides and back of his head shaved, the rest styled up, exposing strange black magical runes encircling his head. They start in a black band at his blue hairline, and the symbols etch themselves downward into his flesh, akin to an inverted crown. The crown

stops at his forehead, however, and at its center, there is a lone mystical circular Rune, slightly larger than an eye.

The elf is wearing a long, sleeveless, black leather hooded trench coat, with silver and blue inlay which faintly shimmers in the inn's torchlight and plain black trousers tucked into brown boots. His empowered black cloak is open, exposing a bare, muscular chest with a massive, circular Runic tattoo. His arms bare the same strange black Runic tattoos that start by encircling his wrists, climbing their way up his muscular forearms.

Lastly, upon the elf's back is a large, black, two-handed greatsword. It seems to ravenously suck up the light in the room. The entire sword - blade to hilt - is "oblivion black" except for a single stone the size of an eye, held firmly in the blade's pommel, which is pure white.

Upon seeing the elf, everyone in the party must roll a Wisdom Save DC 18 or be intimidated. If they fail, they avert their gaze from the elf and suffer disadvantage on their next roll within the next ten minutes.

Domadred is taken aback by the elf but recovers quickly. *"And who, my pointy-eared friend, are you?"*

"Vajra Ajey Virendra," the elf says with a respectful nod of his head. *"I am here to help you kill your Patron."*

"Well, that's splendid! I am Dom—"

"No need to introduce yourself," Vajra continues, *"you and I are something like half-brothers."*

Domadred eyes the elf's long ears incredulously, saying, *"I highly doubt that is true, friend. In Terra's great Thalassocracy we don't have—"*

"Don't believe me?" Vajra asks smugly, once again interrupting Domadred, *"Plane Walking is a tricky thing, and we don't have much time before we must slay your Patron. Give me a moment and I will gladly prove myself."* Vajra then closes his eyes and they flutter for a moment as a sly smile spreads across his elven face.

"Your deceased wife's name is Kalisa, former chair of the Warden Women's High Council, and she was slain by Lenhal after he bedded her and framed you for the murder of the prime admiral, casting you and your men out of the Western fleet."

Domadred's face goes pale upon hearing these words, and Vajra continues, *"Do you not wish to avenge your wife and return home and see your son, Brayden, again? Do you not long to once again become re-united with Beck Al'Beth in Mindra's Haven,*

and use Devdan's military might to bring Lenhal to justice, regaining your former glory as an Admiral of the Thalassocracy?"

Domadred swallows hard and whispers barely loud enough for the party to hear. *"... Indeed, I do."*

"Then my dear Captain," Vajra continues, *"let me introduce you to a Patron who can help you achieve your noble goals."*

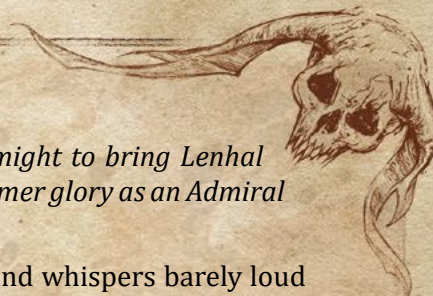
Vajra takes a deep breath and once again closes his eyes. This time when he opens them, they glow brilliant white. Have all players roll a Perception check DC 15. If they pass or possess the ability to see Ethereal beings, they also see the glowing silhouette of a floating woman, seated with her legs crossed in lotus pose, hovering next to Vajra's body. She has many arms, outstretched with one hand gently resting on Vajra's shoulder, and the rest are either holding mirror shards showing various scenes from across the planes, or performing meditative hand mudras. The glowing woman is smiling and has a nose and lip piercing, her red hair flows about, as if she were underwater, suspended in an ethereal substance. Her face and body have golden cracks as if filaments of gilded light were shining through places in her flesh that had been broken and mended with divine radiance.

Even if players fail their perception check, while they cannot see these details, they can at least see the faint silhouette of her body and know that a Patron is reaching through planes and time, connecting and speaking through Vajra in a voice melodic and womanlike.

"Ahh, Domadred Steel," Vajra says in a strangely feminine voice, *"You are so very far from home, but I see you have finally recruited allies to your cause."* The floating Patron, still speaking through Vajra, then acknowledges each of the characters by name, highlighting something about each of them from their backstory that their fellow party members might not know.

"I am known as The Mother of Mirrors, and have cast Silence about us here, so Those Who Wait Beyond cannot hear us despite their vile omnipresence in this place in time. I am here to help you slay this vile creature." The Mother of Mirrors then acknowledges the party's specific reasons for wishing to help Domadred, whether they be personal, monetary, or fame based.

"To achieve your goals, however, you all have a part to play, each one as vital as the next. First, Domadred, once we leave this inn you must reach out to Those Who Wait Beyond with your mind and convince it that



you are willing to accept its demands and give your body and soul to it."

Domadred opens his mouth in surprised objection, but The Mother of Mirrors raises a glowing hand behind Vajra and instantly silences him.

"You must convince it you are telling the truth—believe it in your heart, and give in to despair knowing in your soul that it has won. I will be there with you, however, preserving a sliver of your mind from its insanity and corruption, and you must trust in me, and in my agent Vajra to bring you back from the brink of dark madness.

The Mother of Mirrors then, still speaking through Vajra, turns her attention to the party. *"But for Vajra to be able to act, you must lure Those Who Wait Beyond's hulking leviathan body out from the depths of The Nameless Black Sea and help expose the creature's skull. For only by your aid will Vajra be able to plunge his Obsidian Blade into its brain, destroying it not only in this plane but throughout all of space and time."*

Vajra's voice suddenly begins to waver, and he grows unsteady on his feet. *"I must be quick, using Vajra as a conduit like this is taxing and you have a dangerous journey ahead. Once Vajra completes his duty, you all will be rewarded handsomely, and I will use my Mirrorwalking abilities to transport not only Domadred, his crew, and their ship back to their home of Terra, but first, all of you to any plane you wish to journey to. And, as a reward, if you so choose it, after you have completed this task, you may call upon me again—but now, as your Patron and eternal ally."*

Domadred bows his head deeply to The Mother of Mirrors, saying, *"I do not pretend to understand the machinations of demons and goddesses such as yourself, however, I am honored by your help and will follow your command, despite the fear in my heart. Consider my role in this already completed."*

The Mother of Mirrors smiles at Domadred and then looks at the party. *"Time is of the essence, but we have a few fleeting moments for questions if you must. Despite his gusto and bravery, my agent Vajra will be unable to accomplish this task without you—so unless you are ready to embark on this noble quest now, you may ask me three questions"*

If your players ask her additional details regarding who she is, The Mother of Mirrors smiles, looking into one of her mirrors while responding,

"I am known as Vlahnya to some, and as a Siren to others; but to most here in The Shadelands, I am known

as The Mother of Mirrors—a Patron of Yon'Cath hailing from these lands as a young Glau'bjurn, long before the Warlock cities of Yonder and Cathrach grew out of the banks of the Obsidian Rush."

If asked why she is helping Domadred or the players, or why she wishes to defeat "Those Who Wait Beyond," she responds, *"I have traveled across space and time hunting those who have hurt my children and me—and Those Who Wait Beyond are the second to last on a long list of entities which have stolen more from me and mine than you could ever imagine. If you have doubts, just ask that question to Vajra and see the pain upon his face for your answer."*

If The Mother of Mirrors is asked who Vajra is, or how she is communicating through Vajra like this, she responds, *"Vajra is betrothed to one who I am very close to, and he knows the only way to rejoin with her is to reclaim the power Those Who Wait Beyond and others have stolen from his Chakric homeland. He and I have been hunting these fiends through space and time for what seems like an eternity, and we are so very close to the end of our journey—after Those Who Wait Beyond, there is just one left remaining in the city of Salvata."*

If asked what having her as a Patron entails, she smiles, saying, *"Mirrorwalking is a path many covet and few achieve—prove yourself worthy of my patronage, and I promise you will not be disappointed."*

Despite her willingness to answer questions, there must be a sense of urgency to propel the story onward. After the three questions, Vajra collapses from the strain of channeling The Mother of Mirrors for so long. Unless one of the players beats him to it, Domadred rushes to Vajra's side, giving him a hand and a drink of water. If one of your players helps Vajra, The Mother of Mirrors gives that player advantage on their next combat roll.

For a moment, Vajra seems very disoriented but regains himself quickly. If your party has additional questions, they may ask him, however, both Domadred and Vajra are eager to get underway.

If members of your party ask Vajra why he is interested in helping them or Domadred, he responds, *"Domadred is the last Warlock of the Patron "Those Who Wait Beyond," and without him, it will lose its connection to this world. This will make it much more difficult to kill and I cannot allow it to escape until I reclaim what it has stolen from my Chakric homeland."*

If pressed on what the evil Patron has stolen, Vajra will not answer directly, saying only, *"That is between*

that vile creature and my people. I have made my terms well known—I am to claim the killing blow on Those Who Wait Beyond, I demand nothing else but will not have my prize stolen from me.”

If asked what the physical reward is (other than a title and Domadred’s gold) for defeating the Patron, Vajra will sneer, saying, “Is ridding our worlds of such an abomination not reward enough? It is selfishness such as this that has allowed such vile creatures into our planes. Regardless, an abhorrent Patron of such power will no doubt have body parts any alchemist or apothecary would covet and kill for. Great Old One’s saliva, blood, teeth, eyes, talons, maws, scales, and all manner of parts are near priceless in the right circles, possessing powers and abilities you can hardly fathom—or dare to wield.”

Once the party agrees, Domadred steels his mind in preparation to contact *Those Who Wait Beyond* and the party departs The Bloated Barnacle, making their way towards the docks and Domadred’s ship, the *Illusive Diamond*.



ACT 2: THE NAMELESS BLACK SEA

Act 2 is a set upon the *Illusive Diamond* and after so much exposition your party is sure to be eager to get underway. The docks of the Obsidian Rush could be, depending on the ending of the core campaign, in any state of turmoil or tranquility.

During the short walk to the harbor, Domadred will be pre-occupied with steadying his mind in preparation to contact Those Who Wait Beyond, and Vajra will not speak much unless your party asks him additional questions now which were unanswered in the inn.

This is a good opportunity to engage your players in a brief roleplay scene based upon the nature of the city and your players' motivations for agreeing to attempt such a dangerous quest.

When the *Illusive Diamond* comes into view, the party can see that she looks like no other ship in the harbor. Her pristine sails are pure white and her elegant hull is built for speed. She has a complement of twenty cannons—nine on either side and a chaser at the bow and stern. With a square-rigged foremast and fore-and-aft rigged main and mizzen, the majestic ship sticks out no matter the state of the city.

The ship will either will look pristine, amid the smoke and turmoil of the pier or, if the city is not in chaos, will look imposing and elegant among the other trade and shipping vessels of Yon'Cath.

If Yon'Cath is in turmoil, containers will be strewn about the dock along with a mob of citizens and soldiers petitioning the *Diamond's* crew to allow them to board. The ship's men, however, hold drawn swords, keeping the rabble at bay.

As Domadred and his small group came closer, they could see that a wharf building farther up the dock is burning brightly and cast long shadows across the crowd trying to get passage aboard the *Diamond*. Drum up urgency here, to drive the story along, with a sense of frantic panic among the city and her people.

If the city is not in chaos, the walk to the ship will most likely be uneventful, however, you could fabricate a little excitement here, if you'd like, none-the-less.

Upon boarding the ship, Domadred will hastily introduce the party to his crew, making special note of Marlen, the ship's doctor; Kefta, quartermaster and first mate; and Valen, the boatswain.

The three men singled out wear garb more ornate than the clothes of the majority of the seamen, and their numerous beaded braids in their hair signal them as officers. Instead of going shirtless or wearing simple cottons, they each wear loose-fitting embroidered V-neck vests tucked into elegant belts.

After a few more rushed introductions, Domadred will shout orders at his crew, and the ship will pull away from the dock in all haste. As the ship glides down the Obsidian Rush, Valen, the boatswain, walks up to Vajra and the players. He has the same baggy pants as the crew but instead of being barefoot like many others, he has tucked his pants into knee-high brushed-leather boots.

"Sixty meters long, nine and a half wide, and thirty-six tall," the officer says proudly, his thumbs hooking into his belt. "She's got just shy of thirty crew, and with a strong wind her one thousand square meters of sail can fly us faster than any on Terra."

"Captain said you were boatswain, correct?" Vajra asks.

"Indeed, I am," the man responds in a thick accent and extends his hand to each of you in turn. *"The name's Valen. It's a pleasure to meet you all. Welcome aboard the Illusive Diamond."*

Suddenly, the ship hits a large swell and Vajra takes a step back to steady himself from falling. Likewise, the party must make a Dexterity save, if they fail, they fall to the deck, taking 1d6 bludgeoning damage.

As the players explore the ship, the following dialogue can be overheard if they choose to listen.

"The boatswain..." Vajra says, *"that makes you in charge of deck activities, rigging, and the handling of the sails, correct?"*

"Indeed. You know a lot for a long-eared land walker," Valen says, chuckling.

"Like you, I am far from home," Vajra answers, narrowing his eyes as he crosses his large Runically tattooed arms. *"My homeland is a series of large islands, separated by deadly ocean. Only the boldest of us are brave enough to traverse those waves—and I am honored highest among them."*

"Well, then the captain was right to bring you aboard, it seems," Valen says, with a respectful nod, eyeing Vajra's long, great sword.

Before any more dialogue continues, Domadred will instruct the party to keep an eye out, saying, *"Stay sharp men! I don't trust these waters at all—vile creatures lurk below these depths and even worse was falling from the sky mere days ago. If whatever prowls in the waters brings down the ship before we make it to my vile Patron, all of this will be for naught."*

An eerie silence overtakes the Diamond as Domadred guides the wheel and reads the fast-moving currents which propel the ship along the channel toward the sea. A wave-born seaman, Domadred is able to keep the ship on a perfect line even as the extreme waters buckle and shudder the ship stem to stern.

Nearing the end of the channel, however, the current becomes too strong, and the party feels the ship begin to flex and crack under the force of the flows. The crew scurries to loose the sails and regain control, and Domadred calls out to the party to assist his men, lest they lose the ship.

Have your players rush over to the lines, and roll Strength (Athletics) Check DC18. On the first round, if ANY of the players fail, the lines pull the entire party off-balance, and they are slammed into the rigging and tackle, with each player taking 1d6 points of bludgeoning damage.

If this occurs, Domadred and the crew curse at them, telling them to try again before the ship is lost.

Have your players take ahoid of the lines again, and roll a second time. But this time if any of the players fail, another player may take the Help Action, allowing the first player to roll at Advantage. If they fail that roll, too, not only is the entire party once again thrown off balance, taking another d6 of bludgeoning damage—but one of the ship's spars also breaks in a violent cracking sound. It then slams down upon the ship's deck, damaging several of the cannons, making one of the four gunning stations inoperable for the remainder of the adventure, affecting the final boss fight in Act 3.

After three rounds, and much salty cursing, Captain Domadred gets the ship back under control and connes the wheel expertly as the ship's keel catches in a churning crosscurrent two fathoms down. The Diamond then shoots out of the channel and into the open ocean of the Nameless Black Sea.

As the ship pushes past the headland the waters change, and stars can be seen both above the ship in the sky and below the ship, shimmering in the water beneath them. This is a palace where the veil

between planes runs thin, they can see shimmering portals into unknown worlds and realms hidden deep under the murky depths below.

Before the players can fully recover, they must succeed on a Wisdom Save DC15, lest a booming voice is heard deafeningly loud—but instead of heard with their ears, the vile sound is projected directly into each party member's minds.

"SHIP CAPTAIN I SEE YOU HAVE FINALLY CHOSEN TO ACCEPT YOUR FATE. YOU HAVE CHOSEN WELL AND WILL BE ETERNALLY REWARDED BY SERVING ME."

Domadred buckles over in pain, still clenching the ship's wheel in white-knuckled hands. The Great Old One casts Fear on the party, and your players must make a Wisdom Save DC9001 or become Frightened, but instead of running away, shelter in place.

"Damn you, vile creature," Domadred shouts into the sky, *"Just show me the way to your fowl lair, and let's get done with this!"*

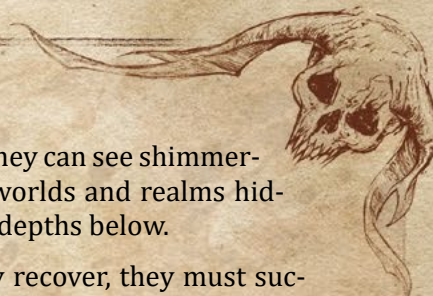
The crew all avert their gaze, and busy themselves with their work, trying to regain control of their ship and futilely repair any potential damage incurred by the broken spar.

"MY MIND WILL GUIDE YOUR HAND CAPTAIN. SAIL ONWARDS AND SOON YOUR SUFFERING WILL FINALLY COME TO AN END. BEWARE, HOWEVER, FOR THERE ARE OTHERS WHO SWIM IN THESE WATERS TOO, AND THEIR TENTACLES WILL NOT SPARE YOUR FLESH UNTIL YOU HAVE MERGED WITH ME COMPLETELY."

As suddenly as the Great Old One's voice appeared, it is gone, and Vajra can be seen gripping the hilt of his sword with a grim scowl on his face.

After the ordeal, Domadred's eyes have become milky white. He then suddenly takes out his belt knife and begins etching strange symbols into his flesh. If a party member approaches the Captain, Domadred tries to etch the symbols into that character's body, instead, all the while muttering under his breath in Primordial. If a player speaks primordial, Domadred can be heard saying, *"Flesh, flesh, flesh, for the Great One. I give my body and Soul to the Great One. I live, I live, I DIE for the Great One. My Body and Soul is FOREVER YOURS."*

Seeing his madness, Kefta signals to Marlin and the pair binds the Captain to the mast so that he cannot hurt himself or others. Domadred objects loudly in Primordial, and the first mate is forced to bind



Domadred's mouth with a gag. Kefta then assumes the wheel and guides the *Illusive Diamond* through the unsettling waters into the great black beyond.

For some time, little can be heard or seen except for the rush of the wind in the sails and the splash of waves against the bow. Her strong spars and tight rigging creaks and moans as she cuts across the water deeper into the Nameless Black Sea. This soft groaning of the tackle sounds odd to any non-sailor, but soon it becomes second nature to the entire party.

If your players look up, they can see The Shadeland's great dome of stars overhead, intermingled with a brilliant aurora borealis. If they focus or comment on this, they gain Inspiration for their next combat roll.

If they look back at the headland, they will see the figure of Yon'Cath retreating, showing off whatever state it was left to the fullest.

Suddenly, while Vajra silently looks out into the ocean, he notices the waves are no longer shimmering with the strange light of the multi-planed stars and calls out, saying, "Those are not waves—those are tentacles!"

But it's too late. Have your players roll a Wisdom (Perception) Check DC15. Those who succeed, notice the waves are no longer only water, but swimming with severely injured Void Maws, each missing chunks of flesh, sometimes even full limbs. All are trying to clamber aboard. If a player fails, however, they are ensnared by the vile appendages as a battle with Void Maws begins. There is one Void Maw per player, with numerous attacking Vajra, keeping him occupied for the entirety of the fight. A tentacle will also attack Domadred while he is still bound to the mast, and if he is not protected, he will die.

This is to serve as a warmup for the Act 3 boss encounter and should weaken the party slightly, but not cripple them. During the battle, severed tentacles try to damage and pull the players into the ocean, and any player that is ensnared for over 2 rounds is pulled overboard.

If a member is pulled overboard, Kefta, the ship's quartermaster and first mate, will throw a line to them, but another player must help Kefta pull the line in with a contested Strength (Athletics) Check, Sleight of Hand (Dexterity) Check, or magic with the Void Maw. Party members only have 3 rounds to save the submerged player, lest the player is lost forever within the fathomless interdimensional abyss below.

After the encounter is completed, the players have time to take a short rest and request Marlen, the ship's doctor to help heal them. Marlen has ample healing potions, and the entire party should be at full health before Act 3 begins.

GM Note

The Void Maws were featured in the great battle of Yon'Cath earlier, and they return here for vengeance. However, the patron has been siphoning power from his minions. These Void Maw's are all damaged and weakened drastically with chunks of flesh removed and their essence drained. While they are still as deadly with their abilities, we suggest removing hitpoints down to something a single character can defeat in three rounds.

For low-level parties or mid-tier, you may wish to only have one Void Maw for the party, and another for the crew.

Void Maw

Medium Aberration, Chaotic Evil

ARMOR CLASS 15 (natural armor)
HIT POINTS 105 (14d8 + 42)
SPEED 40 FT

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
22(+6)	15(+2)	16(+3)	11(+0)	10(+0)	8(-1)

Saving Throws Dex +5, Con +6

Skills Stealth +8, Perception +3

Damage Resistances Psychic, Necrotic

Damage Immunities Poison

Damage Vulnerabilities Radiant

Condition Immunities charmed, frightened

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 13

Languages Deep speech

Challenge 8 (3,900 XP)

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The maw makes three attacks.

Claw. Melee Weapon attack: +9 to hit. Reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 13 (3d6 +3) slashing damage

Tongue Strike (Recharge 5 - 6). Melee Weapon Attack: +9 to hit. Reach 30 ft., one creature. Hit: (30) 4d12 +6 piercing damage. On a successful hit, the target must succeed on a DC 17 Constitution saving throw or have a larval void maw implanted in its body. 2 (1d4) rounds later, a full mature void maw emerges from the target's body, taking 44 (8d10) necrotic damage as the void maw appears in the nearest unoccupied space. A larval void maw can be removed by a creature within reach using an action to succeed on a DC 17 Wisdom (Medicine) check to extract it.

Void Gaze. The aberration opens its chest mouth wide, revealing a seemingly endless black abyss with streaks of white light swirling. Each creature of the void maw's choice that it can see must succeed on a DC 17 Wisdom saving throw or be mesmerized by the void, becoming incapacitated for as long as the void maw concentrates (as though concentrating on a spell).



ACT 3: TO KILL A GOD



Act 3 is a combat act, serving as an epic boss battle finale. Expect this fight to take about two hours due to the profound strength of Those Who Wait Beyond.

After the party is healed, Domadred falls even deeper into madness, and once the *Illusive Diamond* makes it into the depths of the Nameless Black Sea, Those Who Wait Beyond emerges to claim their new host and Avatar in the physical realm.

As you approach the location read:

“Now deep within the Nameless Black Sea, mottled slate clouds obstruct the stars above. A sickly warm wind blows across the murky waves as your hearts clench with anticipation.

Suddenly, the wind picks up and the waves begin to churn violently. Bubbles emerge from the ocean bringing with them a sulfuric stench. Soon, a torrent of frothy water roils from the ship exposing a grotesque mass of rotten flesh.

A two-eyed tentacle enshrouded horror emerges towering before you all. Salty ocean cascades down about its pitted flesh exposing massive suction cups on each of its curling limbs, flailing amidst the waves.

This gargantuan aberration causes your very essence to coil in fear as piercing red eyes burn through your soul exposing your deepest darkest fears and desires. You stare into the abyss of a god and it stares back at you knowing full well that you are inconsequential compared to its cosmic consciousness and power.

Despite all of this, you grit your teeth and prepare yourself for battle.”

GM Note

The Illusive Diamond is made out of “Yalmalrah” wood which is both immune to magic and fire. This means that Those Who Wait Beyond’s ability “Obliteration” will not destroy the ship, however, can affect players, crew, and objects upon the ship’s deck.

Those Who Wait Beyond has had all its cultists destroyed throughout the Red Opera. While it is still incredibly powerful, it has lost some key features from its stat block where it first invaded Yon’Cath.

Remove the following abilities from their stats:

- Mythic Resistance.
- Consume Cultist
- Cyclonids
- Puppet

Without the full might of Yon’Cath helping battle, low-level parties will struggle with this encounter. There is also no Fayte to assist them. *The Illusive Diamond* crew will have to fill this gap. Low-level party members should have more options to assist with canon fire to increase damage or score critical hits on the Patron.

Another option is a rival elder god. The Stranger In Tatters (from the earlier sidequests), can cause the Void Maws to revolt against the Patron if the fight becomes too difficult. Nothing says Eldritch horrors get along after all, and even the Stranger will take advantage to kill a rival. If this effect comes to pass, the Stranger will not appear, but leave hints of his arcane mark searing itself into the Void Maws as he takes control.

Even without cultists, the Patron is still terrifying and, in its desperation, has gained a new ability for this encounter:

My World. Those Who Wait Beyond are desperate for a foothold into this world. At the cost of 100 hit-points, The Patron can drain its own essence to refill its 3 legendary actions. This effect visibly weakens the creature and it cannot regenerate these wounds during this encounter.

Part 1: Battle Stations

- Preparing for Battle, assuming stations and readiness

Part 2: Initiative and Combat

- Roll Initiative
- Distance combat for 2 to 4 rounds via projectiles, magic, and cannons
- In each round, if Those Wait Beyond ensnare one of the sailors manning the guns, players have

until the end of the round to free the sailor, or that set of cannons cannot fire that round

- Players can also attack the Great Old One directly either with magic or projectile weapons. If players wish to attempt to climb on top of The Great Old One, they risk falling into the churning water, and much like in Act 2, Kefta will throw them a line, however, another player will need to assist in pulling the submerged player back aboard, lest they be lost forever

Part 3: Vajra Casts Spell

- Tentacles start to assault ship, players, and crew
- Vajra needs as many rounds as players to cast a spell which allows players to traverse the skin of the Great Old One without falling off
- The Spell, much like a Twin Spell starts at the Caster, extends to 1 character per round at initiative order 0, continuing until all characters have been affected
- Vajra needs to be protected while concentrating on casting this spell. If Vajra is hit during his casting, casting that round is paused and continued next round

Part 4: Getting onto the Great Old One

- Once a spell is cast, Vajra gathers everyone together and players must figure out how to get onto The Great Old One from the ship
- They risk falling into the water during this section

Part 5: Leading the Charge

- Vajra sets the pace from here on out, and if players keep up the spell will protect them from falling into the water
- *Round 1* is traversing up a face tentacle
 - You can still be attacked by a tentacle in this round
- *Round 2* crossing the path of the eyes
 - Tentacles will try to flail characters off, Dexterity Saving Throw DC 24
 - Tentacles will not attack in this section
- *Round 3* is climbing upon the forehead
 - Upon nearing The Great Old One's Third Eye, all party members must make a successful Wisdom Saving Throw of DC 24 or be affected by Eldritch Madness
 - Tentacles will not attack in this section

Part 6: Entering the Head

- This section can take as many rounds as necessary to penetrate each layer of the head—however many hit points The Great Old One has left, divide it equally between the 4 layers of the head
- During this time, The Great Old One may still attack the party
- These sections should be cinematic and exciting, serving as the finale of the battle with The Great Old One
- Each player should describe how they choose to get through each layer upon successful damage
- Layers of head: Skin
 - Flayed skin is slippery and causes Prone
- Layers of head: Muscle
 - Muscle can spasm, throwing characters away from the location of the attack
- Layers of head: Bone
 - Bone can fracture and explode causing piercing damage to players
- Layers of head: Brain
 - Brain vapors are intoxicating causing Enslave—the target must succeed on a Wisdom Saving Throw DC 18 or be magically charmed and must obey the command Consume Cultist

Part 7: Killing a God

- Once The Great Old One is reduced to 0 Hit Points, have each player describe how they pry open The Great Old One's brain so that Vajra can administer the killing blow

When Those Who Wait Beyond has been reduced to 0 Hit Points read the following box text.

You feel the creature below you shudder, and suddenly a voice fills your mind.

"ALL I WANT IS PEACE. ALL I WANT IS AN END TO SUFFERING, NO MORE PAIN. NO MORE LOVE. NO MORE ANYTHING. JUST SILENCE... SCREAMING SILENCE! IMAGINE HOW BEAUTIFUL IT WOULD BE FOR ALL MINDS TO BE UNITED AS ONE, SCREAMING THEIR SILENCE INTO THE BLACK VOID OF SPACE—MY SPACE. FOREVER."

Seeing his opening, Vajra's body begins crackling with glowing Runic power. He swings his Oblivion Blade high over his head, screaming, "*Return what you have stolen from my people and DIE!*"

Those That Wait Beyond's massive eyes widen in surprise as Vajra plunges his now shimmering black blade deep within the Great Old One's grotesque brain.

For a moment all is still until suddenly, time and space seem to warp around the blade, and a rancid geyser of blood and filth jets forth, streaking high into the sky. A deafening, soul-piercing howl emanates from the vile creature's dreadful maw, as the sword sucks the very life and essence from its horrid, leviathan body. Vajra's Runes glow with a blue crackling lightning as he drains the power from the Patron, absorbing it within his black blade and storing it within the now glowing white stone at the sword's pommel.

Using his boots as leverage, Vajra pulls his blade free from the now lifeless skull of Those Who Wait Beyond and leaps back down to the *Illusive Diamond*, triumphantly.

Have your characters describe how they victoriously return to the ship and rejoin the crew. When everyone is back on deck, read the following box text.

"Blessed are the Guardians!" Domadred exclaims, rushing over to embrace the party.

"May they forever protect us in our time of need," Vajra says, with a wide grin, gripping Domadred's shoulder tightly in celebration.

In unison, the crew of the *Illusive Diamond* then completes the ancient oath's response: *"We vow to forever be worthy of their grace and love!"* The sailors then all turn and cheer the noble elf, as Vajra holds his Oblivion Blade high over his head with tears of joy streaming down his face.

"We did it! Now I have only one more horrid aberration left," Vajra exclaims to the party. *"The Mother of Mirrors was right to trust you. You have found yourself a valuable ally and Patron in her—and a trusted friend in me. But I now must depart in all haste."*

"You are leaving?" Domadred asks Vajra, with a tone of reverence and awe. *"Where will you go?"*

"I now must make all haste to Salvata to assist Vlahnya Um'vairar to rid the bohemian city of another of these vile creatures," Vajra says, with a deep breath. *"Maybe I'll see you all there, in time."*

And with that, a shimmering portal opens up behind the elf. He looks the party over as he sheathes his massive greatsword and nods his tattooed head respectfully before disappearing through the portal to rid the world of one last evil before he can return home.

Domadred turns to you and says, *"Where to now?"*

THE END

Thank you for participating in The Red Opera Epilogue: "Tentacles in the Deep" by Jamison Stone and Satine Phoenix





Appendix 1

NPC & CREATURE STATISTICS

Accursed Guard

Medium humanoid, Adjust Alignment to fit Campaign

ARMOR CLASS	20 (natural armor)				
HIT POINTS	224				
SPEED	30 FT				
STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
16(+3)	22(+6)	24(+7)	18(+4)	16(+3)	26(+8)

Saving Throws Str +8, Wis +8

Skills Intimidation +13, Perception +8

Senses passive Perception 18

Languages Common, plus one other language also spoken by its patron

Challenge 13 (10,000 XP)

Spellcasting. The guard is an 11th level spellcaster. Its spellcasting ability is Charisma (spell save DC 21, +13 to hit with spell attacks). It regains its expended spell slots when it finishes a short or long rest. It knows the following Warlock spells:

Cantrips (at will): booming blade, eldritch blast, true strike
1st-5th level (3 5th-level slots): The guard knows the following spells according to which patron it serves, as detailed below.

Archfey. Faerie fire, calm emotions, greater invisibility, dominate person

Fiend. Burning hands, hellish rebuke, fire shield, flame strike

Great Old One. Dissonant whispers, phantasmal force, black tentacles, telekinesis

Hexblade. banishing smite, branding smite, shield staggering smite,

Lurker in the Deep. Cone of Cold, gust of wind, lightning bolt, thunderwave,

Undying. blindness/deafness, contagion, death ward, contagion, ray of sickness

Actions

Multiattack. The guard makes two attacks, or makes a single attack and casts a cantrip.

Halberd. Melee Weapon Attack: +8 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. Hit: 8 (1d10+3) slashing damage.

Gift From Beyond (3/day). The guard entreats its patron for aid, regaining an expended spellslot granted by its Spellcasting feature.

Accursed Summoner

Medium humanoid, Adjust Alignment to fit Campaign

ARMOR CLASS	16 (breastplate)				
HIT POINTS	95 (18d8 + 14)				
SPEED	30 FT				
STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
13(+1)	18(+4)	13(+1)	18(+4)	13(+1)	16(+3)

Saving Throws Con +5, Wis +5, Cha +7

Skills Perception +5, Persuasion +11,

Senses passive Perception 15

Languages Common plus one other language

Challenge 9 (5,000 XP)

Aura of Supremacy. The summoners exude an aura of supernatural authority in a 60 ft. radius sphere. While the summoner is not incapacitated, creatures conjured by the summoner in the affected area add the summoner's proficiency bonus (+4) to their attack rolls, saving throws, and ability checks.

Master of Horrors. The summoner can exert control over up to four summoned creatures at a time so long as it maintains concentration (as though concentrating on a spell). A creature controlled in this manner can be verbally commanded by the summoner (no action required), acts immediately after the summoner's turn, and follows the summoner's commands to the best of its ability. If the summoner's concentration is broken, it loses control over any creatures it has summoned, which become hostile to the summoner.

Actions

Sling. Ranged Weapon Attack: +8 to hit, range 30/120 ft., one target. Hit: 6 (1d4+4) bludgeoning damage.

Summon Black Water Imps (3/day). The summoner conjures four mud mephit in four separate unoccupied spaces it can see within 60 ft. The mephit have the statistics of **mud mephit**, but deals an additional 9 (2d8) necrotic damage on successful hits with their weapon attacks. The mephit vanish after 1 hour or if they are slain.

Summon Gargoyle Brute (2/day). The summoner conjures two gargoyles in two separate unoccupied spaces it can see within 60 ft. The gargoyles have the statistics of ordinary gargoyles but can make an additional Claw attack as a bonus action on each of their turns. The gargoyles vanish after 10 minutes or if they are slain

Summon Arclight Phoenix (1/day). The summoner conjures a fire elemental in the shape of a phoenix in a 10 ft. Unoccupied square it can see within 60 ft. The phoenix has the statistics of a **fire elemental** but gains the following action.

Arclight Blast (Recharge 5 – 6). The phoenix unleashes a blast of superheated flame in a 60 ft. line that is 5 ft. wide. Creatures in the affected area must attempt a DC 14 Dexterity saving throw, taking 14 (4d6) fire and 14 (4d6) radiant damage on a failure, or half as much on a success.

Brick Elemental

Huge elemental, neutral

ARMOR CLASS 20 (natural armor)
HIT POINTS 283 (21d12 + 147)
SPEED 30 ft., burrow 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
27(+8)	12(+1)	25(+7)	3(-4)	11(+0)	5(-3)

Saving Throws Con +12, Cha +2

Damage Immunities Poison

Damage Resistances Bludgeoning, Slashing, Piercing from Non-magical Attacks

Condition Immunities Exhaustion, Paralyzed, Petrified, Poisoned, Stunned, Unconscious

Senses tremorsense 60 ft., passive Perception 10

Challenge 14 (11,500)

Immutable Form. The elemental is immune to any spell or effect that would alter its form.

Robust Architecture. If the elemental takes 10 or less damage from a single attack or instance of damage, it instead takes no damage.

Sturdy Foundation. The elemental cannot be pushed, pulled, or magically teleported unless it allows it.

Actions

Multitattack. The elemental makes two slam attacks. It then uses either its Brickwork or Repair action.

Slam. Melee Weapon Attack: +13 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. Hit: 22 (4d6 + 8) bludgeoning damage. If the target is a creature, it is grappled (Escape DC 21).

Brickwork. The elemental integrates a creature it is grappling into the structure of its body. A creature so integrated becomes restrained (Escape DC 21). While the elemental has a creature restrained in this manner, the elemental takes only half the damage dealt to it, and a creature of its choice restrained in this manner takes the other half.

Repair. The elemental magically regains 22 (4d10) hit points.

Brutes Guild Thug

Medium humanoid, chaotic neutral

ARMOR CLASS 14
HIT POINTS 161 (17d8 + 85)
SPEED 30 FT

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
25(+7)	19(+4)	21(+5)	10(+0)	10(+0)	12(+1)

Saving Throws Str +11, Con +9, Wis +4

Skills Athletics +11, Intimidation +5, Perception +4

Senses passive Perception 14

Languages common, plus one other language

Challenge 9 (5,000 XP)

Crushing Grip. The thug can make unarmed strikes with a limb that is grappling a creature.

Reckless. At the start of each of its turns, the thug can gain advantage on all melee weapon attack rolls during that turn. When it does so, attack rolls against it have advantage until the start of its next turn.

Actions

Multitattack. The thug makes three attacks. The thug can forgo making an unarmed strike in this manner to instead attempt to grapple a creature within reach.

Unarmed Strike. Melee Weapon Attack: +11 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 18 (2d10 + 7) bludgeoning damage.

Sleeper Hold (Recharge 5 – 6). The thug attempts to knock a creature it is grappling unconscious. The target must succeed on a DC 19 Constitution saving throw or fall unconscious for 1 minute. At the end of each of its turns, a creature can repeat this saving throw, ending its unconsciousness on a success.

Cathrach River Sentry

Medium humanoid, Adjust Alignment to fit Campaign

ARMOR CLASS 14
HIT POINTS 60 (11d8 + 11)
SPEED 30 FT

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
12(+1)	18(+4)	13(+1)	18(+4)	16(+3)	16(+3)

Saving Throws Wis +6, Cha +6

Skills Arcana +7, Perception +9

Senses darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 19

Languages Common, plus one other language

Challenge 5 (1,800 XP)

Spellcasting. The sentry is an 7th level spellcaster. Its spellcasting ability is Charisma (spell save DC 14, +6 to hit with spell attacks). It regains its expended spell slots when it finishes a short or long rest. It knows the following Warlock spells:

Cantrips (at will): eldritch blast, light

1st-4th level (2 4th-level slots): The sentry knows the following spells.

blight, dispel magic, fireball

Actions

Rapier. Melee Weapon Attack: +7 to hit, reach 5 ft. one target. Hit: (8) 1d8+4 piercing damage.

Revealing Light (Recharge 5 - 6). The sentry emits bright light in a 90 ft. cone until the start of its next turn, which projects in a single direction for the duration. The sentry and its allies have advantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks to detect creatures in the affected area, and creatures in the affected area take an additional 4 (1d8) radiant damage on successful hits from attacks made by the sentry and its allies.

Cultist

Medium Humans, Lawful Evil

ARMOR CLASS 12 (leather armor)
HIT POINTS 9 (2d8)
SPEED 30 FT

STR 11(+0) DEX 12(+1) CON 10(+0) INT 10(+0) WIS 11(+0) CHA 10(+0)

Skills Deception +2, Religion +2

Senses Passive Perception 10.

Languages Common

Challenge 1/8th (25 XP)

Dark Devotion. The cultist has advantage on saving throws against being charmed or frightened.

Actions

Scimitar. Melee Weapon Attack; +3 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit 4 (1d6+1) slashing damage.

Deataigh the Smoke Dragon

Gargantuan Dragon, lawful neutral

ARMOR CLASS 23 (natural armor)
HIT POINTS 250 (20d20 + 40)
SPEED 60 ft., fly 60 ft. (hover)

STR 13(+1) DEX 20(+5) CON 15(+2) INT 26(+8) WIS 23(+6) CHA 21(+5)

Saving Throws Dex +11, Con +8, Int +14, Wis +12

Skills Stealth +11, Perception +12

Damage Resistances acid, fire, lightning, thunder; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical weapons

Condition Immunities exhaustion, frightened, grappled, paralyzed, petrified, prone, restrained

Senses darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 22

Languages Common, Draconic

Challenge 22 (41,000 XP)

Gloom Shroud. As a bonus action, the dragon can emit a shroud of smoke in a 30 ft. radius sphere centered on it, which lasts until the dragon uses this action again or

becomes incapacitated. The affected area is heavily obscured for creatures other than the dragon.

Smoke Form. The dragon is composed of ethereal smoke, allowing it to move through other creatures as if they were difficult terrain.

Actions

Bite. Melee Weapon Attack: +11 to hit, reach 15 ft. One target. Hit: 24 (3d12 + 5) piercing damage and 18 (4d8) fire damage.

Claw. Melee Weapon Attack: +11 to hit, reach 10 ft. One target. Hit: 12 (2d6 + 5) slashing damage.

Wind Whip. Melee Spell Attack: +14 against to hit, reach 120ft., one target. Hit: 44 (8d8 +8) bludgeoning damage and the target must succeed on a DC 22 Strength saving throw or be thrown 30 ft. away from the dragon in a straight line, landing prone.

Mindsplitter Breath (Recharge 5 - 6). The dragon unleashes a horrible shriek in a 90 ft. cone which rends both mind and body. Each creature in the affected area must succeed on a DC 22 Constitution saving throw or take 55 (10d10) thunder damage. Additionally, on a failed save a creature must succeed on a DC 22 Intelligence saving throw or be incapacitated until the end of its next turn.

Life From Death. A creature of the dragon's choice regains 21 (6d6) hit points. This amount is doubled if a creature within 120 ft. of the target failed a death saving throw that round.

Dorian, the Accursed King

Medium Humanoid (human), lawful neutral

ARMOR CLASS 18 (plate)
HIT POINTS 427 (45d8 + 225)
SPEED 30 ft.

STR 15(+2) DEX 16(+3) CON 20(+5) INT 29(+9) WIS 25(+7) CHA 20(+5)

Saving Throws Dex +10, Wis +14, Cha +12

Skills Arcana +16, Insight +14, Perception +14

Damage Resistances Force, necrotic, poison, psychic

Condition Immunities Charmed, frightened

Senses truesight 60 ft., passive Perception 24

Languages Common, plus three other languages

Challenge 22 (41,000 XP)

Lich Blade. Dorian's spell attacks with his lich blade are magical and deal an additional 21 (6d6) necrotic damage on a successful hit (included in the attack). Additionally, if Dorian is disarmed of his lich blade, the weapon reappears in his possession at the start of his next turn.

Patron's Blessing (3/day). When Dorian fails a saving throw or is critically hit, he can beseech his patron to succeed on the saving throw or turn the critical hit into a normal hit.

Voice of Authority. While he is not incapacitated, Dorian can choose to speak compelling words laced with beguiling magic, which can be heard by creatures up to 120 ft. away.

When a creature that can hear Dorian in this manner starts its turn, it must succeed on a DC 24 Charisma saving throw or be permanently cursed. A creature cursed in this manner is charmed whenever they have a line of sight to Dorian.

Unless surprised, a creature can cover its ears with either its free hands or a suitable object at the start of its turn. If the creature does so, it cannot use those hands and is deafened until the start of its next turn, where it can cover its ears again. If the creature hears Dorian in the meantime, it must immediately make the save.

Actions

Multiattack. Dorian makes three attacks with his Lich Blade, each of which must be against a different target.

Lich Blade. Melee Spell Attack: +16 to hit, reach 5 ft. One target. Hit: 14 (1d8+10) slashing damage plus 21 (6d6) necrotic damage. If the target is a creature, Dorian regains a number of temporary hit points equal to half the necrotic damage dealt (rounded down). These temporary hit points last until Dorian finishes a short or long rest.

Razor Rain. Dorian tosses a ball of raw magic at a point he can see within 120 ft, which then explodes in a 40 ft. radius cylinder that is 100 ft. high. Each creature in the affected area must succeed on a DC 24 Dexterity saving throw or take 55 (10d10) slashing damage, or half as much on a success.

Psychic Sweep. Dorian waves his arm, sending a blast of telekinetic energy outward in a 60 ft cone. Each creature in the affected area must succeed on a DC 24 Intelligence saving throw or have their surface thoughts read by Dorian for 1 minute. A creature whose surface thoughts are being read in this manner has disadvantage on attack rolls and saving throws against Dorian.

Ray of Frozen Fire (Recharge 5 – 6. Ranged Spell Attack: +16 to hit, range 300 ft., one creature. Hit: 18 (4d8) cold and 18 (4d18) fire. Additionally, the target must succeed on a DC 24 Constitution saving throw or be encased in a prison of burning ice, which is an object with an AC of 12 and 50 hit points. While so encased, a creature is paralyzed and has total cover from everything outside the ice, and vice versa. At the end of each of its turns, an affected creature takes 9 (2d8) fire and 9 (2d8) cold damage and can attempt a DC 24 Strength saving throw, freeing itself and shattering the ice on a success.

Infinite Void. Dorian whispers an infernal incantation, creating an obsidian sphere of negative space in an unoccupied space he can see within 300 ft, which lasts for as long as Dorian concentrates (as though he were concentrating on a spell). The sphere emits an aura of crushing gravity in a 20 ft. radius centered on it. When a creature starts its turn in the affected area or enters the area for the first time on a turn, it must succeed on a DC 24 Strength saving throw or be knocked prone and be unable

to stand up for as long as it remains within the area. As a bonus action on each of his turns, Dorian can move the sphere up to 60 ft.

Legendary Actions

Dorian the Accursed King can take 3 legendary actions, choosing from the list below. Only one legendary action option may be used at a time, and only at the end of another creature's turn. Dorian the Accursed King regains used legendary actions at the start of his turn.

Summon Horror (costs 3 actions). Dorian calls forth a creature from beyond to serve him for 1 minute, which appears in an unoccupied space of Dorian's choice within 60 ft. The creature has the statistics of a bone devil, but with the following exceptions. It is an aberration instead of a fiend, is resistant to bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing damage, and is vulnerable to radiant damage.

The horror acts immediately after Dorian's turn and follows his commands (no action required) to the best of Dorian's ability. The horror immediately vanishes if Dorian uses this action to create an additional horror.

Astral Exile. Dorian attempts to exile a creature he can see within 60 ft. to a world beyond space and time. If the target is unwilling, it must succeed on a DC 24 Charisma saving throw or vanish as it is lost in time and space. At the end of the target's next turn, it reappears in the nearest unoccupied space to where it vanished. Additionally, when the creature reappears it has aged 1 year and any effects with a duration greater than instantaneous affecting the creature are ended.

Lich Blade. Dorian makes an attack with his Lich Blade.

Lair Actions

On initiative count 20 (losing initiative ties), Dorian can take a lair action to cause one of the following effects, so long as he is within the Impossible Spire. Dorian can't use the same effect twice in a row.

Sinister Shadows. Dorian gently dances his fingertips about the air as if conducting an orchestra. A sly smile traces over his expression during a momentary pause. A sharp upwards flick of his hand grows the atmosphere dark; filling the chamber with deafening screams. From the shadows, slender blades of every size and shape are instantly outstretched. All of Dorian's enemies must make DEX saves (DC22) or take 31 (5d10) slashing damage.

Shadow Winds. Winds of dark power swarm around creatures of Dorian's choice in the affected area. Until the next initiative count of 20, affected creatures gain a fly speed of 60 ft. (hover).

Eldritch Shackles. Magical shackles erupt from the ground to bind a creature of Dorian's choice. The target must succeed on a DC 20 Dexterity saving throw or be restrained by the shackles, which are an object with an AC of 15 and 20 hit points. While restrained in this manner, a creature cannot cast spells.

LaCroix, the Knight Captain

Medium human, Adjust alignment to fit campaign

ARMOR CLASS 22 (+ 2 Plate, Shield)
HIT POINTS 525 (42d8 + 336)
SPEED 30 FT

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
30(+10)	17(+3)	26(+8)	15(+2)	15(+2)	20(+5)

Saving Throws Str +16, Con +14, Wis +8

Skills Athletics +16, Intimidation +11, Perception +8

Damage Resistances bludgeoning, piercing, slashing

Condition Immunities frightened

Senses darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 18

Languages Common

Challenge 20 (25,000 XP)

Legendary Resistance (3/day). When LaCroix fails a saving throw, he can choose to succeed instead.

Magical Equipment. LaCroix armor and weapons are magical and cannot be removed from his person unless he allows it.

Mighty Warrior. LaCroix's weapon attacks score a critical hit on a roll of 18 – 20.

Actions

Multiattack. LaCroix makes four attacks. LaCroix can forgo making two attacks in this manner to instead take the Dash action.

Hammer Smash. Melee Weapon Attack: +16 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 23 (2d12 + 10) bludgeoning damage. If the target is a creature, it must succeed on a DC 24 Constitution saving throw or be dazed until the end of its next turn. A creature dazed in this manner can only take its action or bonus action on its turn, not both, and can only make a single attack on its turn.

Quake. LaCroix strikes the ground with terrific force, generating a small earthquake in a 30 ft. radius centered on him. Each enemy creature in the affected area must succeed on a DC 24 Dexterity saving throw or be knocked prone and drop what they are holding.

Hurling Strike. Ranged Weapon Attack: +16 to hit, range 60/120 ft., one target. Hit: 45 (10d6 + 10) bludgeoning damage. If LaCroix uses his hammer to make this attack, it immediately returns to him at the end of his turn.

Reactions

Spiteful Strike. As a reaction when LaCroix is hit by a weapon attack by a creature he can see within 5 ft., he can make a single melee weapon attack against that creature and has advantage on the attack roll.

Legendary Actions

LaCroix can take 3 legendary actions, choosing from the list below. Only one legendary action option may be used at a

time, and only at the end of another creature's turn. LaCroix regains used legendary actions at the start of his turn.

Impregnable (Cost 2 actions). LaCroix becomes immune to a damage type of his choice until the start of his next turn.

Move. LaCroix moves up to his speed.

Spellbreaker (Costs 3 Actions). LaCroix becomes immune to a spell or magical effect of his choice that he can see for its duration. If a spell or magical effect would prevent LaCroix from taking this action, he can instead take this action.

Lair Actions

On initiative count 20 (losing initiative ties), LaCroix takes a lair action to cause one of the following effects: LaCroix can't use the same effect twice in a row. LaCroix cannot use these options if he is not within Yonder, or is on the Bridges, the Scarlet Hearth, Cathrach, or the Shadelands.

Contingency Plan. Hidden goons fire crossbows at creatures of LaCroix's choice that he can see in the area. Each affected creature must succeed on a DC 18 Dexterity saving throw or take 22 (4d10) piercing damage, or half as much on a success.

Hidden Stash. LaCroix uncovers a hidden stash he prepared for emergencies, inside of which is a potion of superior healing, which he can immediately pick up using a reaction.

Lady Helena Whitestone

Medium undead, lawful evil

ARMOR CLASS 17 (natural armor)
HIT POINTS 187 (29d8 + 87)
SPEED 30 ft

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
11(+0)	16(+3)	16(+3)	23(+6)	14(+2)	16(+3)

Saving Throws Con +9, Int +12, Wis +8 Cha +9

Skills Arcana +12, History +18, Religion +12, Perception +8

Damage Resistances Cold, Lightning, Necrotic, Bludgeoning, Piercing, and Slashing From Nonmagical Attacks

Damage Immunities Poison

Condition Immunities Charmed, Exhaustion, Frightened, Paralyzed, Poisoned

Senses truesight 120 ft., passive Perception 18

Languages Common plus four other languages

Challenge 19 (22,000 XP)

Legendary Resistance (3/Day). If the lich fails a saving throw, it can choose to succeed instead.

Turn Resistance. The lich has advantage on saving throws against any effect that turns undead.

Silence. As a bonus action on each of her turns, Lady Helena may cast silence as a 5th level spell without the need for any components.

Spellcasting. Lady Whitestone is a 16th level spellcaster. Her spellcasting ability is Intelligence (spell save DC 20,

+12 to hit with spell attacks. She has the following spells prepared.

Cantrips (at will): mage hand, prestidigitation, ray of frost
1st level (4 slots): detect magic, magic missile, shield, thunderwave

2nd level (3 slots): detect thoughts, invisibility, acid arrow, mirror image

3rd level (3 slots): animate dead, counterspell, dispel magic, fly

4th level (3 slots): blight, dimension door

5th level (3 slots): cloudkill, scrying

6th level (1 slot): disintegrate, globe of invulnerability

7th level (1 slot): finger of death, forcecage

8th level (1 slot): dominate monster, power word stun

Actions

Paralyzing Touch. Melee Spell Attack: +12 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. Hit: 10 (3d6) cold damage.

The target must succeed on a DC 20 Constitution saving throw or be paralyzed for 1 minute. The target can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on itself on a success.

Deadly Glare. Ranged Spell Attack: +12 to hit, range 120 ft., one creature. Hit: 55 (10d10) necrotic damage.

Legendary Actions

Lady Helena can take 3 legendary actions, choosing from the list below. Only one legendary action option may be used at a time, and only at the end of another creature's turn. Lady Helena regains spent legendary actions at the start of her turns.

Cast a Spell. Lady Helena casts a spell of 3rd level or lower.

Paralyzing Touch (Costs 2 Actions). Lady Helena uses her Paralyzing Touch.

Siphon Life (Costs 3 Actions). Lady Helena emits a pulse of necrotic power in a 30 ft. radius sphere centered on her. Each living creature in the affected area must succeed on a DC 20 Constitution saving throw or take 21 (6d6) necrotic damage and Lady Helena magically regains a number of hit points equal to half the total damage dealt (rounded down).

Legionnaire

Medium humanoid, neutral evil

ARMOR CLASS 18 (plate)
HIT POINTS 255 (30d8 + 120)
SPEED 30 ft

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
22(+6)	19(+4)	19(+4)	13(+1)	14(+2)	15(+2)

Saving Throws Dex +9, Wis +7

Skills Athletics +11, Perception +7

Condition Immunities frightened

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 17

Languages Common

Challenge 13 (10,000 XP)

Weapon Master. The legionnaire rolls an extra damage dice on all of its weapon attacks (included in the attack).

Tactical Teamwork. When the legionnaire is within 10 ft. of an ally and both it and the ally are not incapacitated, it has advantage on attack rolls and ability checks.

Actions

Multiattack. The legionnaire makes three attacks. It can forgo making a single attack in this manner to instead take the Dash, Dodge, or Disengage action.

Longsword. Melee Weapon Attack: +11 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 15 (2d8+6) slashing damage.

Mighty Crossbow. Ranged Weapon Attack: +9 to hit, range 100/400 ft., one target. Hit: 17 (2d12 + 4) piercing damage.

Leth'ka, the Hexblade Champion

Medium humanoid (half-elf), lawful neutral

ARMOR CLASS 19 (natural armor)
HIT POINTS 356 (31d8 + 217)
SPEED 50 ft

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
26(+8)	16(+3)	24(+7)	22(+6)	16(+3)	24(+7)

Saving Throws Str +14, Con +13, Wis +9, Cha +13

Skills Athletics +14, Acrobatics +9, Insight +9, Perception +9

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 19

Languages Common

Challenge 17 (18,000 XP)

Fey Ancestry. Leth'ka has advantage on saving throws against being charmed and cannot be magically put to sleep.

Gift of Renewal (2/day). At the start of each of her turns, Leth'ka can choose to regain any of her expended spell slots.

Spellcasting. Leth'ka is a 17th level spellcaster. Her spellcasting ability is Charisma (spell save DC 21, +13 to hit with spell attacks). She regains her expended spell slots when she finishes a short or long rest. She knows the following spells:

Cantrips (at will): *booming blade, eldritch blast, true strike*
1st-5th level (4 5th-level slots): *banishing smite, blink, blur, dispel magic, misty step, shadow blade, shield, wrathful smite*

Blade Waltz (Recharge 5 - 6). Leth'ka magically teleports to an unoccupied space she can see within 5 ft. of an enemy creature, then makes a single spellblade attack. She can then repeat this action, so long as she does not target a single creature more than once, and no more than a total of ten different creatures.

Actions

Multiattack. Leth'ka makes three attacks, or makes one attack and casts a spell.

Spellblade. Melee Spell Attack: +13 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target., Hit: 11 (1d8+7) slashing damage. When she scores a hit with this attack, Leth'ka can choose to expend a spell slot to deal an additional 22 (5d8) necrotic damage with the attack. 295

Mechanical Golem

Huge Construct, unaligned

ARMOR CLASS 20 (natural armor)
HIT POINTS 275 (22d12 + 132)
SPEED 30 ft

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
24(+7)	9(-1)	22(+6)	3(-4)	11(+0)	1(-5)

Damage Immunities Poison, Psychic

Damage Resistances Bludgeoning, Slashing, Piercing from Non-magical Attacks

Damage Vulnerabilities fire

Condition Immunities Charmed, Exhaustion, Frightened, Paralyzed, Petrified, Poisoned, Stunned, unconscious

Senses darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 10

Languages Understands the languages of its creator but cannot speak

Challenge 17 (18,000 XP)

Immutable Form. The golem is immune to any spell or effect that would alter its form.

Spell Resistance. The golem automatically succeeds on saving throw against spells and magical effects and takes half damage from spells.

Actions

Multiattack. The golem makes two Piston Punch attacks.

Piston Punch. Melee Weapon Attack: +13 to hit, reach 15 ft., one target. Hit: 40 (6d10 + 7) bludgeoning damage. If the target is a creature, the golem may push it 15 ft. away from or pull it 15 ft. toward the golem in a straight line.

Forearm Blunderbuss. Ranged Weapon Attack: +13 to hit, range 30/60 ft., each target in a 30 ft. cone. Hit: 21 (4d6 + 7) piercing and 14 (4d6) fire.

Steam Burn (Recharge 5 - 6). The golem expels a 15ft cone of boiling steam from its. Each creature in the affected area must succeed on a DC 21 Constitution saving throw or take 54 (12d8) fire damage and be permanently blinded. A successful save halves the damage and prevents being blinded.

Pet Seedling

Tiny plant, unaligned

ARMOR CLASS 13
HIT POINTS 28 (8d4 + 8)
SPEED 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
16(+3)	16(+3)	12(+1)	1(-5)	1(-5)	1(-5)

Skills Stealth +5, Perception -3

Senses darkvision 30 ft., passive Perception 7

Languages -

Challenge 1/8 (25 XP)

Actions

Bite. Melee Weapon Attack: +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 5 (1d4+3) poison damage.

Master's Magic. The seeling casts a cantrip known by its creator, using the creator's character level, spell attack bonus and spell save DC (when applicable). If the cantrip deals damage, it instead deals half damage when cast in this manner.

Rat

Tiny Beast, unaligned

ARMOR CLASS 10
HIT POINTS 1 (1d4-1)
SPEED 20 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
2(-4)	11(+0)	9(-1)	2(-4)	10(-0)	4(-3)

Senses Darkvision 3 ft. Passive Perception 10

Actions

Bite. Melee Weapon Attack; +0 to hit, reach 5ft., one target. Hit: 1 piercing damage.

Scath'an the Glass Dragon

Gargantuan dragon, neutral

ARMOR CLASS 20 (natural armor)
HIT POINTS 385 (22d20 + 154)
SPEED 30 ft., fly 50 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
27(+8)	10(+0)	25(+7)	16(+3)	13(+1)	21(+5)

Saving Throws Str +14, Con +13, Wis +7, Cha +11

Skills Perception +7, Persuasion +11

Damage Resistances radiant; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagic weapons

Condition Immunities exhaustion, stunned, unconscious

Senses darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 17

Languages Common, Draconic

Challenge 22 (41,000 XP)

Blinding Glare. When completely within an area of bright light, Scath'an shines with a blinding light. While Scath'an so shines, enemy creatures that can see it have disadvantage on attack rolls against Scath'an.

Mirrored Scales. Scath'an is coated in scales like reflective shards of glass. When Scath'an is hit by a melee attack by a creature within 5 ft., the attacker takes 11 (2d10) slashing damage.

Actions

Multiattack. The dragon makes three attacks, two with its claws and one with its bite.

Bite. Melee Weapon Attack: +14 to hit, reach 15 ft. One target. Hit: 47 (6d12 + 8) piercing damage. If the target is

a creature, it must succeed on a DC 22 Constitution saving throw or instead by critically hit.

Claw. Melee Weapon Attack: +14 to hit, reach 10 ft. One target. Hit: 15 (2d6 + 8) slashing damage.

Glass Breath (Recharge 5 – 6). Scath'an unleashes a terrible roar, spewing hundreds of tiny razor-sharp shards of glass in a 60 ft. cone. Each creature in the affected area must succeed on a DC 22 Dexterity saving throw or take slashing damage equal to half their hit point maximum, or half as much on a success. Additionally, a creature that fails this saving throw by 10 or more has their hit point maximum reduced to their current hit points. This effect only ends if an affected creature receives the benefits of a DC 20 Wisdom (Medicine) check, or a greater restoration or heal spell.

Reactions

Spell Reflection. (Recharge 5-6) As a reaction to when Scath'an is targeted with a spell from a creature it can see, Scath can change the target to instead be a creature of its choice that it can see within 60 ft.

Thistlefury

Large Aberration, chaotic evil

ARMOR CLASS 17 (natural armor)
HIT POINTS 78 (12d6 + 36)
SPEED 20 ft., burrow 20 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
16(+3)	14(+2)	17(+3)	10(+0)	14(+2)	10(+0)

Damage Resistances Cold

Damage Immunities Poison, Psychic

Damage Vulnerability Fire

Condition Immunities Blinded, Deafened, Exhaustion

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 12

Languages none

Challenge 3 (700 XP)

Actions

Root Snare. Melee Weapon Attack: +6 to hit, reach 15 ft., one target on the ground. Hit: 10 (2d6 + 3) bludgeoning damage and 7 (2d6) poison damage. If the target is a creature, it must succeed on a DC 13 Strength saving throw or be grappled and restrained.

Seedling Drop (3/day). The thistlefury creates 1d4 Thistlefury seedlings in unoccupied spaces within 5 ft. of it. The seedlings are friendly toward the thistlefury and act immediately after its turns.

Thistlefury Seedling

Tiny aberration, unaligned

ARMOR CLASS 13
HIT POINTS 1 (1d4 - 3)
SPEED 60 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
16(+3)	16(+3)	5(-3)	1(-5)	1(-5)	1(-5)

Damage Resistances Cold

Damage Immunities Poison, Psychic

Damage Vulnerability Fire

Condition Immunities Blinded, Deafened, Exhaustion

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 5

Languages none

Challenge -

Actions

Bite. Melee Weapon Attack: +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target., Hit: 5 (1d4+3) piercing damage.

Infection. The seedling attempts to burrow into the flesh of a living creature within 5 ft. The target must succeed on a DC 13 Constitution saving throw or have the seedling enter their body. A creature so infected is vulnerable to all damage, and the seedling can only be removed by a creature within reach using an action to succeed on a DC 13 Wisdom (Medicine) check to remove the seedling.

Those Who Wait Beyond

Gargantuan aberration (great old one), unaligned

ARMOR CLASS 23 (natural armor)
HIT POINTS 1147 (62d20 + 496)
SPEED 0 ft., 5 ft. fly (hover)

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
29(+9)	14(+2)	26(+8)	20(+5)	25(+7)	17(+3)

Saving Throws Int +14, Wis +16, Cha +12

Skills Insight +23, Perception +16

Damage Resistances bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from non-magical attacks

Damage Immunities psychic

Condition Immunities Charmed, frightened, exhaustion, grappled, paralyzed, petrified, poisoned, prone, restrained, stunned, unconscious

Senses blindsense 5 ft., passive Perception 26

Languages All, but can only be understood by those suffering from madness

Challenge 29 (41,000 XP)



Mythic Resistance. When the great old one fails a saving throw, it can expend and unspent legendary action to succeed instead.

Utter Chaos. At the start of each of its turns, the great old one gains one of the following benefits, which lasts until the start of its next turn. If the great old one is weakened, this effect instead occurs every other turn.

- **Apocalyptic Might.** The great old one deals double damage on all attacks and effects.
- **Profane Insight.** The great old one gains advantage on attack rolls, saving throws, and ability checks.
- **Magical Supremacy.** The great old one becomes immune to spells of 6th level or lower.
- **Unstoppable Will.** The DC of the great old one's effects increases by 3.

Omnipresent. The great old one is beyond the petty rules of mortal dimensions. Its influence can be felt in a 1-mile radius cylinder that is infinitely high, centered on the point upon which it manifests. The great old one is treated as though it occupies this space, though it imposes no penalties, nor receives any for sharing this space with other creatures.

Cyclonids. Each Cyclonid has an AC of 17 and 1 HP. When a Cyclonid is destroyed, half the damage of the attack is dealt to the Entity's total HP. Roll an appropriate die each round to see how many Cyclonids will take on of the following actions:

- **Strike.** A flying eyeball attempts to stab a creature with its sharp, spider-like legs. +15 to hit. Deals 3d8 +8 piercing damage.
- **Puppet.** A flying eyeball attempts to clamp down on a creature's head with its legs. The target must make a DEX save (DC15). On a failure, the Cyclonid grasps the target's skull. If not knocked away in the next 18 seconds (3 turns) the sharp spider legs will pierce the target's skull, dig into their brain, and the Cyclonid will take control of the target like a puppet, gaining all their abilities. If a Player becomes a puppet, and the Cyclonid is destroyed, the Player survives but is immediately reduced to 1 HP.

Actions

Multiattack. The great old one makes a tentacle attack against each creature of its choice in the area of its Omnipresent feature.

Tentacle. Melee Weapon Attack: +18 to hit., reach anywhere in the area of its Omnipresent feature., one target. Hit: 31 (4d10 + 9) bludgeoning damage. If the target is a creature, the great old one may grapple it (Escape DC 26).

Gaze of Eldritch Madness. A creature the great old one can see must succeed on a DC 24 Wisdom saving throw or be afflicted with eldritch madness. While afflicted in this manner, a creature deals half damage and cannot be considered as or treat other creatures as friendly toward it. At

the end of each of its turns, an affected creature can choose to repeat the saving throw, ending the effect on a success. However, each time it fails this saving throw, it takes 35 (10d6) psychic damage.

Fate Worse Than Death (Recharge 5 -6). The great old one chooses a creature at 0 hit points within the area of its Omnipresent feature to join it in a realm beyond space and time. The target vanishes, never to be seen again, forever lost in a realm of madness, death, and suffering. Only a wish spell or divine intervention can change this fate.

Obliteration. The great old one projects a column of destruction in a 15 ft. radius cylinder that is 300 ft. high, centered on a point within the area of its Omnipresent feature. Unattended objects and structures in the affected area are reduced to dust, while creatures in the affected area must succeed on a DC 24 Constitution saving throw or have their maximum hit points reduced by 55 (10d10) or half as much on a success. This reduction lasts until a creature finishes a long rest or benefits from the effects of a greater restoration or heal spell.

Consume Cultist. A tentacle lashes down from the sky and slowly lifts a willing cultist who is eagerly waiting to be devoured by its master. This cultist can be 2d10 x100 feet away from the Party in the Shadelands. If the round ends and the cultist is not stopped, then Those-Who-Wait gain (or heal) 30 HP.

Legendary Actions

The great old one can take 3 legendary actions, choosing from the list below. Only one legendary action option may be used at a time, and only at the end of another creature's turn. The great old one regains spent legendary actions at the start of its turns.

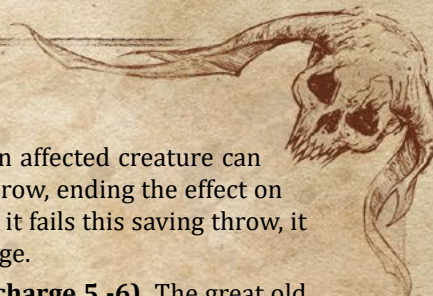
Consume Magic (Costs 2 Actions). The great old one ends a spell or magical effect of 9th level or lower within the area of its Omnipresent feature.

Tentacle. The great old one makes a tentacle attack.

Gaze of Eldritch Madness (Costs 2 Actions). The great old one uses its Gaze of Eldritch Madness action.

Obliteration (Costs 2 Actions). The great old one uses its Obliteration action.

Mindbreaker (Costs 2 Actions). The great old one attempts to shatter the mind of a creature it can see within the area of its Omnipresent feature. The great old one makes a Wisdom ability check contested by either an Intelligence, Wisdom, or Charisma ability check (target's choice) from the target. If the target loses the contest, the great old one reduces the ability score used by the creature to contest the check to 1. This reduction lasts until the great old one is defeated.



Twilight Giant

Huge Giant, Chaotic Neutral

ARMOR CLASS 20 (natural armor)
HIT POINTS 350
SPEED 50 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
29(+9)	14(+2)	20(+5)	20(+5)	18(+4)	18(+4)

Saving Throws Con +11, Int +11, Wis +10

Skills Athletics +15, Perception +10

Damage Resistances psychic, necrotic

Damage Immunities bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing damage from nonmagical attacks

Condition Immunities charmed, frightened

Senses darkvision 120 ft., passive Perception 20

Languages Common, giant, plus one other language

Challenge 18 (20,000 XP)

Amphibious. The giant breaths air and water.

Innate Spellcasting. The giant's innate spellcasting ability is Intelligence (spell save DC 18). It can innately cast the following spells, requiring no material components

At will: *detect magic, feather fall, levitate, light*

3/day each: *harm, heal*

Actions

Multiattack. The giant makes three attacks. The giant can forgo making two of these attacks to instead cast a spell.

Aurora Light Club. Melee Weapon Attack: +15 to hit, reach 15 ft., one target. Hit: 22 (2d12 + 9) bludgeoning and 13 (2d12) radiant damage.

Star Beam. Ranged Spell Attack: +11 to hit, range 60/240 ft., one target. Hit: 35 (4d12 + 9) force damage.

Arcane Lightning (Recharge 5-6). The giant conjures a magical lightning bolt at a point it can see within 500 ft. of it. Each creature within 10 ft. of that point must make succeed on a DC 18 Dexterity saving throw or take 90 (20d8) lightning damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a success.

Void Maw

Medium Aberration, Chaotic Evil

ARMOR CLASS 15 (natural armor)
HIT POINTS 105 (14d8 + 42)
SPEED 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
22(+6)	15(+2)	16(+3)	11(+0)	10(+0)	8(-1)

Saving Throws Dex +5, Con +6

Skills Stealth +8, Perception +3

Damage Resistances Psychic, Necrotic

Damage Immunities Poison

Damage Vulnerabilities Radiant

Condition Immunities charmed, frightened

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 13

Languages Deep speech

Challenge 8 (3,900 XP)

Actions

Multiattack. The maw makes three attacks.

Claw. Melee Weapon attack: +9 to hit. Reach 5 ft., one target. Hit: 13 (3d6 + 3) slashing damage

Tongue Strike (Recharge 5-6). Melee Weapon Attack: +9 to hit. Reach 30 ft., one creature. Hit: (30) 4d12 +6 piercing damage. On a successful hit, the target must succeed on a DC 17 Constitution saving throw or have a larval void maw implanted in its body. 2 (1d4) rounds later, a full mature void maw emerges from the target's body, taking 44 (8d10) necrotic damage as the void maw appears in the nearest unoccupied space. A larval void maw can be removed by a creature within reach using an action to succeed on a DC 17 Wisdom (Medicine) check to extract it.

Void Gaze. The aberration opens its chest mouth wide, revealing a seemingly endless black abyss with streaks of white light swirling. Each creature of the void maw's choice that it can see must succeed on a DC 17 Wisdom saving throw or be mesmerized by the void, becoming incapacitated for as long as the void maw concentrates (as though concentrating on a spell).



Appendix 2

MAGIC ITEMS ARTIFICER ITEMS

Shield of Rebound

Armor (shield), very rare (requires attunement)

While you are wearing the shield, if you are attacked by a melee weapon attack by a creature within 5ft., you can use your reaction to change the target of the attack to the creature, instead of you.

Work In Progress. The Player must roll a D8 when using this ability. On a roll of 1, the item malfunctions and the ability fails.

"Its thick, roughly smithed exterior is made of black-iron and adorned in spikes that jut upwards dangerously; ensuring a faulty move against it would be punished."

The Doubletap - Dual Hand Crossbows

Weapons (hand crossbows), rare (requires attunement)

These magical hand crossbows magically reload themselves after each shot. Additionally, when you score a critical hit using either of the crossbows, you may make an additional attack using that crossbow (no action required). This benefit cannot occur more than once per crossbow on your turns.

Work In Progress. The Player must roll a D8 when using this weapon. On a roll of 1, the crossbow jams. The Player will have to spend their bonus action to unjam it.

"One can never be too efficient with prey, more so if that prey possesses these weapons."

Lightning Whip

Weapon (whip), very rare (requires attunement)

A long whip of braided leather, with a thin copper wire threaded through the braids. A bronze signet of a sword crossed with a lightning bolt is built into the handle. When you would make a melee weapon attack with the whip, you can choose to instead make one of the following special attacks, which add their benefits to the attack. Once you have made a special attack with the whip, you cannot make another one that turn.

Lash. The attack deals an additional 2d10 slashing damage.

Trip. The target must succeed on a DC 14 Strength saving throw or fall prone.

Zap. The target is shocked with electricity and must succeed on a DC 14 Constitution saving throw or be stunned until the end of the turn.

Work in Progress. The Player must roll a D8 when attempting Zap. On a 1, the shock backfires, dealing 4 damage to The Player.

"Pain delights in teaching your adversary regret, but you as well - should you falter."

Belt of Righteousness

Wondrous item, very rare (requires attunement)

While you wear the belt, you have a +1 increase to your proficiency bonus and all saving throws. Additionally, you are physically incapable of lying and find yourself magically compelled to tell anyone you meet the truth.

"Like a halo that binds my soul, expelling all my secrets." In some circles, it is known that priests of old were put on a holy crusade at the turn of their tenth year of service to the temple and earned this as a reward. A secret pocket slit in the leather is an adage passed down from master to master. "Always be willing to shield the innocent, and let your faith guide your death."

Coin of Destiny

Wondrous item, rare

When you roll a d20, you can immediately take a bonus action to flip the coin in the air, placing the result in the hands of fate. On a heads, the d20 roll becomes a 20. On a tails, the d20 roll becomes a 1. Once you have used this feature, the coin cannot be used in this manner again until 24 hours have passed.

"Drunk was I, on the wine of destiny, always the wealthiest pauper by day's end."

A coin so thin, it appears without edge no matter how close you inspect. It carries an odd tarnished complexion and is older than any known civilization's currency. It is speculated that the Patron's dropped it as a means of testing the greed of mankind, others say it is as a means to seize power if you understand the cost.

Deadly Precision

Weapon (rapier), rare (requires attunement)

A silver blade with a crimson edge with a hilt of plain steel and the handle wrapped in black leather. A smooth steel orb acts as a pommel. The sword feels incredibly light and nimble in your grip. The level of speed and control they feel is unlike anything you've experienced with other blades. You gain a +1 bonus to attack and damage rolls made with the blade. Additionally, when you deal 15 or more damage in a single hit with the blade to a creature of flesh and blood, you can inflict a bleeding wound. A creature so wounded

loses 1d10 hit points at the start of each of its turns until it either receives at least 1 hit point of magical healing or receives the benefits of a DC 15 Wisdom (Medicine) check to treat the wound.

"Their forms entwined, master, and blade. Harmoniously, they struck as one who would court death itself. As you reach and grab the handle, it slides into your grasp with ease. The blade lacerates through the air so effortlessly you could swear the sword is leading your hand towards the target. Though common steel, the craftsmanship was nothing short of legend."

Fiend's Trinket

Wondrous item, rare (requires attunement)

This small metal charm is sculpted into a dragon's claw, which can be attached to a weapon, staff, or tied around the wrist. When you slay a creature while attuned to the trinket, you can choose to have their souls sent to the Fiend patron as tribute. After you have sent twenty souls to the Fiend in this manner, you gain the following benefit whenever you are attuned to the trinket.

Hurl Through Hell. When you hit an enemy with an attack, they transport the target to the lower planes, sending them hurtling through a nightmare landscape. At the end of your next turn, the target returns to the same space (or nearest if occupied) and takes 10d10 psychic damage.

"Charmed, I'm sure..."

Its embossed lines and particular detail seem common. Yet upon very close inspection, they are unlike any kind known by traditional craft. Its presence is unassuming and dismissible, but the charm always leaves an unknown sense of dread in those who stare at it for long enough."

Remnant Rings - Remnant of Scath'an

Wondrous item (ring), very rare (requires attunement)

While you wear the ring when a creature you can see attacks you, it provokes an attack of opportunity from you.

The ring appears as pure reflection, almost blending into whatever surface it is set on. When placed in direct light, the flashes of azure glint in the sun. The ring initially hurts to bear on your hand, a chill mildly numbing your finger. The bitter cold seemingly heightens your senses and centers your focus making you keenly aware. You feel the cold death that will visit those who would try to subdue you. Infrequently, a vividly dark feeling crawls over your skin and you feel territorially on guard, even towards allies."

Remnant Rings - Remnant of Deataigh

Wondrous item (ring), very rare (requires attunement)

While you wear the ring, if you are targeted by a spell or magical effect by a creature you can see, you can use your reaction to change the target of that spell or magical effect to another creature you can see within 30 ft.

The ring feels almost willful at first but calms once fully worn. Your sight briefly becomes painted with ash and smoke as pale-sepia clouds wash over your eyes and pass without trace.

Song of Tranquility

Wondrous item, very rare (requires attunement)

Inked by the famed Bard, Rhima Rhythym. This scroll contains four poems so beautiful they are rumored to cause calming and healing effects in a person when they hear them read aloud for the first time.

By spending 1 minute of strenuous activity you can read one of the poems from the scroll, granting each creature that can hear your recitation the benefits of a short rest. Once a creature has benefited from a poem in this manner, it cannot benefit from the magic of that poem again.

Finespun cloth so dense it appears as paper but remains soft and silky to the touch. Gold trim wraps each of the four edges of the scroll that is segmented into blue, scarlet, forest green, and cyan. Once read, the poems dissolve from the page, and upon falling into dream are forgotten altogether. Known only to the wise, all beautiful things one day must die.

Whitestone Amulet

Wondrous item, legendary (requires attunement)

While you wear the amulet, your attacks are imbued with supernatural cold. When you deal damage to a creature with a weapon or spell attack, you can add 1d10 cold damage to the attack's damage and you take an amount of cold damage equal to the cold damage dealt.

"A banshee's sorrowed heart captured in silver."

The chain feels almost like a noose around your neck, yet loose enough to not cause too much discomfort. Its lineage was traced back to the Blackmorn family - a pendant gifted to the youngest daughter in a time of great strife within the household.

Woodskin Bangle

Wondrous item, very rare (requires attunement)

This circlet of carved wood can grant you the durability of a mighty oak. As an action you can activate the magic of the circlet, granting you the following benefits for 1 hour or until you use an action to end the effects.

- Resistance to bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing damage.
- Immunity to poison damage and the poisoned condition.
- Vulnerability to fire and lightning damage.

Once you have used the ring in this manner, it cannot be used again until 1 week has passed.

"Blood-sap flows within the veins of wooden roots, so too shall you be woven into nature itself."

The bracelet wraps snug around your wrist and you sense slight movement for a brief moment as if something entered into your skin. Removing is doable but offers discomfort as you feel what seems like roots getting pulled from your body.

Appendix 2.1

UNASSIGNED MAGIC ITEMS

Blooded Brooch

Wondrous item, very rare (requires attunement)

This silver brooch has two silver fangs bordering a ruby gemstone. As an action, you can prick your finger with the pin and transform into a vampiric beast, which lasts for 1 hour. While in this form you have advantage on melee weapon attacks, are resistant to bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing damage from nonmagic weapons, immune to necrotic and poison damage, and magically regain 1d6 hit points each time you hit a flesh and blood creature with a weapon attack. However, this form comes with a price. While in this state you cannot communicate intelligibly and cannot regain hit points from any source other than the brooch. This effect can only end early if a creature within reach pricks uses an action to prick you with one of the brooch's fangs.

"Oh, sweet night of merciful reprieve; by my blood I am yours, by my will you are mine."

The gem, bordered by two elongating silvery fangs, hangs from adjoining leather strands connected by a silver chain, its gem flickers bright sparks of red. A subtle vortex of swirling scarlet hides under the outward flash of tangible brilliance.

Boots of Godspeed

Wondrous item, very rare (requires attunement)

While you wear these boots your base walking speed is increased by 20 ft. Additionally, as a bonus action, you can achieve godlike speed for the remainder of that turn. While you move with this speed, you do not provoke attacks of opportunity and can run across liquids and up vertical surfaces.

Held up to the light, the black leather boots glint with an unnatural midnight blue hue. When worn, your footfalls occasionally hasten without intent, as if carried on by some unseen force. They were originally crafted by an envious Sorcerer seeking the heart of his unrequited love. Upon challenging a rival for the lady's hand, it was agreed to be settled in a race of purely physical skill. Though the Sorcerer had spent many of his years locked away in the refining of his mind, not body, he agreed to the terms, vowing to cast not a single spell. He was sure the boots would carry him to his unrequited love's heart with the haste of gods. Pleased with his craftiness in outwitting his foe, he came to find that, as he raced farther and farther ahead, a river awaited, and he was unable to swim.

Circling of Spatial Displacement

Wondrous item, uncommon (requires attunement)

This leather band houses a large stone that looks like the night sky – black and speckled with bright white dots. As

a bonus action, while you wear the circling, you can magically swap spaces with a creature you can see within 60 ft. An unwilling target can succeed on a DC 16 Charisma saving throw to prevent the effect. Once you have used this feature three times, it cannot be used again until 24 hours have passed.

"Your high ground is meaningless from down here."

From ravenknight leather dangles a single black stone with stars like embers captured inside. Inscriptions trace the band written of an eldritch language both forward and in reverse. A small droplet of blood stains the frayed ends of the bracelet, belonging to an aspiring, yet inept, practitioner.

Flavor Maker

Wondrous item, uncommon

This small wooden chest is banded with gold and bears a fork and knife carved into the lid. As an action, you can speak of your favorite food the box, which when opened contains the item desired. Once you have used this feature, the maker cannot be used again until 8 hours have passed.

"Fetch me my knives, bring me my wine, for each night as a King I shall dine"

Created by a rather "prosperous" mage whose name was deemed "not-to-be-spoken" for the shame and scorn his brethren felt after a time. His laziness was deemed so profound that, to bother keeping apprentices to serve his ever-growing appetites, left him yearning at the end of each night. Every pleasure, every wine, the comforts of countless women, exotic inebriants from across the sea, the sweetest succor, and the ways of the nymph no longer sufficed. So, it came to pass that his final creation would be his undoing. With this device, not having further need to be served, desiring no company of little use and with no one left to care for him, his knowledge and greatness slipped away into apathetic idleness. He was found one morning when his estranged apprentice came calling out of simple kindness to the old mage who found him dead upon the floor surrounded by bones of various small animals. With hands clenched tightly, and arms encircling the small wooden chest, he laid in a pool of wine.

Pick Me Up

Potion, rare

Dark liquid. Smells delicious. Tastes bitter. As an action, you can drink the potion, which grants you proficiency in a saving throw of your choice for 1 hour.

"Could I conceive such power? If I were to drink the very soul of a righteous warrior and know a lifetime in an instant."

The blackened Prussian liquid emanates an earthy, yet sweetly floral fragrance. The taste of bitter root and a mixture of pleasant and

unfavorable ingredients sludges over your tongue. Though not unbearable, the taste is certainly acquired.

Red Sight

Wondrous item, rare (requires attunement)

This pure white opera mask has blood-red teardrops painted at the corners of the eye slits. As a bonus action, while wearing the mask, you may invoke the Red Sight. This state is a magically induced rage, granting you the following benefits for 1 minute or until you become incapacitated.

- You have advantage on melee weapon attack rolls, but creatures have advantage on attack rolls against you.
- You gain a +5 bonus to damage rolls on melee weapon attacks.
- You cannot cast spells.
- When you are reduced to 0 hit points, you are instead reduced to 1 hit point. This effect cannot occur more than once per instance of Red Sight.

Once you have entered the Red Sight, the mask cannot be used in this manner again until 24 hours have passed.

An old mask in remarkably pristine condition.

Originally gifted to the famous playwright Richard D. Vryce. It was inspired by hellish dreams. Between the princes of night and dark alliances, the playwright used the mask to control his performers in some of the bloodiest performances to ever grace the stage—even if he only allowed his guests to see them once.

Summon Patron

Wondrous item (scroll), very rare (requires attunement by a creature who made a pact with an otherworldly patron)

As an action, you can read from the scroll to summon the titanic power of an otherworld patron. When you do so, you can immediately cast a spell of your choice from the following options. The spell save DC of this spell is always 25 (when applicable. level foresight, power word kill, psychic scream, true polymorph)

"The imperceptible fibers of the paper tingle in your hands, a subtle reminder of what force can be summoned."

The worn, discoloration varied about the parchment created only by time's ageless years.

Close inspection will note finely faded words layered and on top of words, countless pearls of wisdom contained on one piece of parchment; whole scriptures of knowledge infused into the thick, feathery grain. When focused on for long periods, whole passages are noted to fade and reappear elsewhere on the page, as if the communion was occurring from within.

The Calm Exterior

Wondrous item, legendary (requires attunement)

This simple black opera mask is trimmed with gold. While wearing this mask you have complete control over your emotions. You have advantage on all Deception, Performance, and Persuasion checks, and other creatures have disadvantage on any Insight checks made toward you.

"All was lost, the very reaches of my soul were in defeat, yet under shadow's guilded-hewn guise, I was unstoppable."

When held to the light the mask has no shine and no surface reflection as if you were holding the void itself. When worn, you feel the serenity of a numbing wave wash over your psyche, leaving you helplessly drowning under a calm tide of peace. Your expression becomes that of neutrality, hiding the flow of human emotion, though those emotions may occasionally wash over the minds who foolishly place too much faith in the mask to carry their burden of subterfuge

Wind-Up Knife

Weapon (Dagger), very rare (requires attunement)

This sterling silver dagger is marked with a simple etching depicting a humanoid outline attached to marionette strings. When you slay a flesh and blood creature using the knife, you can choose to leave the blade in the target's body and twist the blade to activate its magic. When you do so, the target rises as an undead thrall under your command within 1 minute. The creature's statistics are unchanged, except its type changes to undead, and it becomes immune to necrotic and poison damage. As a bonus action on each of your turns, you can issue verbal commands to the target, which follows your commands to the best of its ability and otherwise has no will of its own. After 1 hour, the magic of the knife fades and the thrall crumbles to dust. Once you have used the knife in this manner, it cannot be used again until 1 week has passed.

"Dance, dance, then dance some more, under my command as your unlife must endure. And when you fall, shall that be the final call?"

Within the hilt, you can almost hear the faint ticking of tiny gears, far too small to have been placed and set with even the most dexterous fingers. An off-color liquid will periodically seep from the joint between the hilt and the blade. When the blade twists in a devious manner it causes cracking, rusty gears, and straining clicks, to creep out.

Wrath's Bargain

Wand, legendary (requires attunement)

This pale wooden wand is laced with jagged veins of dark emerald. When you cast a spell while holding the wand, you can immediately use a bonus action to lose hit points to increase the power of the spell's magic. For every 10 hit points you choose to lose in this manner, you increase the spell's level by 1, to a maximum of the highest spell level you can cast using your class spellcasting feature.

"Patrons hear my cries and indulge my sinful need of vengeance, even should it cost me my own life!"

Crafted under a full moon by Yamila Skrillen with vengeance seething through her, she swore to the patrons that she would avenge her slaughtered partner, even if it cost a part of herself. Her calls were heard as she slit her palm to offer the wand her blood. It drew her life in, and she felt a connection forged... So long as blood was offered through the wand, even if it belonged to the wielder, their chances of slaying those who stood against them strengthened. Hopefully, any would-be wielder wouldn't abuse this gift from the Patron to the point they drain themselves dry.

Appendix 2.2

ADDITIONAL SHADELANDS LOCATIONS

Autumn Burg

Nestled in the rolling fields of the south sits the quiet farming village of Autumn Burg. Simple houses and swaying trees line the dirt roads. White cobblestone streets host a variety of shops from the purchase of rations to receiving simple repairs. "The Fox & Rose Tavern" stands at the end of the road; a tall, wooden public-house where coin is exchanged at the hard day's end. A place where foxes sit next to a pond behind the tavern, often caught running with fish or a scrap of meat delightfully dangling from one side of their mouths.

Autumn Burg is given its very namesake due to the sunset as night touches down. Leaves, grass, the rich red dirt, and all vegetation become alit with ever more vibrant autumn colors as the sun falls. Retired soldiers, families fleeing the conflict, and all war-scarred mercenaries are welcomed here to forget their past, no matter how grievous, and start anew.

Long-standing families of merchants and farmers, whose bloodline reaches back to when the town was first founded, run the yearly seedings and harvests. Occasional warriors that arrive seeking quarrel with former adversaries are often deterred by the town's haste in any call to arms. Tools become weapons, and those weapons become death sentences in the hands of any battle-hardened man or woman that stands in unison.

Bards and painters alike often travel to Autumn Burg for inspiration, while the farmers that reside there welcome the Patronage their town harbors. An alchemy shop, no larger than a room sits at the end of town, supplying only the meagerest of ingredients and wares. The owner, far into the twilight of his years has traded his lifelong craft to die happily a farmer. Though often he continues to dabble when passions rekindled anew, just frequent enough for him to not close the door on his past for long. The stablemaster towers above the townspeople with arms as trees. It is fabled that he alone could mount a horse atop his shoulders carry it uphill. Though kind, he is quick to temper.

Belly of the Beast Inn & Tavern

Located dead center of the Shadelands near the crossroads east of the Yawning Lake. To the west rises Sweet Mist Hollow. More of a small compound than a single building, the Belly of the Beast Inn & Tavern has a main lodge that serves as the actual tavern. Surrounding this wooden lodge of wood-cooked food and fine ales, is a large number of supporting buildings. Barns, stables, water mills, grain silos, and more help "Handsome" Harald and his family run the establishment. Together, they are Kaldenkind, sentient

humanoid bear people that resemble polar bears with mostly white fur, but always carries a shaded tint from the Aurora above. Harald and his family are jovial and personable, but quite dangerous if trifled with.

Blackmorn Manor

This imposing estate stands atop a rocky hill near the coastline, just a short ride east of the city. Long dilapidated though awe-inspiring from its size alone, wooden signs dangle from a single rusted chain and dried weeds emerge from cracked stone. Low stone walls weave a maze-like path throughout the grounds. A neglected boathouse rests on the edge of a small lake at the southern edge of the property.

Within the house itself, torn red carpets run the length of every hallway. Rotting curtains, dusty tapestries, and creaking floorboards abound through the manor's thirty-some rooms. Mixed rumors surround the Blackmorn family, scandalous and benevolent alike. Some saw them as gracious, who paid their help fair wages. Others feel that was not enough, as their immense prosperity occurred due to that very same help. It has been well over a decade since a beating heart call this place home. Being the most haunted location in a city literally full of otherworldly entities hasn't helped the matter either.

Cindered House, The

East of Yon'Cath, there sits a lake with a small island at its center. The sole structure of this island is The Cindered House. A near-constant tendril of smoke can be seen curling up toward the sky. The hum of machinery can be heard faintly from the outside along with the occasional clashing of metal.

Like the bastard love child of a log cabin and a coal factory, this charred black monolith stands tall among the trees. The only activity seen outside the House is either soot-covered figures emerging to receive the day's delivery of corpses, or grim dwarven merchants heading to market flush with new goods and weapons.

Cracked Pact, The

In the northeast corner of Yonder, there stands a sturdy building of dark gray brick. Arrow slits for windows and wrought iron doors make the Cracked Pact look more like a miniature fortress than a place of commerce.

Inside, Khouryn Brickfoot reclines with her feet up on the counter. The dwarven

woman hides her eyes behind circular opaque glasses and is almost always chewing on an unlit cigar.

A Warlock gains their power by striking a pact. In a city literally full of Warlocks, there are bound to be those unhappy with the deals they've struck. Khouryn's business is breaking those pacts... for a price.

Crooked Lighthouse, The

At the northwest corner of the Shadelands, the Nameless Black Sea comes to an end along a narrow ridge of dark rock. On the other side of the rock, the blue waves of the great northern ocean crash again and again. Here stands the Crooked Lighthouse, its name a result of the many half-hearted repairs that left the exterior twisted and contorted. To the east of the structure stretches the endless line of black jagged stone that marks the northern Shadelands border. To the west, the shoreline gives way to a series of partially sunken caves and tide pools. No approaching ship will find guidance here, and many wonder if the structure has ever been anything more than ornamental.

Forest of Shrieking Whispers

Gaunt, moss-hung trees arch and twist in every direction like bark covered contortionists. The near-constant mist often leads outsiders to mistake the trees for people locked in an unnatural pose. The air tends to ebb and flow through the wreathed timberland, causing an exhale to pass the ears of those who traipse too deep. Those with the right connections, understand this is a forest for druids and druid-adjacent creatures. As with most of the Shadelands, unwanted guests will find plenty of danger and death awaiting them.

Fort Ironweald

Within the northern reach of the western forest stands Fort Ironweald. Encircled by an almost impassably dense thicket of trees, this old settlement is unknown to most. Upon entering, one would discover a mixture of peasant folk; humans, halflings, gnomes, and half-elves. They are hunters, warriors beyond their best years, and children laboring alongside their adult counterparts. The worst is always presumed of outsiders. There is no use for currency and often the younger citizens do not know the concept. These are people who yearn to hide from the endless chaos of the outside realms, who want nothing more than to be left alone and forgotten by the world.

Grenloft

If one were to enter Sweet Mist Hollow from the western forest edge, walk until they reached the river, and then follow said river north—they'd reach the secluded village of Grenloft. Though the uninformed or unwelcome might just

as easily walk right under it. The village does not exist on the forest floor; but rather high up near the top of the massive Jadewoods. This town is not born from carpentry, but druidic wood shaping. The green branches and lavender leaves have been molded and sculpted to form dwellings and walkways.

An aqueduct system funnels water from a lake in the nearby mountains through the forest. These each end in small waterfalls that litter the forest of Grenloft, both creating a low-hanging forest fog, and an elusive air of mystery.

Gravehand Steppes

Natural bridges of toppled stone and felled trees stretch over gentle brooks. Sprites and Faeries laze the day away floating along the water in leaf boats. Fragrant flowers are peppered among the grass, breathing sweet life into the chilled air. Simple stone archways stand as monuments at the ends of dozens of well-trod paths, the edges of which are lined with swords stuck in the dirt. Each one left in tribute to fallen warriors. Those who come to this peaceful place often do so to reflect on the moral cost of war. Neither the names of the dead nor causes they died for are not recorded here, as all are one in this garden of final peace. The only inscription you'll find repeated constantly is: In death, we lose our name. In death, we are all the same.

Hexworth Ruins - Underdark

Narrow tunnels open into a great cityscape of charnels, tenements, and pillared spires. Monolithic sculptures depicting long-dead heroes stand ridged throughout the massive earthen city, towering over the broken streets. What may first be confused for gravel is pulverized bits of bone, and there hasn't been any formal civilization here for quite some time. Completing the long journey through the empty, quiet architectures will find adventurers standing at precipices edge, overlooking a vast nothingness. Pebbles that fall off from the edge have no echo to reverberate. Steps descend into the unknown shadows, allowing the faintest draft of cold air to drift by.

Little Helper, The

Imps, sprites, pseudodragons, winged monkeys, and diminutive sidekicks of all ilk's can be found carousing and blowing off steam at The Little Helper. Located on the east side of the city in Cathrach. This gin mill caters exclusively to the short-in-stature assistants of Yon'Cath's magic-wielding elite.

Maghor's Perch

Like a gnarled black twig, the clock tower Maghor's Perch looms over the western riverbank of Yon'Cath. Named for the otherworldly Patron, it's four clock faces cast an eerie blue glow toward each of the cardinal directions. But this tall, twisted obelisk is not just a helpful timekeeper. It serves as the home for a ruthless clan of Warlocks, The Evermores.

These devout followers of Maghoro operate with cold efficiency, their motives remain shrouded in mystery.

Mountainheart Passage

The craggy peaks of the Shadelands are home to hearty peoples such as Goliaths, frost giants, and mountain dwarves. The terrain is quite inhospitable, even by Shadelands standards. Most "flatlands folk", as the locals call them, stay away from the treacherous rocky heights. The Mountainheart Passage, however, remains the exception. Narrow pathways and poorly secured bridges create a honeycomb suspended above the shadowy abyss below. Deep within that dark crack, two howling faces have been carved into the mountainside. A mysterious, rusty liquid greatly coveted by alchemists throughout the world pours endlessly from their howling maws.

Parched Whale Tavern

An inn of a most peculiar quality, located at the southeastern corner of the Shadelands, near the eastern sea. Spectators of all manner come to witness the spectacle. Here, Warlocks and bards join in unison to bring about grand narrative displays of battle, slaughter, glory, and death by combining their magics in a display of music and malefic visions. Many of the performers are dressed in war paints reflecting day and night, life and death. Survivors of many a war would come to perform in the youthful years of their careers. This is the closest thing the Shadelands has to tourism.

Penwick Seminary

Not far from the opulent town of Ravenvale, stands the Bard's College, Penwick Seminary. Within this cluster of colorful buildings, long rows of shelves house the greatest pieces of literature, songs, and poems throughout history. The smell of jasmine dances as the delicate harp plucks like drops of water, accompanying the steady brush of the bow on the violin.

Statues tangle in a sensual embrace, displays of carnality frozen in time. Prism rays shine brilliantly through stain glass windows. In the Grandiose Hall lies a tremendous stone hearth, engraved and adorned with wooden filigree.

The banner above the entrance is inscribed in masterful calligraphy "Let thine quill set thy parchment ablaze." Belonging to an old bard, inherited from her parents, thousands and thousands of records remain unaccounted for, an eternal task for only one. However, she was always told, "The wealth is in the records." And thus, the records she kept.

Ravenvale

Hollowed into the southwestern edge of the forest, along the Shadelands border, is the town of Ravenvale. Fine manors rise in fields of colorful flowers, sable and burgundy banners hang from light posts, and quaint wooden bridges cross peaceful creeks. Children play while men and women dressed in regal garb exchange pleasantries. Trees crowned with crimson leaves fill the air with sweet spice. These are the famous Cardinal Oaks.

Ravenvale's wealth relies on the exports derived from these trees. Founded by a married pair of modest hunters, Gareth and Tish Ravensworth, seeking naught but quiet splendor to build a homestead. However, they quickly discovered the bounty of their surroundings. Amongst the peaked roofs, decadent houses, cobbled streets, lethargic water wheels, and opulent shops, stands a cabin ever unmoved.

Red Deep, The

The land around the Scarlet Hearth is cracked and broken. The cavernous depths below these arcane fissures are known as the Red Deep. Rumors abound of what tremendous power may be discovered from this bottomless chasm. This broken maw swallows the runoff from Yon'Cath: black water from the Obsidian Rush... spilled blood from sacrificial rituals... the residual arcane energies that saturate the city.

Many are the Warlocks who venture down into the fissures, searching for that next "high" of otherworldly power. As one might expect, very few make it back to the surface with mind and body intact.

And those that do, return with tales of bones scattered about, bones of every discernable race and some from creatures unknown. Paintings in white pigment, presumably derived from the sea of bones, covered the sheer rocky walls. The natural stone all but disappears in some places, hidden under ritual marking after ritual marking.

Reliquary of the Ivory Tear - Lluthorn

Across the mountains and past the forests, the small industrial hamlet, Lluthorn, lies at the western edge of the Shadelands. The subtle groaning of gears around town harmonizes with the rhythmic patter of frequent rain. The homesteads are aligned in rigid rows, but appear warm and inviting nonetheless. The people of Lluthorn are mostly cheerful introverted folk, preferring the company of warm interiors and companionship to the outdoors.

The Reliquary of the Ivory Tear stands as the jewel of Lluthorn and the surrounding area, having been named as such to commemorate the statues that continuously weep from the rooftop.



Silent Throne, The

Endless stairs spiral up the mountain path, narrowing with every step, ultimately leading to the frigid peak where the Silent Throne sits. A rough, stonework throne carved above the world with very little room to rest your feet. Whether intended or not by the unknown builders, the throne sits as an apt metaphor for power. What good is ruling over ever everything you see, if you are too far above to grasp it?

Sweet Mist Hollow

A thick dense forest grows near the center of the Shadelands, nestled snugly against the western mountains. Many come to this region in search of Fey creatures, and Sweet Mist Hollow is most certainly where to find them in the Shadelands. While many of the forest's denizens lean toward harmless mischief and whimsy, the danger of the Fey is very real. Many outsiders and promising Warlocks have been lost to the hollow for decades at a time, often returning as if they've barely missed a day—but everyone they know has aged decades.

Thistlewood

The great northern forest. The last haven of nature before the desolate stretch of rocky coastline along the Nameless Black Sea. All the other Shadelands forests have those who've laid some claim over them. Not Thistlewood. None have yet to tame this wild swath of vegetation. Near the forest's eastern edge stands The Last Rest, an inviting lodge where travelers can enjoy one final night of peace and quiet before completing their journey to the chaotic metropolis of Yon'Cath.

Tranquil Shadow Sanctuary

Nestled high atop the cliffs and encircled by frost dusted walls and fallen stone, Tranquil Shadow Sanctuary is known to host all manner of nefarious characters. Bargains, both dirty and clean, are struck in hushed tones amidst hearty laughter and flowing drink. Springwater trickles down into wooden buckets from the mountain above whilst the bonfires crackle. There is an unspoken respect shared by all who've managed to climb this high up the cliffs.

Tree of Bone

A single white birch tree overlooking the Yon'Cath cliffside to the far south, humble in stature and extremely old. If you look closely, you may find a time-faded carving of the letters D and F in the trunk. Small chests filled with items of widely ranging value can often be found buried near the tree's base. It is a place where many come to leave symbolic elements of their past lives behind.

Twixtfel Bog – A Morass Most Foul

In the furthest eastern reaches, noxious steam wafts upward from the wintery swamp. A layer of frost coats the surface, yet somehow the water below bubbles and roils with inexplicable heat. Islands that are scattered about are connected by icy, stone bridges. Ripples across the water may be from the wind, of course, they could just as easily be from some forsaken abomination lurking in the black depths. Dull, bellowing howls and groans of an unknown nature whip through the air at night, joining the Shiver Crickets in a sanity testing cacophony.



Appendix 2.3

CHAPTER 7 & 8 NPC BIO'S AND PATRONS

Cordelia

Female Elf, Captain of the Accursed Guard: Cordelia is a fit woman, almost Aasamir in nature, with knee-high plated armor boots and a blue French military coat. The threads of magic are woven into every fiber, and it certainly enhances her beauty. Politically, Cordelia is the right hand of the Accursed King and the General for the Shadelands armies. While they have been losing of late, it is a testament and a marvel to her skill that they've held on for this long against odds that continue to grow against them. She's a quick-witted woman who isn't afraid to swear in court, and even make jovial light of their situation. It may come as a surprise to the party to learn that her Patron is a Satyr Arch-Fey. While Cordelia is loyal to Dorian, she recognizes that his time on the throne is coming to an end. If he abdicates the throne, she is willing to step up and preserve his legacy and hang the traitorous Knight Captain.

Quiven Luxx

Male Elf, Field Marshal of the Legionnaires: The pointed tip of his right ear is missing. His face looks as battle-hardened and weary as is possible for a nigh-immortal elf. He is not clad in full regalia but wears modest navy robes fastened with a golden brooch bearing the Legionnaire Signet. Fayte would be quite stunned to see him here, as he is one of LaCroix's highest-ranking officers. He will come to her and the party to explain himself before they all have a chance to confront him. He states he is here representing the interests of the Legionnaires. If pressed further, he will reveal he considers himself loyal to the Knight Captain's cause, however, he fears LaCroix, the man, has allowed himself to be consumed by personal feelings and rage. Quiven is concerned LaCroix is no longer making the best decisions for the long term well-being of their people. *"I was a Warlock-bastard doing bastard things before LaCroix was even born. But I left that life and followed him because I believed in him. I believed in his cause... I still do. But the fact is, I will be here, the Shadelands will be here, long after his short human life is spent. Someone has to ensure the safety of the people."*

Alios

Cleric of Mask, Guild Leader of Patron's Pass: The party will recognize Alios from their earlier adventures, and it is no surprise that the cunning cleric of thieves is having a field day here. Since the party last saw him, Alios has had

his guild assassinate or taken over anyone with a passing interest in Patron's Pass. That bridge (even on both sides and in some of the other nations' armies) is entirely his—along with the entire rogue's and assassin's guild. His motive for being here is simple curiosity and a desire to keep other religions out of the Shadelands... but he's open to negotiations on that. Alios knows he has territory, guild, and information for sale, so he's here to barter and broker to the right bidder. Not the highest. As Cleric of Mask, Alios doesn't care who has the most coin (he'll steal it from them if he really wants), but rather, who can make the world a more colorful and interesting place. Who will tip the scales of balance and put the beggar as the king? At the start of this adventure, Alios has chosen no side. He may have a sarcastic comment or two for the party, seeing as their last interaction ended with him expressing his desire for this matter to be handled with a degree of secrecy. He waves vaguely toward the battered and bruised city below and quips. *"So, that's your idea of stealth, is it?"*

Ulka Resh

Male Orc, Guild Leader of the Black Span: Resh still has his gnarled wooden staff with him to help get around, and a handkerchief stuffed in his dark trouser pocket, just peeking out. His dark blue clothing makes this Warlock's scarred ancient grey skin seem slightly paler, or perhaps more silver. He has softened his hardline stance as a supporter of the King but is still loyal. Currently, this orc is eyeing up support for Cordelia or even another martial nation to help restore some balance here. His larger concern is that of the Patrons themselves and the arcane energies swirling around the Shadelands. Resh is a member of the court who sense that something is different in Fayte and Majin, and is worried about what happens when kingdoms of wizard's war. Often all that is left is a desert, and he's seen that once before. Resh has no interest in being King but desires a strong ruler who is willing to bring martial law, even if it is the Knight Captain. Much of his demeanor toward the party will be determined by how their last interaction went.

Snow

Female Wood Elf Ranger, Guild Leader of Stone's Leg: Her dark complexion and near ivory-black hair helps her sharp, frosty blue eyes to be

accentuated whist a smirk nags at the corner of her mouth. She dons the white cloak that is standard to her rangers, the white shirt, leather trousers, and brown boots are nearly hidden underneath. Unlike the other two guild leaders, Snow has a little more ambition. As the center of commerce, culture, and life that gives Yon'Cath the vibrant culture that it's known for—Snow wants to be queen. The way she sees it, the Shadelands should not be ruled by a single party, but rather several parties in council to represent the diverse world they live in. She'll admit that could lead to a bogged down council that does nothing but argue, but it is better than everyone relying upon one person to balance the whims of all the Patrons. Snow has been hard at work building support with other nations and offered up many trade deals already. At the start of this act, Snow has her own ambitions but will support the Knight Captain.

Mingani Lilt

Female Gnome, Leader of the Assassins Guild: A short but slim woman with a bronzed complexion, a red-tinted nose, and a scar running from the left-top of her neck almost to the left corner of her lips. Her dirty blonde hair covers the collar of her dark red tunic, the sleeves tucked into leather gloves and brown pants into black leather boots. She was one of the last people to see the party before they supposedly disappeared. She speaks closely to Alios for a moment with the utmost respect and, the Players may find out that he is the head honcho of the Guild she leads, she just handles tasks when he can't call the shots. All this turmoil seems to be thoroughly amusing to her. She may very well be the warmest and welcoming to the party. She's tickled to see them alive and presents comments as such, *"I would've bet me whole purse that you all was dead."*

Tauthog 'Lightmaker' Gota-Kogara

Male Kaldenkind, Representative for the Rustic Bloods, the loose collection of rural communities. A six-and-a-half-foot tall, humanoid, bear with white fur that carries a slight blue tint. He wears dark green harem pants which are tucked into brown boots with fur lining the top, and a small jacket that covers just his shoulders and the upper half of his back, the edges lined with thick fur. Whilst a Warlock himself, he represents the smaller settlements from the outer tundra's, the forests, the mountains. These are places that have successfully achieved relative peace and balance with the Shadelands. They are not big fans of Yon'Cath in general and are especially upset with the current chaotic state of affairs. The leaders of Yon'Cath are too greedy and power-hungry in their eyes. *"The peace and balance that we who are living outside of Yon'Cath have managed to cultivate... We don't want our homes, our lives, destroyed."*

Milicent Canterfeld

Female Human, Bursar for the Scarlet Hearth: She wears the red robes of a temple fanatic, but her face screams "Accountant". Her hair is pulled back so tight it looks like it's straining to stay in place. She's wearing thick, round glasses and carrying a hefty ledger and, yet again, here is someone surprisingly pleased to see the party. After assaulting, commandeering, and then shuttering her temple, anyone would think she'd hate the party, but she fawns over Fayette. Even drops hints that she might want Fayette to take a ruling position over the Shadelands. *"Oh yes yes yes... that little misunderstanding. It's all Rush under the Bridge, if you will. No sense getting all worked up over a little spilled blood. We've more important matters to discuss."*

Master Ridgewell Becket

Male Ghost, Librarian: The Party and Ridgewell would be surprised to see each other. He's just happy to be floating out and about and not all cooped up in the library.

Iorfaan Shimbaac

Male Dragonborn Barbarian, Leader of the Brute's Guild in Yonder: A hulking mass of brass-colored scales. Iorfaan and his loosely organized army of muscle-for-hire thugs don't care who "wins" this conflict, as long as there are fights to be had and his people are getting paid to have them

Vywin LAanise

Female Elf, Vice Admiral of the Iceborne Imperium: Her skin is so pale it is almost blue, only amplified by the dark blue and white mottled cloak with a silver trim, which shelters a pale iron breastplate. Her kind is commonly referred to as a Winter Elf. Her nation borders the Shadelands to the northwest. They appreciate order, despise chaos. Yon'Cath in general and this current conflict in particular, are a source of frustration for them. The chaos of the Shadelands often bleeds into their territory. The white dragons prowling the skies above are under her command. Vywin will be looking to support whoever she feels offers the best chance of bringing lasting peace to this realm.

Khouryn Brickfoot

Female Dwarf, Proprietor of the Cracked Pact: She peers over opaque black spectacles, forever chewing on an unlit cigar, a smug grin permanently fixed to her face. Her grey shirt is untied at the top and half-tucked into brown pants, which cover the leather straps of her closed-toe brown sandals. She and Majin are not fans of each other. They find her practice of breaking and swapping Patron deals utterly offensive.

Mazokai the Just

Male Aasimar, High General of the Radiant Brigade: Clad in full plate, gleaming silver and gold, it is painfully obvious that this man is Paladin. The Radiant Brigade is a radically religious militant faction. They come from a place far to the south but have long viewed the Shadelands as an unseemly bruise on the world's face. When news of turmoil began to trickle out into the neighboring lands, he saw an opportunity to 'cleanse' the Shadelands and led his army north. He is exactly what one might expect from a hardline Lawful Good crusader. He is much more likely to align with LaCroix and will almost certainly stand against whatever plan Dorian enacts simply on principle.

Borla

An Autumn Glau, Leader of the Stonemason's Guild. A short and stocky man with copper-colored skin, bright orange eyes, and blood-colored hair. He's clad in fine, expensive-looking clothes of white and forest green, and a dark, hooded robe, though he rarely pulls the hood up. He wears the symbol of Ammitia, his Warlock Patron, around his neck. He seems distraught and distant when spoken to - a result of having recently discovered that his sister, who was his right-hand in the Guild, was found dead under mysterious circumstances. This has caused him both emotional trauma and business problems, as she ran the quarry beneath the Cindered House, from which all of his stone is carved and collected. He clearly doesn't want to be here right now. He's got many clients who are in need of stonework and repairs thanks to the massive war that's been raging in Yon'Cath, and his time is as valuable as it is limited.

Moadne

A Spring Glau, Leader of the Stonemason's Guild. Tall for a Glau, her dark brown skin contrasts starkly against her pale pink hair and viridian eyes. Despite being the leader of a Guild through which vast quantities of money passes, her clothes are that of a craftsman, or a laborer: a recently-washed shirt and pants, a black apron with more pockets than one could ever imagine having a use for. Moadne seems stressed, and if the party speaks to her, she will recognize them from the Cindered House. She'll be apologetic for her brother, and appreciative of the party for effectively saving her life. She will align herself to the party by default.

THE PATRONS

Archfey

One of the Fey creatures of the DM's choosing from around the feast table in the Scarlet Hearth. They don't much care what happens to Yon'Cath, but are more concerned with the wellbeing of the forests and wildlife of the Shadelands. This Patron and Tauthog 'Lightmaker' are

natural allies and enlisting one will go a long way toward getting the other on their side.

Fiend

The same chalk-white Tiefling with hollow black eyes from before. Her demeanor toward the party will be cold indifference, only interested in furthering her own ambitions. This will be the same no matter what (if any) interactions transpired between them in Chapter 2. Even if they struck a deal with her back in the Hearth, she won't care. "But what have you done for me lately?" Her wants are the same. She wants power. She wants souls.

Hexblade

Leth'ka the Guardian is present. If the party dueled with her, she may have a quip about how she hopes they've learned how to fight in the time they've been away. Or if the party never entered her chamber in the Hearth, she will size them up as she's always looking for a new challenge. The Hexblade Patron's goals remain the same: a desire for greater and greater challenges, for legendary combat achievements, metaphorical feathers in the cap.

Old Ones

Ahk Noh Ra will be represented by a figure completely covered in a large cloak. Getting up close, the party will see a Yuan-Ti Pureblood woman with an eye tattooed on her forehead. She and Ahk Noh Ra want the establishment of Yon'Cath overthrown. They want to build a new order. If the party freed him, she will be grateful and more open to making a deal. If the party did not free him, that will likely be a stipulation of gaining her support. She will require the party to free him when they reenter the Hearth.

Lurker in the Deep

The Great Fish is represented by a Water Genasi Male, dressed like a cross between a Warlock and a pirate. He is older and quite grizzled in appearance. Like most of the others, he is very open to allying if a party member has a pact with his Patron. If not, he is still relatively warm and jovial, and simply looking for whatever opportunity is in the best interests for his Patron.

Undying

The Green Dragonborn is there. However, his robes are resplendent and clean. He looks much younger and healthier than he did in the Hearth. The turmoil of recent days has left him well fed with life essence. He's always interested in adding more "time" to his coffers but is also motivated by avoiding as much premature death as possible. To him, people dying before their time is like pouring out fresh water in the desert. "What a tragic waste..."





Appendix 2.4

DEADLY ENCOUNTERS

BLACK SPAN ASSASSINS

You turn a corner, only to see pure chaos: over forty Warlocks engaging in a bloody free for all, spanning multiple city blocks. It's a deadly fireworks show of arcane energies being hurled to and fro. Buildings are ripped apart. An explosion forms a giant sinkhole, sucking one stretch of road down into the depths. Looking up, you see more Warlocks dueling across the rooftops. Everywhere you look, you see bursts of light and hear the cacophony of battle. It seems there is no way around this deadly scrum. You can search for a safe route...or you can try to plow right through it.

This battle is an illusion, a projected image. The illusion does not dissipate if the party chooses to move through it. With all the flashes of light and furious movement, it will make perception extremely difficult. If the party wants to go up and over, they'll need to find a tower which they could ascend to the rooftop. There are assassins, dressed like living shadows, hiding within the illusioned fight. As the party goes through the illusion they should be relentlessly pestered with attacks from unseen assailants. Black-clad figures rush by, slashing at the players. Rope snares attempt to catch them around their ankles and pull them away into the alleys.

Players are only able to target the assassins through the illusion by succeeding on Wisdom (Perception) checks contested by the assassins Dexterity (Stealth). Attempts to dispel the illusion only serve to lessen its potency, granting the PCs advantage on checks to detect the assassins. At some point, the party may come face to face with Mingani Lilt: She tilts her head to the side and offers you a sad smile. *"Your heads are fetching one hell of a price today. Sorry, folks. It's not personal... at least for me, it isn't. I imagine us killing you feels very personal to you. Oh well."*

Mingani wears a purple gemstone ring. This ring is what generates the illusioned battle. Removing the ring from her possession will make the entire projection disappear.

Violet Violence

Ring, legendary (requires attunement)

This purple gemstone ring shifts its colors when exposed to light. As an action, while wearing the ring you can project an illusion of a climactic battle in a 300 ft. radius centered on you, which you must concentrate on to maintain its effect (as though concentrating on a spell) for up to 1 hour. The illusion creates an area that is heavily obscured for creatures other than you unless you choose otherwise. A creature can attempt to see through the illusion by using an action to attempt a DC 16 Wisdom (Insight) check, reducing the illusion's potency to make the area lightly obscured for that creature on a success. Once you have used the ring in this manner, it cannot be used again until 1 week has passed.

BRAWL WITH THE BRUTES GUILD

You round the corner, entering a large, open six-way intersection. As you are passing through the intersection, a lone figure steps out to block the street directly in front of you. He is a tall, broad brass Dragonborn. You recognize him as Iorfaan Shimbaac, leader of the Brutes Guild. He is shirtless, a sapphire gemstone hangs on a chain around his neck. As far as you can tell, he carries no weapon. More figures: Humans, Dwarves, half-orcs, Dragonborn... men and women alike, emerge from alleys to block all six streets. None of them carry weapons. Iorfaan smiles as the blue gemstone begins to glow. "We've been paid quite the pretty sum to put you folk back in your place." If asked who paid, he'll shrug and say, "Does even matter?" Players who try to cast damage-dealing spells will find they don't work. All weapons will dissolve into sand. Iorfaan chuckles and taps his pendant, "We could've broken out the Mash Clubs, the Choppers, all the toys... but I wanted to make this sporting." As if on perfect cue, a small low-hanging cloud forms above you and begins pouring down rain just on your little corner of the city.

Roll initiative for the Unarmed Street Brawl. Spells that don't deal damage can work. The radius for the damage nullifying spell emanating from Iorfaan's pendant is a 500ft radius sphere. As the Brutes aren't wearing much in the way of armor, grant a +5 damage bonus to all players' unarmed strikes. If the pendant is taken away from Iorfaan, the nullification spell can be stopped.

Unarmed Brute (Gladiator NPC) - carries no weapons and only makes unarmed strikes.

Once the Brutes are defeated. The rain cloud dissipates. All spells are working. Grains of wet sand coalesce, reforming all the weapons.

Iorfaan will try to surrender once it's plainly obvious the fight is lost. He doesn't really want to kill you, and certainly doesn't want to die over this. He was simply doing a job. If the players let him live, he'll give them a parting smile and a wink. *"That was one heck of a good scrap though, wasn't it?! If you survive this mess, you'll have to give me a rematch!"*

Item: Rain of Honor - Magical blue sapphire pendant. The wielder can summon a low-hanging rain cloud, 120ft in diameter. While beneath this rain cloud, the ring wearer and any allies they can see are immune to fear and charm, and receive +1 to all checks and saves.

ICEBORNE IMPERIUM

Yon'Cath is quickly falling to ruin around you, as scores are settled and blood feuds resolved between over a dozen separate factions. The

Iceborne Imperium seems to draw much of the attention, and rightly so, as their white dragons indiscriminately rain frozen death down upon the city. Your party feels the temperature suddenly drop. You hear the flap of leathery wings. You look up to see three white dragons heading in your direction. Roll perception. To the player that rolled highest: You see a halfling at the far end of the city block (about 200 feet away) remove a false slab of "stone" from the street. He notices you staring, gives you a wink, and hops down into a supposed tunnel, replacing the false stone just as the beasts unleash a truly massive burst of cold... coating the entire city block in a thick layer of ice.

Roll a DC 17 Constitution saving throw. On failure, a PC takes 39 (6d12) cold damage and is paralyzed. A successful save halves the damage and prevents being paralyzed. This effect only ends if an affected creature takes fire damage or succeeds on a DC 17 Strength saving throw at the end of each of its turns, freeing itself on a success.

The dragon's arc around in a lazy circle, continuing their unchallenged onslaught. Based on their trajectory, they'll be back in less than a minute. The air is so cold, so very cold. It is an arcane, unnatural cold.

The party must traverse the frozen city block to reach the hidden escape. A player trying to cast a spell will find it suddenly quite difficult. They will have to pass a DC 20 Constitution ability check to overcome the brutal chill in the air or any attempt to cast the spell fails.

You hear the dragons swoop by the next street over. Their breath weapon does not reach your street directly, however, the force of the blast causes a nearby tower to explode, sending stone, metal, and glass debris in every direction.

The party must succeed on a DC 17 Dexterity saving throw or take 28 (8d6) bludgeoning damage and fall prone. A successful save halves the damage and prevents falling prone.

As you near the false stone, the dragons loop back and spew another breath attack on your location.

The party must succeed on a DC 17 Constitution saving throw or take 70 (20d6) cold damage, or half as much on a success.

You reach the false stone, but the icy coating holds it in place. You will have to thaw it or break it free. The dragons tighten their circling arc, as if planning to zero in on the party. Complicating matters further, back from the way you came, you see a squadron of Iceborne soldiers clad in white iron plate heading your way. They move effortlessly across the icy ground.

Under the false stone, the party will find a warm, series of tunnels that will lead them to the river bank. The Iceborne soldiers will not bother to give chase. Once the party gains access to the tunnel, the encounter can be over. If the party opts to stand and face the soldiers, each player will find a handsome reward:

Imperium Icespike

Weapon (spear), rare (requires attunement)

This frozen shard of pointed ice deals cold damage instead of the weapon's normal damage type. Additionally,

when you score a critical hit against a creature with the spear, the target must succeed on a DC 16 Constitution saving throw or be encased in a block of ice. The block is an object (AC 12, 30 hit points) that is vulnerable to fire damage. The creature is paralyzed but has total cover against creatures outside the block, and vice versa. At the end of each of its turns, an affected creature can repeat the saving throw, freeing itself on a success.

Iceborne Soldier

AC 19 / HP 60 / Speed 30 ft movement on normal ground. 45 ft movement on ice.

Actions: Stab. +6 to hit. deals 9 cold + 9 piercing. Cold **Spike.** Deals 8 piercing. CON save (DC14), target frozen in place for 1 round on failure

RADIANT BRIGADE

The Scarlet Hearth is in sight. Only a few city blocks stand between you and your objective. However, before you can take another step forward, a lone individual skids around the corner of the nearby building. He looks like a young half-elf Warlock. You register fear in his eyes. As he sprints right past your party, he shouts, "You should be running!" Just then, a flash of light pulls your attention upward, where you see a massive sphere of yellow-white energy coalescing in the sky just a few blocks away. The sphere of light drops, exploding outward with a wave of brilliant energy. The ground implodes, towers shatter, and collapse... The party must Roll a DC 20 Dexterity saving throw or take 21 (6d6) bludgeoning damage and 21 (6d6) radiant damage on a failure, or half as much on a success. You have just survived a Sun Bomb, the preferred method of destructive ordinance employed by the Radiant Brigade. When the dust settles and the light fades, you see the entire section of the city between you and the river has been turned into a jungle of twisted metal, shattered glass, and warped stone. Where the street should be is now a deep pit of jagged rock and residual radiant energy mingling with melted stone, forming some kind of magical magma. The party rolls a DC 20 Wisdom (Perception) check, seeing the following on a success. You can see a potential path over this mess. The toppled buildings and larger chunks of debris have formed a perilous network of unsteady bridges.

Let the party work their way across the debris with some low difficulty skill checks. When the GM feels the time is right:

You hear a trumpet echo across the sky. Looking up you see a cadre of winged creatures swooping toward you. As they get closer, you see they are humanoids clad entirely in full golden plate armor. Their faces are hidden behind the narrow slits of great helms. The framework of their wings looks molded from platinum. The feathers spun from golden thread. They each hold a gladius sword in one hand and a long-chained morningstar in the other. The party rolls a DC 18 Intelligence (History) check, learning the following on a success. These flying juggernauts bearing down on you are called Nephilites, the elite shock troops of the Radiant Brigade.

Roll Initiative. This should be a difficult battle for the party. The enemies can fly, are well-armored, and the players stand on unfirm ground above a dangerous pit of death. This would also be an excellent encounter for one of the party's allies to show up and assist in.

Nephilite

AC 19 / HP 90 / Flying Speed 60ft

Blessed Gladius. +6 to hit. Deals 1d12+6 slashing. Roll CON save DC16. On failure, radiant energy courses through the target's veins dealing an extra 1d10 radiant / **Lightfist Morningstar.** +8 to hit. Deals 3d8+6 bludgeoning. Roll STR save DC15. On failure, pushed 5ft and knocked prone / Sun Flare. The golden feathers of the Nephilite's wings glow impossibly bright, disorienting their enemies. All enemies within 60ft make a WIS save DC17. On failure, enemies blinded for 1 round.

Once the Nephilites are defeated, the GM can decide whether or not the players can acquire items from them:

Blessed Gladius. Short sword. 5ft range. Deals 1d12+STR+Prof. The target must roll CON save or take an additional 1d10 radiant

Lightfist Morningstar. 10ft range. Deals 3d8+STR. The target must roll STR save or be pushed 5ft and knocked prone.

Nephilite Wings. Magical construct, strapped to back. Wings can be folded in, but still very visible. Grants Fly and Sun Flare: An enemy within 60ft must roll WIS save or be blinded until the start of your next turn.

RANGERS OF THE TUNDRA

You can see the river just a block or so away. All you'll have to do is follow the river south to the temple... suddenly you hear an odd noise echo off the buildings. It sounds like a massive deck of playing cards getting shuffled. A flurry of motion pulls your eyes skyward... and you realize the sound you heard was a hundred arrows being loosed. "TAKE COVER!"

The party must succeed on a DC 17 Dexterity saving throw. On a failure, a PC takes take 45 (10d6+10) piercing damage from the arrows. A creature that failed the save by 10 or more instead takes double damage from the effect.

GM Note

The party is at a severe tactical disadvantage here. Rather than a direct fight, this is intended to be more of a skill challenge. Being so close to the river, it may make sense to attempt to make a break for it. A friendly NPC can may a plea for this course of action. If one isn't already present, this is an excellent time for a friend to show up and offer aid. The party is welcome to fight it out, though it should cost them dearly.

You see dozens upon dozens of figures in white cloaks appear in the windows and on the balconies overlooking the street. Each one is reloading a longbow. Someone must have struck a deal with Snow and her Rangers for your heads...

"RUN FOR IT!" cries your friend.

Every round of initiative order, another arrow volley will be unleashed with the same effects as the first. After three rounds...

You've managed to almost make it out from the street of death. The open-air of the river bank draws close. Just then the ground begins to rumble... and around the corner at the end of the street, come stomping five Glaciallos: massive bison with white manes and horns that look as if they've been carved from diamond. The creatures are over eight feet tall and so wide that, standing shoulder to shoulder, they completely block the street. Snow, herself, sits atop the center beast. She offers you a wicked smile before spurring forward. You now face a stampeding line of hooved monstrosities.

Party has one round of actions before the beasts are upon them. Anyone still in the way must succeed on a DC 18 Strength saving throw or trampled, taking 30 (4d8+12) bludgeoning damage. Stats for combat:

Rangers

AC 16 / HP 117

Melee Axe. +9 to hit. 1d8+10 slashing / Longbow - +13 to hit. 2d6+10 piercing / (Add spells as you see fit)

Glaciallos

AC 18 / HP 168

Horn Gore. +10 to hit. 2d4+10 piercing

RUSTIC BLOODS

You come round the corner, finding a city street appearing much like all the others: scarred, cracked, and smoldering... as you continue forward, a shadow passes overhead. Looking up you see a Fjelle Hawk, a gigantic grey-green bird of prey with ram horns and long barbed tail, native to the Shadelands mountain ranges. The creature alights on a nearby tower. Looking closer, you see the beast is ridden by the Kaldenkind Torrad Lightmaker. He glares down at your party, his eyes glowing with arcane power. The ground beneath your feet rumbles and shakes. A crack forms down the middle of the street. For a brief moment, you see the tips of green vines sticking up from the crack. Then with a thunderous snapping sound, the stone boulevard beneath your feet is ripped wide open. In an instant, you are falling into a gaping hole. The sides of this pit are coated in writhing vines. At the bottom waits an enormous flower-mouth with thousands of sharp thorns for teeth.

The party must succeed on a DC 16 Dexterity saving throw to catch themselves on a vine 20 feet below the edge of the hole. On failure, they catch themselves 40 feet below the edge. The flower-mouth is 60ft below the hole's edge.

Roll initiative. Every round while climbing out of the hole, a vine will try to grab the player, which must succeed on a DC 17 Dexterity saving throw or be grappled by the vine

(Escape DC 17). The vine is an object with an AC of 15 and 40 hit points, that is vulnerable to fire damage.

Players out of the hole will have to battle Torrad on his Fjelle Hawk (Stats Below). The encounter ends when all players are out of the hole and Torrad and his hawk have suffered a combined total damage of 150 points. After that, they will fly away in retreat and the hole will close.

Fjelle Hawk. It is recommended to use the SRD stat block for **Roc**

Torrad Lightmaker

AC 18

Lightning Lance. Range 15ft. +11 to hit. Deals 2d6+5 piercing and 2d6 lightning dmg. *Torrad attempts to run you through with his long, barbed lance. Sunburst - Torrad hurls a ball of light. All players within 15 feet of target must make INT save DC17. On failure, take 5d6 radiant damage and blinded for 1 round. On success, half damage.*

THE SORCERERS OF BLACK SPAN

Your party reaches an intersection of five major streets. You can see the river, not too far away. A colony of bats zips by overhead. As you attempt to cross through the intersection, your feet perform the seemingly impossible task of completely missing the ground. Your party and any accompanying allies soon realize that gravity no longer applies to you as you slowly begin to float upwards. The bats from earlier circle downward, and as they get near the ground, they transform into figures draped in flowing black robes. The Sorcerers have come for you...

GM Note

The first challenge the players will have to overcome is their lack of gravity. They will have to get creative in how they move. While this effect is active, players will have disadvantage on Strength and Dexterity saving throws. The number of Sorcerers they must face is up to you, however, this should be a difficult encounter. Scale the encounter to fit the Tier of your party.

GM Note

Once the battle is close to finished, this is an excellent time for one of the friendly factions to arrive to offer aid to the players.

Gravity. Have one Sorcerer standing back or off to the side. They are staring at the battle with intense concentration, their eyes glowing with arcane energy. This Sorcerer will take no actions, as they are expending all their effort on maintaining the anti-gravity spell. Make players pass a Perception check to notice this Sorcerer. If their concentration is broken, gravity will return for the players. However, they will cast it again on the next round. If this Sorcerer is killed, the anti-gravity spell is permanently ended.

Black Span Sorcerer

Armor Class 16 / HP 91 / Speed 30 ft.

STR 9(-1) DEX 17(+3) CON 16(+3) INT 13(+1) WIS 11(+0) CHA 20(+5)

ACTIONS - 1 per turn

Dagger. +11 to hit. Deals 1d6+5 piercing dmg

Shadow Walk. Bonus action. Magically teleport up to 120 ft. to an unoccupied space you can see that is in dim light or darkness

Cantrips. Acid Splash, Chill Touch, Fire Bolt, Frostbite, Gust, Mage Hand

1st Level - 4 Slots - Chaos Bolt, Fog Cloud, Shield, Thunder Wave

2nd Level - 3 Slots - Darkness, Hold Person, Shadow Blade

3rd Level - 3 Slots - Fly, Lightning Bolt, Sleet Storm

4th Level - 3 Slots - Ice Storm, Polymorph, Storm Sphere

5th Level - 2 Slots - Cone of Cold, Insect Plague

6th Level - 1 Slot - Scatter

7th Level - 1 Slot - Whirlwind

8th Level - 1 Slot - Power Word Stun

TEMPLE CULTISTS

GM Note

This one is a "wild card" of sorts that could be used regardless of whether the party made a deal with Millicent Canterfeld. The temple fanatics have something in the works at the Hearth, and they do not want to see it disturbed by interlopers.

Your party nears the river. Soon you will reach the Scarlet Hearth... however as you round the next corner, a curious sight is waiting for you. A single human man stands in the middle of the street, about 60 feet away. He wears red cloth pants and no shirt. He holds no weapon. He stares at the party with wild eyes. Blood trickles from a large rune that's been recently carved into his chest. Without a word, he starts sprinting toward the party.

Give each player 1 turn. After each player's turn, the man is 10-15 feet closer. Either when the man reaches the party or whenever he takes any damage, he will explode with arcane energy. Wearing no armor, the AC is only 10.

More cultists appear. Some at the far end of the street. Some behind the party. Some start leaping from balconies above.

They cry out "Salvation!" "Purge the unclean!" and "Glory to the Patrons!" as they hurl themselves at you.

Whenever a cultist takes a single point of damage, their body will erupt with one of the random effects listed below in a 30 ft. radius sphere centered on them. The cultists can attempt to harm themselves to trigger their effects.

Arcane Eruption. Each creature in the affected area must succeed on a DC 17 Dexterity saving throw or take 18 (4d8) force damage, or half as much on a success.

Plague Mist - Each creature in the affected area must succeed on a DC 17 Constitution saving throw or take 18 (4d8) poison damage and be poisoned for 1 minute.

Gravity Bomb - Each creature in the affected area must succeed on a DC 17 Strength saving throw or take 14 (4d6) bludgeoning damage and be knocked prone.

Psychic Shriek. Each creature in the affected area must succeed on a DC 17 Intelligence saving throw or take 14 (4d6) psychic damage and be stunned until the start of their next turn.

Repentant Burst - Each creature in the affected area must succeed on a DC 17 Wisdom saving throw or drop what they are holding and become incapacitated until the start of their next turn.

Senseless Blast - Each creature in the affected area must succeed on a DC 17 Constitution saving throw or be blinded and deafened for 1 minute.

GM Note

The resolution of this encounter is up to you. The cultists can be an unending wave until the party escapes this particular section of the city. Or there can be a finite number of them. Whether this is more straight combat or skill-based is between you and the players.

THIEVES OF PATRON'S PASS

At last the Scarlet Hearth is in sight. The great bridge, Patron's Pass, is all that stands between you and your destination. As you approach, you see no people, no movement. For a city being literally torn apart, this small corner is exceptionally quiet. When you get closer, you notice that all the tents, structures, shacks, and other makeshift buildings on the bridge have been either dismantled or rearranged. The bridge is almost entirely covered with piles of debris. It even looks like someone moved rubble from the city proper onto the bridge, intentionally blocking as much space as possible. You see just one opening that looks like a viable pathway through the stacks of detritus. The path through the debris is narrow and winding. Occasionally, you can hear the sounds of faint whispers or something scurrying along.

This should turn into a gauntlet, peppered with the obstacles listed below. The party can blast through the rubble, at which point they should find themselves in a straight-up battle with a pack of rogues.

Obstacles

GM Note

Effects that magically teleport do not work this close to the Scarlet Hearth. The middle of the bridge, where it branches south into the temple, is 600 ft away. If the party attempts to fly over the obstacles on the bridge, roll initiative. Add Alios' thieves in the order with a +5 to initiative. On their turn, every player flying will have a crossbow bolt shot at them. If the party flies too high, they may catch the attention of a white dragon or another winged beast battling in the sky, not to mention all the various spell casters in the streets that may see them as easy pickings. Seeing the crossbowmen requires a DC 20 Wisdom (Perception) check. (Venomous Crossbow attack stats below)

Place as many of these as you see fit to make it a challenge for the party. They have 600ft of path to travel.

Stick & Move. A dagger, sword, or other sharp implement bursts from the makeshift wall, stabbing at you. An unseen voice cackles and giggles as the wielder of the weapon disappears back into the cover. Melee Weapon Attack: +14 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. Hit: 22 (4d10) piercing damage and 22 (4d10) poison damage.

Rubble Collapse. A wobbly stack of brick and splintered wood suddenly topples inward right as you move past it. All players in the vicinity must succeed on a DC 17 Dexterity saving throw. On failure, a creature takes 45 (10d8) bludgeoning damage and is knocked prone. A successful save halves the damage and prevents being knocked prone.

Punji Pit. The pit is hidden (DC 22 Perception to detect). Any PCs that step onto the pit must succeed on a DC 20 Dexterity saving throw to leap to safety or fall in. A creature falls 50 ft. and lands in a pile of noxious spines, taking 26 (4d12) piercing and 26 (4d12) necrotic damage.

TripWire. The tripwire is hidden (DC 22 Perception to detect). Any PCs that triggers the tripwire are shot at by five darts (ranged weapon attack: +14 to hit, range 60 ft., one target. Hit: 14 (4d6) poison damage.

Thief of Patron's Pass

AC 17 / HP 90

Actions: Venomous Crossbow. +8 to hit. Deals 1d6+6 piercing. Roll CON save DC15. On failure, take 1d8 poison & become poisoned for 1 minute. / **Dagger.** +10 to hit. Deals 2d10 slashing. / **Misty Step.** Alios' people all wear special masks to appease the god, Mask. These allow them the ability to Misty Step at will within the anti-teleportation zone.





THANK YOU

What started as a love letter to metal music is now in your hands as not only an epic Campaign and Setting but the definitive Warlock Players and Storytellers Guide—all because of you, our dedicated community.

We are thrilled that your players' fates dangle by a spider's thread over a raging inferno, and sincerely hope that the story you weave together with them brings a tragic (and epic) tale forged in the fire and flames of your collective imagination.

The manual is in your hands. Improve, deviate, and craft your own tale within the wondrous world of the Shadelands—but never veer from the reason you supported this adventure: to break bread with friends.

So, have fun, be epic, and don't be afraid to kill a few gods along the way!

Sincerely,
Apotheosis Studios

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Frank
Franklin Shea
Gabriel Reisinger
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General Beck Al'Beth
George Anderson
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Goblins Like the Razzle Dazzle
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J. Evans Payne
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Jack Hilbert
Jack Treeby
Jacob "Snuggulon Nuzzlerump" Miller
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Jean Faucher
Jean-Paul Karam
Jearbear
Jeff gave his spot to Losty
Jeff St. Pierre
Jeff Swan
Jendragon
Jennifer Salialess
Jeremy Bailey
Jeremy Haupt
Jeremy Hudson
Jerry Scholz
Jim O'Sullivan
Joe Contrestan
Joe Kontor
Joel Lajeunesse
Joel MacRitchie
Joey Roberts
John Anderson
John Andrew Rea
John J Dorch
John Swanson
Jon Engstrom
Jon Ferguson
Jonathan Boothe
Jonathan P. Davis
Jordan Lyndell-Lees
Joseph Asphahani
Joseph Evenson
Joseph Reid
Josh B
Josh Flora
Josh Foster
Josh Ryan
Joshua A. Demic
Joshua Dye
Joshua Fegley
Joshua Sivertsen
Joshua Troutman
Julio Solis-Hernandez
Justin "Phoenix" Turczak
Justin Nelson
Justin Whitman
Kalup Rials
Kane Ward-Brennan
Karissa K.
Kent Rice
Kervyn
Kevin Heinz
Kevin Schilling
Kevin Sonney
KHorigan
Kitty 'Small Cat of the East' van Oosten
Kiytiri
Kortan, Darcy
Kory Wiseman
Kris Feric
Kurtis Majors
Kyle (Lord Flabbit) Gwillim
Landan S.
LandisTheThief
Larry "Gamerworf" Benson II

Larry & Devin Ferguson
Larry Norris, Jr
Laura Faucher
Leon Bedwell Jr.
Leonard Lee
LEX
LilStardork
Logan Aust
Luca Kolar
Lucas Berg
Ludus
Madison W.
Magnus "KJR" Rock
Magnús Þór Einarsson
Mahare
Marco Ornigotti
Marcus Funke
Margarida Da Silva
Marie-Eve Dion
Mark Riis-Cordsen
Markus Rütters
Marquis Lewis
Martin Bo Ammentorp (NexusNemesis)
Matt Trussler
Matt Cockburn
Matt Day
Matt Harrison
Matt Wells
Matthew @ProudNerdery
Matthew Allen
Matthew Franklin
Matthew S. Cihak
Matthew Voelsgen
Matthias Vandaele
Maxx Valerious Ratliff
Mel "Insanity Rocks" Riffe
Michael "Neilex" Huffman
Michael Brown
Michael Cearley
Michael Culp
Michael Hannah
Michael Horton
Michael J Smith
Michael Lynn Ainsworth Jr
Michael R. B. Wright
Michael Russell
Michael Valoon
Michelle "greyghostgirl" Powers
Michelle Linderman
Mickey Carter Jr
Mike
Mike Trisevic
Mitchacho
MJ Melchiori
Mordian
Mr Nowhere
Nara
Nate Gitschlag
Nathan D. Crodwer
Nathan Loo
Nathan Maille
Nathanial Burri
NePros
Niall Cartwright
Nicholas Schurter
Nicholas Stegelman
Nick Rice
Nico Gürtler
Noah Acierno
Oliver Carlson
Oliver Hertel
Olivia Grace Clayton
Olivier Gathier
One Shot Dom
Pakito

Pandachrist
Patrick Chandler
Patrick James
Patrick T. Ditton
Paul Folsom
Paul H. Kim
Paul L
Paul Scherer
Paul y cod asyn Jarman
Paula Granjo
Paula Kosior
Pete Griva
Peter "@Coffmeister" Coffey
Peter Hartman
Peter William Hadden
Pheonix Danzig
Phillip W Rogers Jr
Phillip Mains III
Phillip Stepp
Piano the cat
Pipyap
Preston "GreenLantern101" Bannister
Quentin W
Quill Inkwell
Rachel Fizeseri
Raiyn
Randy Smith
Reaver
Redd
Reid "Adran, Patron of Cacophony" S.
Renaldo Müller
Rex Enton
RICCARDO "Musta" Caverni
Richard Barry
Richard Draconos "The Great Riki" Goulart
Richard W. Sorden
Richard Young II
Rikki Smith
Riley Fraser English Major
Riley Hart
robdog
Robert Guest
Robert Keefer
Robert Reynolds
Robert Schettig
Ronnie Zega
Rosa Oliveira
ru hartsell
Russell and Joel Zeinestone
Ryan "Blackbird" Davis
Ryan C. T. Gordon
Ryan Oldani
Ryan Schnackel
Ryan Snyder
Ryan Tait
Ryan Williams
Sam Mckenzie
Samuel Buffum
Samuel Johnson
Sanford O'Donnell
Scott Konig
Scott Lesley
Scott Turner
Scruffy Jaskot
Sean Lindsey
Sean McG
Seth Brown & Will Brown
Sharaen Midnight
Sharif Adam
Shaun Kenyon
Shawn P
Shelby Turner
Shelley A Miller
Sherry Sheggrud
Sheryl Anne Bright

Simon Durkin
Simone Maccapani
Sir Robert Bombalier
Dan Vondran
Skeeter_de
Soren Moskjaer Lauridsen
Spencer Hikade
Spencer J. Schott
Spencer Minton
Stefano Tagliaferri
Stephan Peters
Stephen Hallowich
Stephen Lincoln
Steve Walsh
Steven "Frost" Champagne
Steven A. Holomshek
Steven Bersia
Steven Lietaert
Stevie B Dash
Stewart Alastair MacKenzie
StormeyAura
Stormquiss
StrangeMortal
Suzy Checkie
T. Gordon
Tal M. Klein
Tanner Owens
Tatiana Iwanick-Peterson
Tereasa Walker
Teresa "Teej" McMahon
Terry E Roberts
Thad Gutshall
The Holy Camel
"The Horror Baron" Loren Eason
The John Kerry O'Donnell Sr Family
The Weule Bros
TheOnlyCalamariKing
Thomas Schmidt
Thomas Stanley
Tim "Trench" Young
Tim Raley
Tina Sierra
TJ Henningsen
Tom Henderson
Tom Jones
Tom Maaswinkel
Tom Tolios
Travis Emerson
Trevor Bartlett
Tyler Shedd
Valley Studios
Vascalunav
Vasco Franco
Violaceous Jay
Wade and Maria Racine
Wayne Welgush
William "Crankenstein" Veillon
William (Wonka) Wolfe
William Kramer
William Pettibone
William Rosensteel
William Z. Cohen MSGT/USMC, ret.
Xander Lesley
Zach Rzepiela
Zachary Andrews
Zeb Mc
Zechariah "DaeKoss" Jones
Zophar

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A woman with long, flowing red hair and pointed ears, wearing a golden crown and a purple and gold patterned dress. She is playing a large, glowing harp with golden strings. The background is dark with some light effects.

SIRENS

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