**THE HOUSE OF THE 5TH MERIDIAN**

While the majority of heroes fought over the choice sections of the Tarrasque, all attempts by an onyx skinned warlock named Anton Dolfen to resurrect his slain companion failed, depleting a sizable amount of the mysterious wealth he possessed. Confusion continued to grow when it was discovered the source of his wealth was an appointed inheritance Anton came into...upon the death of the companion he was attempting to bring back from death. A schism in public conversation formed upon the revelation- was this genuine heartbreak or theatrics to hide something more sinister?

So when Anton Dolfen presented seemingly meek contracts, both sides of the schism supported the move as an act of desperation. Whether it was to quickly gather coin to continue attempts to bring back his benefactor or a smokescreen by an unscrupulous mage, both sides agreed Anton was trying to exchange his spellbooks for ledgers too quickly. Centuries later, it is regarded as the most successful strike in the history of Salt-in-Wounds, second only to the original deathblow of the Tarrasque.

In return for taking the least desirable Meridian point, Anton's house negotiated partial malignancy mining rights, allowing them to collect a small wage from each House for excising tumors from their sections, as well as regular tithing of plentiful but difficult to effectively process marrow. These seemingly worthless tumors were known to Anton to be teratomas, containing the normal derivative properties of the tissues and organs they grew on. After going through Anton's closely guarded distillation processes, these teratomas became sources of concentrated alchemical extracts. Once the contracts were ratified, Anton retired from public life. His existence nor his death has been confirmed in the nearly three centuries that followed.

Today, the house’s interests in life extension and ghoul's rights as citizens has fueled the rumors of secret experiments in necromancy that have allowed Anton Dolfen to continue to lead his house. As a result of his contracts, a large minority of alchemists and apothecary shop owners belong to 5th House, with nearly all the others genuflecting to as it has a near monopoly upon a variety of important alchemical reagants harvested from the Tarrasque. From them, the 5th house has developed numerous proprietary formulae and treatments that they make available only to those who can pay their steep licensing fees...or sign themselves over to contracted ghouldom.

**RELATIONSHIPS WITH OTHER HOUSES**

Because of the malignancy contracts, the 5th House has minor symbiotic relationships with every House that serve as both a helping hand and a black eye in their endeavors. Beyond these minor transactions and licensing, House Dolfen supplies a majority of the 10th House Impertabo's chem-factory ingredients for the occasionally peek at The Black Ledgers. They also buy a majority of the surplus Heart's Jelly from 11th's House Trunk Mine (located in the upper torso) to support that House's academy funding. As it does not reappear on the market except in minor quantities, it is believed this rare reagent is being used by the 5th House in secret experiments.

**NOTABLE NPCS**

**5th Meridian Binder-Lady Kuolemita Dolfen & her Consort Merrin Chyn**

Kuolemita is a tall, middle aged, female human with the onyx black skin of her family line. Whenever seen, the powerful aristocrat is dressed in incredible finery; always well-tailored and at the height of fashionability. As Binder-Lady & command word possessor of 5th House, Kuolemita is extremely politically powerful, with the influence and fortunes of her house only growing since the influx of numerous undead into the ranks of 5th. Kuolemita is viewed as being extremely shrewd, unfailingly polite, 'fair' enough although with a ruthlessness to be expected as one of Salt in Wound's oligarchs. However, most can only scratch their heads at her choice of lover.

Merrin Chyn is the non-aristocratic consort of Kuolemita. He is a male human of middling height with gray hair and tan skin. He can usually be found in soiled, ill-fitting clothing wherever drink is to be served, and whether he imbibes to excess in the seediest establishments amidst of Tail Stones or at lordly functions seems to make no difference to the man. Unlike Kuolemita, Merrin is viewed by the town as a drunken fool, infamous for his philandering ways.

**Anton Dolfen- Founder of the 5th Meridian House**

The warlock known as Anton Dolfen was born Agymah Kobina-Addo nearly three centuries ago. As Agymah, he served as the medicine man of his now-forgotten village, saving the life of a military officer named Wilhelm Dolfen. At the conclusion of the officer's campaign, he sponsored Agymah to come back to his home country to pursue higher education and a greater quality of life. Rumors swirled that Agymah, who had changed his name to Anton at Wilhelm's suggestion, and his older, wealthy sponsor were secret lovers- a gilded catamite Wilhelm had brought back from the dark continent. After completing his studies, Anton suggested he leave the city in order to spare Wilhelm any more social embarrassment. Wilhelm countered by presenting Anton a sealed document, granting him the rights to his surname and naming him his heir by appointed succession. They traveled as adventurers, far away from the judgment of Wilhelm's home province before their career ended at the site that would become Salt-in-Wounds.

**SECRETS**

Kuolemita & Merrin are both deeply in love, completely loyal & honest with one another (if no one else), and non-monogamous by prior agreement. They have elected to have Merrin assume the role of drunken fool and Kuolemita that of the role of long suffering wife in order to 'play both sides,' imply a division & weakness where none exists, and otherwise create maneuverability to advance their political aims. They both often weave elaborate (and utterly false) tales about their own mistreatment by their spouse, sometimes hinting that they intend to leave the marriage. This is usually done with the intent to entrap the unwary, greedy, and romantic in their schemes.

Besides continuing to grow the influence and wealth of 5th House, Kuolemita & Merrin are most interested in securing their own power beyond any contest. Hence, one of their primary goals is to eliminate those still loyal to Anton Dolfen, who is Kuolemita's great-grandfather currently in torpor within a powerfully warded section of the Meridian House.

Today, Anton's research led him to put his physical form in suspended animation using reverse engineered Dwergo technology. Inside of a climate controlled sarcophagus, he appears as little more than a corpse fed alchemical nutrients and reagents via tubuoles. He existed as an ethereal patriarch for another century, occasionally speaking to his servants by way of powerful divination. In recent decades, Anton has grown silent and insular, supposedly speaking only to his long-favored servant, a gentleman ghoul known only as Lord Anew. Whether or not Anton truly speaks to him is unknown, but as a brilliant alchemist and the refined, intelligent face of the ghoul citizenship movement, he is simply too valuable to the power of the 5th House to be destroyed by Lady Kuolemita in an attempt to grab power.