

BRINKWOOD

Playtest Booklet

v0.6

*A poacher's widow sat sighing
On the side of the white chalk bank,
Where under the gloomy fir-woods
One spot in the ley throve rank.*

*She thought of the dark plantation,
And the hares, and her husband's blood,
And the voice of her indignation
Rose up to the throne of her God.*

*'I am long past wailing and whining-
I have wept too much in my life:
I've had twenty years of pining
As an English labourer's wife.*

*'There's blood on your new foreign shrubs, squire,
There's blood on your pointer's cold feet;
There's blood on the game you sell, squire,
And there's blood on the game you eat.*

*'So I'll take up my poor husband's bow, Squire
Fletch arrows of ashwood and yew
I'll 'scape to the Brinkwood this evening
And there will I join with the few*

*'And I will not put down my labors
I'll take forest leaves for my bed
Until this arrow pierces your cold heart, Squire
And you in your coffin lie dead*

*'So to kennels and liveried varlets
Where you starved your own daughter of bread
And worn out with liquor and harlots
See your heirs at your feet lying dead*

*'When you follow them into your coffin
And your soul rots asleep in the grave
Then Squire, you will not be forgiven
By the free men you took as your slaves*

-Excerpted and adapted from "The Bad Squire," by Charles Kingsley

Brinkwood is a Forged in the Dark Game.

Blades in the Dark™ is a trademark of One Seven Design. The Forged in the Dark Logo is © One Seven Design, and is used with permission.

CREDITS

Brinkwood is a production of the San Jenaro Co-Op, a gathering of designers, artists, and ttrpg enthusiasts dedicated to democratic decision-making, fair pay for fair work, and equitable distribution of work and profit. For more information on the San Jenaro Co-Op, check out our twitter at @SanJenaroCoop.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction.....	1
Basic Premise.....	1
World and Setting.....	4
Getting Started.....	10
Character Creation.....	23
The Fae.....	53
The Nature of Masks.....	65
Swearing the Pact.....	66
Relationships.....	67
Factions.....	68
Onto The First Foray.....	74
Masks.....	76
The Foray.....	98
Planning.....	101
Reconnaissance.....	106

Masks and Oaths.....	107
Travelogues.....	109
Engagement.....	110
Downtime.....	117
Payoff.....	119
Tyranny.....	125
Downtime Activities.....	128
The Refuge and Rebellion.....	131
Resources.....	132
Tiers and Goals.....	134
Friendly Factions.....	135
The Campaign.....	139
Guiding Principles.....	139
Progress Clocks and Threat.....	141
Setting Effect.....	153
Pacing the Session.....	155

Running a Foray.....	157
Using Maneuvers and Consequences.....	158
Campaign Fronts.....	160
Vampiric Warfare.....	163
An Almanac of Cardenfell.....	171
Factions.....	171
Vampires and Their Servants.....	218
Vampire Lords.....	225

INTRODUCTION

BASIC PREMISE

The world is not as it should be. The rich feed, literally, upon the poor, as blood-sucking vampires who barely bother to conceal their horrific, parasitic nature. The downtrodden people of the world struggle under the burdens of rent, payable through the sweat of their labor or the blood of their veins. Evil has triumphed. Many have given in to despair. But all is not lost.

In *Brinkwood*, you take on the role of **brigands**: renegades, thieves, and rebels struggling for freedom and liberation in a castylpunk world controlled by vampires. Radicalized by tragedy, you have taken up arms and fled into the forests, where you were taken in by unlikely allies – the fae, forgotten creatures of myth – who offered a different path and the means to fight back against your oppressors.

Masks, forged of old wood and older magic, are the final tool left to fight a war long ago lost. If you wear them, they will take their price, etching themselves upon your very soul. But they will also let you spill the blood of the rich and powerful vampires that now

rule the land, and from that blood strengthen yourself and your movement.

Drink the rich, before they drink you.



CASTYLPUNK

Castylpunk is an aesthetic genre that blends elements of gothic horror, medievalism, anachronism, victorianism, gas-punk and fantasy. Castylpunk worlds are usually medieval in setting, but aren't too terribly concerned with historical details so much as aesthetics. You might find factories, gearworks, victorian fashion and other out-of-place setting details, but still set against a backdrop of gloomy castles, old decaying cities, and vaulted gothic architecture. This is a world where you'll still find faeries and other supernatural creatures, but driven to the fringes, back into the darkest parts of the forest where few dare tread. The notable exception in this case, of course, being vampires.

The “punk” in Castylpunk implies a punk aesthetic and intention brought to bear on the setting. You aren't here to admire the scenery, or brood in secret castles, or soliloquize on your moral complexity or the depths of your depravity while you drink the blood of virgins from a crystal chalice; you are here to *fuck shit*

up. This isn't a game about having sympathy for blood-drinkers and oppressors; it's about staking them through the goddamn heart. Be reckless. Be active. Stay mad. Stay punk.

WHAT IS THIS GAME ABOUT?

- Coming together, finding unlikely allies, understanding cultures and people that might at first seem alien to you.
- Organizing people. Recruiting in secret. Staging a full-fledged rebellion against the oppressors that drain people, both literally and figuratively, of everything they have.
- Blowing stuff up. Assassinating collaborators and vampires alike. Planning raids, taking what you need from the stores of your enemies, waging guerilla war, and slowly but surely growing your movement.
- Navigating the politics of underground resistance and, eventually, revolution. Making hard choices about whose needs to prioritize, and giving voice to a collective, democratic will in a tyrannical world.
- Taking back power for the marginalized, dispossessed, and poor. Putting fear into the hearts of your oppressors. Drinking the Rich.

DRAMATIC QUESTIONS

- What does it take to win people's trust, organize a rebellion, and achieve victory? What sacrifices must be made? Who must make them?
- How do you balance the needs of the people you're trying to liberate, versus the costs of overthrowing those that keep you all in chains?
- What amount of violence, be it physical, political, emotional, or economic is necessary to achieve liberation? How do you keep your focus on your goals, without devolving into vengeance and bloodlust?

WORLD AND SETTING

THE BLOODY ISLES

Brinkwood takes place in Cardenfell, a county on the island of Orslae, which is the largest island in a small archipelago off the coast of a much larger continent. Taken together, the islands are often referred to as The Bloody Isles, and are ruled by the Crimson Crown. Almost everywhere else in the so-called "civilized" world, vampires dominate as well.

Cardenfell is rich in natural resources, with deposits of coal and silver, as well as large tracts of fertile farmland. In many ways it is the beating heart of the Isles, as the saying goes, “Blood flows from Cardenfell.” It is controlled by one of the most powerful and favored Vampire Counts of the entire Crimson Crown, and is as jealously guarded as it is heavily taxed.

The vast majority of the population is kept at or below a subsistence level of economic growth, with most of the population being peasants, obligated to pay rent, in blood, silver, or labor to the liege lord or landlord who owns the property they live and work on. Officially, serfdom was abolished on the Bloody Isles shortly after the Crimson Crown took power, but with the land and resources firmly in the hands of Vampires, most people have seen little change in their economic station.

BLOOD STERLING

At least a century ago, someone invented Blood Sterling. Some say it was a secret cabal of alchemists, others whisper it was the Queen of Crimson herself. Officially, Blood Sterling has always existed, and is just as natural as anything else. To say otherwise can get you hanged.

Still, there are rumors. *Someone* found out how to mix silver and blood together, transmuting the two substances into something incredibly powerful. When melted down and imbibed, it grants it's drinker power. As the would-be vampire drinks more, their power grows. At first, they feel hail and healthy. Strength returns to old bones, youth colors pallid cheeks. Soon, they shun the light of the sun. Then, the fangs grow in. Before long, they find they no longer need the concoction of blood and silver, instead, they may simple feed upon the unsuspecting populace. There are rumors of still more power granted to the now fully-fledged vampire; mesmerism, transformation, foul magic and other deviltry.

Important to note in this is that Vampires are not born, or forced into their life, or even incapable of leaving it. A vampire who stops drinking blood will find their power wither away, their mortality slowly return, but most are unwilling to sacrifice the "gifts" of the blood, even if it meant they no longer needed to feast upon their fellow man.

Still, the vampires are not invulnerable. The scent of burning ashwood deceives their senses, and while they are supernaturally resilient, arrows and stakes made from the wood of ash trees have been known to pierce and corrode their flesh. Thus, ashwood is highly controlled, and carrying arrows of it is a crime

punishable by death. The vampires enforce other bans, though it is uncertain whether these substances are actually dangerous to them, if they just wish to give the impression that they might be, or if there are other, socio-political reasons for their control.

These substances include pure silver, gunpowder and steel. Open flames are also strictly controlled, as it said that flame will envelop a vampire as easily it will any other man.

Now, Blood Sterling forms the foundation of capital, commerce, and trade throughout the “civilized” world. The Vampire Counts keep great stores of the stuff, and extract blood and silver from their populace in equal measure to manufacture more. Coins of it are minted, and pass from the hands of commoners to the vaults of the rich, inequality steadily growing day by day.

The coins of Blood Sterling bear grisly monikers, individual to the different realms of the world. On the Bloody Isles, eight tear-shaped “drops” exchange to a small “dram” coin. Five drams combine into a “phial.” 72 phials taken together are a pound of Blood Sterling, though few common folk will ever see so much Blood Sterling in one place. Instead, it’s commonly stored in the vaults of vampires, who trade it with paper notes bearing the seal of their House.

BRINKWOOD

Along the edge of Cardenfell, straddling it's border, lies the forest known to all manner of folk as the Brinkwood. Since time immemorial it has been left unmolested since all know it as a realm of the Fae. Mothers and fathers warn their children away from it, telling legends of wights, wisps, beasts of snapping teeth, birds of sharp talons and vines of twisting thorns. Few are those foolhardy enough to venture within.

In the present, the Brinkwood is banned by the order of the Crimson Crown. Some efforts were made during the early years to destroy the forest, felling it's great trees, and when that failed, attempts to put it to flame. But these efforts were snuffed out, though no one will whisper how. Legend says that the Vampire Lords fear what awaits within the forest, but still covet it's lands, and plot to destroy it once again.

But you are not to be deterred by bedtime stories, and where vampires fear to tread, you might find allies. The forest proved itself dangerous and wild, snagging you with thorns, harrying you with beasts, disturbing your nights with strange cries and calls. But still, you persisted, and in time, the Fae, curious as they were, sought you out. Under the great trees of the forest, on altars

of ancient stone you spilled your blood, and pledged yourself to your cause, and the Fae pledged their assistance.

Now, the forest is your home. A small clearing granted to you by the Fae, with permission to grow your presence as your movement builds. The forest is no less deadly, but now you exist in uneasy detente with it, avoiding the worst of it's dangers and harvesting what fruits of it you need to live. The forest is ally and rival, shielding you with it's ashwood from the senses of vampires and with it's legends from the peering eyes of folk. But each day, you must earn it's respect, and prove your intentions to the spirits and beasts who now call you neighbor.

THE WYLD

What is beyond the world of *Brinkwood*? The Wyld. None have seen the Wyld, the home of the Fae, but it's reverberations can be felt as it's magic ebbs outward from the Brinkwood.

The Brinkwood is a "hedge" of sorts, erected by the fae or their progenitors to separate the two worlds. In ancient times, it was said that magic flowed freely from the Brinkwood, but as the Crimson Crown rose to prominence, the fae fortified and sealed the Brinkwood, leaving only a few sparse cracks for magic to flow through.

Ordinary folk may perceive the magic of the Wyld as it grows out of the cracks in the Brinkwood, and is most prominent in places of wild wilderness, perceivable in villages, and nearly dead in cities and towns. Rumors speak of ancient mages, druids, and witches that could weave and use the Wyld’s magic to perform great works, but that knowledge is all but lost to time. The exact nature of the Wyld, as well as what it is still possible to do with it, is left to the discretion of you and your friends.

GETTING STARTED

If you are planning to play *Brinkwood* as part of a larger campaign, it is advised that you begin with a “Session Zero” where you and your players can discuss the game, their characters, and the content you will want to include.

Alternatively, you can begin with a “one-shot”, using one of the modules included and pre-generated characters. You can always spin your one-shot into a larger campaign later, if you so desire.

WHAT YOU NEED

- 3-7 people, one of whom will act as the GM.
- This rules document, a copy of the player reference sheet for each player, a copy of the GM reference sheet.

- A copy of the character sheet for each player and one of each mask sheet.
- Pencils, paper, laptops, tablets or a virtual tabletop such as Roll20.
- Some standard 6-sided dice.
- Some way to access the Blades in the Dark SRD or a copy of the *Blades in the Dark* rulebook.

BACKGROUND READING

Consider beginning your Session Zero by having the players take turns reading the following paragraphs, in order to set the tone and establish the setting of *Brinkwood*.

Our story begins in Cardenfell, a county on the island of Orslae, itself part of an archipelago known as The Bloody Isles. Cardenfell is rich in natural resources, with deposits of coal and silver, as well as large tracts of fertile farmland. In many ways it is the beating heart of the Isles, as the saying goes, “Blood flows from Cardenfell.” It is controlled by one of the most powerful and favored Vampire Counts of the entire Crimson Crown, and is as jealously guarded as it is viciously exploited.

The vast majority of the population of Cardenfell is kept at or below a subsistence level of economic growth. Most of the population is made up of peasants, obligated to pay rent in blood, silver, or labor to the liege lord or landlord who owns the property they live and work on.

Blood Sterling is the currency of the “civilized” world, and is a powerful mixture of silver and blood, capable of transforming a person into a vampire. Imbibing Blood Sterling grants otherworldly powers at the cost of drinking human blood.

Important to note is that Vampires are not born, or forced into their life, or even incapable of leaving it. A vampire who stops drinking blood will find their power wither away and their mortality slowly return. But most are unwilling to sacrifice the “gifts” of the blood, even if it means they would no longer need to feast upon their fellow man.

Along the edge of Cardenfell, straddling it's border, lies the forest known to all manner of folk as the Brinkwood. Since time immemorial, it has been left unmolested as all know it as a realm of the Fae. Mothers and fathers warn their children away from it, telling legends of wights, wisps, beasts of snapping teeth, birds of sharp talons and vines of twisting thorns. Few are foolhardy enough to venture within.

But you are not to be deterred by bedtime stories, and where vampires fear to tread, you might find allies. The forest proved itself dangerous and wild, snagging you with thorns, harrying you with beasts, and disturbing your nights with strange cries and calls. But still you persisted, and in time, the Fae, curious as they were, sought you out. Under the great trees of the forest, on altars of ancient stone, you spilled your blood and pledged yourself to your cause, and the Fae pledged their assistance.

CONCEPT

Your group should have a good idea of the intended concept of *Brinkwood* from the background reading, but you should discuss whether you want to make any changes to the concept of the game.

AIM

Once the Concept is established, discuss your Aim. Your Aim should be to have fun as a group, but what exactly that means might vary based on individual expectations. Discuss these questions:

- Brinkwood is designed with an explicit “win state”, i.e. when you successfully overthrow the vampire lords’ regime in Cardenfell. Is everyone on board with this goal?
- Brinkwood can be played with lose states, such as total-party-kills or character death, though even these outcomes do not necessarily mean the end of the campaign. More brigands may take up the Masks your brigands wore and continue the struggle. Is losing in these ways an acceptable outcome? Should character death be

mechanically determined or story-based? The answer can vary from person-to-person.

TONE

Take a moment to discuss the Tone of your game. Brinkwood was designed for a dark, though adventurous, tone. It can be played as a black comedy at times, or as a more serious war-and-mud story. Make sure you establish and agree to the Tone you want for your game.

SUBJECT MATTER

The first step in deciding the subject matter of your game is to pick the Vampire Lord your campaign will focus on defeating. Each of the three Vampire Lords has a different “version” of Cardenfell we call their **demesne**, and the vampire lord you pick will in many ways determine the content and tone of your game.

A brief overview of the vampire lords is provided below, but for more detail, see the [Campaign](#) chapter.

As another option, you can put off the decision of which Vampire Lord you wish to pursue, playing out a few sessions in a less specific Cardenfell before settling on a direction for the

campaign. Perhaps a minor noble lord is replaced by the “True” vampire lord once you make their incompetence obvious?

THE DUKE

Themes: *Industrial fascism, paranoia, feudalism, replaceable cogs, mechanics, billowing smoke, coal, choking dust, gunpowder, soldiers, tactics, a slow grind.*

Demesne

Air choked with soot. In towns the banging, clanging of industry during the day, the deathly quiet of strict curfew after darkness, punctuated by the occasional scream or sob, quickly silenced. Marching boots on cobblestone. Shuffling peasants, their heads bent low, watched over by towering guard posts and panopticons. Turning gears and the wrenching grind. The taste of oil and gunpowder. Monolithic, imposing architecture, draped with tattered banners and propaganda.

THE COUNTESS

Themes: *The Gilded Age, austerity, rot, inequality, beauty, misshapen, too-perfect forms, uncanny valley, dancing, victorian balls, deception, applause, sycophants, disposable things and people, dolls, The Favorite*

The Countess's Demesne

Tattered tapestries depicting pastoral scenes, high vaulted architecture, chipped crimson paint and layers of cheap gilt over

grime, the wind carries the scent of perfume over rot, and the faint strains of hauntingly somber music.

THE BARON

Themes: *Late capitalism, hunger, excess, eating, crunching, snapping, thirst, insatiable, hollowness, sunkennes, ravenous, bestial, howling, meat-horror*

The Baron's Demesne

The squeal of pigs, cries of terror, lonely sobs. Blood, blood everywhere. Messy piles of gore and intestine, gutters choked with bile and filth. The stains of blood and ichor in the cracks of nearly everything. A foul, rotting stench, clinging to the air.

From your chosen Vampire Lord, you should have an idea of the themes and content your game is likely to include. However, it is best to go over the content of your game and make sure Cardenfell is custom-tailored to your playgroup. For this, we recommend Ron Edward's *Lines and Veils*.

LINES AND VEILS

Lines are hard lines, things you don't want to come up in the game and want the GM and your fellow players to steer away from. Veils are a little looser, describing things you want fast-forwarded by without going into too much detail about the nitty-gritty. Every player should lay out their Lines and Veils, and these should be recorded down and made visible to

all players. Please note that players are not expected to state why something is a line or veil for them, though room should be made if the player bringing up the topic wants to discuss it.

Some potential lines and veils that should be discussed are listed below:

- Violence: *Brinkwood* contains violence by its nature, but the exact level of that violence is up to the players. Think of movie ratings, PG, PG-13 or hard R. Do you want descriptions of bloody gore? PG-13 action and stakings? Or more cartoon-esque violence where enemies puff away into smoke?
- Child Exploitation: Cogscampers are the children who work in the factories that dot the world of *Brinkwood*. This is meant to mirror real-world exploitation of children during the industrial age, but some groups might want to tone-down or excise this element of the game completely.
- Sexual Violence: It is highly recommended that Sexual Violence be a hard line.
- Lack of Consent / Compulsion / Mind Control: In a great deal of vampire fiction, vampires are depicted as being able to compel people to do things against their will. Furthermore, by default, some player characters have the ability to “mesmerize” NPCs. How much of this you want in your game is worthy of discussion.

SAFETY TOOLS

Your group should also consider which safety tools to use, if any. A full discussion of the benefits and drawbacks of different safety tools is beyond the scope of this document, but some to consider might be the X-Card by John Stavropoulos or Script Change by Brie Beau Sheldon.

No matter which Safety Tools you choose to use, you should make it clear that the safety tool is not intended to override common sense or be leaned-on as an excuse to “push” more traumatic content. *Brinkwood* is designed to be an adventure game, not an exploration of trauma or emotional pain.

THERMIAN ARGUMENT

The Thermian Argument is a term used to describe the pattern of justifying objectionable or harmful content in a work by making reference to the fact that it exists in the game world.

This, in the opinion of the designer, is a flimsy and foolish argument, and should not be invoked to leave in any part of the game that would be harmful or damaging to the players. There is no aspect of *Brinkwood* that should not be changed or excised in order to improve the play experience for a specific group. There is

nothing you can change or alter that will fundamentally break the experience or the world.

Have fun together. Make *Brinkwood* your own.

NEXT STEPS

With your concept, aim, tone, and the setting established, you are ready to begin making your characters. Turn to the [Character Creation](#) chapter for the next steps of your Session Zero.

CHARACTER CREATION

Every player besides the GM will create a player character, referred to in this text as a **brigand**. You will build one **Fae** character together as a group. It is the GM's role to guide and help the players during Character Building. It is recommended that you read through these sections one by one, and consider printing off multiple copies of this section for each player.

1. Folk and Look

Choose any mix of Folk you like and record it on your character sheet. This represents your character's ancestry and heritage, and while it has no mechanical effect on the game, you may choose to have it effect the "Look" of your character.

2. Upbringing

Choose an **Upbringing** for your character, and select one **Trait** and **Associate** from your chosen Upbringing.

3. Profession

Choose your brigand's former **profession**, and select one **Trait** from those listed and one **Associate**. Next, mark down a dot in the action listed under your Professions's **Training**.

4. Class

Choose a **Class** for your brigand, and mark down the **action dots** it gives you.

5. Action Dots

After choosing your **Profession** and **Class**, you should have 4 action dots on your character sheet. Assign 3 **additional dots**, for a **total of 7**. Keep in mind that these dots may not raise an action rating over 3 dots.

6. Tragedy

Mark down your character's **Tragedy**, the inciting incident that caused them to leave their old life behind and join the rebellion.

7. Hobby

Choose a **Hobby** for your character, which they will use to blow off **stress during downtime**.

8. Fae Pacts

Choose a Fae Pact for your character, which they will swear oaths on to gain **essence** and be rewarded with **experience** if the fulfill.

9. Name, Alias, and Pronouns

Next, choose a Name and Alias for your brigand. Most folk in Cardenfell go by a given name, with only noble houses claiming family names. Peasant folk typically give their profession or village as a last name, ie Gwen the Miller or Aedel from Cliffsblack.

Aliases can be anything you choose, and may serve as a “nom de guerre” for your brigand.

Finally, note down the pronouns your brigand should be referred to with.

Names: Gaël, Gwenneg, Judoc, Ronec, Luhan, Matelin, Kirill, Gothian, Jovan, Katarin, Ahez, Lizig, Servanne, Gaid, Maele, Awen, Riwanez

Aliases: Hooks, Fetch, Thicket, Lark, Badger, Oak, Laurel, Delight, Crow, Fox, Red, Jacket, Feathers

FOLK

Legends say that in the Old Kingdoms, the folk of the world were often separated from one another. Separated by culture, geography, and language, the folk of the world nonetheless slowly grew together. Now, none can truly claim a “pure”

heritage without sounding like a dolt, as the fortunes, cultures, and peoples of the world have integrated and woven together. Some characters may show signs of their ancestry in their appearance, while others will not.

SALTFOLK

Saltfolk were the most common folk in the Bloody Isles during the Old Kingdom, and many count at least a few Salters among their ancestors. Saltfolk are diverse in all things, and culturally tend to seek accord and agreement with one another.

Look: *Tall, short, plump, skinny, dark, tanned, hardened, soft, cheery, dour.*

SYLFOLK

Sylfolk are people of the woods, and their legends claim that the first of their kind grew rather than born.

Look: *Tall, stocky, broad, willowy, multicolored, sun-dappled, oak-skinned, emerald-skinned, leaf-haired*

FAIRFOLK

The fairfolk, or “elves,” are descended from the Fae of the wilds who fell in love with other folk of the world. They are marked by

their extremes, in beauty and in stature, and they can appear almost alien to some.

Look: *Tall, lanky, cherubic, alien, gaunt, gleam-eyed, twisting, willowed*

DVARFOLK

The dvarfolk, or “dwarves,” are an industrious people who once lived in great holds of stone and in clever mines dug into mountains. Their descendents tend to be a bit on the stockier and shorter side, and their culture values endurance and fairness in all dealings.

Look: *Short, stocky, broad-shouldered, well-muscled, rough, bearded, sharp-eyed*

DEEPFOLK

The Deepfolk come from the sea and the rivers, descended from merfolk and other folk of the sea who followed their curiosity to find love and acceptance among the sailors that plied their waters.

Look: *Scaled, wide-eyed, gilled, tattooed, befinned, azure, emerald*

BEASTFOLK

Beastfolk are as diverse in their nature as the beasts they resemble, taking features of fur, horns, claws, and hooves down from their ancestors.

Look: *Ram-horned, stag-horned, befurred, clawed, satyr-hoofed, bepawed, snouted, winged, betailed*

SCALEFOLK

Scalefolk descend from small, scaled races of beastfolk, varying from dragonkin to goblins to kobolds.

Look: *Emerald, auburn, shining scales, forked tongue, slick, long-eared, nimble*

UPBRINGING

While vampire propaganda preaches that any folk may rise to stations of power and influence if they are only willing to work hard enough, in actuality most of a person's life on the Bloody Isles is decided by their upbringing.

FOUNDLING

You were not born, per-se, but found. Left near the Brinkwood when times grew lean and another hungry mouth was unwelcome, your fate seemed grim. But then, you were taken in, possibly by a kindly villager, or perhaps by a curious fae of the wild. Your adoptive parent loved you and raised you into what you are today.

Traits

- **Fae-loved:** Raised by the fae, they take a special interest in you. They may offer you things, provide guidance, and generally dote upon you.
- **Village-raised:** It takes a village, or so it is said. To take in a foundling is said to bless a village, and you were raised by many hands. Choose a village as your home, you are always welcome there, no matter what.

Associates:

- Ather, a beast you met in the forest.
- Holgin, a village elder who taught you near everything you know.

PEASANT

You were born into hardship. Your parents were simple sharecroppers who did their best, but were often tired and worn down from their labors and anemia. Still, the adversity strengthened you, hardened you, and taught you a few things about the natural world.

- Farmer's Knack: You know a thing or two about agriculture, farming, seasons, and raising livestock. You can assist competently with farm work. Gain +1 effect whenever this knowledge and competence would help you.
- Peasant Song: You know the best manners, jokes, and tone to take with your fellow peasants to help win their trust. Gain +1 effect whenever this knowledge or competence would help you.

Associates:

- Ovan, another youngster from a neighboring farm
- Qain, the baker your family brought their grain to

SCION

You were raised in the lap of luxury, your every whim catered to by your parents and their servants. You drank the Blood Sterling, and for a time blinded yourself to the pain and agony your good fortune was built on. But such ignorance cannot last, and eventually, you turned away.

- Light Mesmerizing: You learned the basics of mesmerizing your fellow folk, to make them more pliable to your will. Funny, no one mentioned it also works on vampires.
- Quick-Drain: You learned how to quickly drain the blood from a body. A grisly task, but a vampire can be drained just as quickly as anyone else.

Associates

- Quell, a Loan-Blood charged with protecting you
- Samsor, a servant who attended you as a child

COGSCAMPER

When the blood rent came due, you were sold or seized by a landlord and put to work in a mine or factory as a “cogscamper,” a small child laborer who can squeeze between the billowing machines, scamper down tight tunnels, or sweep the soot-stained chimneys. It was arduous, dangerous work, and many of your fellows were taken by a black cough or maimed by an errant loom. But you survived, “graduating” when you grew too tall to scamper and sweep, a crust of bread and a dram or two of blood sterling your only reward.

- Cogscamp Veteran: Having survived the factories, you learned a great deal about them. You also can command a certain amount of respect from your fellow workers. Gain +1 effect whenever this knowledge or competence would help you.
- Scampsense: You don't survive the factories without being very lucky or very observant. You will always have a chance to avoid a trap, machine, or other environmental danger.

Associates:

- Fillin, an unlucky cogscamper who lost a limb

- Pullo, the ‘head’ cogscamper who taught you what you needed to know

APPRENTICE

Your parents were able to scrape together enough blood, silver or connections to have you apprenticed to a master craftsman or merchant. You worked long hours learning your master’s craft or going over their books, enduring harsh punishments for simple mistakes, and working your fingers to the bone. But, by the end of it you knew a trade or how to balance a ledger. Valuable skills... until they devise a machine to replace you.

- Keen Eye: You know good or shoddy work when you see it.
Gain +Effect whenever this would be helpful.
- Book-keeping: Increase the amount of Blood Sterling your Refuge can hold by two.

Associates

- Anndr, a fellow apprentice
- Vogan, your master who taught you your trade

STUDENT

You had the good fortune to be born into a family that could afford to send you off for proper schooling. Perhaps you studied diligently, perhaps you took the opportunity to learn the ways, manners, and games of high society. Either way, you're reasonably sure you got your parent's money's worth.

- **Educated:** You have a proper education, granting you the ability to read and write in several languages, understand natural philosophy, and do a bit of arithmetic. Gain +1 effect when this knowledge or competency would help you.
- **Etiquette:** You know the manners, etiquette, and subtlety necessary to survive in ennobled circles. Gain +1 effect when this knowledge or competence would help you.

Associates

- Cullugh, another student who came from a wealthy family
- Dr. Avern, a teacher who took a special interest in you

FAITHFUL

Some few children are said to have a touch of the divine. Perhaps they have a knack for easing the troubles of others, or maybe they hear words or see signs that are invisible to others. Whatever the

reason, such children are usually raised specially in the traditions of the Old Faith.

- Faithful: Such is your faith that it allows you to push past the injuries of your flesh. Expend special armor to cancel the effect of one level of harm.
- Truesight: Choose one of the following sights:
 - Step: You may see the footsteps of others
 - Heart: You may see the hearts of folk
 - Evil: You may see the evil that lurks within folk
 - Sighs: You hear the most ardent thoughts of folk

Associates

- Friar Gallin: A kindly monk who helped raise you.
- Corban: A sprite who was your playmate when you were young.

PROFESSIONS

POACHER

From the Old Kingdom to the Crimson Crown, the prohibition on poaching in the Lord's woods remains. Still, when the grip of winter tightens and the blood rent comes due, risking the hangman's noose for a scrap of meat begins to look like a worthy trade.

Traits

- **Passle:** You always have the ability to scrounge up a bit of meat. Useful for making a good impression with folks or to trade with if you need it.
- **Quiver:** Take an additional charge of Ashwood whenever you spend it on a mission.

Training: +1 Hunt

Associates

- Sezig, a former huntsman and ranger
- Illec, a retired fletcher

CUTPURSE

Thievery is a common, if risky occupation in the Bloody Isles. Those who get caught robbing the rich of their blood and silver can expect little mercy if caught. Still, if you have quick hands and a good batch of luck, it's not an awful way to make a living.

Traits

- Thief: Gain +Effect when climbing or breaking in to a location.
- Pickpocket: Gain +Effect when picking someone's pockets or picking a lock.

Training: +1 Prowl

Associates

- Ael, a cutthroat assassin
- Ionea, a reliable fence

FRIAR

Many a second-son or daughter of the nobility, or those touched with a sense of the divine, turn to a life of quiet contemplation in a monastery. A monastery education is one of the best you can get, and having access to blessed waters and an actual, readable

prayerbook leads many to doubt the Reformed Faith and the lies of the Vampires.

Traits

- Blessing: Once per session, you can give +Effect to an ally's action.
- Preacher: Gain +Effect to Resolve actions when interacting with the faithful.

Training: +1 Sway

Associates

- Steon, a doubtful abbot
- Yanna, a wandering minister

BARD

To make one's coin through song or story is no easy task, but some hardy few choose it. They serve as scribes when demand for their art is on the wane, and entertain many a tavern or village square when the occasion calls for it. Few are those who would turn away a Bard, and they are welcome in humble hearths and grand palaces alike.

Traits

- Scribe: The ability to read and write is uncommon on the Bloody Isles, and the ability to scribe down letters, histories, bills of sale, or anything else can be quite the boon. Gain +Effect whenever this would be helpful.
- Song: Gain +Effect when using song or instrument to entertain. Useful to earn a bit of coin or entertain hospitable folk.

Training: +1 Consort

Associates

- Elid, a duplicitous courtier
- Seza, a tavernkeeper

DESERTER

Conscription is the order of the day among the peasantry, as any able-bodied folk may be called upon to take up steel to fight for their lord's petty vendettas or conflicts. Many is the soldier that becomes disillusioned with fighting a pointless war for a rich man's profit, and deserts quietly into the night.

Traits

- Appropriation: Gain +2 Steel.

- Scout: Gain +1d when Gathering Information about the Vampire's forces.

Training: +1 Skirmish

Associates

- Seve, a grizzled sergeant
- Gwenael, a practised blacksmith

HEALER

The wise-women common to villages in the Old Kingdom faced persecution of their craft by the Crimson Court and agents of the Reformed Faith, but some still practiced in secret, or passed their learned craft down to cunning and loyal students.

Traits

- Chirurgeon: Once per session, you may cause an ally to ignore the consequence of one level of Harm.
- Barber: A kit of barbers tools, allowing one to do everything from performing surgery to give a nice shave. Barbers are welcome most everywhere, and they do get so very close to their noble patrons...

Training: +1 Study

Associates

- Youn, a cunning poisoner
- Clervi, a banished court physician

ASCETIC

To desert the world of folk and to venture into the forest is typically a death sentence, but a few hardy folk make it their practice. You survived on the fruits of the forest, a canopy of trees for a roof, branches your bed while you contemplated the mysteries of the universe. It may have brought you wisdom, or only greater disillusionment, at least until the Fae beckoned you.

Traits

- Enduring: You may ignore the penalty to effect from 1 minor injury.
- Foresight: You may use one free flashback per session.

Training: +1 Attune

Associates

- Azvent, a traveling scholar
- Colledoc, an observant mendicant

SAILOR

Trade via waterways and the sea is still the mainstay in the Bloody Isles, and the cargo rigs and junkers that ply river and wave are crewed by hardy sailors. Sailors keep to themselves more than most, and are thus less susceptible to the temptations of the Vampire Lords and the Blood Sterling. Still, the long reach of the vampires can extend even to the sea, and where the vampires tread, tragedy likewise stalks.

Traits

- Rigger: You know how to tie knots, climb quickly, and scramble in and out of tight holds. Gain +Effect whenever this would be helpful.
- Navigator: You're well-versed in navigating both on land and by sea. Gain +Effect whenever this would be helpful.

Training: +1 Survey

Associates

- Breval, a skilled navigator
- Alis, a subtle smuggler

WASTREL

Vast wealth flows easily into the pockets of a select few. The scions of vampiric houses are those most likely to end up as wastrels, frittering away the blood and sweat of the peasantry in games of chance or houses of pleasure. Still, it is a path that ends only one of two ways: in death and misery, or in renunciation and redemption. Let's hope you aim for the latter.

Traits:

- **Gambler:** A proper wastrel knows when to switch out some “special” dice, which usually seem to come up the way they want. Gain +Effect whenever this would be helpful.
- **Paperwork:** You can cobble together a smudged writ, bearing an official-looking seal. It is probably long since expired or irrelevant, but held out to a bailiff or guard who can't read, who's to know?

Training: +1 Finesse

Associates

- Gaele, a well-informed foreign spy
- Fanch, an inveterate gambler

ALCHEMIST

Chemistry is a new science, still blended with old folk practices and the magic of alchemy. While many of the old formulae are bunk, the mere existence of Blood Sterling is enough to vouchsafe the merits of alchemy. Many a student aspires to be an alchemist in the court of some crimson noble... but many quickly realize the dark toll their would-be masters expect from them. To be a rogue alchemist is to be a living weapon - hunted for the very wisdom you possess.

Traits:

- **Resourceful:** You may expend your special armor to have a single charge of any one **contraband** item stowed about your person.
- **Chemist's Eye:** You are always able to identify the most dangerous alchemical substance present in a scene. You may expend your special armor to summon in a substance of your choice if you so wish. You may quickly identify the weak points of structures.

Training: +1 Tinker

Associates

- Agata, a witch in hiding
- Brugal, a mentor who taught you terrible secrets

CLASS

When you went into the Brinkwood, you left your old life behind. You had to learn new skills, unlearn old biases, and leave behind old things. What emerged from this process is your **Class**, borne of your role within your **band**, and the skills you learned to fill it. When you choose your Class, note down the action dots you received in the **action** section of your background sheet.

Vanguard

- 2 Command
- 1 Skirmish

Herald

- 2 Sway
- 1 Finesse

Messenger

- 1 Prowl
- 2 Consort

Ranger

- 1 Prowl
- 2 Survey

Rogue

- 2 Prowl
- 1 Hunt

Mage

- 2 Study
- 1 Attune

Warrior

- 2 Skirmish
- 1 Wreck

Saboteur

- 2 Wreck
- 1 Prowl

Druid

- 2 Attune
- 1 Tinker

TRAGEDY

No one upends their life, flees into the woods, and fights in a revolution on a whim. Your character, like many others, was motivated by a Tragedy, be it political, social, economic, or personal. Perhaps your village was burned down. Maybe you knew someone who was unjustly executed by the local lord. Or maybe one day you saw the last of your family ripped apart because they could not afford to pay the blood rent.

It is recommended that you tie your Tragedy into your particular version of Cardenfell, either by invoking a connection between your tragedy and the Vampire Lord who rules or one of their servants, acting on their command. Alternatively, tie it into the demesne of the Vampire Lord, or the themes of your game.

Whatever the tragedy, write it down. The memory of it will keep the fire within you burning hot on those cold nights in the forest.

HOBBY

Life in the forest can be dreary at times, and you and your comrades will likely find creative ways to pass the time. Choose a hobby that you feel fits your character, either from the list below or from your imagination. You may change it later if you wish. As

a downtime action, you may practice your hobby, relieving your stress by narrating a short description of how you pass the time in (relative) peace.

Example Hobbies: *Sporting, Games, Cards, Bird-watching, Archery, Wrestling, Cooking, Darning and Stitching, Weaving, Carving*

FÆ PACTS

The Fae do not lend their power to the unsure or uncommitted. The price they ask for their help is simple: an oath, written in your own blood, to follow a Fae Pact. This oath will allow their essence to flow through you, feed your Mask, and lend you the power you need. Choose your Pact from the list below, and consider carefully why your character chose to swear themselves to it. Changing your Pact can only be done with great consideration, and would require a rededication ceremony, performed by your entire **band** and your Fae.

Before each foray, you can swear an Oath that the next time you wear a Mask, you will honor your Fae Pact. When you do so, you will gain **Essence**. But beware, if you fail to honor your Oath, the Mask will haunt you, demanding you fulfill your bargain until it is done, causing you **Stress**. Finally, if you honor your pact, you will earn **experience** for your chosen Mask.

You swear a pact of **Vengeance**, to humble the proud, to punish the wicked, to succor the weak, and exact retribution.

You swear on a pact of **Justice**, to balance the scales, to free the chained, to cast down the oppressor, to let the blood of the wicked flow in the streets and the cries of the powerless be heard.

You forswear yourself in **Solidarity**, to stand with the weak, to shoulder their burdens, to meet their pain as your own.

You take up the pact of **Freedom**, to liberate, to destroy, to burn down every corrupt institution that comes before you, and to let free the raucous joy within your very soul.

You swear a pact of **Wisdom**, to lay your plans carefully and precisely. To follow through on your promises, while remembering your failures. To wait for the right moment, and then strike, decisively and entirely.

You swear a pact of **Industry**, to create, to forge, to build friendships and alliances. To stoke the flames of passion, to cool and temper fury, and hone yourself and your comrades into the finest blade ever to plunge into the heart of evil.

You swear your heart to **Beauty**, to write, to paint, to inspire and sing and celebrate. To demand bread as well as roses, to feed hearts and minds as well as stomachs. To find love, to share hope, and to build a world as marvelous as any yet imagined.

THE FAE

“The Fae” is a loose descriptor attached to a group of beings who inhabit the **Brinkwood**, and likely many of the other deep woods and forgotten places of the earth. They are terrifying to behold, as strangely beautiful as they are alien. Their conception of other folk is difficult to explain, and they communicate only with great difficulty. In general, they prefer to avoid other folk. But strange times have made them into strange allies, and now, one Fae has come forward to aid your band in your shared struggle, granting you a piece of their forest and gifts that will allow you to fight the vampires on equal footing.

THE NATURE OF FAE

The Fae as Ideology

The Fae as Living Stories

The Fae as Natural Force

The Fae as Folk

THE FAE COURTS

As the fae war against the Crimson Crown, they split themselves into four “courts”, allied in endeavor, but split as to the best route to overcoming the vampires.

In choosing your Fae, you should also choose the Court it belongs to.

SPRING, THE COURT OF ROSES

A thousand springs shall bloom, and from a thousand gardens shall our roses grow.

The Fae of the Spring Court believe that mass movements, going beyond all borders, are the key to overthrowing the Crimson Crown. They look to inspiration from the revolutions that have dotted the colonies of the Crimson Crown. Largely, they have been the most successful, as more and more former colonies break away from the Crimson Crown each day. Still, some question if all the lessons of decolonial warfare can be applied to an imperial core such as Orslae or the continent.

SUMMER, THE COURT OF FLAMES

Let the fire catch the very heart of wickedness, let it consume the vampire in his dwelling, and from the ashes a new world shall be born.

The Summer Court emphasizes the importance of fighting in the imperial cores of the Crimson Crown, in overthrowing the Vampires at the heart of their power. They seek to bind together the disparate factions within lands such as Orslae into powerful forces that will, from within, burn out the heart of vampiric corruption.

AUTUMN, THE COURT OF LEAVES

A thousand pages, a thousand words, kept warm in the hearts of folk shall never fail.

The Court of Autumn focused their efforts on the philosophy and soul of revolution, emphasizing the importance of teaching, education, and discussion, in order to build the “consciousness” necessary for the overthrow of the vampires. Some deride them as more passive, but their slow, steady path is always active, always teaching, tending a flame of thought that shall never be snuffed out.

WINTER, THE COURT OF FROST

The frost does not plot, or plan, or scheme. Slowly, surely, it spreads. Winter cannot be stopped, it is as inevitable as the snow.

The Winter Court takes the position of inevitable victory, hard-fought though it may be. It considers the overthrow of the vampires a natural outcome of history itself, one that may only be expedited by the actions of individuals or revolutions. It focuses on this acceleration, highlighting the contrasts of the vampire's lies, driving home the heart of the vampire's cruelty, and spreading, slowly but surely, the frost that will crack and destroy the crumbling edifices of the Crimson Crown.

YOUR EXQUISITE FAE

Your Fae should be designed collectively, as a group. As the GM, hand out the following slips of paper, one to each player, taking one yourself if your playing with 3 players and discarding the last if you are not playing with 5.

Have the players secretly answer the first question, then pass the slip clockwise, with each player answering a subsequent question on the slip, until it is completed.

Next, read the following aloud:

Your curious fae did not show itself wholly to you (at first). They spoke and whispered it's true nature, until it lead you to meet your companions in a small clearing. There, you spoke of what

the fae had told you of themselves, and as you spoke, your Fae did appear.

Have each player describe the features of the fae on the sheet of paper they ended up with, in character if they so choose.

As a GM, next ask these questions of your players, either as a group or written down privately. From the answers, and the descriptions of the Fae detailed previously, a “picture” of the fae should begin to emerge.

- *What terrifies you about this Fae?*
- *What enralls you about this Fae?*
- *What was the first physical feature you noticed in this Fae?*
- *What did this Fae do or say to convince you of their good intentions?*
- *What aid, mercy or comfort did this Fae offer you? How did you respond?*
- *What do you admire most about this Fae?*

As the GM, choose the the True Name of the Fae, as well as their Title. Playing as the Fae, speak your True Name, bid the brigands

say why they have come. This is a chance for your players to talk about the Tragedy they have chosen, in character, if they so wish.

As the GM, have the Fae, in their own words, promise an answer to the tragedies that have brought the brigands together.

Considering their Court, promise them the Masks, and offer them a *secret* about the masks, should they swear their oaths.

My eyes are.... (Describe the fae's eyes. Say how they acquired them.)

Look into them, and you shall see... (Describe an aspect of the fae's personality, symbolized by their eyes.)

I shall see for you... (Describe what advantage the fae's eyes give them, how they will use their eyes to help the group)

My hands are... (Describe your fae's hands and arms. What are they made of? Where did they come from?)

In them, I hold... (Describe an aspect of the fae's personality, symbolized by what their hands are holding)

For you, they will... (Describe what advantage the fae's hands give them, or what they will use their hands to do for the group.)

My heart is of... (describe the fae's heart. What is it made of?
How did they acquire it?)

In it, I carry... (describe an aspect of the fae's personality, a
memory, or a secret they hold in their heart)

Alas, it shall bleed... (describe a weakness of your fae. What will
make it bleed or suffer. Something it cannot assist with)

My voice is... (describe the fae's voice. What does it sound like?
How did they win it?)

I hope these words will reach you... (say what is most important
to this fae, what do they want to be known about them above all
else)

Alas, if I sing... (What makes it difficult to understand or
communicate with this fae? What is something they cannot tell
you or advise you about?)

My _____ is like a.... (Describe an incidental feature of your fae. It might be horns, their fur, antlers, a tail, etc. What is it made out of?)

In it, I carry... (describe a strength that this feature gives the fae. Something it will be able to assist with, thanks to this feature.)

Alas, if you marr it.... (describe a weakness that this feature gives the fae. Something it will not be able to assist with.)

THE NATURE OF MASKS

Your group should decide, collectively, on what precisely is the nature of the Masks the Fae will offer them. Choose from one of the options below, or invent your own explanation for the masks:

- The Masks are pieces of your Fae, their emotions, spirit, memories, and magic woven into each one. Your fae is, quite literally, offering you a piece of itself.
- The Masks are ancient weapons, forged centuries ago, entrusted to the fae. The fae cannot wield them, but were chosen to keep them safe until they were needed once again.
- The Masks were once siblings who swore themselves to a noble but doomed cause. When the day was lost, the siblings forged themselves into Masks, so that they might carry on a war lost long ago.
- The Masks are literal embodiments of the forces they describe, made manifest into the real world. They have always existed, in some form or another, and will exist for a thousand centuries hence.
- The Masks are simple things of cheap wood, indifferent, but for a few carved sigils. It is the blood they drink, the

tragedy of those that wear them, and the oaths they extract that give them power.

- The Masks grew slowly, over time, as each wearer left a piece of themselves within them. They carry within the spirits of multitudes, and when you fall, they will carry you too.

SWEARING THE PACT

As a group, choose how you will swear your Oaths to the Fae, choosing from one of the options below or by inventing your own ritual.

- Spill blood upon an ancient stone altar, as you speak your Pact, and swear to spill the blood of the Vampires.
- Hold your hand within a magical flame and do not cry out as you meditate upon the suffering of the world and upon your Pact.
- Whisper a secret to a companion. Swear to never speak of it again, until your Pact is honored.
- Each of you, fletch an arrow, and speak your Pact into it's ashwood. Swear that the arrow shall pierce the heart of the Vampire Lord.

Once you've decided how you will swear your Pact, play out a short scene where you do so, with each player describing their brigand's Pact in their own words, as well as how they swear themselves to it.

RELATIONSHIPS

Some groups may wish to also establish relationships between their brigands. These relationships should be seen as jumping off points to be expanded on, developed, or changed entirely during play.

If you wish to use Relationships, have the GM ask the players these questions about their brigands. Both the player you are asking as well as the brigand they name must agree to the relationship between their two characters:

- You've fought beside _____ before. What was the fight about?
- You helped _____ out of a tight spot. What was it?
- You have a friendly rivalry going with _____. What do you compete in?
- You talked _____ out of doing something stupid. What was it?

- You're pretty sure _____ is cursed. Or blessed. Whichever. Why do you think this?
- You helped _____ 's friends, family, or community out when times were tough. How did you help?

FACTIONS

You are not alone in the world of *Brinkwood*. Other factions, amenable to your cause, have been fighting the good fight a lot longer than you have. Answer the following questions as a group, and take note of the factions that helped you. Perhaps helping them in return would make for a good first move?

Choose one of the following:

- The **Diggers** smuggled you some extra supplies. Start with 4 **supplies** and at +1 with Hogswick, where the Diggers have made inroads.
- The **Guilders** contributed some coin to your cause. Start with 2 **supplies** and 2 **blood sterling**, and at +1 with Grismont, where the Guilders have influence.

Choose one of the following:

- The **Fletchers** smuggled you some Ashwood. Start with 2 **Ashwood** and at +1 with Fletchgrove.

- The **Stokers** supplied you with Black Powder. Start with 2 **Black Powder** and at +1 with Cliffsblack.
- The **Coggers** managed to steal some Steel for you. Start with 2 **Steel** and at +1 with Stamleigh.

Choose one of the following:

- The **Scribblers** distributed leaflets encouraging the people of Cardenfell to be sympathetic to your cause, causing the academics of Drancaster to rally to your cause, but causing the vampire lord who rules Oldleigh to tighten their grip. Gain +2 with Drancaster and -1 with Oldleigh.
- The **Witchers** supplied the people of Flaypool with much needed medicine during the outbreak of a disease, but were confused for charlatans in Shepforth. Gain +2 with Flaypool and -1 with Shepforth.
- The **Poisoners** laid low an unpopular overseer in Ironholme, but the lord of Flinford simply doubled the quota to account for the loss. Gain +2 with Ironholme and -1 with Flinford.

Choose one of the following:

- The **Prayers** are popular in the Veins, where the peasants of the small feifdoms still practice the Old Faith in secret. Gain +1 with the Veins.
- The **Reavers** have hideouts, allies, and friends all along Cardenfell River. Gain +1 with Cardenfell River.

FACTION DESCRIPTIONS

The **Diggers** are a hearty group of renegade farmers and agriculturists, dedicated to reclaiming land deemed unusable by the powers that be and using it to build communal farms.

Coggers are the beginnings of a worker's movement in the factories and workhouses of the Bloody Isles. Their focus is on improving working conditions, better wages, and protecting their fellow workers.

Fletchers are those who practice the forbidden crafts of fletching arrows and crafting bows. Hunted relentlessly, they do their work in secret, and hope to keep the knowledge of their craft alive.

Scribblers are writers, teachers, and scholars, seeking to spread knowledge and literacy throughout the Bloody Isles. While they do not face official sanction from the Vampires, radical writers and thinkers have been known to turn up dead.

Stokers are arsonists and radicals, devoted to burning down everything the vampires hold. They are well-known for the collateral damage their activities cause.

Fixers are craftspeople devoted to preservation and repair. While a culture of disposability has overtaken much of the population, Fixers seek to preserve and conserve broken things.

Witchers are healers and medicine-folk who have avoided execution and persecution. They seek to keep the healing arts alive and to tend to the sick and injured.

Poisoners are scholars of alchemy and nature. They seek to build up toxins in their own blood that are harmful to the vampires, pass their blood as rent, and in doing so subtly weaken the vampiric hold on society.

Guilders are the progressive elements within the few remaining crafting guilds. They see the writing on the wall with regards to the rise of industry, and seek to dismantle the vampire's reign before it claims their own vocations.

Prayers are a radical strain of persecuted monks, nuns, priests, and layfolk who reject the bloody "prosperity theology" of the so-called Reformed Faith, instead turning back to core tenants of aiding the poor, communal duty, and respect for individual expression of faith.

Lawyers are those educated folk who seek to use their knowledge of the unjust laws of the vampires as a weapon and a shield, using

legal proceduralism and intervention to thwart the worst excesses of vampiric abuse.

ONTO THE FIRST FORAY...

With your brigands, their fae, and the seeds of their alliances set, you should be ready to start your first Foray. However, you may consider beginning with a “home” scene, having each character describe how they live in their forest refuge, what actions they are taking to prepare for their first foray, and how they interact with their fae patron. To spur the decision-making of what the first Foray will be, it is recommended that the Fae call the brigands together, and ask them one of the following questions:

Spring: *Our garden will blossom, but first we must sow. You have friends, comrades, whose aid we must secure. I ask you to go forth, and bring me the seeds of our rebellion. Where will you find this seed?*

The players should choose a faction they would like to assist, and the GM may choose to prep an interaction with a leader of said faction, including a “Goal” that perhaps the brigands could assist them with.

Summer: *The winds blow warm, and there is dry grass and tinder. Tell me, where shall we strike our first match?*

The fae of Summer hope to start things off with a bang. An assassination, a raid on a factory, or some other act of sabotage or show of defiance is what they're after.

Autumn: *The leaves fall from my forest, but must be gathered together. Where will you go to find me my leaves? What will you teach? What will it cost?*

A fae of Autumn wishes that the players go out amongst the populace and strike a blow that will raise the consciousness of the people. What action can the players take that might endear them in the hearts of the populace? The assassination of a greedy tax collector? A prison break? An execution interrupted?

Winter: *Frost gathers on the tips of our forest leaves, but we must shake the bough. Many are the cruelties of the vampires. Many are the contradictions of their rule. Where will your avalanche begin?*

The fae of Winter hopes that the brigands will go forth and illuminate, expose, or reveal some cruelty of the vampires. Will they perhaps save some vampire's latest meal? Will they gather evidence of injustice?

MASKS

Generations ago, the fae forged Masks. Creations of wood, magic, and blood, they were meant to be a tool, a weapon. Some say they were used to fight an ancient war, or vanquish a long-dead evil. Others say they are a final line of defense should the encroachment of folk threaten the existence of the Fae. Whatever the original purpose, the Fae don't seem to be keen on sharing it. What's more important, they say, is that they are used, now, with purpose and conviction.

The Masks were said to be carved from ideas themselves, taken from horror and pain, reforged in purpose, capable of good and evil. The Masks themselves wish to be used, wish to honor the pacts and ideas they were forged from, wish to win the battles they were made to fight.

The Masks are the Fae's most potent gifts, given with special care and great trust, to be worn, to be used, but then put aside. Most importantly, they feed upon the blood of vampires as their users do, gaining in power as they are put to use.

Physically, the Masks look rather nondescript. Plain things of bark and wood, rough-hewn. Easy to confuse for a child's plaything or a mummer's mask. But when worn with intent and

conviction, they shift and change, taking on aspects of their own dread nature, combined with the inner nature and expression of the wearer. In practical terms, you decided what a mask looks like when you play it, it's appearance may shift and change with time, and will certainly change when the wearer is different.

MECHANICS

At any time during a **foray**, a brigand can flashback to which Mask their character brought with them and wear it. When a brigand dons a mask, they must choose whether to pledge an **Oath** to honor their **Pact**. If they do so, they will gain essence, but will need to take actions that honor their pact during the **foray**.

Players may also choose to add Blood Sterling to the Mask at this time, spending Blood Sterling to convert it into Essence at a rate of 1 Blood Sterling to 1 Essence. Players should be reminded that after transferring Blood into a Mask, it cannot be brought back out.

Players should choose their Mask based on what they feel the situation calls for, and what abilities they feel they might need. Note that a player's choice is far from permanent, it is meant to change from foray to foray. A brigand might wear the mask of Terror one session, and the mask of Violence the next. This is

designed to help keep the gameplay fresh, and make sure that each brigand has the skills and abilities necessary to take an active role in the narrative of the current foray.

Players can choose to **adjust** their mask when they wear it, choosing to “switch” a selected special ability to one that might be more useful in their current situation. This can only be done once per foray when the brigand first puts on their mask.

Finally, when a brigand dons a mask, their player should narrate the mask’s appearance. Describing how it contorts and twists to form an appearance representative of the character, the mask, and the interplay and interpretation of the former on the latter.

If a brigand chooses to take off their mask before the end of the foray, they do not gain any additional essence and may not re-adjust their mask if they decide to put it back on later.

MASK CREATION

The first time a mask is brought on a foray, the player who brought the mask should assign 2 action dots to one of the mask actions and a single dot to another mask action. They should also choose a special ability from those listed for the Mask.

MASK STRESS

Masks take their toll on their wearers, and wearing the same one for too long has been known to cause stress on the wearer.

Mechanically, if a brigand wears the same mask they did on the immediately previous foray, they must immediately take 1 point of stress. This is meant to discourage sticking too closely to one Mask without punishing players too much for choosing a Mask they like.

This rule should therefore be discussed in your play group, and decided whether or not you want to include it. You may also find that you want to re-introduce or remove this rule at a later time, and that's fine too.

MASKS IN THE NARRATIVE

The Masks serve several purposes in the narrative and fiction of the game. They can symbolize the brigands committing to action, the act of putting on the mask symbolizing a sort of “go-time” where they leave their previous identities behind.

For the GM, the Masks can be a vehicle for interaction with the brigands. Consider the Masks stated personalities, or build your own, and have them occasionally talk back to the brigands.

Ultimately the brigand is running the show, but the Mask might voice their opinion on their performance and options.

Finally, in the fiction they serve as an immediate disguise for the brigand's identities. The Masks morph and change in their appearance with each new wearer, and while patterns might be discerned by keener investigators, in typical practice, the Mask separates the brigand from the immediate consequences of their actions, allowing them to be bolder, brasher, or more daring than they might usually be.

MASKS IN THE MECHANICS

An observant player might ask “why would I use a Mask Action when I have more dots in a similar Action?” The answer to this is two-fold:

First, Masks are first and foremost designed to “fill in” areas where brigands might be weak / allow brigands to take any role and be effective. Therefore, Mask Actions are designed to be more “broadly” interpreted than their Basic Action cousins. “Slip” can disappear into a crowd, slip a knife into a ribs, and slip something out of someone's pockets, for example.

Second, Mask Actions should be treated by the GM as essentially “Magic”, meaning you should be more lenient in their effectiveness and what is possible to do with a Mask Action. A Mask Action might allow superhuman feats of physical ability, or even allow brigands to employ straight-up magic. Each GM and

playgroup should tailor the “power level” of the Mask Actions to their personal tastes. In general, the more powerful Mask Actions become, the more powerful the threats the brigands face will need to be in order to provide a suitable challenge.

MASK BARGAINS

The **Masks** that the brigands don have magic, goals, and personalities of their own, and they may offer additional strength to the players in exchange for taking additional risks. These are offers from the mask the brigand is currently wearing, either asking the brigand to perform some risky action, ensure a shared goal is completed, or otherwise letting the mask act “through” the wearer. Common mask bargains include:

- Collateral damage, unintended harm.
- Commit to an unnecessary course of action or a more “complete” solution to a problem.
- Start and/or tick a troublesome clock.
- Add heat to the crew from evidence or witnesses.
- Suffer harm.

The penalties for “breaking” a bargain with your mask are the same as breaking an **Oath**, described in greater detail in the **Masks** chapter.

Both players and the GM can suggest possible Mask Bargains, but the GM has the final say on which Bargains are offered. If a player accepts a mask bargain, they gain **+1d** or **+effect** as the Mask gives the brigand an extra push.

MASK COHERENCE

If a brigand has an action rating on their sheet that overlaps with a **Mask Action** for the mask they're wearing, they can choose to roll the **lower of the two action ratings** to gain +Effect.

Narratively, this represents the Mask “aligning” with the brigands talents in order to make their actions more potent, deadly, or otherwise effective.

MASKS AND MAGIC

You may ask, what type of magic do the masks use? The fae magic of the Wyld, or the Blood Magic of the vampires? Again, the answer is left to your discretion, or perhaps for a mystery to be discovered through play. One possible explanation, however, is that these magics are tied together intrinsically in some way.

It may be that the blood of all folk carries magic within it, flowing into them through their connection to the Wyld. This, perhaps, is why the vampires keep so many folk in a semi-feudal state, preserving the magic in their blood by keeping them connected to

the soil through farmwork and toil. Blood sterling allows a vampire to “fix” this magic and concentrate it, essentially transforming them from a conduit of magic into a vessel for it, able to store “Wyld” magic for later use.

Therefore, we can suppose that the Masks, made from ashwood that is antithetical to the vampires, instead “release” the essence of vampiric magic back into its natural state, and that the transformation from vampiric blood to mask essence is a bit like burning fuel to produce warmth.

TERROR

The Mask of Terror was born of fear and pain. The fear of the lash, the bludgeon, the rent, and starvation. But fear can become strength as easily as it becomes hate. Terror can be righteous, stilled into the hearts of oppressors like a shock, a sudden jolt of animal empathy. It can be a shield to guard the oppressed, to give the masters pause, to force the boss, the foreman, the lord to consider the dangers of pushing a populace too far.

Intended Roles: *Defensive, Assault and Social*

Potential Looks: *Sharp, twisting vines; fierce, circling horns; wide maws, grinning with razor-sharp teeth, twisted, misshapen oak*

ACTIONS

When you **Frighten**, you instill fear into others.

- You might sow terror into the ranks of enemy soldiers, or scare a guard into fleeing. You might also try to sway a large group of people with fear, but **Awe** or **Command** might be better.

When you **Awe**, you create a spectacle so fantastic as to not be ignored.

- You might gather the attention of a group of townsfolk by using deft illusions and a booming voice. You might distract a garrison of enemy troops with a series of well-timed explosions, but **Explode** might be better.

When you **Disarm**, you remove the ability of another to harm you.

- You might use snarling and threats to convince an enemy to give up a fight, or a deft twirl of a dagger to knock a blade aside, or soothing words to convince a would-be ally that you mean them no harm. You might use it to sway an angry crowd into hearing your side of the story, but **Awe** might be better.

When you **Explode**, you use your emotions or literal explosive devices to make things go “boom.”

- You might use a passionate outburst to convince others of your cause. You might carefully set a series of powder-kegs around an enemy garrison, wait for the right moment, and set them off. You might try to gather the attention of a large group using lights,

illusions, explosions, and other trickery, but **Awe** might be better. You might use a detonation or the threat of one to cow an enemy into surrender, but **Frighten** might be better.

SPECIAL ABILITIES

- **No Lords, No Masters:** Gain **potency** when either soothing the souls of the oppressed or inspiring them to action.
- **Fear Your Slaves:** Spend 2 Essence and roll Disarm to gaze into another person's mind and know their deepest fear.
- **Sow Discord:** Spend 2 Essence and roll Frighten to terrify an enemy force, reducing their **scale** (and Tier) as combatants flee in terror.
- **Lay Down Arms:** Gain **+Effect** when trying to convince a foe to lay down their arms and surrender.
- **Light the Match:** Gain **+Effect** to any explosions or arsons you engineer.
- **Calm Tensions:** You may spend **special armor** to avoid a social or mental consequence inflicted on you.
- **Shock and Awe:** Whenever you perform a Desperate action, pay only 1 essence to take **+Effect**, as all are shocked and awed by your sheer audacity.

XP

- **If you instilled terror into the heart of an oppressor**

VIOLENCE

Violence was the last of its brothers and sisters to be forged. A blunt instrument, cruel, keen, and vicious. It has no mercy for the oppressor. No compassion for those that would grind the humanity of others beneath their heel. It does not negotiate. It does not waver. It acts, it protects, it directs, and when the last vampire is slain, it rests.

Intended Roles: *Aggressive and Defensive, Assault and Stealth*

Possible Looks: *Red tears, gashes. Spikes and twisting tattoos, ram horns, sharp antlers, crimson flowers*

ACTIONS

When you **Slaughter**, you use close, personal violence with unparalleled viciousness.

- You might fight off a gang of ghuls using only a sword and a dagger. You might cut through ranks of Loan-Bloods to get at their Vampiric master. You might hold back an enemy force using only your wits and your blades, but **Cover** might be better.

When you sow **Carnage**, you fight at a distance, using deft bow-work or powder-rifles to clash with a foe.

- You might take up a defensive position and rain death down upon your enemies. You might fight through back-alleys, using rapid-fire arrows to fight off your pursuers, but **Slaughter** might be better. You might pick off pursuing enemies one by one to give an ally enough time to escape, but **Cover** might be better.

When you **Direct**, you use shouts, orders, planning, and signals to execute a plan or rally your allies in the heat of battle.

- You might rally allies to your banner with hearty shouts in the heat of battle. You might signal for an ambush to begin at the perfect moment, striking with precise coordination. You might lead your forces into close combat or ranged attack, but **Slaughter** or **Carnage** might be better.

When you **Cover**, you use violence to protect your friends and allies.

- You might rain down arrows from a rooftop to harry and drive back a gang of Powdermen. You might stand between your allies and your enemies, shield raised, sword drawn, taunting them with insults and daring them to attack. You might order a cohort to retreat while you hold the line, but **Direct** might be better.

SPECIAL ABILITIES

- **Taunt:** You may taunt an enemy into focusing it's attention on you. A Taunted enemy may not attack any other ally until you "release" it from the taunted state. You gain +1d to any attacks on your "taunted" enemy.
- **Threaten:** Gain **+Effect** when using boasts, threats, and general shouting to intimidate your foes.
- **Wholesale Carnage:** Gain **+Effect** when using **carnage** to fight a group that is at a larger scale than your own.

- **Fleshmend:** You may expend **special armor** to avoid physical harm.
- **Lead from the Front:** Add +2 ticks to any **morale** clock of a **cohort** or allied group you personally lead.
- **See Red:** Spend 2 Essence to “see” the blood of everyone at your current location, even through walls, until the end of the foray.
- **Bloodtaker:** Instantly gain 2 Essence whenever you defeat a vampiric enemy.

XP

- If you used violence to protect a comrade or ally

LIES

Lies is the oldest mask, the teacher and instructor of its brethren. It was made when the world was young, worn by the first shamans to speak of things that were not, to teach of things that could be, to explain the darkness of the world and add tinder to the thin flames of hope and progress. It aids as it harms, it educates as much as it deceives. It has lived so very long, it knows when a lie will heal, when the truth will cut. But it's work is never done, there is always another story, another performance. Another moral to be learned, another lesson to teach. Won't you help it at it's work?

Intended Role: *Defensive, Social and Stealth*

Possible Looks: *Grinning, laughing mouth; a crown of branches or antlers, jeweled, emerald eyes, twisting golden filigree over amber-colored wood*

ACTIONS

When you **Deceive**, you use lies, half-truths, and trickery to coerce others.

- You might lie to a guardsman, or put on airs that you are someone you're really not. You might sow dissent or spread rumors among an enemy camp. You might hide your true identity or that of your comrades, but **Hide** might be better.

When you **Hide**, you use shadows, disguises, crowds, and any other available means to veil yourself and your allies.

- You might stick close to the shadows, waiting for the perfect moment to prowl forth. You might put on a guardsman's uniform to help infiltrate an enemy camp. You might stow a few revolutionaries under the floorboards and in the attic when the bailiff or an investigator comes knocking. You might use lies and deceit to hide your true intentions, but **Deceive** might be better.

When you **Reveal**, you discover what was hidden or dramatically reveal new information to others.

- You might investigate a crime, search for evidence at a crime scene, or track down something horrid. You might pour over arcane tomes, searching for hidden wisdom. You might dramatically reveal a Vampire for the foul leech that they are, or reveal the culprit of some terrible crime. You might impart wisdom and teachings to others, but **Educate** might be better.

When you **Educate**, you teach, elucidate, or hold forth on a topic of expertise.

- You might remind your allies of the best way to dispatch a particular type of monstrosity or vampire. You might take some time to tutor a peasant family on their letters, earning their trust and hospitality. You might read stories, tell legends and myths, and spread folklore that teach important lessons. You might disguise yourself as a travelling scholar, but **Hide** might work better.

SPECIAL ABILITIES

- **Many Faces:** If you are able to get a single drop of blood from someone, you may spend **2 essence** to change your face so that it matches theirs.
- **Simple Truths:** Gain **+Effect** when countering propaganda or exposing some commonly accepted lie.
- **Honeyed Words:** When using lies or flattery to influence your enemies, gain **+1d** or **+Effect**.
- **Unseen, Unheard:** You may expend **special armor** to avoid a consequence that would lead to your discovery.

- **Taste Truths:** If you are able to drink a dram of blood from a person, you may spend **1 essence** to **gather information** about their past, seeing some of their life through their eyes.
- **Twist the Lie:** When you catch an enemy in a lie, you immediately **harm** them for 2 ticks on a relevant clock or with a **-1** to their Threat.
- **Cloak of Rumors:** Spend 1 **Essence** and use the Deceive action to whisper a “rumor” in someone’s ear. They will believe that rumor and will most likely act on it within the next hour. You may need to spend additional **essence** for more dangerous rumors, at the GM’s discretion, following the **ritual** rules.

XP

- If you taught someone else something or learned something important.

RIOT

Riot is multitudes. Forged of many trees, many branches, many magics. They speak in echoing voices, a cacophony of riotous sound. They are the voice of the unheard, the agitator of action, the spark that lights the flame. They urge, they cajole, they sway and persuade and never, it seems, shut up. They are perpetual action, almost exhausting in they're thirst for justice, for the end of villainy, for the blood of the wicked. They have such things to tell you, to tell the world. Wear Riot, and let your voice, and the voice of the multitude ring out for all to hear.

Intended Role: *Aggressive, Social and Assault*

Possible Looks: *Firey reds and oranges; orbs of flame for eyes; branching horns, tipped with smoldering embers*

ACTIONS

When you **Rouse**, you gather people to take action.

- You might hold forth with fiery rhetoric in a town square or a quiet hideaway. You might rally the oppressed to fight against their oppressors. You might bolster your allies flagging morale by rousing their passions and reminding them of what they fight for, but **Inspire** might be better. You might lead a crowd through the streets, riotous and free, but **Burn** might be better.

When you **Burn**, you set fire. To hearts with your words, to buildings with torches, to vampires with more torches (and possibly lamp oil).

- You might set a warehouse of Blood Sterling or a store of powder aflame, dealing a blow against your enemies. You might use fiery rhetoric to rouse the passions of the downtrodden, but **Rouse** might be better. You might threaten your oppressors with a crowd of angry villagers with pitchforks and torches, but **Provoke** might be better.

When you **Inspire**, you fill the hearts of your allies with passion, and their minds with purpose.

- You might rally a flagging band of revolutionaries to redouble their efforts. You might convince a crowd of peasants, pushed past the

breaking point, to take collective action, but **Rouse** might be better.

When you **Provoke**, you use rhetoric and other means to get your enemies to do things they really shouldn't.

- You might denounce a vampire lord in the public square, drawing the attention of the guardsmen while your allies slip away. You might provoke a bailiff or hunter into firing the first shot or taking the first swing. You might use jabs, reminders, and harsh, fiery language to demand your allies take action, but **Rouse** might be better.

XP

- If you led others or spoke truth to power.

SPECIAL ABILITIES

- **Language of the Unheard:** Gain +1d when **gathering information** on a potential ally.
- **Riotous Feasting:** You may spend 1 Blood Sterling to hold a Feast in your Refuge, granting every member of your band +1d to reduce stress. Feast days are common, but not constant. You may only use this ability once every 4 downtimes.
- **Friends, Comrades, Countrymen:** Gain +Effect or +1d when addressing a crowd.
- **Fiery Rhetoric:** Whenever you deliver a speech, you may spontaneously cause something in the scene to catch on flame.
- **Torches and Pitchforks:** Any crowds or **cohorts** you lead gain **quality**.
- **Righter of Wrongs:** You may invoke some crime, tragedy, or other horrible thing committed by the vampires to gain **+1d** or **+Effect**.
- **Inspired Labors:** Your actions inspire others to redouble their efforts. Fill 1 extra tick on any ally's goal clock when helping an ally complete a goal.

TORMENT

Torment is agony and relief, suffering and mending. It is the necessary pain, the sharp knife that cuts out the caustic tumor, the pin-prick of the suture that closes the wound, but also the aloe that soothes and the bandage that protects. It was made to help it's brethren, to keep them safe, to protect and heal where it can. It loves all, cares for all, enough to urge the end of those that are past all hope of redemption. A quick blade is it's mercy, tearful and empathetic, it does not kill with joy, but with sorrow. The greatest torment is it's own, but only slightly less will be the suffering of the oppressor.

Intended Role: *Defensive, Stealth and Social*

Possible Looks: *Tears of azure lapis lazuli; a face twisted in permanent grief; sharp thorns and knotted branches*

ACTIONS

When you **Suture**, you use stitches, powders, unguents, to repair people and things.

- You might suture close an open wound, dressing it to keep an ally in the fight. You might bind an enemy with ropes to prevent their escape. You might stitch together some cloth into a makeshift rope, but **Tinker** might be better.

When you **Exsanguinate**, you draw blood from the veins of another.

- You might drain the blood from a vampire, quickly and efficiently. You might draw blood from a willing patient, to help you better diagnose their malady. You might administer blood to an anemic ally, but **Tend** might be better. You might use quick swipes of a blade to open up the arteries of an enemy, but **Vivisect** might be better.

When you **Vivisect**, you use quick, precise blade strikes on the living and dead.

- You might rend a foe limb from limb, opening arteries, slicing deeply, and generally causing havoc. You might dissect a dead body, performing an autopsy to attempt to determine who or what killed them. You might perform delicate surgery, to remove some

tumor or other plagueflesh from a patient, but **Tend** might be better.

When you **Tend** to another, you care for your comrade's well-being, both mental and physical.

- You might tend to a wound, set a fractured bone, or treat some foul sickness with powerful medicines. You might tend to emotional needs, providing support, encouragement, advice, or just a friendly ear. You might seek to understand how a person was harmed or how a corpse came into its present state, though **Vivisect** might be better. You might wrap a bandage over an open wound or cut, though it might be better to **Suture** the wound closed.

SPECIAL ABILITIES

- **Lure:** You gain +1d when attempting to lure someone away or **set up** a future action.
- **Stuck Pig:** You may expend this ability as **armor** to avoid having a stabbed target cry out or alert others.
- **Tormenting Laughter:** You may expend 2 **Essence** to make a target hear mocking laughter coming at them in all directions.
- **Careful Suture:** +1d when tending to an ally's wounds.
- **Agony of Multitudes:** You may promise an enemy that they will suffer as they have made others suffer. If you invoke a specific crime or cruelty they inflicted, your entire **band** and any **cohorts** gain **potency** against them for the rest of the current foray.
- **Expert Vivisection:** Gain +1d when performing an autopsy to determine how someone died or when using blades to rend someone limb from limb.
- **Feed the Masses:** Your **band** may descend together upon a defeated enemy vampire, draining them rapidly of all blood. Divide the acquired **essence** among your allies as evenly as possible.

XP

- If you cared for an ally, either physically, emotionally or mentally.

JUDGEMENT

Without judgement, there can be no true peace. Judgement was born from a desire for truth and reconciliation. It was made to execute the guilty, to spare the penitent, to strike down the wicked and strengthen the oppressed. It is placid, almost gentle in its stoicism. It speaks simply, directly, without embellishment or theatrics, stating only the facts of the matter as it discerns them. It does what must be done, nothing more, nothing less, a cold executor of the will of a collective whole.

Intended Role: *Aggressive, Stealth and Assault*

Possible Looks: *Placid ivory overlay, subtly featured, imperceptible, dark, concealed ebony wood, expressionless*

ACTIONS

When you **Snipe**, you shoot at targets from long range.

- You might set up a well-concealed position to shoot at a target from concealment. You look for a good place to shoot from, but **Scout** might be better.

When you **Scout**, you gather intelligence on terrain and enemy forces.

- You might scout out a location for a raid or ambush. You might scout ahead of your party, searching for any hidden dangers. You might keep an eye on a situation from a distance, ready to step in, but **Read** might be better.

When you **Read**, you read and interpret writing or situations.

- You might read and decipher an ancient text or an encoded message. You might read a room, searching out hostile intent. You might read the face of an ally or enemy, attempting to discern their emotions. You might judge a situation, a case of evidence, or a trial. You might Read the lay of the land, searching for a clear path through difficult terrain, but **Scout** might be better.

When you **Slip**, you quietly fade away.

- You might slip away into a crowd or the shadows. You might give a pursuing enemy the slip. You might slip a dagger into the bowels of a nosy bailiff or a keyring off the belt of a prison warden, but **Finesse** might be better.

SPECIAL ABILITIES

- **Executioner:** Gain **+Effect** or **+1d** when attacking a target whose death has been ordered by a Conclave.
- **Scout Unseen:** **+1d** when gathering information about a specific target.
- **Inhuman Speed:** When there is a question as to who acts first, you do.
- **Distracting Shot:** You may **protect** an ally from a consequence involving them being discovered, even from far away.
- **Careful Aim:** Gain **+1d** when shooting a target from a **controlled** position.
- **Pronounce Sentence:** Your words carry the weight of democratic authority. Gain **+1d** when giving information to others or **commanding** them to action.
- **Read the Room:** You can always tell when danger is coming your way. The GM will warn you of upcoming danger, or provide you with a free flashback to prepare for it.

XP

- If you pronounced your judgement on a situation or character.

RUIN

Ruin is the slow death, the crawling chaos, the inexorable drumbeat and the march of time. It is the end that comes for all things, but it only by it's consumption that rebirth becomes possible. Ruin was forged at the waning days of war, when defeat seemed inevitable, it was made to be a glowing coal, a slow simmer, that it might one day reignite.

Intended Role: *Defensive, Assault and Social*

Possible Looks: *Cracked, aging wood. Dry rot, spreading mushrooms, crumbling bits of stone, unfinished, half-made.*

ACTIONS

When you **Decay**, you weaken your enemies.

When you **Crack**, you force a small but critical break.

When you **Quarry**, you strengthen, reinforce, or hunt.

When you **Spoil**, you rot and spread illness from within.

SPECIAL ABILITIES

- **Corrupted Blood:** A terrible poison runs in your veins. You may spend 2 essence to poison any weapon you wish when you have at least one harm.
- **Alchemic Blood:** You may infuse your blood with one of the following effects, and may combine your blood with explosives. You may unlock additional effects by spending additional advancements.
 - *Soporific*, puts folk to sleep
 - *Ashen*, spend *Ashwood* to spread ash into the air
 - *Caustic*, melts armor
 - *Flechette*, cuts and maims flesh
 - *Naptha*, flammable, “sticky” fire.

- *Narcotic*, causes euphoria, may be ingested to allow allies to ignore their wounds

- **Turn the Flesh:** You may reverse the effect of one level of harm for the duration of a foray. For example, take **+1d** instead of **-1d**.
- **A Slow Poison:** If you poison an enemy or mark them with your blood, they cannot hide from you. You may always sense them and track them all across Cardenfell. Gain **+Effect** when harming your quarry.
- **Strong Stone:** You may spend 2 supplies and a downtime action to strengthen the walls of a town, or spend 4 supplies and a downtime action to raise a wall around a village.
- **Bulwark:** Gain +1d to all resistance rolls when leading a cohort.
- **Time Quickens:** You may use Decay to attack physical structures, not just people.

XP

- If you strengthened a fellow brigand or an ally.

THE FORAY

*'And I will not put down my labors
I'll take forest leaves for my bed
Until this arrow pierces your cold heart, Squire
And you in your coffin lie dead*

A revolution does not succeed just with plans and honeyed words, it relies on *action*. In *Brinkwood*, you will need to periodically leave your forest refuge in order to scavenge resources, build alliances, or to wage guerilla warfare upon the vampire lords. The success of your rebellion depends on these missions, missions that we call **forays**.

A foray is a single mission with an explicit goal: *Sabotage the supply of Steel flowing to Afforshire, assassinate a collaborator in Hogswick, smuggle supplies from the Diggers into the forest, etc.* Usually, a foray will be one of the following:

- Expropriation of **resources** or **contraband**, determined by the current needs of your Refuge. If you're running low on **supplies** or **powder**, you'll need to go out and steal some more from your enemies.
- Building an **alliance** with a friendly faction, either by meeting with representatives of that faction or by helping

them complete one of their **goals**. Alliances are crucial to your success and the **advancement** of your cause. Later, once alliances become more cemented, you may need to take on missions ordered by your **conclave**, the collective governing body of you and your allies, covered in detail in a later chapter.

- Waging **guerilla warfare** is a necessary evil. The vampire lords won't fall because you wish it so. You'll need to sabotage supply lines, destroy outposts, assassinate key figures, and bring the fear of the people to the very heart of your oppressors. As your rebellion grows, you may move towards **open warfare**, attempting to seize control of villages, towns, and eventually all of **Cardenfell**.

A foray will usually be the centerpiece of a given session, but they can also be short and sweet. In general, you should aim for one foray per session, but don't feel bound to this guideline.

The PCs determine each foray by choosing their target, preferably at the end of a session. They can look at the map of Cardenfell to find places to raid, consult their allies to see what goals need tending to, or check their refuge's stores to see what supplies need refilling.

A foray consists of a few key elements, detailed in this chapter: **planning & reconnaissance, travelogues, and engagement.**

Note: A higher-level concern players might wish to consider is the effect of where their Foray will take place. If they target a specific location for repeated attacks, the Vampire Lord will regard their uprising as localized and contained, and while they may send more forces to deal with the problem, they will overall be less swift to react than if attacks are happening all over their Demesne.

PLANNING

Forays are not to be undertaken lightly. Your band will gather in the refuge, huddled around maps and candle-light, the sage advice of your Fae close at hand, arguing, debating, and planning your next move. In *Brinkwood* we abstract out most of these details, flashing back as needed and focusing in on what you need, as players, to get to the action.

The plans your brigands make do not need to be explored in detail up front. In *Brinkwood* we **play to find out** what happens during a given foray. Instead, to begin, all that is needed is a **goal**, an **opportunity**, an **approach**, and a **detail**.

GOAL

The goal of the foray will depend on what the brigands want to accomplish. As a GM, you might prompt your brigands to consider their current situation from a few different viewpoints.

First, consider if there is a **pressing opportunity** or something the brigands are excited to do next. If so, go with that.

Next, consider your **resources** and **contraband**. Do the brigands have enough supplies to survive, let alone bring the fight to the

enemy? If not, they should perhaps consider focusing on obtaining these necessities as a goal.

Next, have the players consider the **goals** of their potential allies. Are they excited to help out an ally? Can someone dream up a clever way to use the group's skills to advance an ally's goal? If so, it may be wise to set an ally's goal (or some small part of it) as your goal.

Lastly, consider the **Tier Goals** of your rebellion. These are meant as general advice as for the sort of missions your brigands should be undertaking as they advance their **refuge tier**.

REFUGE TIER	GOALS
Tier 0 - A Small Band	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Taking care of basic needs● Gathering allies● Freeing prisoners● Recruiting radicals, outsiders, etc● Small-scale raids, building on successes
Tier 1 - Forest Refuge	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Dealing with logistics, staving off starvation, building shelter, counteracting sickness● Building a reputation, recruiting

allies, helping people out

- Feeding, training, educating people
- Spreading influence to other communities
- Securing aid, donations, safehouses

Tier 2 – Covert
Rebellion

- Secret raids
- Distributing radical literature, counteracting vampire propaganda
- Storing weapon caches, building fighting cells
- Dealing with internal politics

Tier 3 – Open Rebellion

- Warring with the vampires
- Securing and raiding supply lines
- Making strategic, high-level decisions
- Taking fortifications

Once you have a goal firmly established, make a note of it somewhere visible. Keep in mind that a single foray may have multiple goals (steal some black powder *and* help out the Stokers), and you should feel free to note down as many goals as you like, though setting more than 2 goals in a single Foray may put a few too many eggs in one basket!

OPPORTUNITY

Having a goal in mind is all well and good, but the opportunity to accomplish it must also be available. As the GM, ask your players these questions or answer them yourself:

- *Where is this Foray taking place?*
- *Who / what is our primary target?*

Next, ask a player to volunteer an action roll to “scout” the opportunity. The degree to which a target is vulnerable is determined by this roll:

- *1-3: A hard target or difficult to exploit opportunity. The target is well-defended, we’re on enemy territory, etc. Ask: Why is this target difficult to attack? What makes going after it still worth it?*
- *4-5: A moderate opportunity. The target is out of their element. Ex: A caravan on the move. A potential turn-coat badly in debt. Ask: What do we need to do first to exploit this opportunity? What might prevent us from taking full advantage?*
- *6: An excellent target, ripe for the plucking. A poorly defended supply depot. An assassination target in a vulnerable position. A simmering powderkeg, ready to explode into a riot. Answer: What makes this opportunity*

so perfect? If it's too good to be true, what might the unintended consequences be?

APPROACH AND DETAIL

Your approach indicates how your band plans to engage with the foray and accomplish their goal. Keep in mind that an approach is not a guarantee or a fail condition. Forays can start as stealthy infiltrations and wind up as all-out assaults. Likewise, approaches are not mutually exclusive, and if you're hung up on which to use, pick the one that seems the easiest to come up with a detail for and move forward. Alternatively, it may sometimes be wise to split the party between two separate approaches. When in doubt, encourage your players to not only consider what they think would make the best story, or the "kind" of foray they're most excited to play out.

Dramatic	<i>How will you command attention?</i>
Subtle	<i>How will you remain unnoticed?</i>
Tactical	<i>How will you gain an advantage?</i>
Rapid	<i>How will you strike quickly?</i>
Cautious	<i>How will you prepare?</i>

Charismatic	<i>How will you rally others to your cause?</i>
--------------------	---

RECONNAISSANCE

As the GM, you should fill in a few more details of this Foray.

Either ask the brigands these questions, or come up with answers yourself:

- *What do you need to do to accomplish your goals?*
- *What obstacles do you think you might need to overcome?*
- *Who do you think might try to stop you?*
- *What other opportunities might we be able to exploit to make this go smoothly?*

The idea here is to establish a clear enough picture of the Foray so that you can successfully improvise the remaining details.

Next, as the GM you will want to generate a **possibility cloud**, a list of potential threats, enemies, or obstacles that might stand between the brigands and their goals during this Foray. You might consult your Campaign Map for ideas on which enemies are nearby, or consult the Almanac for ideas on what sorts of threats, opportunities, and enemies make sense for where the foray is taking place.

Note: You might want to split up the work, having your players answer the reconnaissance questions while the GM plots out the obstacles. If your players need more time to answer these questions or the GM needs time to plan out the obstacles the brigands are likely to face, you might call for a short break, and/or pull out a storytelling aid, such as tarot cards, *Spindlewheel*, or story dice.

MASKS AND OATHS

Once you have decided on an Approach and found a relevant Detail, the players should decide which Mask they will wear for this Foray. Point them to the Mask Reference, which has details on each mask and their strengths. Each Mask is listed as working better with certain approaches, but creative combinations of masks and approaches may yield even better results, so don't be afraid to experiment.

Once each player has chosen a mask, each player should choose whether or not to swear an Oath. It is strongly recommended that players do so, as the essence gained from swearing an Oath will allow them to avoid more consequences and make full use of their abilities.

- If you swear an **oath**, roll dice equal to your **current oaths** and gain Essence accordingly. **1-3: 2, 4/5: 4, 6: 5, Crit: 6**
- When you fulfill an **pact** (decided during the XP phase at the end of a session), gain an **oath**. If you fail to fulfill an **oath** you have pledged, **lose an oath**.

It is worth noting to players that they do not need to set a specific goal for their Oath, and they may decide during the Foray exactly how they plan to fulfill the terms of their Fae Pact. However, note that if the terms of an Oath are not fulfilled, their brigand will gain 1 Stress before each Foray until it is, and will not be able to take another Oath until the current Oath is complete.

When a player dons their mask, they should narrate how the appearance of it shifts and changes, molding their face, flesh, and body.

Note: When a mask is selected for the very first time, the selecting player should choose a **special ability** for that mask and mark 3 **action dots**, two in one action and one in another.

Alternative: You may choose to have your players not decide their masks up-front, but instead let them “pull out” their mask at a point in the foray when it makes the most sense for them to don their mask. This allows for more flexibility, as well as

highlighting the moment when the player decides to wear their mask.

TRAVELOGUES

Optionally, the players may choose to narrate a scene or two of their brigand's preparations for the Foray, meeting with their Fae, or discussing how they plan to travel to their destination. Next, the players will choose what **action** each will take to help their band arrive safe (and ready) for their next mission, such as keeping watch, navigating the trail, swaying guards, or foraging for supplies. One brigand should be chosen to be the Travel Leader, and each player will roll the dice for their chosen action. Treat this roll as a **teamwork** action, with the travel leader taking a point of stress for each "failed" roll, but taking the best single die result as the result of the total roll.

- On a critical result, gain +1d to your engagement roll and one additional downtime action. Narrate how you skillfully traverse Cardenfell, and what extra time you gain on your journey, allowing you to arrive ahead of schedule.
- On a roll of 6, gain +1d to your engagement roll. Narrate how you successfully navigate Cardenfell.

- On a roll of 4-5, gain no bonus to your engagement roll. Narrate what problems you ran into during your travel, and how you overcame them.
- On a roll of 1-3, lose -1d on your engagement roll. Narrate what difficulties you faced during your journey, and what it cost to overcome them, be it time, patience, or preparedness.

ENGAGEMENT

Once loadout is decided, we are ready to begin the Foray. In *Brinkwood*, we jump to the action, the point in the story where your band first meets resistance in accomplishing their objective. To determine what the situation is when we first face that challenge, we use an **engagement roll**.

- Start with 1d for Pure Luck.
- Consider the land, is the **territory** particularly seditious or friendly? If so, **take +1d**. Are the common people fearful or less willing to help? Is the vampire presence strong here? If so, **lose -1d**.
- Have any **recent entanglements** interfered with your ability to act freely? If so, **lose -1d**.

- Is your **approach** something your enemies are particularly weak against? **Take +1d**. Contrariwise, are your enemies strong against your chosen approach? **Lose -1d**.
- Are any of your **associates** able to help you in this foray? You may need to flashback a negotiation with them to convince them to aid you, but if so, gain **+1d** and mark that **associate** off. You may not invoke that associate's help during your next foray.
- Is your **fae** particularly helpful against this enemy, can they provide counsel, advice, or intelligence of particular use? If so, **take +1d**.
- Are any of your band injured? If so, **take -1d**.
- Have you conducted a foray at this location recently? If so, the local guards are likely watchful for you. **Take -1d**.
- Does your average **load** affect your **approach**? Are you trying to sneak in somewhere with a **heavy load**? If so, **take -1d**. Are you at an average of a **light** load while trying to infiltrate a location? **Take +1d**.

- Are you using any extra resources to gain an advantage on your engagement roll, such as blood sterling, ashwood or black powder? If so, **take +1d** for each resource spent.
- Would you like to spend a point of **Prep** to gain +1d?
- Would the GM like to spend a **Blood** point to give you -1d?

Once you have gathered all the dice necessary, roll them and consult the chart below to determine the starting situation. The GM should begin the Foray by narrating the scene where the Foray is taking place. Next, the players should narrate how they enter the scene, as well as how they are keeping to their chosen **approach**. Finally, the GM should confront the brigands with the first obstacle, and ask them how they will react to it.

- Crit: Controlled position, and remove one obstacle!
- 6: Controlled
- 4/5: Risky
- 1-3: Desperate

GM Note: During a foray, a back-and-forth pattern should emerge, with you presenting your players with obstacles, them stating how they overcome them, and then you confronting them with new obstacles. Don't be afraid to move the camera from

obstacle to obstacle, as the players can always flashback or ask for a pause if the action grows too hectic.

Disengagement Roll

A disengagement roll can be made when running short on time for a Foray or when the group wants to abstract their exit strategy.

Once the brigands have accomplished their **goal** for a foray, if nothing is standing between them leaving, it is often best for the GM to narratively wrap things up and get the fiction to **downtime**.

If something stands between the brigands and escape, they have yet to accomplish their goal but time is running short, or they wish to cut and run on a foray before accomplishing their goal, use this mechanic.

Start with **1d** for pure luck.

Add **+1d** for each ally, associate, cohort, or expert that can aid your escape. **Mark** any associate you invoke for this.

Add **+1d** for each advantage you establish to aid your escape. This is a good chance for flashbacks or flash-forwards to set up escape routes, find secret exits, or sabotage pursuers.

Add **+1d** if you are in seditious territory, subtract **-1d** if the vampire presence is strong here.

Subtract **-1d** if you have not yet accomplished your main goal.

Subtract **-1d** for each “side objective” you would like to *still try to get*

on your way out. This covers quickly grabbing things you don't already have, not "getting away with the loot." We assume you brought enough bags.

Subtract **-1d** for each brigand that has been **taken out** by their stress bar.

Roll fortune dice and adjudicate the result:

Crit: A clean get-away, with everything you tried for, and a bit extra. Maybe you snag a bit of extra reputation or lose some heat.

6: A good get-away. You get everything you tried for and everyone gets home safe.

4,5: A messy escape: You get away, but there are consequences. Maybe you take additional heat as you are chased across Cardenfell. Maybe a brigand or two takes **harm** holding back enemies while retreating. Maybe something important is left behind, or a side goal left unaccomplished.

1-3: The skin of your teeth: You escape, but only barely. Everyone takes harm, you move up a "level" of heat, or you leave behind something of vital importance.

Remember: Any consequences gained from this roll can be **resisted**, harm can be **canceled by armor**, and brigands can **protect** their allies.

IMPORTANT: A brigand *cannot* die or suffer permanent harm (unless they choose to do so) during an escape. Do not threaten permanent consequences, and do not *subvert the foray* by canceling out / rendering moot their main goal with a consequence.

DOWNTIME

After the band completes a foray (either through success or by retreating), they return to their refuge in order to recover, regroup, and prepare for their next expedition. This phase of the game is called downtime.

Downtime fulfills three purposes in the game:

- First, it's a break for the players. During the action of the foray, the brigands are always under threat, charging from obstacle to obstacle in a high-energy sequence. Downtime gives them a reprieve so they can catch their breath and relax a bit—focus on lower-energy, quieter elements of the game, as well as explore personal aspects of their characters.
- Second, the shift into a new phase of the game signals a shift in which mechanics are needed. There are special rules that are only used during the downtime phase, so they're kept “out of the way” during the other parts of play. When we shift into downtime, we take out a different toolbox and resolve downtime on its own terms, then shift back into the more action-focused phases of the game afterwards.

- Third, the shift in perspective allows us to “zoom out” the focus of the game. It can be easy to get too focused on certain objectives or moment-to-moment decisions. Downtime allows the players a chance to focus on the larger goals of the rebellion, their allies, and the needs and daily necessities of their Refuge.

Downtime is divided into four parts, which are resolved in order:

1. **Payoff.** The crew receives their rewards from a successfully completed foray.
2. **Heat.** The crew accumulates suspicion and attention from the vampire lords and their servants as a result of the last foray.
3. **Entanglements.** The band receives opportunities and deals with threats depending on their current reputation with the populace of Cardenfell and the vampire’s knowledge of their affairs.
4. **Downtime Activities.** The PCs practise at hobbies to remove stress, work on long-term projects, recover from injuries, etc.

PAYOFF

After a foray, the PCs take stock of what they have gained. A successful foray may add resources or contraband to the Refuge, gain rep for the band, add ticks to an allied faction's goal clock, or add ticks to a location's sedition clock.

RESOURCES AND CONTRABAND

The band earns **blood sterling** based on what loot they seized and the scale of the operation:

- 2 - A minor foray; several purses.
- 4 - A small attack; a strongbox.
- 6 - A standard foray; decent loot.
- 8 - A big ambush; serious loot.

Bartering:

You may **trade** and/or **redistribute** up to a total amount of Blood Sterling equal to a community's **Sedition + Sedition Level**.

For each blood sterling you **trade**, gain 1 **supply**.

For each blood sterling you **redistribute**, gain 1 **sedition**. This does not raise the cap on the sterling you can use during this barter phase.

Note, any Blood Sterling you are not able to add to your stockpile is lost only *after* this bartering phase is concluded. Give to the poor.

The band earns **contraband**: black powder, ashwood, or steel only if the operation was specifically undertaken to seize these goods, or if an opportunity to acquire them was taken.

- 2 Contraband: An opportunity to acquire contraband was seized.
- 4 Contraband: The operation was devoted (in part) to seizing contraband.
- 6 Contraband: The operation was devoted entirely to seizing contraband.

To review, here are the types of resources and contraband the band might have looted:

- **Blood Sterling** is the grim currency of the Bloody Isles, and is exchanged for goods and services.

- **Steel** stands in for weapons and armor forged from steel, useful to get the upper hand and improve equipment.
- **Black Powder** is an explosive substance new to the Isles. It is used for manufacturing explosives and gunpowder.
- **Ashwood** is made from ash trees, and can cause grievous harm to vampires or hide one's presence from their supernatural senses.

GM Note: Do not screw around with the players when it comes to the payoff. Moldy food, damp powder, or rusted steel are more frustrating than fun. A potential foray may turn out to be an ambush or bait, but the brigands should have the chance to discover the enemy's plans in advance, and if they escape with what they stole, they should get to keep what they earned.

HEAT

Cardenfell is full of prying eyes and informants loyal to the Crimson Crown. Anything you do might be witnessed, and there's always evidence left behind. To reflect this, your band acquires heat as they steal, sabotage, and assault their way across

Cardenfell. After a foray or conflict with an opponent, your crew takes heat according to the nature of the operation:

- 0 heat: Smooth & quiet; low exposure.
- 2 heat: Contained; standard exposure.
- 4 heat: Loud & chaotic; high exposure.
- 6 heat: Wild; devastating exposure.
- Add +1 heat for a high-profile or well-connected target. Add +1 heat if the foray or conflict took place in a high-security location. Add +2 heat if a vampire noble (loan-fang or higher) was killed.

You mark heat levels on the heat tracker on the Refuge sheet or Map of Cardenfell (not yet implemented, use a 10-clock)

When your heat level reaches 10, Cardenfell gains a **Tyranny** level and you clear your heat.

FACTION STRENGTH

If a foray accomplishes an objective that would lead to the completion of a friendly faction's goal, fill in ticks on that faction's **strength** clock accordingly:

- 1 tick: A minor objective, set-up for a future operation.
- 2 ticks: A small objective accomplished, reconnaissance, gaining information, gathering resources.
- 3 ticks: An objective accomplished, a minor raid, an attack on a shared enemy, acquiring something valuable or well-guarded.
- 4 ticks: A major objective accomplished, a devastating raid, ending a threat to the ally, acquiring the last piece needed to finish a goal.

Then, take the following steps:

1. Generate a new goal for any “Content” faction.
2. Replace the aided faction’s goal with “Content.”
3. Empty the aided faction’s goal clock.
4. Add an additional tick to any other faction’s goal clock.

If no factions were aided by your foray, add a tick to all of the faction’s goal clocks.

If a faction's goal clock fills, they accomplish their objective on their own. Add a tick to their Patience clock and roll Fortune equal to their Tier to see how they did.

Critical: Outstanding success! Faction gains 2 ticks on their Strength clock.

6: Success. Faction gains 1 tick on their Strength clock.

4-5: Mixed result. Faction accomplishes some of their goal, but at a cost. Gain 1 Strength clock tick and 2 Heat.

1-3: Failure: The faction fails to accomplish their goal. Gain 2 Heat and lose 2 Rep.

If a faction's **Patience** clock fills, they have grown frustrated at the rebellion's disregard of their goals. They will issue a **demand** to the brigands, usually to help with a new goal. If the demand is not met, then the faction will strike out on their own, leaving the rebellion and taking any assets or strengths they contributed with them.

A faction which has left the rebellion may **re-join** later if the brigands go out of their way to help them accomplish a major objective, or otherwise work to make amends.

SEDITION

Sedition measures how sympathetic a location is to the rebellion, and progresses by stages. In general, villages have 6-segment sedition clocks, and towns have 8-segment sedition clocks.

After a foray, fill in ticks depending on the activities performed:

Sedition:

- **1 tick:** Mildly seditious activities such as making contacts.
- **2 ticks:** Easily seditious activities, such as ambushing a guard or two, or setting up a cache of supplies.
- **4 ticks:** Moderately seditious activities, such as creating a cell of agents, stockpiling weapons, assassinating a collaborator, ambushing a patrol.
- **6 ticks:** Majorly seditious activities, such as destroying a guard post, assassinating an official, attacking the vampire lord's servants, or staking a vampire.
- **+1 each** if you aided a community by filling a need, learning something new about them, or making a sacrifice for them.

When a location's *sedition* clock fills, (6-clock for villages, 8-clock for towns), they become **Seditious** and the rebellion gains a level of **status** in that town. This will usually result in the crew moving up a tick on the Reputation Track.

TYRANNY

As you gain notoriety, the vampire lord of Cardenfell will attempt to crack down on your activities, allies, and the communities you

aid. Every time your Heat clock fills, Cardenfell gains an additional level of Tyranny.

As Tyranny rises, the Vampire's actions will grow more vicious, focused, and dangerous. At a low Tyranny level, the vampires are too busy with in-fighting and their own schemes to consider you much of a threat. As Tyranny rises, they will begin taking more direct action against you, as well as sending more powerful servants against you.

GOING UNDERGROUND

If the players find that the **Tyranny** level is rising too quickly, they may choose to **go underground** for a period of time. Players must spend a number of **supplies** and/or **blood sterling** equal to the **Tyranny level** multiplied by their **current tier**. These resources represent the expenditure necessary to keep the coals of the rebellion warm while the brigands and their allies “lay low”, hoping to convince the Vampire Lord that the flame of rebellion has been extinguished.

The players and GM should choose a thematic period of time, perhaps a year or a few seasons, and ask the players how their brigands spend this downtime. Some questions to consider might be:

- *Do you return to your family? How do they welcome you?*
- *What personal comforts did you miss most?*
- *Who keeps you hidden and safe? What do they risk by doing so? Are there any close calls?*
- *Why do you return to the Brinkwood? Who must you say goodbye to?*

Any **stress** or **essence** accumulated is erased during this period, and the GM should roll the Tier of each Allied faction to see how they fair.

Crit: Gain 2 ticks to goal clock, **6:** Gain 1 tick to goal clock, **4/5:** No change, **1-3:** Lose 2 ticks on goal clock.

Lastly, the GM should roll a **fortune check** with a number of dice equal to the current Tier of the band, to check for any contraband or resources that were lost, damaged, rotted, or otherwise destroyed.

Crit: You find an extra cache. Gain 2 supplies. **6:** All is accounted for. **4/5:** lose 1 black powder or ashwood. **1-3:** Lose one black powder, ashwood, and steel.

DOWNTIME ACTIVITIES

Between forays, your band spends time at their liberty, usually in their forest Refuge, attending to personal needs and side projects. These are called **downtime activities** (see the list below). During a downtime phase, each PC has time for **two downtime activities**.

- Long-Term Project
- Recover
- Reconnect
- Reduce Heat
- Practise Hobby

You may choose the same activity more than once. You can only attempt actions that you're in a position to accomplish. If an activity is contingent on another action, resolve that action first.

A PC can make time for more than two activities, at a cost. **Each additional activity from the list costs** 1 blood sterling or 1 supply. This reflects the time and resulting resource drain while you're "off the clock" and not raiding the countryside for resources. When you complete a new foray, you reset and get two "free" activities again.

Activities on the downtime list are limited; normal actions are not. During downtime, you can still go places, do things, make action rolls, gather information, talk with other characters, etc. In other words, only activities that are *on the list* are limited.

For any downtime activity, take **+1d** to the roll if a **friend** or **contact** helps you. After the roll, you may spend blood sterling after the roll to

improve the result level. **Increase the result level by one for each blood sterling spent.** So, a 1-3 result becomes a 4 or a 5, a 4/5 result becomes a 6, and a 6 becomes a critical.

GM: If a player can't decide which downtime activity to pick, offer them a long-term project idea. You know what the player is interested in and what they like. Suggest a project that will head in a fun direction for them.

LONG-TERM PROJECT

When you work on a long-term project (either a brand new one, or an already existing one), describe what your character does to advance the project clock, and roll one of your actions. Mark segments on the clock according to your result: **1-3:** one segment, **4/5:** two segments, **6:** three segments, **critical:** five segments.

Fletching and Gathering Supplies

Fletching and Gathering Supplies are two unique long term projects. When you fletch arrows, you gather ashwood and refine it into ashes to mask your presence and arrows and stakes to attack vampires. When you gather supplies, you gather the necessities your band needs to survive and thrive. Both of these long-term projects start as 4-clocks, and when filled, add either a unit of **Ashwood** or **2 Supplies** to your stockpile, respectively.

RECOVER

Spend 1 supplies and **receive aid** from another brigand, an associate, or a fae. Receiving aid involves playing out a short

scene in which your friends and allies help you to feel more “human.” Remove highest ban.

RECONNECT

Unmark all personal Associates or one Expert.

REDUCE HEAT

Say what your character does to reduce the heat level of the crew and make an action roll. Maybe you Consort with your friend who’s able to make a few incriminating dispatches disappear. Or maybe you Hunt collaborators and spies.

Reduce heat according to the result: 1-3: one, 4/5: two, 6: three, critical: five.

REST

Narrate how your character spends their time resting and recovering from the stresses of the rebellion. Remove stress according to the rebellion’s current position on the Rep Track.

THE REFUGE AND REBELLION

Revolutions begin in strange circumstances, perhaps none stranger than yours. The vampire's spies are everywhere, their minions ever present, except, of course, in the depths of the Brinkwood. There, you take your refuge, protected from vampires by the forest and from the forest by your oaths, discretion, and wisdom.

In this section, we cover how you will go about building your Refuge, expanding your forces, and what goals you must set if you one day wish to see the vampires overthrown.

- **Resources** covers the materials and equipment you will stockpile in your Refuge, as well as their utility during forays.
- **Tiers and Goals** discusses how you will advance your **Refuge's** Tier, a measure of it's strength and size. Likewise, it describes what your goals should be at each respective Tier.
- **Ally Tiers** discusses the Tier rankings of allied factions, how to advance their Tier, as well as what benefits they will offer you for aiding them.
- **Friendly Factions** provides a brief overview of the various factions and groups that may be willing to join your cause, should you win their trust and loyalty.
- **The Conclave** describes a special sort of downtime, in which the different allied factions you have gathered will come together to make decisions about the future of the rebellion.

RESOURCES

In order to succeed, your rebellion will need to stockpile **resources**, powerful goods and necessities that will allow you to increase the effectiveness of your forces, protect against vampiric influence, or to simply live through a harsh winter.

Supplies represent the food, shelter, clothing, and other necessities needed to survive in the Bloody Isles. Supplies can be spent in the following ways:

- Each downtime, supplies must be spent equal to your Tier. Otherwise, the Tier of the entire refuge is temporarily reduced by 1 until supplies are spent once again. If multiple downtimes pass without supplies being spent, the Tier of the refuge is reduced each time, until it hits a minimum of zero.
- Supplies can be spent to provide additional downtime activities.

Steel is a force to be reckoned with, and is hard to come by. It can be spent in the following ways:

- 6 steel may be spent to permanently upgrade your band's weapons and armor. Any bladed weapon your crew uses gains the **fine** quality, and Heavy Armor can absorb an extra consequence.
- 4 steel may be spent to permanently upgrade a cohort's weapons and armor. A cohort upgraded in this way gains the *Steel* quality, making them more capable in battle. They also gain an extra slot of armor.
- 4 steel may be spent to arm a village, 6 to arm a town. The location gains +1 to their Tier during any Sieges.

Black Powder is a combustible substance used to fire pistols and rifles with great force and to detonate large explosions, and may be spent on the following

- Spend 1 black powder to receive 3 *charges* of black powder. These charges may be spent to reload rifles and pistols.
- Upgrading the effect of a detonation or explosion.
- A unit of black powder may also be used to temporarily give a cohort the *Powder* trait for a single foray, making them more effective at causing explosions, sieging walls, and firing guns.
- A unit of black powder may be used to give a village or town (spend 2 black powder for a town) +1d during a Siege.
- A unit of black powder may be spent to gain +1d on an engagement roll, usually by blowing something up.

Ashwood is gathered from the fallen branches of **Ashen** trees, a special tree that grows only in forests home to the Fae. The garlicy smell of ashwood confounds a vampire's senses, and piercing a vampire's flesh with ashwood causes them dire harm. Ashwood may be spent on the following:

- Spend 1 ashwood to gain 3 *charges* of ashwood. These charges can be spent to upgrade the effect of a weapon or attack that uses ashwood against a vampire, such as firing a bow or staking a vampire.
- Upgrading the effect of any effort to avoid the detection of a vampire, by burning ashwood in a censer.
- A unit of ashwood may also be used to temporarily give a cohort the *Ashwood* trait for a single foray, making them more effective in fighting vampires and evading their detection.

Blood Sterling is the dire currency of the Bloody Isles, and while you may find it distasteful, it does have it's uses.

- Blood Sterling may be converted into **supplies** as part of **payoff**.
- Blood Sterling may be spent to gain **+1d** on an engagement roll, usually by paying some sort of bribe.

TIERS AND GOALS

As your band grows in size and strength, they will also advance in Tier. However, you will need allies to advance as well. To advance between Tiers, the Rebellion will need to have an Ally of the next highest Tier. Allies can advance to new tiers by spending Rebellion XP, discussed below.

With each new Tier you unlock, the goals of your band should change. This chart provides a summary of which goals your band should pursue as they advance in Tier.

TIER	GOALS
Tier 0 - A Small Band	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Taking care of basic needs● Gathering allies● Freeing prisoners● Recruiting radicals, outsiders, etc● Treating with faeries / gaining their permission / blessing.
Tier 1 - Forest Refuge	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Dealing with logistics, staving off starvation, building shelter,

counteracting sickness

- Building a reputation, recruiting allies, helping people out
- Feeding, training, educating people
- Spreading influence to other communities
- Securing aid, donations, safehouses

Tier 2 – Covert
Rebellion

- Secret raids
- Distributing radical literature, counteracting vampire propaganda
- Storing weapon caches, building fighting cells
- Dealing with internal politics

Tier 3 – Open Rebellion

- Warring with the vampires
- Securing and raiding supply lines
- Making strategic, high-level decisions
- Taking fortifications

FRIENDLY FACTIONS

You are not alone in your struggle. There are many other groups in Cardenfell who share your disdain for the vampires, and whose ideology aligns with your own. However, each has their own priorities, goals, and challenges to overcome. Your task is to do your best to coalesce these

factions into a unified whole, capable of overthrowing the Vampire Lords who oppress you all.

The **Diggers** are a hearty group of renegade farmers and agriculturists, dedicated to reclaiming land deemed unusable by the powers that be and using it to build communal farms.

Coggers are the beginnings of a worker's movement in the factories and workhouses of the Bloody Isles. Their focus is on improving working conditions, better wages, and protecting their fellow workers.

Fletchers are those who practice the forbidden crafts of fletching arrows and crafting bows. Hunted relentlessly, they do their work in secret, and hope to keep the knowledge of their craft alive.

Scribblers are writers, teachers, and scholars, seeking to spread knowledge and literacy throughout the Bloody Isles. While they do not face official sanction from the Vampires, radical writers and thinkers have been known to turn up dead.

Stokers are arsonists and radicals, devoted to burning down everything the vampires hold. They are well-known for the collateral damage their activities cause.

Fixers are craftspeople devoted to preservation and repair. While a culture of disposability has overtaken much of the population, Fixers seek to preserve and conserve broken things.

Witchers are healers and medicine-folk who have avoided execution and persecution. They seek to keep the healing arts alive and to tend to the sick and injured.

Poisoners are scholars of alchemy and nature. They seek to build up toxins in their own blood that are harmful to the vampires, pass their blood as rent, and in doing so subtly weaken the vampiric hold on society.

Guilders are the progressive elements within the few remaining crafting guilds. They see the writing on the wall with regards to the rise of industry, and seek to dismantle the vampire's reign before it claims their own vocations.

Prayers are a radical strain of persecuted monks, nuns, priests, and layfolk who reject the bloody “prosperity theology” of the so-called Reformed Faith, instead turning back to core tenants of aiding the poor, communal duty, and respect for individual expression of faith.

Lawyers are those educated folk who seek to use their knowledge of the unjust laws of the vampires as a weapon and a shield, using legal proceduralism and intervention to thwart the worst excesses of vampiric abuse.

ALLY GOALS

Your allies will periodically present you with goals, generated by the GM, that they would like your help in accomplishing. These goals will often be accompanied by “Time” clocks which tick

down with each Foray. When this clock fills, the ally will attempt to accomplish their goal, either with or without your aid.

REBELLION XP

As more allies join your rebellion, they will contribute XP conditions that, when fulfilled, will earn you Rebellion XP.

Rebellion XP can be used to:

- Raise the Tier of an Ally. Must have 2 allies of a lower tier.
- Raise the Tier of a Cohort. Cannot exceed Rebellion Tier.
- Give an additional Edge to an Ally or Cohort

THE CAMPAIGN

*'There's blood on your new foreign shrubs, squire,
There's blood on your pointer's cold feet;
There's blood on the game you sell, squire,
And there's blood on the game you eat.*

This section is designed for the use of GMs. If you are not a GM, you need not read any further.

Your role as the GM is special, in that you are, in many ways, responsible for the tone and experience of the game. Long gone are the days of the GM shouldering the entire burden of the game's experience, and you should rely on your fellow players as much as possible to lighten the load. However, as the GM, there are responsibilities you will have to shoulder.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

When running *Brinkwood*, you should keep in mind several guiding principles common to other *Forged in the Dark* games.

Be a fan of the players. As the GM, you are not the adversary of your fellow players. Instead, you are a collaborator, a guide, and a fan of their story. You should bear this in mind in all your decision-making. Often times in *Brinkwood*, the dice will be the

players worst enemy. You do not need to take it upon yourself to make sure that the players are “earning” their victories.

Be their guide. In your role as the GM, you will oftentimes be the player at the table with the greatest command of the rules. This means that it is, on some level, your responsibility to advise your players. If the players are struggling to get together enough effect to beat a potent enemy, suggest Set-Up actions, using Contraband, or Push actions. If they are feeling helpless or desperate, suggest putting on a Mask to increase their options. After you hit them with a consequence, remind them that they can resist with their stress, essence, or armor. *Brinkwood* is designed to give the players many options on how to overcome their enemies, but they must be aware of those options in order for the game to work properly. While it is not your role to ensure the brigands succeed, it is your role to give the other players all the tools they need.

The rules serve the game. The rules of *Brinkwood* exist to give structure and guidance to the story you and your fellow players are telling. Don’t be afraid to bend, break, or disregard the rules-as-written if it makes for a better story or game. Encourage improvisation in your players, if someone comes up with a clever

solution, your answer should always be “yes, and...” or “yes, but...”

PROGRESS CLOCKS AND THREAT

As part of the **Reconnaissance** stage of **Foray** planning, the GM is asked to construct a **possibility cloud** of what obstacles they think might stand between the brigands and their goals. These obstacles can be environmental dangers, social threats, prying eyes, the minions of vampires, or the vampires themselves.

However, these obstacles might not always be simple to overcome with a single action. In this case, we use **Progress Clocks** to track the brigands progress towards overcoming an obstacle. Generally speaking, the more complex the obstacle, the more dangerous the threat, or the more time it would likely take to overcome, the larger the clock. In practice, a single obstacle is likely best represented with a 4-tick or 6-tick clock, with 8-tick clocks reserved for hordes of enemies, complex engagements or pitched battles.

When creating a progress clock, it is important not to state a necessary approach to completing the clock. Imagine a line, leading from the brigands to their goal. What breaks that line? Those will be your obstacles. A large courtyard, a guard patrol, or

a set of heavy, locked doors are good obstacles. Things like “cross the courtyard”, “ambush the guards”, or “pick the locks” might quickly become irrelevant as soon as the brigands change their approach.

You should usually have a few clocks running at once, tracking with the fiction, rather than being confronted sequentially. You don't need to climb the *Tower*, then fight the *Guard*, before finally facing the *Bit-Blood*. You might slip past a *Guard* or two at the gate, climb the *Tower* for a bit, run into a *Guard* patrol while you rest on a balcony, face down a *Bit-Blood* who is chasing after you, and then race up the stairs of the *Tower* once again.

Bear in mind that not all progress clocks need to fill in order for the brigands to accomplish their objective. If it makes more sense to flee from the *Bit-Blood* once you've completed the *Tower* and stolen the loot, encourage the brigands to do so.

GOAL CLOCKS

While the brigands decide what goals to pursue and how to pursue them, it is the GM's role to mechanically model the effort necessary to achieve these objectives.

Goal Clocks should be used in conjunction with one another for multi-phase plans, possibly as Linked Clocks. Goal clocks are unique in that they must be filled in order for the stated goals of the brigands to be accomplished.

Consider the complexity of the goal and the difficulty when setting a goal clock's size and tier. Typically, you'll want your goal clocks to range from 8-12 ticks when totalled together, and only consider at most a -1 threat, with -2 threats reserved for obstacles or very short goal clocks.

TERRAIN CLOCK

A "terrain" clock is relevant to most forays, even if it might not immediately appear so. For forays where your goal is to infiltrate a location and perform some specific act, the location itself, its walls, locks, and sheer size form a barrier between the brigands and their goal.

Alternatively, in more social scenarios, navigating the complex web of rivalries, petty grudges, alliances, and heartbreak that dominate a vampire salon or a village square can pose an obstacle that must be overcome.

For an ambush or more tactical operations, holding good terrain is a must. Consider a tug-of-war clock, where the brigands and

their foes attempt to gain the high ground, good positioning, or other benefits from their surroundings.

In general, the size of a terrain obstacle's clock should mirror the size and complexity of the terrain it represents. A small country manor or the politics of a single farmstead might be 4-clock, while a sprawling keep, palatial mansion, or the web of lies and deceit that make up a vampiric ball might be an 8-clock.

Consider, also, that these "types" of terrain might be combined. Using social manipulation to get further into an impregnable fortress is fair game, as it's always a good idea to rummage around the host's drawers for incriminating evidence during a party.

Typically, when a terrain obstacle is overcome, it should mean that the brigands have reached their goal, or are very close to achieving it. There may still be other enemies lurking nearby, or there may be one final step left to take before seizing your objective, but you should be within striking distance.

OBJECTIVE CLOCK

An Objective clock represents a main objective the brigands are pursuing. If the plan is to assassinate a vampire, then the objective clock might be said vampire. If it is to steal blood

sterling, it might be the strong-box said silver is stored within. An objective clock need not be particularly large,. In situations where navigating the Terrain is enough to accomplish the objective, an objective clock can be a simple two-tick clock, linked to the Terrain Clock.

SIDE OBJECTIVES

If a foray is wrapping up too quickly, or if the brigands are struggling for ways to progress, it might be worth it to dangle a few side objectives. These should be goals that aren't essential to the success of the foray, but might give extra advantages or resources.

For example, A cache of black powder, defended by only a locked gate might make for an appetizing temptation to a group of brigands who are closing in on their target. On the other hand, a set of keys, dangling from a seneschal's hip might prove too good to pass up for a group of brigands who are having trouble *Finessing, Tinkering* with, or *Ruining* locks.

In general, these objectives should not be presented as essential or of critical importance to success. The *one* key that you *have* to steal is not a great side objective.

Side Note: Prisoners and Moral Imperatives

There are some things that, if presented to the brigands, are likely to swivel their head no matter what. Captive prisoners, long-lost relatives, or captured allies should be used sparingly, as the effect can sometimes grate the nerves. If you do introduce these elements, make them quick, controlled rolls to achieve. It is far more interesting to have to care for and listen to your rescued sister than to watch her fall into a pit of acid. Do not, as they say, “fridge” a character’s personal connections.

As a principle, *never put something or someone at risk that, if the brigands were unable to save or rescue them, would make the players want to stop playing the game.*

OBSTACLE CLOCKS

Obstacle clocks differ from Goal Clocks in that they do not necessarily need to be filled in order for the brigands to accomplish their objectives. Instead, think of them as lines or complications that may “step in” to the brigand’s path to slow them down or try to thwart their progress.

Typically, you should have two or three obstacle clocks in mind at the start of a foray. These can have a threat from 0 to -2, with -3

threats reserved for truly powerful vampires or menacing obstacles.

It is important that when an Obstacle Clock fills, they are “out” of the fiction. No one wants to defeat a “Guards” clock just to have another “Guards” clock appear mysteriously. Reinforcements, if used, should be telegraphed with a Danger Clock.

GUARDIAN OBSTACLES

Guardian obstacles represent the foes that will hound, thwart, or generally try to keep your brigands from getting to their goal. The suspicious Wisp at the town meeting. The Forsworn guard posted outside the vault. The bit-blood captain trying to rally his men in the face of an ambush. Be careful how many of these you throw at the players, as by their flexibility, they are also more dangerous.

Larger groups of enemies, such as patrolling guards, dramcoat cohorts, or othersuch threats might be better considered as “terrain” or “persistent” obstacles.

ARMOR CLOCKS

When the brigands come across a high tier enemy or obstacle, consider using two 4-clocks or a 4-clock and a 6-clock to represent the threat they pose, rather than an 8-clock. The first 4-clock might represent some defense that needs to be overcome

in order to weaken an especially potent enemy, such as their armor, their tactical position, or an escort of guards.

Remind brigands that an Armor clock might still be bypassed in order to strike directly at the obstacle, such as by using a *desperate* strike at a weak-point in an enemy's armor, or by attacking an escorted target from an unexpected vantage-point.

Lastly, remember that when clocks are filled, the fictional positioning changes. An enemy that has had their armor broken, their guards defeated, or their magic subdued is likely to have a penalty to their potency, and therefore give a bonus to the brigand's effect.

TRAPS AND BARRIERS

Particularly clever barriers, traps, or locks can be represented with clocks. Note that these obstacles are often best used when combined with other clocks menacing the brigands at the same time, and used sparingly. If the brigands need to unlock doors and slip through doors, but there is no one there to stop them from doing so, such a scenario might be better represented by rolling on a terrain clock, rather than using a new clock for each new lock.

Instead, use these clocks to represent one-of-a-kind safes, vaults, magical traps, spinning blades, or other clever and unique obstacles. Typically, you will not want one of these clocks to go above 4 ticks or -2 threat.

DANGER CLOCKS

The GM can use a clock to represent a progressive danger, like suspicion growing during a seduction, the proximity of pursuers in a chase, or the alert level of guards on patrol. In this case, when a complication occurs, the GM ticks one, two, or three segments on the clock, depending on the position the brigands are in. When the clock is full, the danger comes to fruition—the guards hunt down the intruders, activate an alarm, release the hounds, etc.

Before hitting the brigands with an imposing, **elite**, or **high threat** obstacle, it is recommended to first count down a Danger Clock, in order to telegraph the increasing risk.

PERSISTENT CLOCKS AND ENGAGEMENT

Depending on the plan your brigands choose, there are likely to be some obstacles (or advantages) that can't be overcome, per se. Instead, like Danger Clocks, they might “cook off” into more immediate threats, or present additional complications when

they run out. In general, Persistent clocks should have about 6 ticks on them, or 8 for particularly long or involved forays.

For *Charismatic* or *Subtle* plans, *Suspicion* might be a persistent clock. When it fills, a patrol of guards might catch up to you, a loan-fang might challenge you to a duel, or the situation might otherwise escalate.

For *Cautious* or *Tactical* plans, *Planning* and *Advantage* might be persistent clocks. If they empty, your brigands might find themselves facing surprising, unexpected foes or in the middle of a counter-ambush.

For *Dramatic* or *Rapid* plans, *Chaos*, *Surprise*, or *Time* might be persistent clocks. When they run out, your enemies might come to grips with the situation, you might lose the element of surprise, or your opportunity to achieve your goal might close.

During **engagement**, consider putting ticks on a persistent clock based on the outcome of the engagement roll. A stealthy plan that begins in a *Desperate* position might start a single tick away from *Suspicion* being filled. The patrols are closing in, you are about to be spotted, whatever will you do? Meanwhile, a *Tactical* plan that starts in a *controlled* position might start with 5 ticks on an *Advantage* clock, representing the nearly perfect ambush the

brigands have laid, or the advantageous defenses they have prepared in advance.

When using persistent clocks, it is important to give opportunities in the fiction to manage them and reflect their current state. If *Suspicion* is getting high during an infiltration, present a patrol for the brigands to deal with, or a dilettante that wants to ask a few pointed questions. Dealing with such an obstacle should empty some ticks off the *Suspicion* clock. If the brigands are running low on *Chaos* or *Advantage*, suggest chucking a molotov cocktail or repositioning to better ground. If *Time* or *Surprise* runs low, suggest a flashback to scouting out shortcuts, or show the officiant the party is hunting reaching for the door of a waiting carriage.

RACING CLOCKS

Create two opposed clocks to represent a race. The brigands might have a progress clock called “Pursuit” while a vampire spy might have a clock called “Escape.” If the vampire finishes their clock before the brigands fill theirs, they get away. Otherwise, they’re cornered and can’t flee. If both complete at the same time, the spy might be cornered... but have set their own ambush for their pursuers!

ESCAPE AS AN OBSTACLE

Narrow escapes, while a staple of the genre *Brinkwood* is emulating, do not make for very compelling obstacles. They are profoundly binary in nature, with most players having the choice to “keep running” or “try to slow down your pursuers.” Secondly, while escaping is fun, being captured usually isn’t. Not to mention, being captured alive strains credulity in a world such as *Cardenfell*, where vampiric monstrosities are more keen on drinking rebels than interrogating them. “Roll well or die” is not usually a fun experience, and your players should always have the option to cut and run, *especially* once they’ve achieved their objective.

In general, you should “cut” your foray once the brigands have achieved their goal. If the players are still raring for a fight, let them battle it out with their foes, but don’t force them to do so.

If the situation is appropriately dire and you feel that *some* sort of escape is in order, use the Disengagement Roll to abstract this out, focusing in on the exciting parts in flashback, and painting in broad strokes how your brigands flee back into the forest.

INTRODUCING NEW OBSTACLES

Normally, you should avoid introducing new obstacles that have not been properly telegraphed, either by laying them out on the table at the start of the foray or by ticking down a Danger Clock. However, as a consequence, you may introduce *complications*, additional obstacles that stand in the brigand's way or threaten their path forward. These should be used sparingly, and should probably either not be a clock or be at most a 2 or 4 tick clock. No one wants to deal with a constant, never-ending stream of reinforcements every time they roll a 4 or a 5.

SETTING EFFECT

One of the trickiest parts of running any *Forged in the Dark* system is learning how to tailor the level of **effect** you set on player's actions. The system gives you a lot of options in terms of what to consider, from scale, to potency, to tier, to quality. However, it is highly recommended that you do **not** treat effect as a mathematical formula or an equation to work through to arrive at the "correct" effect.

Instead, consider the aspects that seem most important to you in the moment. If it takes you more than a few seconds to remember a factor such as *scale*, it likely isn't a factor in the fiction anyone

is paying attention to, and therefore it shouldn't change your decision-making. Go with your gut.

In general, you should set your effect at *standard* or *limited*, dipping only into *zero effect* for especially tough foes or situations where the brigands are clearly outclassed. *Negative effect* should only be used when the brigands have knowingly gone into a situation where they are punching well above their weight, and such situations should be properly telegraphed to the players long before they pick up the dice.

Remember that Tier and Quality assume that the brigands are engaging an enemy on equal footing, playing to the strengths of the foe. Deceiving a Porcelain may be a whole lot easier than fighting them, just the same as killing an Officiant is a lot easier than trying to trick one.

If your players despair when you bring out *zero* or *negative* effect, first advise them to check the reference sheet for ways to boost their effect. Also, consider telegraphing your punches better. When you say what the effect of an action will be, you want your players to say: "Yeah, that makes sense." If they're reacting with surprise, it could be a sign that there is a disconnect between how you're envisioning situations and how your players are imagining

them. Consider explaining or vocalizing your process when setting effect.

Hm, well, there's a lot of dramcoats here, right? So they have scale on you, but their equipment is about the same as yours. So, limited effect if you're going to try and Skirmish with them head-to-head.

Lastly, bear in mind how effect changes the game's pacing. Low effect slows the game down, as obstacles will take longer to overcome. This will mean the brigands will take more stress, spend more essence, and use more resources, but also, that the game will take longer. Consider the pacing of your game when setting effect. No one wants to get hit with a *negative effect* elite threat ten minutes before they planned to pack up the game.

PACING THE SESSION

Pacing is important in all tabletop roleplaying games, and as the GM, you bear some responsibility for it. Remember that a great deal of the character building, relationship development, and fiction of the world is built in *free play* and *downtime*, so if your play group enjoys the more narrative aspects of the game, be sure to take your time with these phases. Contrariwise, *forays* are more active, direct, and action-packed.

A foray is not the time to present the brigands with a wide-scope view of how to tackle things, or to ask the players *where do you want to go next?* Instead, you should drive towards obstacles and goals. *A group of dramcoats is approaching you, rifles at the ready. What do you do? The villagers are tense, ready to start a riot, all they need is a spark. What do you do?*

To control pacing, it useful to use “camera language.” When a scene starts to drag or peter out, zoom out. *“Alright, I think the camera sees you settle up with the merchant and head back to the refuge. Sound good?” “We watch as you dispatch the remaining few powdermen, and head off into the night, your objective complete.”*

Likewise, swivel the camera around, giving ample “screen time” to players who might be more shy or reserved. *“Let’s cut away from this for a minute. What is Rook doing while this is going on?”* If players are playing brigands that are more taciturn, give them a chance to vocalize their character’s thoughts to the group, delivering soliloquy or internal monologue. *“As you two discuss matters with Aza, we see Rook listening in. What does he make of all this? What does he think about this plan?”*

In playtesting, for a 4-hour session, we found the most success in dividing the play evenly between forays and downtime / free-

play, with an hour devoted to free-play to start, followed by a 2-hour foray, with a 1-hour downtime at the end. This is, of course, a loose guideline, and your play-group may vary in how much time you want to spend on the different phases.

RUNNING A FORAY

When running a Foray, start with the position the brigands start in. Set the scene depending on their fictional positioning. Describe any obstacles or goals that are immediately apparent, and, if using clocks, put them on the table.

If the brigands begin in a *controlled position*, give them a chance to decide their first move, whether it's to gather information, flash back, or fill an objective or obstacle clock.

If the brigands begin in a *risky* or *desperate* position, confront them immediately with an obstacle. The guards are closing in. A high wall bars your way. If the players despair, encourage them to use flashbacks. Oftentimes, flashbacks are used by brigands to “dig their way out” of a desperate position.

One rhythm we found success with in playtesting was to alternate obstacle and goal clocks. After the brigands advanced towards a goal, they would be confronted by an obstacle, and would have

the choice of trying to put some ticks towards defeating it, subverting it in some way, or choosing a different path.

This rhythm works well because it can be adjusted easily on the fly. If the brigands are having a lot of trouble or a bad night of rolls, you can throw fewer obstacles at them and let them engage directly with their goals more frequently. If you want to play up the danger of their situation, you can make obstacles hound their every step.

Bear in mind that ultimately, the brigands are in charge of the fiction. If they want to side-step an obstacle and make a roll to do it, let them. Your goal is to help them tell a compelling story, not to make them “earn” their accomplishments with some arbitrary formula.

USING MANEUVERS AND CONSEQUENCES

In *Brinkwood*, the GM has two primary ways to interact with the fiction and the mechanics, maneuvers and consequences.

Consequences are relatively simple. When the brigands roll below a 6, some new complication occurs, they take harm, or the situation worsens in some tangible, mechanical way. In other roleplaying games, we might call a consequence a “hard move.”

Maneuvers are a little more ephemeral. In other games, they might be referred to as a “soft move.” Sometimes, when playing a *Forged in the Dark* game, it can be hard for the GM to make their threats and obstacles feel potent, especially if the players are on a hot streak with their rolls. To alleviate this, we use maneuvers.

Maneuvers rarely, if ever, affect the mechanics of the game, but they do affect the fiction. And, since the fiction in turn effects the mechanical options open to the players, we are able to dramatically alter the game flow without directly causing any consequences to the brigands.

Each enemy has a list of suggested maneuvers they can perform, as often as the GM likes. Typically, you will want to use at least one maneuver after every roll, if only to show how the world reacts to the brigands actions.

Also, we have a list of more general maneuvers for you, as the GM, to consider:

- Remind the brigands what’s at stake, with threats or taunts in the voice of their enemies, or with questions or requests posed by their friends and allies.
- Sneer, look down on, or abuse the less-powerful.

- Flee from power, reposition to strength, throw underlings at a problem
- Haunt the brigands, use weak vampiric magic, temporarily confound their senses
- Make unreasonable demands, abuse power
- Cryptically hint at grand schemes, terrible works, or ancient plots and vendettas.
- Toy with prey, make idle threats, soliloquize

Remember, the goal of using a maneuver is not to subvert the brigands goals or to “win in the cutscene”, but instead to make your villians and obstacles feel powerful (even when they aren’t putting consequences into a scene), and in so doing, make their defeat that much more rewarding.

CAMPAIGN FRONTS

The narrative of a Brinkwood campaign is broken into “Fronts”, distinct narrative “tracks” that help the GM and players organize the story they are telling, and understand what is at stake in the larger fiction of the game.

A Front is made up of several key sub-components, created by the GM, sometimes with input from the players.

Summary: A one-or-two sentence summary describing what the front is and what it represents.

Stakes: The stakes of the Front. What will be lost if the vampires triumph? What's at risk? What are the brigands likely to gain?

Opposition: Which enemies have a direct stake in the front? Typically, a front will have at least one “main” antagonist (typically a vampire) as well as a minion or lieutenant of said antagonist.

Interested Parties: Fronts should be tied into the world of Cardenfell. What other factions are interested in the outcome of this front? What NPCs, allies, or towns might be effected?

Tragedy and Triumph: Each Front should have a “tragedy” and “Triumph” clock, roughly indicating how close the front is close to resolving, either in the favor of the brigands or the vampires. These are not tied strictly to mechanics, but should serve as an indicator of progress, visible to the players and the GM.

When **Tragedy** reaches 6, the stakes are resolved in the favor of the vampires. When **Triumph** reaches 6, they are resolved in the favor of the Brigands. Fronts should then “roll forward” into other Fronts, setting up future fronts with their own stakes.

Events: As the brigands work to advance the front, so to do the vampires seek to advance their own goals. Each downtime, the GM should advance one or two fronts with a Vampire Move (described below) that will move the front towards Tragedy if ignored. The brigands, meanwhile, have tools at their disposal in the form of dispatching allies, leading cohorts, or going on forays to slow the progress of the vampires or advance a front towards Triumph, described in Player Moves.

Vampire Moves: Taken each downtime, their strength depends on the current Heat level. They tend to cause events that will advance towards Tragedy, unless they are countered.

- Heat 0-3: “Weak” moves. Ie preparing forces, retreating, testing for weaknesses, fighting amongst themselves
- Heat 4-6: “Normal” moves. Ie Making progress but leaving room for mistakes, targeting allies and advantages of the brigands
- Heat 7-10: “Strong” moves. Ie making large strides, directly threatening the brigands or their allies, threatening to undo past victories.

Player Moves: Taken each downtime to counter the Vampire Moves.

- **Hold the Line:** Send resources to local forces with instructions to delay the vampire’s progress. Prevents

tragedy from escalating, but grows more expensive if used repeatedly.

- **Send Forces:** Send cohorts or allies to deal with the Vampire's moves. Can result in victory or in defeat, likely to have consequences for allies.
- **Engage / Ignore:** The brigands take steps during their foray to counter the vampire's moves. Can counter a vampire move completely. Does not need to be the sole focus of a foray.

Forays are the primary way that the brigands advance Fronts towards Triumph, usually by strengthening their own hold in a location, driving out the vampires, or by beating them to accomplishing an objective.

STARTING FRONTS

At the start of the game, the GM should create a few “rumors” that might spin off into full-fledged Fronts depending on which rumors the party chooses to pursue. These rumors should tie into the goals of ally factions or the schemes of various vampires.

VAMPIRIC WARFARE

BUILDING ARMIES

As the game speeds towards revolution, you may consider adding *Armies* to the game. About a hundred (*Scale 3*) Tier 0 or Tier 1

dramcoats, either mercenaries, conscripts, or standing soldiers, depending on the circumstance.

Twenty or so (*Scale 2*) Tier 1 Servants, to act as “shock infantry”, infiltrators, or to fill in the ranks with cheap fodder.

A dozen (*Scale 1*) Tier 2 servants, to act as sergeants, or as agents to undertake specialized missions.

Five or so (*Scale 0*) Tier 3 servants, who act as lieutenants and captains over “lesser” forces.

A single Tier 4 (*Scale 0*) servant, to act as a General, or as an advisor or specialist assisting the vampiric nobleman who commands the army.

As vampiric armies take casualties, they begin to prey on themselves. Dramcoats are the first to go, either lost in battle or drained of their blood. Tier 1 servants go next, usually thrown away to buy time to escape. Tier 2 and Tier 3 servants are expected to fight unto death, or give up their blood so that their Tier 4 general might survive. Still, not everything always goes as planned. There are tales of the vampiric officers killing one another in wild panic, trying to hoard enough blood to survive while their dramcoats quietly desert. Still, the most common scenario for a thoroughly defeated vampire army is a single,

blood-soaked Tier 4 servant, either captured and ransomed back to their master, or allowed to flee, so fearful are opponents of their power, let alone of the blood of their underlings that now fuels them.

In game terms, you should bear in mind this slow dynamic as an army takes damage. The *scale* of a vampiric army is likely to fall as it suffers casualties, but not necessarily its *quality*, and most assuredly not its *potency*.

SIEGES

To begin a siege, the vampire lord must move an **army** to a location held by rebel forces. This begins a “siege clock” with 8 segments for a town or 6 segments for a village, that ticks down one tick per **campaign phase** by default. If the siege clock fills, the town surrenders, the sedition clock is reset to zero, and any occupying Cohorts are lost.

Any cohorts stationed in a location under siege may be used to help break the siege, but a cohort may not “enter” a besieged location or pass through the besieger’s lines (though attacking the besieging forces is always an option).

The siege is lifted when the Rebellion takes an effective action to do so, (assassinates the besieging general, decimates their forces, destroys their supplies to force a withdrawal, etc).

SUPPLY LINES

Supply lines run across Cardenfell, from villages where raw resources are produced, to town where those raw resources are turned into finished goods, to depots where resources are collected, finally out to the locations of various units who rely on those resources.

INCOMING SUPPLY LINES

Supply lines providing resources to an industry are considered “incoming” supply lines, and run between villages that provide the raw resources to the towns and keeps where these resources are refined.

DEPOTS AND OUTGOING SUPPLY LINES

Each town has a **depot** which collects resources that are then distributed via road to the units that need them. While intercepting supplies along the river is possible, it is near impossible to completely “break” the flow of river-borne commerce.

RAIDING SUPPLY LINES

Supply lines can be **Raided** by the brigands to cause damage to any unit that has had it’s supplies raided or supply lines cut. Typically, the damage done will range from 1 to 3, with 1 damage

for a quick theft of a wagon or a bribed official, 2 damage for significant damage being done to a road, the poisoning of a well, or the seizure of an entire baggage train, and 3 damage if a depot or factory is destroyed.

THE DRAMCOATS

The dramcoat is the foundation of most vampiric militaries. Made up of folk, either levied from a vampire's estate, recruited as mercenaries, or given the choice between taking up the pike or slaving away in a factory to pay off a debt.

TRAINING

Dramcoats are typically marshalled at a keep, far from their point of levy, to dissuade any would-be deserters from fleeing back home. There, dramcoats are split into two castes, Pikemen and Fusiliers, or Pikers and Fuzies, as they are sometimes affectionately called. Those who show an aptitude for firing a rifle are made fusiliers, while those of imposing stature, physical strength, or strong situational awareness are assigned as pikemen.

The two groups drill together both separately and together. At the start of training, a Fusilier and Pikemen are assigned into *attaches*, pairs containing a fusilier and pikemen, who are

instructed to live, work, and train with one another. These relationships are informally called *marriages*.

A fusilier learns how to shoot, clean, and load their rifle, and are expected to guard it with their life. Pikemen, meanwhile, learn to drill, put up a pikewall, and fight in close, hand-to-hand combat.

TACTICS

After basic training, dramcoats are grouped into *cohorts*. Each cohort is made up of 4 lines of 10 men, informally called *phials*, with lines of pikemen and fusiliers alternating. Each cohort has a fuselier and pikemen captain, affectionately referred to as the *mama* and *papa* of the cohort.

When firing at a distance, fusiliers are trained to “collapse” their lines, forming a kneeling front-rank and a standing second-rank. When preparing for a charge, the pikemen are trained to present a front row of pikes in the first and third lines, with the second and fourth lines of fusiliers “bracing” their pikeman attache.

LIFE AND KIT

Dramcoats live in pairs, two to a tent, sharing most of their kit. Veteran dramcoats are called *rustcoats*, as while dramcoats are dressed in the livery of the vampire lord they fight for, their coats

tend to take on a rust-colored tinge as the cheap dye in them runs.

The life of a dramcoat is brutal, difficult, and often short.

Desertion runs rampant, though the punishment, the killing of the deserter's *attache*, paradoxically both discourages and encourages desertion. Few is the dramcoat that would leave their *attache* behind to face summary execution, and many desert in pairs. However, if a dramcoat dies, their *attache* is highly likely to desert well before another is assigned.

A single *attache* pair typically has the following kit:

- 2 woolen “winter” coats.
- 2 flax “summer” coats
- 1 fusilier rifle and 1 pike, made of steel and yew. Dramcoat superstition states that each rifle and pike pair are made from the same tree.
- A steel cuirass and helm, worn by the pikeman.
- A tricorn hat, salt-powder bag, shot-bag, and cleaning rod, used by the fusilier.
- A single mess-kit
- Tents and stakes
- Socks, underthings, and livery.
- Hard-tack rations

- 1 canteen
- 3 pairs of boots
- 1 Kit-bag

The “kit” of an *attache* is frequently alternated between the two during long marches, as they trade off carrying the pike and rifle or the heavy kit-bag.

AN ALMANAC OF CARDENFELL

Cardenfell is the beating heart of our vampiric enemies, the very heart of our oppressors. As it is said, the Blood flows from Cardenfell. If revolution is to come to Orslae, it must begin in Cardenfell. And we must do all we can to see that it does.

-Avan of Myra

This chapter is designed to present additional information about Cardenfell and its immediate surroundings, including the lands, towns, and villages that lie within its borders. Within, you will find descriptions, tables, and advice on how to bring Cardenfell to life.

FACTIONS

Many disparate factions call Cardenfell home, and many have been struggling against the Vampires far longer than you. Some of them may become your allies... if you can prove your cause.

Coggers

BACKGROUND

The Coggers are a nascent worker's movement dedicated to alleviating the plight of the working poor in Cardenfell's towns. Centered mostly in

the factories of Cardenfell, the Coggers came together over shared concerns like dangerous working conditions, poor wages, and exploitation by the factory bosses and their vampiric overlords. Early attempts at peaceful organization and collective bargaining were ruthlessly crushed by the vampires, leading the Coggers to develop a more militant spirit and going underground. While their numbers may be small, they have the potential to grow rapidly, as every man, woman, and even child that works in the factories is a potential recruit.

SPOKES

Guen

The Organizer

History: Sold at an early age to a factory as a cogscamper in order pay off some gambling debts, Guen survived the factories by being quick, friendly, and charismatic. He quickly realized that the best way to be safe was to work together with others. As Guen grew, conditions in factories deteriorated, and his friendships were tested and strengthened. He forged these small groups of workers into militant unions, capable of working together to resist the worst deprivations of the bosses and foremen.

Description:

Motivation: Guen prefers bold, daring plans with a high reward for their worthy risks. He isn't necessarily a gloryhound, but he understands the importance of delivering victories of morale and symbol. Most of all, he

seeks to bolster the enthusiasm of his constituents and to draw more workers to the cause.

Melaine

The Saboteur

History: A veteran of textile mill strikes, Melaine learned quickly that a spanner in the works was often the surest way to effect change. She quickly became an expert at sabotage, using ingenuity and coordination to disable mills and looms when hours grew long and wages grew thin. She has acquired near-legendary status among certain groups of workers, and “accidents,” both intentional and otherwise, are often blamed upon her.

Description:

Motivation: Melaine sees herself first and foremost as a protector. She took to sabotage because it allowed her the chance to stop the machines that tore off limbs and mauled bodies. She will endorse most plans that lead to a reduction in life lost, and will be quick to suggest the destruction of property over the taking of lives.

Samzun

The Machinist

History: Born to a wealthy family and educated as an apprentice, Samzun was set to become a master smith. However, a fascination with industry and the changing times directed him down a different path. He

designed many labor-saving machines and automations, only caring for the challenge of the work. Soon, though, Samzun noticed that no matter the efficiency his inventions introduced, it only ever seemed to benefit the bosses and vampires that controlled the factories. His blood boiled, as his labors were always meant to aid the many, not the few. Now, he designs and crafts for a higher cause, the cause of liberation.

Description:

Motivation: Samzun loves efficiency and hates waste, and will carefully evaluate plans and schemes based on their likelihood of success. He is incensed by perceived unfairness, and wishes for a world where no one need work harder than they need to.

GOALS

Tier 0 -

Union Drive - The Coggers are a small movement, and the factory bosses are quick to snuff them out wherever they're found. In order to have any hope of success, they must first increase their numbers, and bring more factories into the union.

Strike Fund - Money greases many wheels, and having the funds necessary to keep workers in basic necessities during strikes is a huge boon to any organizing effort. Perhaps some blood sterling can be requisitioned?

Tier 1

Spanner in the Works – The working conditions are brutal and unsafe. Jamming the worst, most dangerous machines, causing work slowdowns or outages, should save limbs and lives.

Street Power – If the union is to succeed, they must extend beyond the factory. Mutual aid, community defense, and building alliances will create a sound foundation of union power.

Tier 2

Seize the Means – The time has come to seize what is rightfully owed to the workers of the world. Aid the coggers in their efforts to seize factories, oust the owners, and give the fruits of labor back to the worker and his community.

LODGES

Tier 0 - Brass and Bolts

Coggers are adept at sifting through the bits and bobs produced by factories, finding those most suited for the harsh realities of forest-living. Increase the maximum supplies your Refuge can hold by 2.

Tier 2 - Union Representatives

The Coggers can grease the wheels of cities, supplying safe-houses and supplies whenever you enter a city. Gain +1d to any engagement roll taking place in a town.

Tier 3 - The Union's Forges

The factories of the union roar to life to fuel the revolution. So long as you control at least one town, you gain one unit of Black Powder or Steel each downtime.

DIGGERS

BACKGROUND

The Diggers are a movement of farmers, peasants, agriculturalists, botanists, and visionaries who have sought to advance the development of agriculture and the interests of those who make their living growing food. Core to the Diggers outlook is the issue of “communal land.” Most fertile land on the Bloody Isles has been divided up into fiefdoms by landlords, who peasants and farmers must pay rent to in order to grow their food. Some small portion of land, usually deemed infertile or otherwise worthless, is reserved as “common land”, and no rent is charged for its use.

It is to the interests of landlords that this “common” land not be farmed, communally or individually. However, the Diggers have recently had great success in tilling and harvesting crops from soil previously thought unsuitable for cultivation, thus acting as a direct challenge to the landlords and their monopoly on productive land.

Also core to the Diggers movement are ideals of communal labor and sharing of bounty. Their farms and fields are tended cooperatively, with

all taking a share of what is produced. Furthermore, the Diggers do not hoard their crops or seek to quickly convert it into currency. Instead, they distribute what crops they cannot eat or store to those that are hungry or destitute.

It is agreed by most revolutionary thinkers that The Diggers will play a key role in any successful rebellion and its aftermath, as their model of agriculture and community living is both antithetical to the vampire's way of life, as well as immensely productive. An army marches on its stomach, and it is the Diggers who will fill those stomachs.

SPOKES

Clindre

The Farmer

History: Clindre is an older woman, middle-aged with several grown children. She has been a farmer her entire life, running a small parcel of land single-handedly after her husband died. A generous spirit, she took in many on the verge of starvation, offering them fair shares of her crops for their labor, thus forming a small nucleus of Digger activity.

Description: She has sharp, quick eyes under a wrinkled brow, and speaks in a slightly hoarse tone of voice.

Motivation: Clindre is an eminently practical woman, and vouches for goals and tasks that others might view as beneath their notice. She

wants stomachs filled, feet shod in boots, and warm blankets over tired bodies.

Yoan

The Researcher

History: Yoan is a young man, and a student of botany and agriculture. Fascinated with plant life from a young age, his talent for coming up with new techniques of crop rotation, tilling, and fertilization made him both coveted and infamous among the landlords of Cardenfell. Among the Diggers, he found a group of kindred spirits, happy to let him experiment and research to his heart's content.

Description: Yoan's skin is broken up into layers of bright, emerald leaves. Upon his head is a gallant rack of antlers, rakishly sharpened and styled. He often wears simple, but stylish coats, and no shoes upon his cloven hooved feet. He speaks in a high, sometimes lilting tone of voice.

Motivation: Yoan is a voice for progress, always pushing for more experimental techniques and approaches to solving problems. Gaining some new insight or a bit of knowledge is often worth any price, at least according to him.

Brigit

The Quartermaster

History: While they don't speak of it much, a harsh winter and a harsher text robbed Brigit of nearly everything they held dear. Consumed with a fiery passion to not let others suffer as they had, they threw themselves into devising new methods of storing, transporting, preserving, and distributing food. Among the Diggers, they act as quartermaster, a tireless force for ensuring all have what they need to live.

Description: Auburn scales over dark, blotted skin and flashing yellow eyes that never seem to rest in one spot for too long. Simple, utilitarian clothing in basic colors. Always a bit of parchment close at hand, or a figuring-abacus about their belt. A gruff, passionate voice.

Motivation: Brigit hopes to see hunger eradicated, and will support any goal that leads to that end. They are fond of somewhat complicated solutions, and believe firmly in the value of setting up large-scale solutions to large-scale problems.

GOALS

Tier 0

Secure and Stockpile Supplies - If the Diggers are to expand their operation, they must first have the supplies necessary. Seed, tools, and experienced leaders are all invaluable.

Discourage Harassment - Bailiffs, powdermen, and landlords have been harrasing Digger farms and communes, small and isolated as they are. While they have yet to resort to open violence, something must be done to "discourage" such interference from the Digger's enemies.

Tier 1

Finding Land - While the Diggers are masters at exploiting land deemed useless by others, keeping such land safe, as well as ensuring continual access to it is more of a challenge.

Spreading the Word - Landlords are loathe to have their peasants and serfs flee to join the Diggers, and conjure up all sorts of propoganda to prevent their subjects from leaving. Counteracting these falsehoods, and aiding those who wish to escape, should be a priority.

Tier 2

Preparing for War - An army marches on its stomach, and the Diggers will need an army if they are to protect the lands they have secured from the Vampires. Weapons, food, and ammunition must be prepared, as well as militias trained.

LODGES

Tier 1 - Small Grower's Lodge

A few small fields have been cleared in the refuge, enough to sustain basic needs, if they are farmed and worked. Players may spend a downtime action to gain 1 unit of supplies.

Tier 2 - Small Distillery

There's more to life than just bread, their must also be roses. A little liquid courage comes in use. Add 2 ticks to any cohort morale clocks.

Tier 3 - Granary and Logistics

The Diggers are a source of food, food that is sorely needed if the revolution is to march into open warfare. As long as the lanes of supply are kept safe, the Diggers give **supplies** equal to the Refuge's Tier each turn.

FLETCHERS

BACKGROUND

Before the Crimson Crown, the strength of the Bloody Isles was in it's archers. Longbows forged of yew were in the hands of every child from an early age, and folk were taught to practice the arts of archery and fletching by royal decree.

Whether because they feared a populace capable of putting arrows into their hearts, or because of the more subtle motivation to break local traditions and isolate folk from their heritage, the Crimson Crown banned all bows from their domain.

Those who refused to give up the bow are known as Fletchers, and they are hunted relentlessly by the Crown. They share a close kinship with the forests, and with the Brinkwood in particular, showing reverence to nature and fae. Their numbers are few, but they have survived this long... and no one is better at killing vampires.

SPOKES

Aza

The Bowyer

History: For decades, Aza was a respected master bowyer. He crafted many a masterwork, fine long bows of ashwood, deft crossbows of yew, and fletched many an arrow. But with the rise of the Crimson Crown, his craft was banned, and his fellow masters were hunted to near extinction. He lives quietly now, on the very edge of the Brinkwood, and dreams of reigniting his time-honored craft.

Description: A tired, old man with rough hands and sad eyes. He wears a loose cloak, fraying at the edges, and always seems to have a piece of wood and a chisel-knife in his hands.

Motivation: Aza just wants to make bows. Preferably in peace. That said, more than anything he wants to pass down the legacy of his craft. He will support plans that bring in young blood, and shuns any plan that might risk seeing his apprentices lose their lives.

Haft

The Hunter

History: Once, haft was a skilled hunter, a master of the bow and the hunt. His skill with arrow and blade were unmatched, and he was a caretaker of the forest. When the vampires seized power, his trade was

outlawed, and his fellows abandoned him to join the Huntsmen. Haft, alone with a few others, stayed behind, quietly nursing a grudge.

Description: A huntsmen covered in furs, smudged with dirt and muck.

Motivation: Haft favors a careful, slow approach. He favors assassinations, banditry, robbery, and misdirection. He advocates for a slow, sure approach to carefully stalking the rebellion's prey.

Willow

The Dryad

History: The Dryads do not experience time as mortals do. For centuries, Willow stood as a guardian of the Brinkwood, safeguarding the Fae and the Forest from all dangers.

But, alas, her defense failed. The vampires came, and stole away her sisters, and maimed Willow in the process. Now, the joy and song which once filled her heart is replaced with fury and fire.

Description: A woman of burned ash and frayed bark, with hot coals for eyes.

Motivation: To see the vampires suffer as she did. She will support any plan that promises violent retribution.

GOALS

Tier 0

Preserve the Craft – The fletcher's art is on the verge of extinction. To survive, they need safe places to practice, apprentices to train, and wood to work with.

Preserve the Talent – Archery is banned on pain of death throughout Cardenfell, though many remember the days when every man, woman and child knew how to string a bow. Recruiting archers out of hiding, teaching youngsters to string a bow, and setting up caches of bows and arrows are essential.

Tier 1

Preserve the Wood – The Brinkwood is vital, and tending to its needs has fallen by the wayside for too long. Contracts must be negotiated with the fae and dryads that call it home, and fair trades made for the ashwood it provides.

Mapping the Wood – Trails shift, trees move, and men often become lost in the Brinkwood. While this keeps prying eyes from your sanctuaries, it also makes it very difficult to gather the Ashwood necessary for the Fletchers to advance their craft. Mapping, navigating, and negotiating with the forest should be a priority.

Tier 2

Expand the Wood – The vampires sought to drive back the Brinkwood with flame and axe. Such insults cannot go unpunished. The Brinkwood

must be expanded, with new trees and saplings grown and planted, expanding the wood back to its former glory.

Preserve the Legend - The vampires came so quickly to power because stories of them and their deeds were lost to time, legend, or myth. Knowledge of how to guard against the vampire with Ashwood must be preserved and spread far and wide.

LODGES

Tier 1 - Fine Bowyers

Fine bows of ashwood and yew are made at the humble tents of the Fletcher's lodge. These bows are more intricate, but also more powerful. You may spend an extra point of **load** in order to increase the **tier** of any bow your wield to **fine**.

Tier 2 - Hunter's Lodge

At the hunter's lodge, archers are trained to hunt, spy, and pad silently through the Brinkwood. Unlock and gain an "Archers" cohort or increase the tier of an "Archers" cohort.

Tier 3 - Sapling Nursery

As a sign of defiance, the Fletchers ask that an Ashwood be planted in the center of every village and town liberated from the Vampire presence, preferably watered with blood of vampires themselves. Easy access to Ashwood increases the Tier of defending forces wherever these trees are planted.

EPILOGUE

Planting an ashwood tree where a vampire died. Remembering what was sacrificed, keeping memories / trades alive. Protections of forests, expansion of ashwood, growing it wherever you can. Legal protection for the Brinkwood, forests, regrowing, cultivating. Repaying the fae, legal protection of the fae. Sustainable ashwood planting, sustainable industry. Writing down / recording how to use ashwood, how it works.

THE FIXERS

BACKGROUND

SPOKES

???

The Organizer

History:

Description:

Motivation:

Yoan

The Saboteur

History:

Description:

Motivation:

Brigit

The Machinist

History:

Description:

Motivation:

GOALS

Tier 0

Tier 1

Tier 2

LODGES

Tier 1

Tier 2

Tier 3

THE GUILDERS

BACKGROUND

SPOKES

???

The Accountant

History:

Description:

Motivation:

???

The Guildmaster

History:

Description:

Motivation:

???

The Craftsman

History:

Description:

Motivation:

GOALS

Tier 0

Tier 1

Tier 2

LODGES

Tier 1

Tier 2

Tier 3

THE POISONERS

BACKGROUND

SPOKES

???

The Alchemist

History:

Description:

Motivation:

???

The Academic

History:

Description:

Motivation:

Solena

The Biologist – Botanists, Apiarists, Insectologists, Frogs, blood-sucking insects, Zoologists

History: Fascinated by nature from an early age, Solena grew up on the edges of the Brinkwood, risking danger and driving her parents to distraction. She was well-liked in academic circles, until the Crimson Crown put forth a new ideology: nature must be bent to serve. Solena's research into the natural poisons of various creatures was soon coopted and twisted by the vampires, much to her horror. Now, she puts her skills to use, ironically enough, poisoning the vampires right back.

Description: A sickly, salt-folk woman with a quiet, quaking voice. She carries examination tools and small vials filled with "samples" wherever she goes.

Motivation: Solena loves to observe nature, and will support any plan that leads to greater understanding of the natural world.

GOALS

Tier 0

Corpse Retrieval

Secrecy is paramount to the Poisoners, as is experimental supplies. The top priority is retrieving the corpses of any of their number who died with poison still flowing in their veins, so as to keep the vampires of learning of their plans.

Gathering Poisons

Poisons, especially those lethal to vampires are closely guarded. Obtaining them in significant quantities, be it from stockpiles or directly from natural resources is a priority of the Poisoners.

Tier 1

More Books

The exact nature of blood silver is a closely guarded secret. Securing alchemical texts or experts on the creation of Blood Silver might unlock secrets to how it's powers could be thwarted.

False Silver

While the Poisoners seek to corrupt the blood used in Blood Sterling, there is the possibility that silver itself could be turned against the vampire. Large quantities of silver and other alchemical compounds would be required to do so, of course.

Tier 2

A Poisoned Supply

The formula is nearing perfection, now the challenge is producing the poison, distributing it, and convincing the common folk to mix it in with their taxes. If successful, the vampires will be cut off from the source of their power.

LODGES

Tier 1 - Poisoners Lodge

The poisoners have long experimented in ways to poison, corrupt, and kill vampires. Efforts to poison vampires gain +1 effect.

Tier 2 - Silver Distiller

The poisoners have discovered how to distill Blood Silver back into its component parts. Whenever you trade blood sterling for essence, gain +1 supply.

Tier 3 - Phlebotomist's Lodge

The poisoners are experimenting with ways to drain more blood from vampires. Gain +2 essence whenever you drain a vampire.

EPILOGUES

If its possible to make blood sterling, what else can be made from silver? What other (less harmful_) magic is there?

THE PRAYERS

BACKGROUND

SPOKES

???

The Accountant

History:

Description:

Motivation:

???

The Guildmaster

History:

Description:

Motivation:

???

The Craftsman

History:

Description:

Motivation:

GOALS

Tier 0

Tier I

Tier 2

LODGES

Tier 1

Tier 2

Tier 3

PRAYERS THE REAVERS

BACKGROUND

Centuries ago, long before the Crimson Crown, and before even the Old Kingdom, Orslae was defended by the *Reeves*. The peoples of Orslae elected these protectors from among their number, empowering them to carry blade and bow, and to keep the peace between folk.

When the Old Kingdom rose, they all but destroyed the Reeves, but a few scattered members fled, either into the forest, the wilderness, or the sea. They became bandits, raiders, and smugglers, waging a long, slow, guerilla war. As time passed, the line between warfare and petty banditry blurred, and the once-proud Reeves are now denounced as Reavers, preying upon folk and vampire alike.

Still, the Reavers remember some of their past, dividing their loot equally, electing their leadership, and committing as little bloodshed as is necessary. If the Reavers could truly reclaim their once-beneficent heritage, remember why their ancestors fought so long ago... they would most surely be powerful allies.

SPOKES

Elen

The Smuggler

History: The child of sea-born reavers, with deep-folk blood running in her veins, Elen displayed a precocious curiosity and a talent for hiding things that would serve her well her entire life. Now, she acts as a smuggler, filtering the goods, weapons, and other contraband banned by the Crimson Crown in and out of Orslae.

Description: Deep, wide-set eyes. Seaweed green hair. A cheery smile, some forged writs, and a bag full of drops (useful for bribes) always at the ready.

Motivation: Elen is a practical sort, under her sunny disposition. She will enthusiastically support any plan, but will try to subtly direct towards schemes with the best chance of success.

Rowsong

The Privateer

History: Raised in the comfort of a merchant household, Rowsong's only connection to her Reeve ancestry was from her grandfather, who told stories of daring pirates, noble reeves, romance and adventure.

It was, therefore, no surprise to anyone when she stole her family's heirloom blade and pistol, kept hidden for decades, and joined the first ship crew that would take her aboard.

The life of a privateer was a bit different from the stories, but Rowsong remained undaunted, finding kinship and admiration among her peers for her talents and hard work, until, at last, she was elected captain.

Description: A classic, ancestral reaver coat, carefully maintained. Etched, blue-ink tattoos and tailoring telling the history of her crew, with a coat depicting the legends of her family. A cutlass engraved with her family's name in the old-tongue, a winning smile, and a shock of wild red hair under a tricorn hat.

Motivation: Rowsong longs to bring the Reavers closer to the tales she heard from her grandfather, and will endorse plans of pageantry, nobility, or that just sound like a hell of a lot of fun.

Guethenoc

The Highwayman

History: As a quiet young student in the academy, Guethenoc studied history, poetry, and the sciences. The third scion of a proud family of land-owners, Guethenoc was, on his thirteenth birthday, kidnapped by a band of Reavers and held for ransom. When his family refused to pay, Guethenoc used his quiet charm, wit, and skill to win the hearts of his kidnappers.

Within a few short months, he had been elected as commander of the Reavers who had abducted him. His crew has amassed fortune with minimal bloodshed, after all, who best knows how to rob the vampires than a Scion?

Description: A young man with a quiet demeanor. Rail-thin, dressed in simple, yet fashionable clothes. A subtle, faded reaver tattoo on his back. A marked contrast to the two rowdy, heavily-tattooed bodyguards who always travel with him, Heve and Salm.

Motivation: Guethenoc never gave up his love of history and poetry, and would be happy to see the Reavers return to their rightful role as protectors of Orslae... if he can be convinced it's possible.

GOALS

Tier 0

- Go A-Reaving: Reavers, first and foremost, respect those who can amass weapons, resources, or treasures of renown.
- The Old Ways: The Reavers have lost touch with their history, but wish to rekindle it. Finding those who know the old stories, or what little has been written down is a priority.

Tier 1

- The Reaving Parlay: The Reavers are scattered, with each crew answering only to its captain or commander. Respect and trust must be earned, crew-by-crew.
- The Reaving Way: It is one thing for the Reavers to know their own history, but they are still feared and distrusted by most folk. Some community outreach is in order.

Tier 2

- The Seconde Moot: In the histories of the Reeve, there was no event as important as The Grande Moot. It was here that the codes, practices, and rights which governed the Reeve

were decided. It is time to call a second moot, and let the Reeve rise once again!

- **Powder and Steel:** The Reavers are isolated cells, but could become a proper army. To become as such, they will need powder, steel, and training.

LODGES

Tier 1 - Reaving Stockpile

The Reavers are happy to store your treasure for you. Gain +4 to the maximum Blood Sterling your Refuge can hold.

Tier 2 - Tattoer's Hut

Tattoo is a vital part of Reaver culture, detailing their history, crew, and accomplishments. The ritualized tattooing tends to strengthen the Resolve of those who undergo it. Once per campaign, brigands may spend one downtime action to gain +1 dot in a Resolve action. For as long as this Lodge remains active, Resolve actions may have up to 4 dots.

Tier 3 - Reaving Moot

The reaving moot is a hub of activity where the various operations and escapades of the Reavers can be organized more effectively. Gain +1d to any engagement or fortune roll that involves

skullduggery, assassination, scouting, or other commando activities.

THE SAPPERS

BACKGROUND

SPOKES

Ilan

The Foreman

History: Ilan has been a miner all his life. A dangerous life, to be sure, but one made only more deadly by the vampire overseer's abuses and demands. He was pressed into rushing a mining crew digging a rich vein, promised riches if he hurried the dig. His greed cost his men and women their lives when a cave-in collapsed the tunnel.

Description: Middle-aged, ram-horned, with a tawny white beard and a balding pate. Hard, worn eyes and hands. A perpetually dirty cover-all and tools always close at hand.

Motivation: Motivated by grief, guilt, and a slow-boiling fury, Ilan has pledged to see all the Vampires buried, one way or another. He supports violent plans, but is hesitant to support any plan that risks lives.

???

The Surveyor

History:

Description:

Motivation:

???

The Engineer

History:

Description:

Motivation:

GOALS

Tier 0

Assess the Land - While the Sappers are skilled diggers, knowing where to dig can often be another matter entirely. Finding new locations where vampire estates can be sapped or valuable resources pulled from the earth is a top priority.

Protect the Crews - Sappers are vicious in their tunnels, but it can be difficult for them to fight "fair," so to speak. Defending, guarding, and hiding their tunnels is something they could certainly use help with.

Tier 1

Mirror, Mirror - The Sappers rely on mirrors, complex contraptions of silver, lead, and gears to redirect sunlight down into their tunnels (and into the crypts of the vampires they fight). Finding experts in the creation of mirrors as well as the resources necessary to produce them in bulk would be helpful.

Good Powder - While the mirrors are useful, sometimes the judicious application of blasting powder is more useful. Experts in its use, as well as stockpiles of black powder itself will help the Sappers.

Tier 2

Friends in Many Places - The sappers thrive on their alliances, common folk guarding their tunnel entrances, to Guilders or Scribblers who might have insight to share with them.

LODGES

Tier 1 - Surveying Lodge

The Sappers' surveying kits and experts are useful in their ability to create maps, quickly survey areas, and better help the rebellion organize against its enemies. Gain +1d to all rolls that involve scouting terrain.

Tier 2 - Smuggler's Lodge

The tunnels of the sappers are excellent at smuggling goods and people. Once per downtime, you may spend 2 Blood Sterling to gain 1 unit of

steel or 1 unit of black powder. Furthermore, you can freely move 1 cohort per turn.

Tier 3 - Engineer's Lodge

The sappers have turned their talents towards breaking walls and smashing fortifications. Gain +1 effect whenever you fight in a siege.

EPILOGUES

Better conditions for workers, better mining techniques, responsible mining practices. Eco-friendly techniques for mining, digging, responsible use of resources, recycling. Eco-friendly / healthy processing of materials. Control of where silver goes / what it's used for / tighter control of dangerous materials (like silver)

THE SCRIBBLERS

BACKGROUND

SPOKES

???

The Teacher

History:

Description:

Motivation:

???

The Poet

History:

Description:

Motivation:

Aoda

The Historian

History: A sickly child, Aoda spent most of her childhood buried in books. She was thrilled by the historical epics, disdaining the fairy tales and myths. As she grew to adulthood, she found many of her fellow scholars believed history was “ending”, and that the Crimson Crown would reign forever. Her (academic) contempt for such an ahistorical opinion drew the ire of the vampires, but she was welcomed into the ranks of the Scribblers. Now, she seeks to record and document the ebb and flow of her historical moment, for she knows she is blessed to live in such interesting times.

Description: A bespectacled academic in fraying robes, with thin spectacles and a book always in her arms.

Motivation: Aoda isn't particularly moved by passion or spirited pleas. If it were up to her, she would remain on the sidelines, simply recording events as they happened. However, her command of history and

strategy enlisted her into leadership roles. She advocates for plans based on logic, reason, and above all, historical precedence.

GOALS

Tier 0

Tier 1

Tier 2

LODGES

Tier 1

Tier 2

Tier 3

THE STOKERS

BACKGROUND

The Stokers are a loose collection of rebels, anarchists, revolutionaries, and bandits, united only by their hatred of the Vampires and their love of blowing things up. They are a somewhat divisive group in Cardenfell, with some hailing them as freedom fighters and heroes while others decry them as little more than wanton terrorists and arsonists.

Black Powder is at the core of the Stokers identity, as many are veterans of the mines where it is harvested or the factories where it is employed. Many Stokers see black powder as a neutral force, just as capable of ending the Vampire's reign as it is of extending it. The seizure of black powder, its stockpiling, and its use are chief among their concerns, though it has been observed that they seem to use it almost as quickly as they obtain it.

The role of the Stokers in any revolutionary movement has yet to be determined. Some fear that they will flame out dramatically, while others believe their talents and verve for mayhem only lack more organization and "constructive" application. Either way, the Stokers are a powderkeg.

SPOKES

Phoenix

The Arsonist

History: No one is quite sure of the Phoenix's history, and they seem to prefer to keep it that way. A folk hero to many, tales of their dashing deeds, heroic heists, and fiendish forays abound in the taverns of Cardenfell. Some say they are a myth, while others argue that they are more than one person, as any Stoker may claim the deeds and identity of the Phoenix as necessary.

Description: A red scarf pulled over their face, a pair of smudged goggles over their eyes. The smell of brimstone and gunpowder, and an ever-present brace of pistols.

Motivation: Wherever the Phoenix appears, they advocate for direct action. Sabotage, explosives, and propoganda of the deed are their choice in plans, and they will support any goal that promises to go off with a bang.

Alamin

The Revolutionary

History: Alamin is a traveller, arrived to Cardenfell from a distant outpost of the Empire, they bring with them revolutionary ideas and practical teachings. It is no secret that indigenous revolutionaries in the "colonies" of the Crimson Crown have fared much better than those

closer to the heart of the Empire, and Alamin seeks to correct that. He is well-respected by the Stokers, and any revolutionary would do well to try and earn his trust.

Description: Fiery red hair wrapped in cloth, somewhat odd clothing. A pistol, some gunpowder, and a lesson always close at hand.

Motivation: Alamin's aim is to build a revolutionary movement and to try and guide it towards progressive ideals and practical strength. He advocates for democracy, butter, and bullets, and is keen to support efforts to bring in new allies and to bolster those already won to the movement.

Nolwen

The Engineer

History: A quiet chemist and engineer, Nolwen seemed destined for an ivory tower of academia, until, of course, she blew it up. She helped organize a student rebellion, and led many of her comrades out of the collegia and into a world with desperate need of her skills. She is one of the few among the Stokers with a talent for safety or constructive endeavors, and has taken on an unwilling role as “voice of reason.”

Description: Smudges of soot and sulfurous smells. A messy tangle of black hair and bits of a plague-doctor's costume.

Motivation: Nolwen wants to build the Stokers beyond a gang of would-be arsonists, and into a capable and fearsome army of bomb-throwers

and seige-breakers. Any plan that seems likely to help her meet this ambition will have her approval.

GOALS

Tier 0

A Flow of Powder

The Stokers first and foremost need black powder. They need to steal it, transport it, distribute it, and train new recruits how to use it. Helping them secure a reliable supply of the stuff will go a long way to winning their loyalty.

A Proper Flame

The Stokers are haphazard in their approach, burning targets of opportunity rather than striking at the true heart of vampiric oppression. Learning of viable targets and having help striking a clear blow against a vital engine of the Vampire's reign will bolster their morale and light a fire in their hearts.

Tier I

Organizing a Bonfire

The Stokers are a diverse rabble that need help knitting themselves into a proper revolutionary movement. Dealing with infighting, setting up ways to deal with disagreement, and means of collective decision-

making will be vital. To accomplish this, they will need teachers, advice, and most importantly, practice.

Stoking the Flames

As the Stokers grow, they will need some help rehabilitating their reputation. They wish to be seen as the liberators they are, rather than as the terrorists the Vampires paint them to be. Assist them in this, either by propoganda of the deed or through spreading word of their true motives.

Tier 2

Focus Fire

If the Stokers are to keep their hard-won reputation, they must learn to minimize collateral damage. Learning skills that contain and direct fire are essential, digging firebreaks, using water, and controlled burns need to be learned and taught.

Fire in the Belly

The Stokers wish to knit themselves into a proper army, or at least an artillery corps. For this, they will need guns. Big guns. The kind of guns that will let them knock down walls and drag the vampires kicking and screaming from their crypts.

LODGES

Tier 1 - Alchemist's Lodge

The Stokers have mastered the art of making portable fire, a ‘sticky’ flame that can be stored into glass bottles that break when thrown. Add “firebombs” as an optional equipment choice with 1 load.

Tier 2 - Militia Office

The Stokers are keen on organizing people and teaching the best ways to defend against vampires. Gain +1 to any engagement roll at a location with at least 1 sedition clock filled, and you may create a “Militia” Cohort at any village or city, though it may not move from it’s starting location.

Tier 3 - Artillery School

Time to wheel out the big guns. Create a special “Artillery” Cohort, **which (helps somehow with sieges)**

THE WITCHERS

BACKGROUND

Witches were a common sight throughout the Bloody Isles before the Crimson Crown came to power. Wise women, healers, and practitioners of older faiths often benefited their communities, offering healing, wisdom, and education. When the Crimson Crown began to take root, they knew they would have to root out the influence of the Witchers in order to claim the land and authority they would need to rule. So, they began a campaign of propaganda, accusing witches of crimes ranging

from the grisly to the absurd. Witch hunts were called, and many was the witch or witcher that was put to the stake.

Still, some apprentices, witches, and scholars fled to the forgotten parts of the isles, keeping memory of their craft and faith alive in any way they could. Now, they lurk at the edges of Cardenfell, doing their best to help heal and care for the common folk who were driven to betraying them.

SPOKES

Yaël

The Witch

History: Yaël was struck by a sudden premonition, and so fled to the forest when the witch hunters came for her. Taking what books and herbs she could, she hid in plain sight, moving from village to village. Sometimes she was a beggar, others, a thief. But all along she did her best to heal and help others. Over her journeys she gathered a few apprentices, “seeds” whose knowledge of the old ways she would see blossom.

Description: An old, bent woman, with a frame of scales lining the edges of her face, and a set of gracefully swept ram’s horns atop her head. She speaks in a hoarse, cracking whisper.

Motivation: Yaël wishes to see her “seeds” grow. She will support plans that support, rescue, or gather more young apprentices to the cause.

Donan

The Doctor

History: Donan was a student at an academy on the continent when the Crimson Crown rose to power. He brought knowledge of herbal remedy and distillation native to the Isles to the continent, where their effectiveness was proven with rigorous study and experimentation. Returning home, he was horrified to find his teachers and friends persecuted and their knowledge burned. He stalks the shadows of power now, hiding as a court doctor to a vampire count, all the while seeking to preserve knowledge and pass intelligence to his allies.

Description: Bespectacled, with a long, thin beard that he frequently fiddles with. Dresses in an academic's robes.

Motivation: The preservation of knowledge and the safety of himself and his allies. Favors low-risk, low-exposure plans and goals that build on earlier work.

Sève

The Apothecary

History: Sève was an apprentice botanist, a monk who practised at refining and cross-pollination of herbs and medicinal plants. Their work produced new, wonderous strains of crops and medicines, but was decried as heresy by the Reformed Faith. So, they fled, taking their research with them into the waiting arms of the Witchers. Now, they

continue their research, happy enough to be left alone to brew up a new poultice or carefully note down the results of some new experiment.

Description: Finned, azure skin. Wide, observant eyes. Hands stained with dirt and an ever-present notebook and herb pouch around their waist.

Motivation: Values careful experimentation and new methodologies. Favors plans that are likely to produce new and interesting results.

GOALS

Tier 0

Herbal Remedies

The witches of old were renowned for their skill at producing all manner of herbal remedies and medicines. However, much of the herbs and plants have grown rare and untended to. Gathering medicinal herbs in quantities large enough to be planted elsewhere is a top priority.

Home Medicine

The vampires discourage home remedies and medicine, promoting cure-alls and snake oil. Teaching the common folk how to distinguish good medicine from bad, as well as how to tend to common ailments as their ancestors did would certainly help their resilience.

Tier 1

Hospitals

As the Witchers expand, so too do their hospitals. For those who cannot afford expensive treatments or have ailments that cannot be cured by simpler remedies, these underground hospitals offer hope. Recruiting specialists, stockpiling bandages and medicines, and finding sympathetic locations where they can be set up would all help the Witchers cause.

Plague

Plague is a frequent sight in Cardenfell, sweeping through towns, cities, and villages. Triaging plague, containing it, and treating it's symptoms are a high priority for the Witchers, though they will need information, protection, and supplies to do so.

Tier 2

Trauma Medicine

Fighting a war is more than treating disease or sickness. To truly be able to fight, surgeons will need to be found. Anesthetics developed and stockpiled. Blood supplies and plasma reserved, and medics trained. Help the Witchers in these tasks, and they will keep your army marching healthy.

LODGES

Tier 1 - Witchers Lodge

The Witchers have dispatched one of their best healers to your camp, able to help out and heal. Gain +1 ticks to any healing attempts.

Tier 2 - Health Lodge

As the Witchers expand their operation, the strength of the people they treat returns to them. Townsfolk are more hale and hearty. Gain +1 Hearts, and increase the effect of any townspeople or villagers who aid you.

Tier 3 - Field Hospital

The Witchers have honed their craft, allowing it to be useful at the scale of an army. You may completely heal one cohort per turn.

EPILOGUES

Ending execution / persecution. More permanent hospitals, more holistic healing. Funding medical programs. Freedom of religion / belief / practice. Protections of the brinkwood, associations with the Fae, etc.

VAMPIRES AND THEIR SERVANTS

SERVANT CLASSES

While the servants that serve vampires (as well as the vampires themselves) are diverse, they can be grouped into several unique classes, best suited to certain circumstances. This expresses itself in modifications to a servant's *threat* when they pose an obstacle to the brigands.

- A *courtier* will be at full effect when posing an obstacle during a social scene, perhaps by trying to suss out the brigand's true motives, resist deception, or to manipulate or sow discord among allies. However, they will falter if trying to detect stealthy brigands, and might be near-useless in a straight-up fight.
- An *enforcer* will be at full effect during combat, or when seeking to terrify or brutalize a population. They will be less useful at detecting ambushes or at investigating the brigand's activities, and will typically be rather useless in scenarios that call for subtelety, etiquette, or charm.

- An *investigator* will be at full effect when searching out the brigands or keeping watch for them. They are difficult to ambush, and will attempt to hunt the brigands down at every opportunity. They are not easily misled, outpaced, or fooled. In a fight, they might be able to hold their own, though they typically prefer to call in more blunt instruments. Likewise, they will be at reduced effect in social scenarios, though they may still be potent at sussing out hidden motives.
- An *officer* will have their full effect, so long as they are attended by an appropriate number of subordinates. They excel at politics, investigation, and combat equally, but if stripped of their subordinates, they will quickly falter

VAMPIRIC CLASSES

Even within the ranks of vampiredom, there is a strict hierarchy. Largely based on the accumulation of blood and silver, the “ladder” of vampiric privilege is held up as a meritocracy, hiding the bloody and vicious truth of “ascending” through the ranks. Each rank both hates and aspires to the rank above, putting on airs or attempting to emulate the fashions and practises of the level above them. In this way, Vampire society is bound together, not through love or loyalty, but through envy and greed.

“**Loan-Fang**” is a derogatory term for an unlanded vampire beholden to another for Blood Sterling. They are addressed as “Niece” or “Nephew” in the polite terminology. They are occasionally employed as spies, bounty hunters, or found leading groups of more “mundane” muscle or Bit-Bloods. Peasants who wish to stay in their good graces will address them as “Master” or “Mistress.” *Enforcer*

Kith are Vampires with a bit of Red Sterling and land. They control minor fiefs, and are little better than landlords. They are addressed as Sir, Madam, or Squire. *Courtier*

Kine are Vampires of society, a true bourgeoisie above “sullyng” their hands with the lesser details of extracting blood and rent from the peasantry. To address Kine as anything other than M’Lord or M’Lady will earn a peasant a whipping. *Officer*

The **Pure Lines** are Vampire high nobility, who control other vampires and large vaults of Red Sterling. They are the most powerful, most removed from day-to-day affairs. Their name is a bit of propaganda, as many claim their blood is “purer” than lesser vampires. *Officer*

The **Outcasts** are a rumor, a scary bed-time story told to naughty Scions, of Vampires who have been completely consumed by their

lust for blood and power. Depending on who you ask, they are a fairy-tale, a bit of clever propaganda (after all, the Crimson Crown is not as bad as *those* vampires), or a very real threat: the vampires who predated the Crimson Crown, whose stolen blood made the first Blood Sterling. ***Enforcer***

LESSER SERVANTS

Lesser Servants are those that might appear in any campaign, and should be used by GMs to bolster the forces arrayed against the brigands. In general, these servants should be regarded as Tier 0 or Tier 1, but their Tier may be raised, perhaps if led by a Loan-Fang or other vampiric officer.

Huntsmen – Skilled hunters that help vampires out in sporting “hunts” of faeries, track runaway serfs, rebels, etc. They prefer to fight at a distance, ambushing or picking off their foes.

Investigator

Bailiffs – Men with clubs who keep peasants in line, enforcers for Landlords. They prefer to fight in melee, preferably against a weak or defenseless foe. They may quickly route if faced with a “real” fight. ***Enforcer***

Powdermen – Gangsters with a bit of vampire backing that use a monopoly on gunpowder weapons to terrorize the underworld.

They are versatile, fighting both at a distance with rifles before closing in on prey with their pistols. That said, they are fundamentally motivated by greed, and few is the powderman that will fight to the death. *Enforcer*

Ghouls - People drained of all but a single drop of vampiric blood. Slaves, carrion-eaters, underclass. Literally dehumanized, they are perhaps the fate of those who don't make rent. Mindless and rapid, they are easy to deal with at a distance or in small numbers. Their primary use is as cannon-fodder, or to overwhelm distracted enemies. *Enforcer*

Dramcoats - Soldiers in the service of a vampiric lord, so-named for the dram of blood sterling they are paid weekly. Treated mostly as disposable cannon-fodder in the vendetta wars between vampires, they wield either a pike or a rifle and shortsword depending on their role. Their coats are frequently colored in the livery of their vampire lord, but all seem to bleed to a rust-color at the fringes over time. *Enforcer*

Landlords - Vampiric and Non-Vampiric Squires and Lords who own property, charge rents from peasants. These lords will rarely fight their own battles, and prefer to hire bit-bloods, bailiffs, or powdermen to fight for them *Courtier*

Bit-Blood: A human enforcer who gets a bit of blood from vampiric masters. Stronger, tougher, frequently led by vampires or found leading lesser humans. They are tough, disciplined foes that can be difficult to face down in a one-on-one fight. The best advice is to not fight them fair: ambush them, rally other folk against them, or cut them off from their allies. *Officer*

Wisp - Collaborator humans who aspire to vampirism and rising through the ranks. Spy on their fellows, sow discord, and keep the myth of “ascending” to vampirism alive. Wisps are a cowardly lot, through and through, and will nearly always run rather than stand and fight. *Investigator*

BLOOD MAGIC

The magic used by vampires is left purposely vague, only with the stipulations that it is tied to the blood that they drink, and that greater concentrations of blood produce greater effects. In the “Vampires and their Servants” chapter, we attempt to suggest some abilities that vampires may gain from blood-drinking, but these are not hard rules, and should be adapted to the playstyle and vision of your group.

VAMPIRIC ABILITIES

The exact nature of the blood's gifts is left purposely vague, so that you can tailor your preferred vision of the vampires. If you want ideas, we suggest looking at the Vampire Generator. Some "basic" powers that nearly all vampires have might include:

Charm - the ability to sway folk to their cause. The brigands are inured to the effects of this by the protection of their masks, but a vampire can stir folk to it's defense.

Authority - when the carrot fails, the stick will suffice. Vampires can use threats, commanding tones, and raw charisma to inspire the forces they lead to fight harder and longer.

Toughness - Killing a vampire is no easy feat. They heal quickly from mundane injury, with only ashwood dealing lasting harm.

Speed - Vampires are trained, usually, to fight quickly and decisively, emphasizing their inhuman speed to deliver quick, critical blows in rapid succession.

Blood-Drinking - While a vampire will prefer a more "dignified" feeding method, in the heat of battle, it is not unheard of for a vampire to drain their foes (or even their allies) of blood, in an effort to heal themselves or bolster their strength.

VAMPIRE LORDS

The Duke

Stern, Foreboding, Ruthless

It is rumored that the Duke was the last to fall to the Crimson Crown. As a general and feudal lord of the Old Kingdom, he held the line against the encroachment of vampirism, hunting the vampire lords of old with ruthless efficiency. Still, even the strongest of feudal bulwarks crumble eventually.

It is said that he took the Blood Sterling to preserve what he could of the Old Kingdom. Preserve the privileges granted to the aristocracy, the titles and authority his family had held for generations. Truth be told, he hardly needed to worry about such things. His interests and those of the Crimson Crown aligned almost perfectly, and it is with some bitterness that the Duke recalls how long he fought against his new masters.

Now, his power is maintained in much the same way his ancestors did for centuries. With blood, steel, and fear. The Duke embraced gunpowder and steel, seizing their potential for control and rigid authority. He wrote the propaganda of the Crimson Crown, tying the feudal families of the Old Kingdom to the Pure Blood Lines of the Crimson Crown. He rules with an iron grip, carefully choking his peasants for every drop of blood, every

sliver of silver, every grain of gunpowder, every ounce of steel. Still, a grip can only tighten so much, a boot can only grind down so many, and in the darkness of the Brinkwood, rebellion stirs.

Motto: *I am the heel that grinds forever.*

Themes: *Industrial fascism, paranoia, feudalism, replaceable cogs, mechanics, billowing smoke, coal, choking dust, gunpowder, soldiers, tactics, a slow grind*

The Duke's Demesne

Air choked with soot. In towns the banging, clanging of industry during the day, the deathly quiet of strict curfew after darkness, punctuated by the occasional scream or sob, quickly silenced. Marching boots on cobblestone. Shuffling peasants, their heads bent low, watched over by towering guard posts and panopticons. Turning gears and the wrenching grind. The taste of oil and gunpowder. Monolithic, imposing architecture, draped with tattered banners and propaganda.

Village Demesne

Six features unique to villages within the Duke's demesne.

1. Ever the modernist, the Duke has seen that his populace is best kept docile by way of what they are fed. Cusk, twice-baked biscuit, and hearty stews which keep long and stay sloshing in the guts of the populace are offered from ration stations. They taste primarily of salt and though only numerous in the Duke's demesne; can last a traveler a fortnight before suffering even the vaguest hint of spoilage.

2. The people of this village make use of superior implements in their daily tasks, such that no boot is worn through and no nail is bent out of its shape. They make use of superior vestments, all the same color; and their hair, too, is cropped short for the sake of utility. This uniformed society functions without individuality, and thus it functions efficiently.
3. The prominent forge within this town makes for toilsome labor and choking smog. Urchin children and the less desirable members of society are forced to burn themselves cleaning the soot from red-hot vents lest they go without their rations. They can seldom keep the food down with all their dreadful hacking coughs.
4. The high walls of this village keep the people safe, that is what they are told and that is what many of them believe. No windows face the outsider world, for fear of burglars or an errant gunshot from the enemy. There is no world more important than that of the village, for a villager dream of another life is to court strife and the unknown. It'd take great skill for a monster to scale such walls, though they easily walk through the village gate.
5. The village has seen harsh winters and harsher tithings, as such they keep a well-maintained and guarded storehouse. All goods are well documented by the Officiants of the village, and in their judgment they determine when it is fair and what is equal to dole out to the public. Few dare to make note of the vampire's revelry in lean times, fewer still seek to enter the storehouse for fear of exsanguination.
6. The Duke has seen this village a place surrounded by tamed wilderness, fields stripped of trees and stumps in acted aggression against what lurks within the Brinkwood. Dogs and hunting vampires patrol the distant fields, as if to confirm the fairy-stories of the dark things that dwell within.

Village Obstacles

Six obstacles unique to villages within the Duke's demesne

1. The fires of industry consume endlessly without consent or consideration. An industrial fire has gouted choking smoke throughout the village, its point of origin unknown, but it throttles at mortal as though they were trying to swallow a handful of razors. The vampires know someone must be held to account and seek a scapegoat.

2. The local Officiant, envious of the positions held by other servants of the Duke, seeks to make this village more than a mere backwater. The Officiant has taken to emulating the style of the Duke's servant who holds sway over the area, but their fervor could just as easily be seen as a mockery. They follow the orders of their betters with unerring, violent efficiency; and any failure is met with as much obliterating force can be mustered.
3. A shipment of the Duke's Steel is to pass through this village, and as such the village has begun reinforcing themselves for potential attacks from insurgents or the horrors of the Brinkwood. The Forsworn are drilling the people to exhaustion, expecting them to attend military drills while demanding peak efficiency in their labors so as to keep up good optics to the weapon cache's potential entourage of high-ranking officers.
4. The adults of the village have been granted various ranks in a hierarchy by the local Officiant, allowing them a chance to improve their standing in exchange for meticulously detailed reports, efficiency at work, and performing extra-curricular duties. This false meritocracy exists only for the Officiant's controlling benefit, as a formal dressing down of a failed villager sees greater productivity.
5. A shipment of necessary supplies never arrived in the village and the locals have taken to bitter rationing and starvation wages on the promise that a new shipment is soon to come. The local leadership is curious to see the maximum output they can receive while granting their people nothing. They want to know when the fighting will start.
6. A naive local has perfected a fighting technique which can allow for greater mastery at arms. This has drawn unwanted attention, both from their rivals and from the vampires who desire to reward such talent, but not at the cost of their personal hegemonic power. The local has no true desire to join the vampires, fearful of their violence, but knows they cannot easily deny such a privilege. The burden of this has led to increased factionalism.

Town Demesne

Six features unique to towns within the Duke's demesne.

1. Citizenry within the Duke's demesne is a privilege, of which citizens may improve their standing. In towns of his domain,

badges are allotted to those who can prove their worth. Every man, woman, and child knows they should aspire for a higher rank; as if who they must brutalize to get to such heights will grant them a reprieve from their toil.

2. The high brick walls of the towns were built to ensure a cramped, controlled state. Buildings were constructed with nary an inch between them, wedged tight to ensure additional defenses. Watch towers built at the optimal locations turn the settlement into a panopticon. All is observed, all is controlled, all is safe.
3. Those within the towns of the Duke's demesne know well that enemies may come to claim their vaunted homes. He has seen fit to grant them arming jackets, gambesons, and other forms of paramilitary dress to instill a sense of combat-readiness; though he does not provide to them anything that would withstand a bullet or a blade. Those who wear the uniform know they are on the same team. They cannot say the same of others.
4. The Antiquarian's poisoned pen is clearly at hand in the pamphlets slipped in the doors of all citizens on a nigh weekly basis. They speak of blood, of its worth, of the history of the Cardenfall and the destiny being manifested by the daily toil of the Duke's mortal vassals. They stoke the fires of rage, both in the hearts of the fledgling rebel sick of the lies, and in the hearts of the brutal loyalist who wishes to purge dissidents from the ranks.
5. Frescos upon walls depict great willow trees, the names of loyal servants to the Duke's domain engraved upon each strand of leaves. Placards speak the importance of bloodlines and the importance of service to the Duke, even at the cost of one's life. There are almost more trees in the town's of the Duke's domain than in all the Brinkwood; each leaf a life lost for sake of his vile ambitions.
6. Those who are noticed for their aberrant deviations from the social norms the Duke seeks to enforce are not merely punished, they are humiliated. Gibbet cages force naked forms too close together on the edge of town where the sewage ditches flow. They are left to endure the elements, their crimes of living as anything other than a cog in the machine carved into their bare skin.

Town Obstacles

1. The local Officiant, ever the lickspittle, has turned the local youth into catspaws and informants for the Duke. The Peerage Youth's Crusade lavishes praise and promise upon the young of this town, offering them tin badges and treats. Vagrants and travelling merchants go missing, and their parents fear any outburst may be heard as sedition within their own homes.
2. The Duke's Forsworn patrol this town with mechanical efficiency. They know who needs to be where on any given street at any given time, and those who break such meticulous calculation through human error or mere misfortune, are subjected to public brutalizations. The populace is easily cowed by such displays.
3. The walls and gates of this town are wrapped in barbed razorous wire, the sort that digs deep into cloth and flesh when met with the slightest resistance. The stains upon the stonework beneath such protective measures tell tales of unimaginable torment, mortal beings rent to ribbons.
4. The Duke's Forsworn Captain was recently awarded with a weapon from the Duke's Steel Cache, forged by the Artificer. The Captain desires to see this steel made loyal to their dark ambitions, and as such seeks any opportunity to commit abuse upon the populace. Such hubris will see them stripped of this reward, should it cause strife for the Duke's machinations.
5. Laborers, infuriated by the building pressure of the daily violence and the toil they suffer through, eventually snap under the weight of it all. They build their barricades and engage in violence which will beget only a vicious reprisal from the Duke's servants; upon both the disenfranchised laborers and any other who might be caught in the crossfire.
6. Public floggings are all too common, they cow the populace and enforce a mentality against the repugnancy of "the Other." The victim, their crimes embellished or imagined entirely, suffers at the lash while the population is made to watch. The Duke's Forsworn walk the crowds in search for whispers of dissent; while the Officiant appeals to the jingoism of loyalists between slashes of the whip.

Keep Defenses

1. The gates of the Duke's keep are nothing short of technological marvels, the envy of even the mainland. Making use of advanced pneumatic locks and pressurized gasses, the massive iron gates swing open with disturbing grace and slam shut with reckless abandon. Such technology, in the right hands, could lead to new, terrible weaponry...
2. The bails of razor wire atop the high castle walls are meant to be unfurled during times of siege. The blades upon the wire are of a model meant for lacerating flesh and hooking deeply into muscle tissue, such that an invader's errant fall might see them flayed alive.
3. The Duke's own hounds are terrible beasts, gifted to him by the Houndmistress in a failed attempt to win back his favor. Their yellow eyes and serrated fangs speak to some vile breeding program. They are kept nearly starved save for the refuse meat of intruders, unfortunate souls often used in baiting fights. The hounds enjoy the meat of the face more than any other.
4. There is nothing in the Duke's domain that is wasted if it can be helped, and as such the weaponization of pollutants and gas should come as no surprise. Bile-sprayers and gas bombs are kept for times of war, to melt out the lungs and throats of mortal and vampire alike.
5. The Duke's Steel is a treasured collection of arms and armor, many pieces depicted in portrait by the Patroned Artist in their more useful years. Those who seek to invade the Duke's keep will find themselves against vicious, beautiful weapons of death; the likes that he'd never dare risk leaving the confines of one of his personal fortresses.
6. Steady is the Duke's ambition and his progress is noted well by the mainland. Agents of the Crimson Crown, silent observers well trained in combat arts not known on the Bloody Isles, keep vigil within the keep. Who their loyalty is indebted to is of no concern, they lust for combat and an escape from the doldrums of colonial political posturing.

Vampires

- **The Antiquarian**, a propagandist for the Duke who views the bloodlines and breeding of the mortals and the vampires under the Crimson Crown to be worthy of exploration. The Antiquarian believes the blood of ancestral lines can lead to a profound mandate which will define the fate of the Empire. The Antiquarian sees baleful potential in the phrenological and bone structure of all in their purview, and they will champion those they believe have been chosen by the “will of blood.”
 - Schemes: *Extract Samples (6)*, *Study Bloodlines (6)*, *Cull the Lines (8)*
- **The Patroned Artist**, the ideal citizen who was granted wealth, power and opportunity by the Duke who uplifted them from the hoi polloi. The Patroned Artist has languished in misery and bleakest hedonism, each piece they create a presentation in the art of diminishing returns. They will do anything to feel cherished again.
 - Schemes: *Pursue Pleasure (6)*, *Grisly Art (6)*, *Create Masterpiece (8)*
- **The Knight**, so enchanted by the idea of honor within their privileged rank, continues the systemic corruption they claim to hate. To challenge the violence of the status quo would be to risk reprisal, and any realization of their many flaws and crimes leads only to catastrophization. An egotistical savoir who will bring peace to the land on some destined day they know will never come.
 - Schemes: *Bolster the Legend (6)*, *Enforce Status Quo (6)*, *Hunt the Extremists (8)*
- **The Courtier**, an intolerable and debauched noble from the mainland whose vicious sadism is slowly being challenged by others in the Duke’s court. The Courtier is a guest, someone the Duke is forced to entertain for sake of hospitality and appearances. The Courtier would drain anyone if it made for a fun anecdote in the mainland courts of the Crimson Crown, and the Duke would just as soon catspaw rebels into ending this blight upon the colony before another incident occurs.
 - Schemes: *Practise Debauchery (6)*, *Sadistic Schemes (6)*, *Go Too Far (8)*
- **The Artificer** has always valued ingenuity more than life, this is what has made them such a precious asset. The creator of the

Sacrophages, the Artificer's loyalty to the Duke has allowed for even the most profane acts to go unpunished. The Artificer would work gladly for anyone who provided them resources and opportunity, which is for the moment the Duke. The Artificer would put him in a Sacrophage if given the chance, but no other colonial power is tolerable to the Artificer's limited patience.

- Schemes: *Plan the Masterwork (6)*, *Find a Fitting Subject (8)*, *Complete the Sacrophage (10)*
- **The Houndmistress** was spared the indignity of a Sacrophage for her many failures, but the Duke saw her withered to a husk all the same. She is a broken thing, but she is cunning. She knows that enemies gather within the Brinkwood, and she has given herself false hope that should she tame the woods, she may once again be respected. She will break the wilds with fire and iron, by blood-addled hound and desperate huntsmen who hate the fae more than any vampire.
 - Schemes: *Study the Woods (6)*, *Break the Dryads (6)*, *Burn Out the Rebels (8)*

Servants

Tier 2

The **Forsworn** are the personal guard and army of the Duke.

Loan-Bloods all, they are equipped with the finest armor and the sharpest swords the Duke can muster. Rumors persist of cruel experimentation, hidden behind black helmets and mechanical oculars, performed by the Duke's surgeons to make his soldiers loyal, unthinking, and unfeeling.

Enforcer

Officiants are the functionaries of the Duke's rule. They are the tax collectors, the officials, the bishops and bosses that answer to the Duke. They drape themselves in fine raiment and robes, their

lips stained with blood. They often serve as officers over lesser, mundane guardsmen, using blood and cunning to augment and order their charges.

Courtier

The Duke's Hands are everywhere, but nowhere. Mixtures of stone and metal, they loom down from the imposing edifices of the duke's fortresses or spring up from the ground of his demesne. They snatch and harry the Duke's foes, a hostile architecture to instill paranoia and dread in Cardenfell's populace. It is rumored that the stone that forms the hands was raided from the sacred places of old, despoiled, quarried, and made to serve the Duke who maimed them.

Enforcer

Tier 3

The **Kidnapped Dryads** are unwilling captives of the Duke, for where others saw the Brinkwood as enemy only to be burned or driven back, the Duke plotted to raid and capture. He took the dryadic heart trees of the Brinkwood, shutting them up in some dark iron greenhouse, and forced the dryads who loved them to work on his behalf. The dryads were once beautiful, but the corruption of the Duke has seeped into them as it has their trees. Now, their bark skin is marred with barbed wire, long tendrils of which they use to flay the flesh of the Duke's enemies. They are perhaps the Duke's most dangerous hunters, since they know the very heart of the Brinkwood, and travel through it, scouting, searching, and hunting with ease.

Investigator

Tier 4

The **Sacrophages** are the war-engines of the Duke, great beasts of brasswork and metal, at the center of which is a golden sarcophagi, emblazoned with the heroic visage of the elder vampire that dwells within. In actuality, to be encased in a Sacrophage is a cruel fate, visited upon the elder vampires who were supplanted by the Crimson Crown, but whose blood and lineage still serve useful propaganda purposes. So, the poor wretches are encased in their Sacrophage, withered black hearts at the core of golden machines, their vampiric blood powering it's brassworks. Occasionally, a bellow might emanate from the mouth of one of these bronze beasts, or perhaps it is the screaming of the vampire trapped within.

Officer

Withered: An ancient vampire lies at the withered heart of a sacrophage. If it's armor is destroyed, pierced, or otherwise thwarted, even the simplest attack will destroy the creature.

The Lion - A golden lion, emblazoned with the visage of Dur Antagne, the elder vampire who first brought vampirism to the Bloody Isles from the continent.

The Scorpion - A mechanical, mutli-jointed brass scorpion containing what is left of Val Hashek, a brilliant elder vampire, rumored to be one of the first alchemists.

The Ox - A great bronze ox, whose lowing bellows strike fear into the hearts of the Duke's enemies. The Ox houses Bartre Vellet, the oldest, most dangerous of the Duke's foes, whose fate is rumored to be the most cruel.

The Countess

Narcissistic, Petty, Patronizing

The Countess will spin a tale of sorrow and heartbreak, of forlorn love and filial piety to any who will hear it. The death of her poor father, the late Count, how tragic! And she, forced to assume the mantle of power at such a tender age! The enemies she had to fend off, the hardships she had to endure, to rebuild her ruined house and her name from such a destitute state, using naught but her wits and pluck.

All lies, of course. She murdered her father, a petty baron in the Old Kingdom, and promptly set to work frittering away his gold and influence on any flight of fancy that took her interest. When there was no more gold in the vaults, she squeezed the peasantry. When her serfs fled, she swore herself to the Crimson Crown in exchange for the means to wreak terrible cruelties on those she felt had abandoned her.

Now, she is older by centuries, and wiser. She lusts for perfection, and any weakness, frailty, or infirmity are quickly whisked from her sight. The Countess has established herself as a patron of art, of beauty, of culture. She rules by the pen and the brush, constructing a fanciful, if false image of her reign. To be true, many is the naive artist who seeks patronage at her court, but

they all end their careers the same: a tragic “suicide”, corpses conveniently drained of all blood, dead when their inspiration ran dry, or for some perceived slight, or simple boredom.

Motto: *I, alone, obtain perfection*

Themes: *The Gilded Age, austerity rot, inequality, beauty, misshapen, too-perfect, uncanny valley, forms, dancing, deception, applause, sycophants, disposable things and people, dolls, The Favorite*

The Countess’s Demesne

Tattered tapestries depicting pastoral scenes, high vaulted architecture, chipped crimson paint and layers of cheap gilt over grime, the wind carries the scent of perfume over rot, and the faint strains of hauntingly somber music

Village Demesne

Six features unique to villages within the Countess’s demesne

1. The villages of the Countess’s domain are sprawling affairs, bountiful fields where peasants work their fingers to the bone for the meager pittance her vassals will grant them of their toil. Hearty vegetables, floral gardens, and crops bred and grafted for a more appealing aesthetic make this land appear like a work of portraiture; painted sadly by the cruelest of hands.
2. Hedge mazes, labyrinthine things that they are, can be frequently found lining the cobblestone roads towards the villages of this land. Sculptures of the Countess and her servants, crafted across generations from master to apprentice, are placed throughout; as if to remind those with the time for leisure wandering, that her rule is eternal.

3. The houses of a village are built in the style of the coron; back to back and meant to line the road towards the manse of the local master. Whitewashed stonework and polished timbers would imply a greater standard of living than elsewhere in the Isle, but the people of this land bare the worn faces of the abused. Everything here is broken and numb on the inside, it just requires a willingness to see the rotted wounds beneath the veneer.
4. The manse of a village landlord is a decadent affair, with lavish architecture baroque or rococo in style. Crimson paint and fine brass works are currently in vogue for the Countess's personal tastes, but this will change in time. Vaunted halls of antiquity, the vampires here have inherited the oppression of ancient human regimes, finding the excesses to fit them like an old glove.
5. Artists are cherished; in theory, within the domain of the Countess. Those who show talent have a chance to escape a life of rural drudgery; though only at the risk of suffering the most grotesque of mutilations if they fail the Countess. Those compelled by desires for expression must often hinder themselves, lest they draw attention and ultimately fail to live up to impossible expectations thrust upon them by their masters.
6. Between villages in the lands of the Countess are many roadside inns, places that exist purely for the services of the wandering merchant and the vampire en route to more important places. Coachmen and skeleton crews of cooks and servants supplicate at the leisure of their vampiric betters.

Village Obstacles

Six obstacles unique to villages within the Countess's demesne.

1. While the master of this village hosts a debauched feast, the villagers starve. The elders who have known many lean years council resilience, but the young and the righteous respond that resilience is a poor alternative to their daily bread. A daring raid may soon take place, but the opposition the villagers face is larger than their reckoning. A bloodbath would only see the vampires further engorged on the toil of the common man.
2. Workers have been brought in from a nearby village to help work the earth. They are considered handsome, beautiful; the paragon of the mortal aesthetic. At night, horrible sounds emerge from their houses, bitter screams and bone-snapping cracks. They seem to

take interest in any voice of dissent, pitying them with their gestures and hating them behind their eyes. If seen without their clothes they bare terrible scars and tight stitching; revealing them the victims of a **sculptor** who bound them to this visage.

3. The master of this village has called for a fête to be held. The villagers have gone from working themselves ragged in the field to breaking their backs seeing the village decorated to the preposterous stipulations of their betters. They will drink, they will sing and they will praise; and should anyone act out of accords, they will be punished in methods beyond reproach in their viciousness.
4. Talented young artists were brought before the local master and ever since returning, have acted out of sorts. They seldom blink and carry about them a scent of milk and honey. A tune leaves their lips between monosyllabic responses, conversation is a far gone capacity they've lost. Their artistic works have only increased in potent imagery, but for every item of beauty, many depicting scenes of utmost horror can be found squirreled away in their quarters. To show them such works is to bring them into a rage.
5. The harvest on a field is bountiful, but it is not aesthetically pleasing. The master of the village believes the peasants must have done this intentionally with the hopes of being fed the scraps, like a dog besides the table. The master wants the field burnt, the earth salted; a show of dominance to demoralize and disenfranchise. The peasants even in their lowly lot in life, are unable to comprehend such pointless, cruel destruction. Violence is inevitable.
6. A cadre of **Headhunters** have parked their carriage outside the coron houses of the village. They mutter to one another about awaiting further instructions, but neither the landlord nor the peasants know who they are here for. Both parties fear they may have been found traitorous, with some deed or hushed word heard by unseen **sycophants** who now have sealed their doom. The Headhunters have, it seems, nowhere better to be; though their patience grows thin with the suspicious glances of the people here.

Town Demesne

Six features unique to towns within the Countess's Demesne.

1. They paint the row houses brightly here in the hopes that the gaudy displays might mask the urban despair and destitution of those who dwell within. The cracks in the obfuscation, the lethargy of the townsfolk, the way they look at the red paint and see both their demise and rebellion they fear to enact; hurt hard. These people are owned and manipulated so deeply that even the base appreciation of color exists to remind them of their own mortality and who holds that in their bitter claws.
2. Of note within the Countess's domain more than any other is the idea of the meritocracy of the vaunted, where those who create items that can help contribute to a more perfect world are granted greater privileges than their fellow humans who harvest the resources for them to do such acts. In the urban areas, the towns, it is not uncommon to see a former villager turn true villein in the hopes of being better able to contribute to the frivolous plots of the vampires. They will make every justification for their turncoat ways, but they are collaborators who care not if the consumption they allow is ethical or not.
3. The follies of the Countess's towns display the extravagance of her wealth through obsolescent use of space. Towers which have no entrance, old buildings left locked but in good repair, and all manner of aesthetically pleasing structures litter the outskirts of town, providing no service to the good folk who dwell besides them.
4. Central roads lead to busking plazas in these towns where artists attempt to win the patronage of their vampiric masters by performing their crafts. Such places are rife with dangers, as one artist's experimental phase could be both the elegant display of emotion that sees another artist rendered obsolete, as well as something that touches upon a nerve and reveals an "imperfection" in need of correction.
5. Boulangeries and cafes are present for those of wealth to treat themselves to the finest cuisine the peasantry in neighboring villages could slave away for them. Human participation in such locales grants a degree of security, relatively speaking, as they are expected only to serve and to go unnoticed. When the meat

and wine run out, mortal workers are all too often made to offer up more than they are willing to give.

6. Open theaters exist in the back alleys and garden parks of these towns, lavish affairs where would-be sophists and aspirants put petty twists on ancient tales in the hopes of being able to perform for the Countess and her Janus-Faced Devil. Bloodletting and violence upon the exaggeratedly grotesque wins over the most applause, so such theatrical performances appeal to the sadistic at heart more than any other.

Town Obstacles

Six obstacles within the Countess's demesne.

1. A pair of the Countess's **sculptors** have engaged one another in a horrifying competition in the busking plaza of town. Undesirables, people who have failed the Countess or merely revealed some flaw in their being that her impeccable taste cannot permit; are being carved into more "perfect forms" in a brutal display of gore and stitchery. The victims in queue scream for aid, but such pleas are drowned out by the howls of pain. Once one victim is sculpted to purpose, they are discarded and the violence begins anew.
2. A well-to-do merchant is offering finely crafted objet d'art at a low price, claiming a desire to spread the glorious work of the Countess to the poor and foreign souls who will only ever behold her grace at a distance. The merchant could be a burglar, brazen to hide in plain sight; or more likely an agent of the Countess spreading **mimics** into the populace so as to further extend her reach and eliminate those without capital enough to belong in her world.
3. A collective of **Organists** have been ejected from the manse of the nearby majordomo and been forced to busk their terrible tunes to the public. In their mutilated agony they have hit upon a new sound that evokes sorrow whilst robbing mortal listeners of their joie de vivre; modest as it may be. As the organists find themselves slowly attracting larger crowds, the powers that be seek to correct their mistakes before rival powers or the Countess find out.
4. **Headhunters** roam the street at the behest of chattering **sycophants**, following tips on a supposed traitor to the Countess

in need of their violent correction. The wretched sycophants name names and cast accusations upon anyone wearing a certain color or looking askance at the situation. The Headhunters, unable to comprehend being lead astray by such feckless creatures, will make an example of some unfortunate soul if a true victim is not found.

5. A **Malefactor** is being carted through this town, meant for some battlefield upon a borderland with a rival power, but due to some bureaucratic foolishness, it is now forced to remain within its cage in this urban environ. The sick smell of its hypnotic honeyed form is slowly wafting through its prison, and the soldiers carting it are more than willing to welcome further meat to throw at the enemy; even if they are merely rabble who will die without thought or sense in their heads.
6. The **Majordomo**, on behalf of their master, has proposed a competition to the local mortals. Whomsoever best represents the pursuit of perfection will be granted a phial of blood sterling and right of ascension. Those who fail will be scourged and shamed to the public for their icarian grasp towards a higher station. This has brought out the worst in people; with treachery and bloodshed abounding; which given the toothy grin of the vampires, was likely the true ambition of this contest.

Keep Defenses

Six defenses or obstacles unique to keeps within the Countess's demesne.

1. Aesthetic is everything to the Countess, and the windows of her castle are massive stained glass affairs depicting her in various embellished acts of her rise to glory. Baleful sorcery upon scores of **mimics** and the blood of martyrs used as an enriching pigment in their creation allows the images to leave their caged frames and stalk the castle as razor-edged hunters; should intruders be unfortunate enough to breach her sanctum.
2. The **organists** in service here have weaponized their sound, finding hidden notes of discordance which cause the mortal mind to hemorrhage and seizure. Ears bleed, gums burst under the pressure of grinding teeth, and eyes become shot when under the influence of the sound.

3. Importing foreign unguents and the ambergris of great predatory whales, the Countess has seen fit that each of her chosen host is granted a single amphora of potent flesh-melding perfume with which they may apply to themselves so as to appear more to her liking. If the clay cask containing it is damaged in any way, the vapors will burst forth into the room, causing unprotected flesh to come undone; sloughing off in soggy mounds of drooping forsaken meat.
4. The efforts of countless sculptors and the Fleshwarper's personal ambitions has created these perfect soldiers to man the garrisons of this keep. They are disconcerting in their symmetry, completely perfect yet incorrect in that perfection. The mortal psyche beneath such beatified flesh has long since collapsed, leaving only the hallowed desire to fulfill a purpose and a misplaced devotion to the Countess who allows all that has wronged them to feel so right.
5. The **porcelain** must be kept somewhere, and this keep is where. They sit in mockery of mortal life, blank slates at empty tables, in empty theaters, reading blank books and sitting before empty hearths. Hollow laughter and faint cries emerge from their dollhouse corridors, echoes of psyche which portray a life that could've been but isn't. The murderous cretins hold a vicious energy to them in this place, and to rend a mortal asunder and wear their skin would bring them some slight reprieve from their damnable station.
6. The Countess squandered no expense in the menagerie kept within this keep. Horrors from the mainland and their growing colonial territories, creatures from the darkest corners of the earth which mankind had previously thought to leave in such shadowed places. They are seldom fed but often abused, and to release them upon an intruder would provide delightful entertainment to the sadistic minds of the Countess's court.

Vampires

Six vampire lords that live within the Countess's demesne.

- **The Fleshwarper** is no bootlick to the Countess, it is only the mutual desire for a more perfect world which unites the two in bleakest unity. Making use of foreign unguents which make flesh as malleable as loam, as well as the usual cutting tools of the

sculptor's trade, the Fleshwarper carves their victims into more perfect forms meant to accentuate a singular purpose. The abattoir beneath their manse is filled with the mournful moans and discordant shrieking of derelict parts, damned eternally to an unlife of imperfection.

- *Schemes: Study the Flesh (6), Warp the Flesh (8), Perfect the Craft (10)*
- **The Masked Hunter** is no profligate, unlike his betters and peers. A minimalist and a utilitarian at heart, he takes in the beauty of the void where others would lavish themselves in extravagant plenty. The Masked Hunter dresses simply, no ostentation beyond an obfuscating iron mask. When the Countess cries out for aid, the Masked Hunter answers first among his peers. What has earned such loyalty of him is an unknown curiosity, the sort the Countess delights in.
 - *Schemes: Hunt the Disloyal (6), Enact Purges (8), Hunt the Factions (10)*
- **The Conductor's** haunting music laces the evening winds of the Countess's domain like poison in a wine goblet, promising comfort but seeding only strife. In a decade's long experimental phase, the Countess values the Conductor's pursuit of perfection within such a mercurial field. Those who dare play a discordant note or fail to live up to their place within the Conductor's orchestra are damned to the brutal form of an **Organist** and cast out into the wilds until they have lived their art.
 - *Schemes: Compose Beauty (6), Practice the Concerto (8), The Greatest Symphony (10)*
- **The Master of Ceremonies** maintains the realm's petty matters on behalf of the Countess, enacting laws, arranging the many frivolous fêted events, and ordering the purges of undesirables who might dare blight the perfection of the realm with their presence. Despite the social obligations of their position, the Master of Ceremonies enjoys only the company of the **Porcelain**; favoring them for the grace the Countess once granted them and enjoying her greatness by their proximity.
 - *Schemes: Discover Inconsistencies (6), Purge Undesirables (8), Embezzle Sterling (10)*
- **The Janus-Faced Devil** is a true horror of the Countess's delight. A towering, rail-thin vampire who wears a gilded theatrical mask of

three faces, the Janus-Faced Devil operates the various upscale stage productions desired by the Countess. Such displays are as baroque as they are abstract, with copious razor-wire and vicious, vile deeds performed to the fervor of a lustful crowd.

- Schemes: *First Performance: A Dazzling Regatta (6)*, *Second Performance: A Queen of Crimson (8)*, *The Final Encore (10)*
- **The Rat-King** is an amalgamation of a dozen sycophants, false-spies who suffered this indignity for the honor of the Countess. Bound by their spines in wretched knots and mangled, melded flesh, they can assume a partially human silhouette; a disconcerting sight to behold. The Rat-King desires for the destruction of all the Countess's rivals, such that they might be returned to their original forms; their long service completed.
 - Schemes: *Seek Secrets (6)*, *Seek Redemption (8)*, *Reveal All (10)*

Servants

Tier 2

Sculptors are the crude muscle of the Countess's forces. They are lumbering, hulking things that use adze, chisel, and hammer to shape and form flesh, rending it piece by piece into forms more pleasing to the Countess.

Enforcer

Sycophants are pitiful, chattering creatures that appear as emaciated skulls and spinal cords, leathery wings sewn to their vertebrae. They are rumored to be the Countess's spies, and are the horrible fate of those deemed "unworthy" of living in her "more perfect" demesne.

Investigator

Porcelain are strangely beautiful creatures of marble skin, cracked and worn. Rumored to be “dolls” the countess has grown weary of, they hunt the Countess’s enemies relentlessly, eager to earn some small measure of her grace once again. They fight with slender throwing knives of silver, or, if damaged, with pieces of their own jagged limbs and flesh.

Investigator

Mimics tend to drive their enemies to paranoia, appearing often as common household objects until the time to strike draws nigh. Smashed cups, lanterns, or brooms are common sights in the homes of those who defy the Countess. When they do strike, they transform into horrifying things of gnashing metal teeth and fiery smoke. Some say a mimic can be spotted by its quality and makesmanship, as the Countess would loathe to allow anything of base quality to serve her.

Enforcer

Hidden: Mimics hide in plain sight, and must first be discovered before they can be attacked.

Tier 3

Headhunters are creatures of twisted metal and golden filigree, who wear long coats and tricorne hats to hide the gears, smoke, and coalworks that drive them. Unthinkingly loyal, it is they that

snatch up those deemed “unworthy” to live in the Countess’s domain and render them into Sycophants with raw, brutal, steam-powered might. They have been known to use powder-driven rifles to wear down foes before closing in to collect their grisly trophies.

Enforcer

Formerly musicians of the Countess who lost her favor, **Organists** are melded together with their instruments, so they might “better practice at their craft.” Their agonized bellowing is amplified by the great organs sewn into their backs. They appear frequently in the Countess’s armies, and their haunting “music” seems to direct the efforts of “lesser” creations.

Officer

So enamored is the Countess with certain talents, that she will force herself to enjoy them slowly. Such is the fate of a **Malefactor**, suspended and mellified in honey, their physical and spiritual tissues congealed into a psycho-pheromonal miasma, the opium of a dream. They walk the Countess’s demesne as strange, ethereal messengers, able to put down a riot with a waft of their sticky-sweet smell. It is said that the Countess will occasionally dab the fruit of a Malefactor behind her ears, to enhance her beauty and keep her favorites with her forever.

Courtier

Miasma: As a consequence, the Malefactor may start or tick up a 4-tick “Miasma” clock, which, when filled, prevents the brigands from attacking the Malefactor until the Miasma is dispersed.

The Countess outsources the sorting and evaluation of the artists she patronizes to her **Majordomos**. The Majordomos are students of failure, seeking to drain it, sublimate it, or otherwise excise it from the flesh of those that might someday be worthy of the Countess’s attention. It is they that sew the Organists, mellify the Malefactors, but offer crueler fates to those that disappoint. They have been known to “juice” the failure from disappointing artists, and run the liquified “failure” through byzantine calculating brassworks in their chests. By starting at a false premise, their mad calculations and studies have changed them, allowing them to “glitch” through reality, teleporting through walls, melding and changing their form as they hunt for more “failures” to excise.

Tier 4

Favorites are the chosen of the Countess, those “fortunate” few that have, through flattery, sycophancy, and unwavering devotion, earned some small portion of the Countess’s power. They are as twisted as they are beautiful, appearing in artful gowns, masks of gold filigree, and the latest silk fashions. Lesser vampires all, they wield the Countess’s blood and powers as their own.

The Tailor is favored for his dresses that are known to kill. He is the Countesses chief executioner and hunter of her enemies.

Enforcer

The Oracle is a mystic and fortune-teller, always carefully coding her predictions so as to not upset the Countess's temperament.

Investigator

The **Cosmetologist** is an expert of their craft, able to alter both the faces of her victims as well as their fates.

Investigator

Hidden - The Cosmetologist is impossible to pick out of a crowd, and may even disguise the forces of the Countess, making them excellent at setting ambushes.

The **Sommelier** is always close at hand, devising and administering the ideal cocktails, poultices, and wines to keep the Countess in her 'ideal' mood.

Courtier

The Reflection was once an unlucky peasant girl, born with the misfortune of resembling the Countess. But rather than jealousy, her features earned her the Countess's love. The Countess was never content with crude looking-glasses of silver, and longed to gaze upon her own face. And so she molded her Reflection, slowly but surely, until none could tell which was which.

Officer

Double: The Reflection has all the powers of the Countess.

Uncertainty: If nearing defeat, the Reflection will plead for mercy, claiming that her identity as the Reflection, and not the Countess. However, unless The Flaw is revealed, she may look for a later opportunity to betray the party.

The Flaw: The flaw, paradoxically, is the Reflection's lack of flaws, as the Countess wished to gaze upon a "perfected" reflection, absent her own imperfections. If this flaw is discerned and revealed to the Reflection, she will recover her old identity and turn against the Countess.

The Baron

Agonized, Bitter, All-Consuming

Pity the Baron. None have seen it's wretched form for centuries. Biliious, skeletal, horrid, oozing, words such as these trickle from the madmen who have caught glimpses as it stalks, lonely and wretched, through the ruined halls of it's keep. And yet everywhere are signs of it's terrible appetites: offal and sweetmeats, halls of bloody remains and torn flesh, the squealing of pigs drowned out only by the wretched groans and screams of the Baron itself.

They say it was once a man, or perhaps a woman. It does not make a difference. A noble, to be certain, driven by lust: for power, for wine, for flesh, for excess and orgy, it threw in its lot with the Crimson Crown as the Old Kindgom fell. And still, it's greed and gluttony were its downfall. It's thirst for power grew too great, and so the Crimson Crown cursed it for looking above it's station. It would forevermore thirst, hunger, and gnaw, but no longer would anything bring it saetity, every bite like ashes in it's mouth, no drop of blood quenching it's thirst.

But still it rules, in quiet damnation, unable to stop hungering, stop eating, stop crunching and snapping and breaking those poor peasants damned to live in it's demesne.

Motto: *We feast, we drink, but it is sand upon our throat*

Themes: *Late capitalism, hunger, excess, eating, crunching, snapping, thirst, insatiable, hollowness, sunkenness, ravenous, bestial, howling, meat-horror*

The Baron's Demesne

The squeal of pigs, cries of terror, lonely sobs. Blood, blood everywhere. Messy piles of gore and intestine, gutters choked with bile and filth. The stains of blood and ichor in the cracks of nearly everything. A foul, rotting stench, clinging to the air.

Village Demesne

Six features unique to villages within the Baron's demesne.

1. Animal cullings are all too common in the villages of the Baron's demesne. They serve as offerings to the wandering ghouls and fouler things, left a ways outside the village though there is no escaping the lingering scent of fresh blood and trusts betrayed. **Starving vines** sometimes overtake these offerings, though the carcasses will be exsanguinated one way or another; as if the cursed earth ravenously thirsts for blood.
2. The structures of the village are ramshackle in construction; bits of wood hammered deep into crumbling bricks of filth and mud. Hair from mules, from generations who dwelled in such condition, are plastered into the walls in the hope of insulation and stability. The floors creak when they are wooden, but more often they are raw earth; bitter, hard, and thieving of any warmth that touches them.
3. In the villages of this forsaken land a small allotment of pasture is left to "the Neighbors" by decree of the Baron in their more lucid days. Small stone walls cordine off such areas, and the ground here seems softer, the grass here a bit greener. Crickets chirp in those fields. Entrance is forbidden by ancient law, but shadowy

figures can be seen there on moonless nights. Occasionally an animal is found skinned and disemboweled upon the border rocks.

4. Mounds are a common sight in and around the villages here, earthenworks raised long before the Baron staked their claim here. They are troublesome obstacles, roots and stones seem to trip at the heels of those who seek to climb them; their soil comes down loose and muddy so as to break the footing of any who make it to their tops. Nothing grows here in abundance, even the Starvling vines can only creep about their bases; unable to gain any sustenance from their incline. Some say there are bones beneath them, but of whom or rather what; none are brave enough to discover.
5. Every village in the Baron's domain has a butcher's block; for those who dwell here are just as much meat as any livestock which grazes in the field. A great smooth grindstone, often in the center of the village or by a trench at the periphery. Slaughter is performed upon the rock, like an altar to blood and offal. In pareidolia in the shades of grey that tarnish the black of the rock; some claim to see the screaming visages of those who have been culled here; forever trapped.
6. As filth gathers in the back of the village, in troughs and trenches; filth pits; so to is there an offering ground for the choice cuts located towards the entrance to the misbegotten hamlet. Often constructed of stone, a guard's box watches the roads for the horrors which serve the Baron. The miserable souls who work the offering grounds provide tithings to the heralds of the Baron; in a misplaced bid of hope that such monsters need not enter the village proper.

Village Obstacles

Six obstacles unique to villages within the Baron's demesne.

1. Great and corpulent **swine** stumble upon the dirt roads of the village, stabbing their swollen hooves into the mud in search of tubers and truffles. The hogs obstruct foot traffic with their heft and size, and their wretched gurgling snorts accompany a drone of flies which blot out all but that which is shouted.
2. Putrescent **globbs of rendered fat**, enough to drown a man alive, have sloshed off a detritus heap and into the village proper. It holds a bitter cold to it that clings to naked flesh. Its stench, sickly

sweet in these depraved lands, leads the desperate to consider debasing themselves to nourish upon the slop.

3. A pond of blotting blood has arisen here, perhaps residue left by the **roaming goremass**--perhaps merely the groundwater, utterly tainted by such waste and carrion, bleeding out as the land dies ever more. Flies gather in black clouds, supping upon the foul swill at its edges. It sticks to whatever touches it, like the film of infection upon a wound impossible to heal.
4. An **Emaciant** has been stripped and thrown in a gibbet cage, hung high above the road in-and-out of the village. The ghoul screams loudly for the praise of the Baron, loudly shrieking any crimes it witnesses; real or imagined. It is a craven thing, easily bribed if it could be reached before it unleashes its cacophony.
5. **Starving vines** have overgrown the fields and slithered their way beneath the loose walkways and fences of the village. To cut it back and tame it to the fields would risk destroying it, a crime of great severity given the cost of the wine that can be produced. Blood spilled, several person's worth, could perhaps draw it back; but only by a matter of inches. Day by day it intrudes further into the village, and those who do not treat softly will be bled to feed it.
6. **Gristlegobs** are collecting in a filth pit on the edge of the village, and though their bestial intellect would deny them proper tactics, their innate cunning is exacerbated by their endless hunger. They've collected sharp things, errant nails, rusty saws, misplaced knives and bent hooks; they seem intent to use them for sinister purposes. None shall sleep easily until they are displaced.

Town Demesne

Six features unique to towns within the Baron's demesne

1. Though there are sizable settlements, many buildings in the Baron's towns are empty, left forsaken and abandoned. Doors hang limply upon their hinges and shutters clacker about with the wind; creaking and slamming with a sound akin to the breaking of a child's bones. Ghosts, the locals say, is all that is left in such places. Memories of better times left to linger like a corpse upon a battlefield now forgotten.
2. In the dark of these towns there is an infection, a creeping fungal blight of blood red color which grows in the shadows like a film of festering rot. It slithers into homes and corrupts water, meat,

minds. It causes an itch that does not cease until flesh is rent, it causes a hunger that cannot be slaked save for raw, warm meat. Pest houses exist to quarantine the worst, but this merely concentrates the blight.

3. The people of the Baron's demesne are the most broken of souls to be found on the isles. Their faces are unflinching death masks, their eyes shot and jaundiced by the lethargy of their meager lives, and their morale shattered beyond repair. In these towns, only those who have become so accustomed to butchery and life as prey animals can last; and even then only for so long. These people know only cruelties to suffer, morale is but an illusion they cannot comprehend to dream.
4. Much as anywhere else in the Baron's lands, the ground within the towns are notably cold and hard, even in the balmiest of summer months. Without a firm hand upon a mattock, the earth will not yield an inch. Trenches are hard to dig in the towns as a result; and as such, filth piles nearly as high as the houses that expel it.
5. The water in these towns are hard won, the spoils of war against the bitter earth which gives little to those who seek such basic comforts as hydration. Even still, it is a brackish and coppery drink, the sort that slowly kills the capacity for taste and stains the teeth a brumous, phlegmatic yellow. There are few alternatives to this swill, and despite all its looks; it is clean enough.
6. The Reformed Faith thought it could save this land and its people from their wayward belief in pagan curses; but the hostility of the land and the bitterness of those who dwell within it shattered the faithful. Churches were built, towering monuments to hubris of man's infliction of the divine upon the natural; but now they remain hardly occupied, waylaid by the ravages of time and the ignorance of a cold, godless, populace.

Town Obstacles

Six obstacles within the Baron's demesne.

1. **Butchers** prowl the streets of this town, clanging their knives like a hue-and-crier would ring a bell. They demand the tithe be paid, and the first townsfolk to claim the tithe had already been paid was flayed alive in the town center. They want more bodies, more blood; they're not going to leave without it. Any who dare leave their homes will be culled.

2. Lesser Alchemists, servants of the Warlock, have arrived in town and seek to discern a greater truth to the curse that plagues these lands. Rather than offering panacea or cures, they seek out the bitterest earth and fungal blight with the hopes of seeing the true destruction it can bring. They've thrown more than a few healthy bodies in the pest house, just to chart the spread of the red rotting fungal strain.
3. Mortals of low integrity, poisoned as they are by greed and despair, ply the resurrectionist trade here. Ghouls must be fed, masticators given their due; lest they turn upon the living. These grim folk are willing to make bodies when corpses are not in ready supply; mercy is not within their set of skills and any corpse is better than their own. If they had spine enough to challenge their masters, such dark traits could serve humanity rather than stab it in the back.
4. **Emacians** and ghouls, beggar princes swayed to the words of **the Holy Fool** wander through this town like voracious waisslers, chanting psalms of the Reformed Faith and begging for alms. They claim the Baron will favor those who offer up their wrists to bitter blades with a feast when the Faith once again shines through the land. Those foolish enough to give such dregs attention or be caught alone by their mob, are inevitably ripped asunder and viciously consumed.
5. An attempted digging project for sake of public infrastructure discovered something in the hard and bitter earth. Some say it looked like an eye, raw and red and riddled with tumorous growths. Leadership worries such discovery may spread the curse, or merely be a sign that the curse is clawing its way up from the depths of the dark corners of the earth. The laborers, those strong enough to rend this ground, must be sacrificed in fire, their charred corpses placed in the same pit. An offering to dark powers, heresy, or mere panic; it matters not. A ritual must be performed to purify this revelation..
6. Itinerant weather is unpleasant, but in a town with such fragile infrastructure and rampant rot, it is a death sentence. A storm is on the horizon, within a day it will bring forth rime, freezing rain, and bitter winds. The streets will flood, the filth will flow from its heaps and spread across the settlement. Fires will burn low and foul within the hearths of homes, until the waters rise enough to

seep through every crack. When the storm clouds clear and the waters pass, countless dozens will be dead, and more will be sickened. All the easier for them to suffer predation, by vampire or fouler thing in this darkened land.

Keep Defenses

Six defenses or obstacles unique to keeps within the Baron's demesne.

1. The Baron, having long lost any semblance of humanity, has seen fit that all those who have ever waged conquest against them lay rotting outside the grounds of this keep. Their corpses never decomposed, they bloat and rot; havens for the worms, comely homes for the botflies. The foul, acrid stench of nearly liquified meat held back by only a thin film of flesh, wafts across this domain; causing all but those native to these lands to go bleary-eyed and vomit up their bile.
2. A pikeman's technique can win many a war, but such noble acumen must be brought low when used in this land. Filth spikes, hidden in pits, attached to trip wires, and in the hands of retainers serve the same purpose at this keep. Like the pins of a sea urchin, even the tiniest prick will release necrotic viruses and all manner of filth-born parasites to ravage those who are not immediately impaled.
3. Boiling cauldrons of pitch are a brutal weapon for more antiquated times of savage siege warfare, and as such they are held in high regard by the Baron. Interior gates and venting portholes exist in the courtyards of this keep to ensure those who enter can be sprayed and drowned in the burning black ichor; skin melting to meat and bone.
4. Loyal retainers to the Baron and their minions are rewarded with the cruelest iron weapons to be found outside the Mainland. Such weapons are not vaunted achievements of ingenuity or elegant pieces of art; they are blackened, brittle things. Forged cold in the swamps of old, used in bloody conquest of this domain so long ago. They serve as marks of rank, but against a servant of the Fae, they cut like ash against a vampire. The Baron knows this, but their minions do not; nor can they discern it through the maddened shrieks and rambles of their master.
5. Hungering masses are kept shackled within the keep, addled by agony and riddled with all manner of disease. They are ghouls

save only for their mortal distinction; they are humanity pushed beyond the veil of torment and lost forever to consumption. They will rip and gnash with their yellowed, broken teeth; desiring anything that might fill their bellies and bring them solace from the pain.

6. When pitch is not readily available, the Baron sees their keep stocked with the components for a blood sluice. Using the coagulating refuse blood of culled animals and those who could not grant the Baron an end from their hunger, it is sprayed and tossed; boiling, upon intruders. Those who survive the scalding will find themselves easily tracked by any ghoul, emaciant, or lesser vampire within a league of their location.

Vampires

Six vampire lords that live within the Baron's demesne.

1. **The Warlock** hates the Baron, of this no secret is made. The Warlock however desires no dominion over this land, nor would he ever desire to attend to the petty problems of those who dwell upon it. The curse is the Warlock's concern, he can taste it in the air; it ripples out from people and places here, and such items of concern are subjected to terrible experimentation. The Warlock enjoys immolating that which concerns him in a terrible apparatus and imbibing upon the fumes. He seeks to weaponize the curse, and the insight to do so without succumbing to it himself.
 - a. Schemes: *Study the Curse (6)*, *Contain the Curse (8)*, *Spread the Curse (10)*
2. **The Bell-Ringer** was blessed once, a campanologist well versed in the study of their trade as much as she was in the pulling of ropes for sake of calamitous din. The Baron once held them as a boon companion, and of all the servants the Baron holds, it is the Bell-Ringer who serves unceasingly. When the feast is called, the bells are rung; when war is sounded, the bells doth clang. Mad and wild and with reckless abandon, the bells are rung ragged by this desperate, pathetic soul.
 - a. Schemes: *Signal the Feast (6)*, *Ring in the Terror (8)*, *Unceasing Noise (10)*
3. **The Immolated One** was a trained scholar, an alchemist who thought the curse of this domain could be treated like any illness or frailty. It was a challenge, it could be overcome. Whatever it

was they imbibed, it brought them low. Their body withered to the bone, muscle and organ sweating from the skin in tar-like ichor. When they speak, fire gouts forth; as though whatever soul a vampire has is dying a horrible death. They hunger for warmth that will not come, and those marred by the tarry ichor find themselves blighted to ghoulish mien in a matter of days.

a. Schemes: *Scourge the Sickness (6)*, *Burn the Weak (8)*

4. **The Holy Fool** was emaciated in recent memory, yet a flicker of the flame imperishable and raw ego lingered within. The Holy Fool found solace and purpose in its hunger. It praised the Baron for such clarity. Naked and disjointed, with elongated jaws and carrying always with it a banner in praise of the Baron, the Holy Fool seeks to slake its thirst by consuming what it claims to be the souls of cowards, traitors, and the weak. It eats in ritualized ways, and the truth of how it has retained its mind is lost in the gnashing of teeth and the rending of flesh.

a. Schemes: *Study the Rituals (6)*, *Obtain the Flesh (8)*,
Order the Feast (10)

5. **The Wormhost** is among the most vile of the Baron's minions. His human chattel turned on him many years ago. They cut him to ribbons and bound him in irons. They threw his wretched frame into a cesspit, they thought the maggots would finish him off. But this land is cursed and it is unkind. He arose a year later, a host for ten thousand burrowing worms; they leak from every orifice and they know the blood of those who buried him. He hunts their lines still, and his new chattel suffer for the transgressions of old.

a. Schemes: *Rise, Reborn (6)*, *Punish the Treacherous (8)*,
Spread the Host (10)

6. **The Hieromancer** came from the mainland in ages past, she spoke the words of the Reformed Faith and the world seemed to cling to her heels in awe of it. She would be that which saved the Baron from the cursed calamity of this land. She lost whatever grace she had when she came to this land. She became the sort to cackle and devour the raw earth, slather poison upon her breast, and stab wildly at nothing. Part of her returns to stability when she gazes upon items of the Faith, and it is then she demands fresh bodies; fresh entrails to read which will grant all those cursed, their dismal release. Countless dead have yet to prove her auspices fruitful.

- a. Schemes: *Study the Entrails (6)*, *Spread the Sickness (8)*, *Devour the Land (10)*

Servants

Tier 2

Emaciants are said to be those unlucky ghuls who died of hunger within the Baron's demesne. Cursed with a fraction of the Baron's blood, they hunger as the Baron hungers, beings of gnashing teeth and gaunt, emaciated frames. Their strength over other ghuls lies in their all-consuming hunger, as they will fight unto the death for even a single scrap of flash, whereas ghuls can be cowed by displays of overwhelming force.

Enforcer

The **Roaming Goremass** resulted from attempts to quench the Baron's hunger through raw quantity. It is said that these lumps of meat, raw scraps and flesh cannot die, are always growing, metastasizing, cancerous in the way they spread throughout the Baron's demesne. Unsettlingly, they always seem to be emitting an impossible shriek, like that of a squealing pig.

Enforcer

Gristlegobs are nasty little creatures, spat up gobs of dead tissue and undigestable bits from the gullet of the Baron and their Masticators. Made up of connective tissue, bone shards, prosthetic limbs, and other indigestible bits, these goblin-like creatures seem to be held together principally by bad attitude.

Investigator

Tier 3

The **Butchers** are willing servants of the Baron, lesser vampires who devote themselves to feeding, creating, and marshalling the Baron's forces. They are the lieutenants, more "hands on" than most vampires, they are marked out by their bloody smocks and cruel hooks, butcher blades, and ravenous hunger.

Officer

The **Starvling Vine** sought to solve the problem of the Baron's hunger by investing in quality over quantity. An invasive species, it quickly spread throughout the Baron's Demesne, drinking blood and nutrients from the soil. It refines the blood into a sort of vampiric "wine", potent in the power it offers vampires, though it still does not sate the Baron. It is only held back by its massive waste, even as it tries to choke soil and man alike, as even a single drop of wine requires acres of land be ruined and gallons of blood be spilled.

Enforcer

Masticators are frankensteined bits of ham scraps sewn together to produce a simple, heavy "shock-troop" of the Baron's armies. Its principle feature is a distended jaw, made up of four wheels of teeth arranged in a rough diamond shape, each made from the jawbone of a different creature. Horrifyingly, a Masticator cannot swallow what passes through its maw, it may only chew it, and

they must be kept alive intravenously via blood transfusion, lest they burn out, be left for dead, or tear themselves apart, trying to create some opening for food to nourish them.

Enforcer

Tier 4

The **Ferals** are the Baron's mightiest enforcers, and perhaps only true companions. It is said that they were once a traveling troupe of acrobats, performers, and charmers. They entertained the Baron, day after day, ignoring the suffering of the peasantry around them as their pockets filled with gold and their bellies with meat. When the curse fell upon the Baron's castle, it fell in the middle of one of their performances, and so too did it fall upon their heads.

They are locked, forever, in grisly pantomime, entertaining their patron with screams, blood, and havoc, mummer's animal masks permanently affixed to their faces.

The **Rabbit** is the swiftest, an assassin capable of dashing forth to slay the Baron's enemies, almost impossibly difficult to catch.

Enforcer

The **Fox** is the cleverest, their madness tinged with method. They organize the festivals of flesh and blood, putting script to the torments of the peasantry, and directing it's companions.

Courtier

The **Boar** is general of the baron's armies, marshalling forces on impossibly long marches, burning whole villages for even the slightest hint of sedition, and taking, taxing, and pillaging more silver, more blood, more feed for the unquenchable maw that is the Baron.

Officer

The **Wolf** is the hunter of the pack, sniffing out rebellion before dragging peasants, screaming, off into the night.

Investigator

