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SHADOWCRAFT

The GLAMOUR WAR

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FATE

SHADOWCRAFT

THE GLAMOUR WAR

This document is a content-complete layout draft. Visual, organizational, and grammatical elements are subject to change, but all mechanical and story content is final and complete.

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ENTER ARCADIA

My first encounter with Shadowcraft happened in 2014. Benjamin Feehan asked if I would be interested in doing some writing for this game designer he knew. That led to an introduction to Ryan M. Danks, and now I am sitting here writing an introduction for the first published work that I have contributed too. It is kind of mind-blowing to think how this project grew out of those conversations.

What you hold in your hands began as a simple idea in Ryan M. Danks mind, what if Mission Impossible took place in a fantasy world. From there it expanded along unexpected lines and grew into territories both familiar and new. Somewhere along the way, the Fae made their presence known from the shadows and Shadowcraft was truly born. From there, you know the rest of the tale. A successful Kickstarter, a collection of writing and art, and now, the book you hold.

I speak for the entire team when I say, thank you. Without you, the person holding this book, Shadowcraft would have remained where it began, a simple idea in someone's brain. I hope you enjoy the wild beauty and dark mysteries of Arcadia.

John-Matthew DeFoggi, 2016

THEME AND TONE

Shadowcraft is about two things, spies and fantasy. Spies cast from the same mold as Bond, Bourne, or Hunt. Magically enhanced agents who are fighting a cold war against horrors and terrors born of nightmares. High-octane impossible missions set a fantastical world, that was the pitch that Ryan M. Danks gave John-Matthew DeFoggi. Many iterations later, Arcadia was born.

The main theme of Shadowcraft is secrecy. Arcadia is a land of shadows, full of half-truths and ephemeral mysteries. It is a land abandoned by its true rulers, and given over to lesser beings. It is a land whose past is locked away from its current inhabitants, the Lost Ones. Even their history is hidden from them. The players will take on the role of Shadow Agents. Empowered by the Essence of the Arcadia, and entrusted with protecting their way of life, they are concerned with this secrecy. Their job is the uncovering or protection of secrets: those of Arcadia, The Lost Ones, and their own.

The tone of Shadowcraft is foreboding. In Arcadia secrets are a path to power, and on every path unseen threats await. Missions never go as planned, intel is never as solid as one would hope, and the enemy is never as ignorant as one would hope. On a more global scale, the war between the Courts constantly threatens to reignite, the Fae ruins hold untold horrors, and even now, the shadow of the Fae hangs like Damocles' Sword over the Lost Ones.

Shadow Agents of the Courts places themselves between their kin and the unknown. They, who among the Lost Ones have a sense of the immensity of the unknown, still seek out the secrets of Arcadia. They risk the snares of mysterious enemies to keep the lands of the Noraluans safe. To preserve the light of their civilization in the face of tides of darkness.

Are you ready to take your place between the darkness and the light?

Acknowledgements

We would like to thank everyone who backed our Kickstarter for making this game happen.

In addition, John-Matthew DeFoggi made a special request to acknowledge specific people:

Trisha DeFoggi, my amazing wife, who inspires and encourages me every day. Benjamin Feehan for introducing me to this project and acting as a partner in crime on it. Calvin Krug, Christopher Pileggi, and Richard Rohlin for always being willing to let me bounce ideas off of them, and for their advice.







CHAPTER

1

THE BASICS

THE CORE MECHANIC

In *Shadowcraft: The Glamour War*, all dice rolls follow one easy to remember, core mechanic:

Roll 4 Fate dice and add any modifiers for aspects and stunts. Compare to either another character's roll or a set opposition number.

There's more to it than that, of course, but these are the very basics. We'll get into more detail in chapter 7.

PLAYERS & GAMEMASTERS

When playing *Shadowcraft* you will either be a player or a game master.

If you're a player, your primary job is to take responsibility for portraying one of the protagonists of the game, which we call a player character (or "PC" for short). You make decisions for your character and describe to everyone else what your character says and does. You'll also take care of the mechanical side of your character—rolling dice when it's appropriate, choosing what abilities to use in a certain situation, and keeping track of fate points.

If you're a gamemaster, your primary job is to take responsibility for the world the PCs inhabit. You make decisions and roll dice for every character in the game world who isn't portrayed by a player—we call those non-player characters (or "NPCs"). You describe the environments and places the PCs go to during the game, and you create the scenarios and situations they interact with. You also act as a final arbiter of the rules; determining the outcome of the PCs' decisions and how that impacts the story as it unfolds. The gamemaster is often referred to as the "GM".

Both players and gamemasters also have a secondary job: make everyone around you look awesome. Fate is best as a collaborative endeavor, with everyone sharing ideas and looking for opportunities to make the events as entertaining as possible.

ASPECTS, RANKS & STUNTS

Aspects are short phrases that tell something important about a character. Some aspects, like a character's high concept, are a permanent part of them; rarely changing. Other aspects are created on-the-fly and disappear shortly after. For more information, see chapter 4 (page 36). Aspects can be invoked by paying a fate point to either add a +2 to a roll or reroll the dice.

Character aspects, as well as static opposition, are **ranked** on the Fate ladder. The ladder is a list of numbers with corresponding adjectives used to rank dice results, character aspects, and the total result of a roll. Here is the ladder:

+8	Legendary
+7	Epic
+6	Fantastic
+5	Superb
+4	Great
+3	Good
+2	Fair
+1	Average
+0	Mediocre
-1	Poor
-2	Terrible

Stunts are special traits that change the way ranked aspects works for your character. Generally, they give you a bonus (almost always a +2) to a certain action in a specific situation. See chapter 5 (page 42) for more details.

GAMEPLAY

While playing *Shadowcraft* the GM will describe the situations at hand and players will describe their character's actions and reactions. Most actions that PCs take don't require more than that: "my character walks across the room," or "I pick up the note and read it."

More complex actions, like investigating a mystery or convincing someone that you're right and they're wrong, require dice rolls to determine their outcome.

ROLLING THE DICE

When a character attempts something that requires a dice roll, the player—or GM, if it's an NPC—decides which aspect best fits the action, then roll 4 Fate dice (often abbreviated 4dF) and add the aspect's rank. Sometimes you'll have a stunt that gives you a bonus on the action you're taking.

If the result isn't as high on the ladder as you would like, you can invoke the aspect rolled, or other aspects that apply, to either reroll your dice or add a +2.

ACTIONS AND OUTCOMES

When a player or GM rolls dice, there are three different actions available in *Shadowcraft*: overcome an obstacle, create an advantage, and defend.

Overcome an obstacle actions are the *doing* actions. When you succeed at an overcome action, the obstacle is no longer in your way.

You **create an advantage** to give you an edge on an upcoming action. A successful 'create an advantage' action gives you one or two free invokes on an aspect—either an existing one or a new one created during the roll.

When someone rolls dice against you, you **defend** yourself against them. Successful defend actions means you succeed in avoiding what they were trying to do to you.

Each of the three actions have four possible outcomes:

- You fail if your total is *less than* your opponent's total.
- It's a tie if your total is *equal to* your opponent's total.
- You succeed if your total is *greater than* your opponent's total.
- You succeed with style if your total is at least *three greater than* your opponent's total.

CHALLENGES, CONTESTS, & CONFLICTS

Usually, when you want to do something straightforward—pick a lock, bribe a guard—all you need to do is make one overcome action against a difficulty set by the GM. Sometimes, however, things get a little more complex.

A **challenge** is a short series of overcome and create an advantage actions used to resolve an especially complex situation. You don't determine success or failure until all rolls are completed.

Contests pit two or more characters against one another for the same goal, but they aren't trying to directly hurt one another. Chases, debates, sporting tournaments, and the like are all examples of contests.

Conflicts are used to resolve situations where opposing sides are *actively trying to harm one another*. Duels, grand mêlées, and climatic showdowns are all great examples of a conflict.

STRESS & CONSEQUENCES

Stress represents the fatigue—both physical and mental—that accumulates quickly during stressful times. It could be a grazing hit in a conflict, an annoyance at someone else (or even yourself). Either way, stress is a fleeting condition that goes away quickly.

Consequences, on the other hand, are new aspects that you take which represent more serious setbacks. Consequences are usually taken to avoid being taken out during a conflict, but sometimes they happen because of a failed overcome or defense roll. More serious consequences last longer, and can be invoked against you; making them great fodder for compels as well!

FATE POINTS

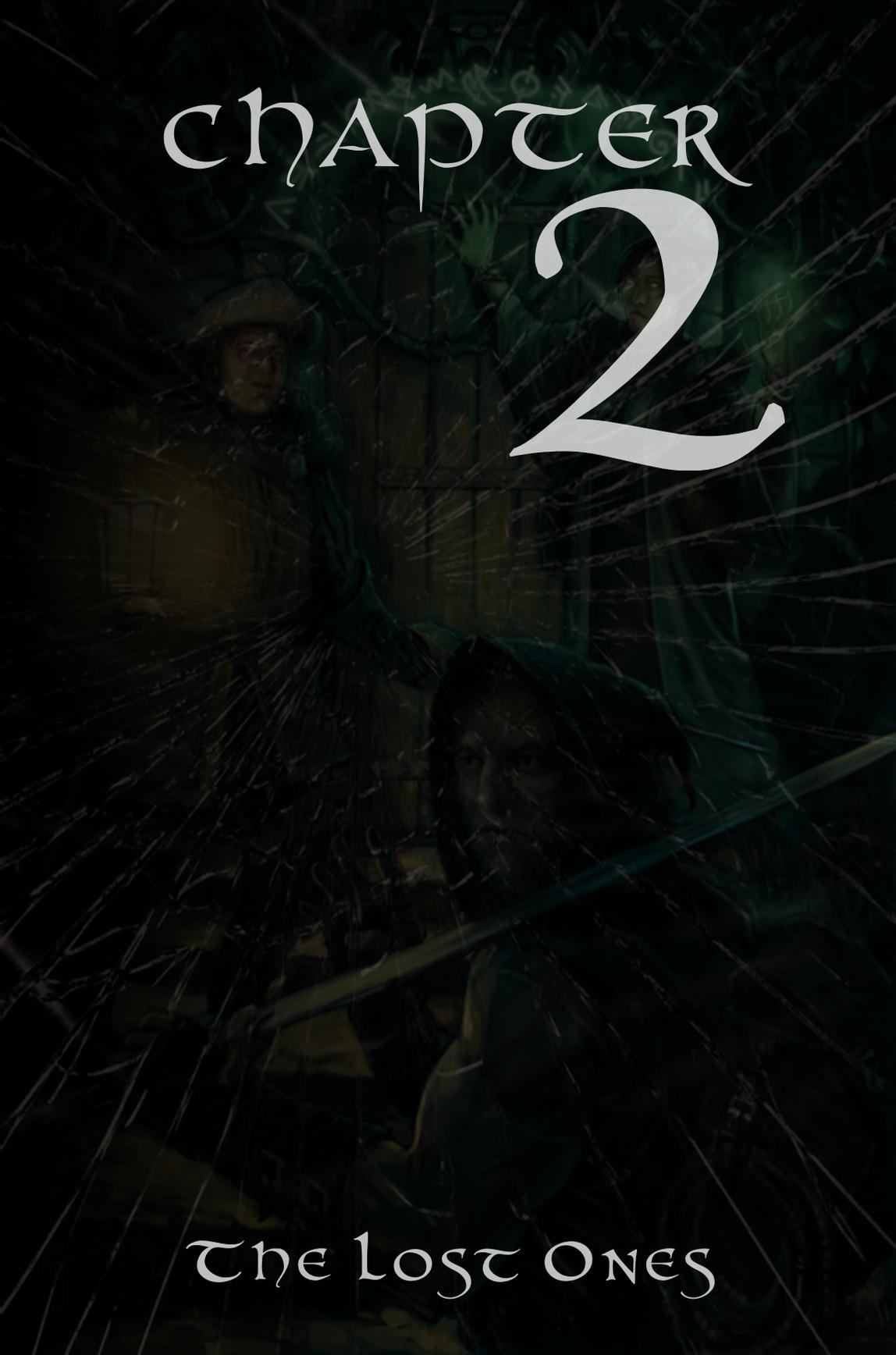
You use tokens to represent how many fate points you have at any given time during play. Fate points are one of your most important resources in Fate—they're a measure of how much influence you have to make the story go in your character's favor.

You can spend fate points to **invoke** an aspect, to declare a story detail, or to activate certain powerful stunts.

You earn fate points by accepting a **compel** on one of your aspects.

Players start each *mission* with a number of fate points equal to their character's refresh. GMs start each *scene* with a number of fate points equal to the number of players, plus a little extra in their reserve.





CHAPTER

2

THE LOST ONES

Arcadia. Once it was home to beings of immense power that strode across the face of the world as gods. These creatures, known in distant lands as the Fae or Fairies, ruled, warred, lived, and loved in Arcadia. But no longer, for the Fae are no more. Those that now inhabit the Shining Realm are the Fae's lesser children, and they war amongst themselves for the memories of their makers. These are the Lost Ones.

ENSLAVED BY THE FAE

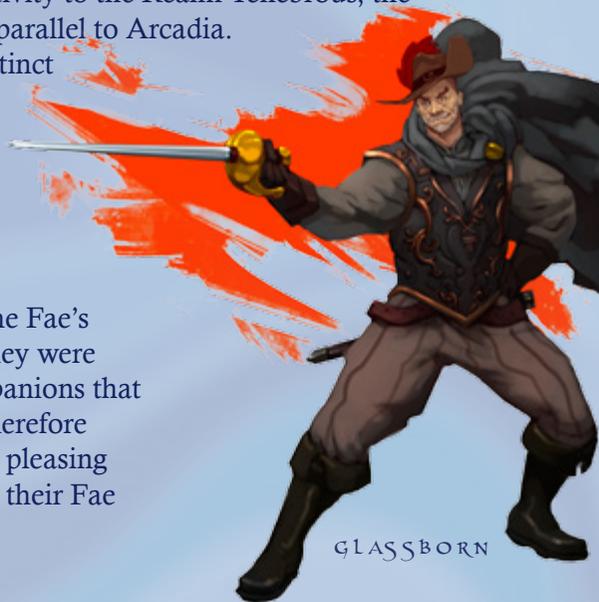
Oral tradition states that the Lost Ones are not natives of Arcadia. They are descended from mortals kidnapped by the Fae untold years ago. The Fae, wandering the world, stole people from their homes, and brought them to Arcadia to fulfill a need for servant-stock. For untold centuries, the Lost Ones labored in service to their kidnappers as wardens, lovers, workers, and apprentices. All the while, the changes the Fae wrought in them continued to strengthen. The Fae, being creatures of chaos and change, seemed to have forgotten that essence flows through all of Arcadia. By wielding the power of Arcadia for themselves, the Lost Ones rose up to cast off their yoke of slavery.

ALTERED LINEAGES

When the Lost Ones were brought to Arcadia, the Fae immediately changed them to better suit the nature of the land and their whims. They were shaped like clay into forms more useful to their new masters. These changes granted the Lost Ones sensitivity to the Realm Tenebrous, the plane of spiritual essence that exists parallel to Arcadia. Over time, the Fae wrought three distinct lineages in Arcadia: the Glassborn, the Sylvan, and the Stonekin.

GLASSBORN

The first, and most numerous of the Fae's new lineages were the Glassborn. They were altered to become servants and companions that accompanied the Fae at all times. Therefore the Glassborn were drawn into more pleasing shapes, dully reflecting the beauty of their Fae



overlords. The Glassborn lived among the Fae in the cities, like the capital of Aileach. The Glassborn kept their masters' homes, worked at their masters' crafts, and provided their masters comfort in their beds. They learned their masters' secrets well and when the rebellion finally came, it was the Glassborn's intimate knowledge of the Fae that enabled its success.

In the present day, Glassborn are known as master empaths, able to divine the ebb and flow of a soul's movements. The Glassborn also became close observers of their former masters' ability to use the essence of Arcadia to shape reality. However, the Glassborn's figments do not possess the animating spark of the Fae constructs. The mockery of the true creations lead the Fae to refer to this power as Illusory. The Glassborns must judiciously draw on the power of the Realm Tenebrous. For the more they express, the more like their figments they become. Eventually they fade into the Realm like the illusions they employ.

In the Glamour War, Glassborns make expert use of their empathy and illusions. Wrapping themselves in illusory figments, they deceive their enemies, shield their allies, and are able to delve deep into the psyches of those they interact with. Without the intelligence gathering that the Glassborn perform, the Glamour War would have failed years ago.



SYLVAN

SYLVAN

During the period of their enslavement, not all the Glassborn accepted their lot in life. The trauma of being stolen, the stress of servitude, some hidden strength or flaw of character, any of these reasons created individuals who would not conform to the role chosen for them. Some rebelled, committing crimes against their own kind and against the Fae. The Fae did not countenance this presence among the rest of their servants. The Fae exiled these criminals, no matter their crime, beyond the cities. Why they were not simply killed is unknown, but the reasoning of the Fae mind were often arcane in the eyes of their servants. The Fae drove them into the untamed wilds of Arcadia. If they would not accept their place within civilization, they would be treated like wild beasts. The Fae named these exiled criminals the Sylvan, and they added a weighty curse on top of their exile: banished to the forests

of Arcadia, the Fae permitted the Sylvan to live as men during the day, but at night the Fae curse twisted their forms and they roamed like beasts.

The Glassborn occasionally sought out their banished kin to use the Sylvan as messengers, but for the most part, the tribes of Sylvan stayed away from their 'kept' brethren. Their essence lost the Glassborn traits, and instead the Sylvan formed a close bond with the wilds of Arcadia. This is what enabled them to survive, and indeed to thrive, bereft of the comforts of the cities. This bond gave the Sylvan the ability to control their natural environments, which they could animate through expression, as well as enabling them to subconsciously tap into the instincts of their bestial selves.

During the Uprising, the Glassborn succeeded in breaking most of the Fae curse upon the Sylvan. This healing was the price the Sylvan demanded in exchange for their service. Still, the souls of the Sylvan remember the Fae's curse, and as they draw on the Realm Tenebrous, they still manifest the characteristics and shape of the beast.

The Sylvan now serve as scouts, messengers, and saboteurs within the Armies of the Lost, and with distinction among the Shadow Agents. Their Rangers patrol the Treaty Line, and search the wilds for Fae Ruins and new instances of the Shadowlands. Without the Sylvan, the Armies of the Lost and the Ministry would have been out maneuvered long ago.

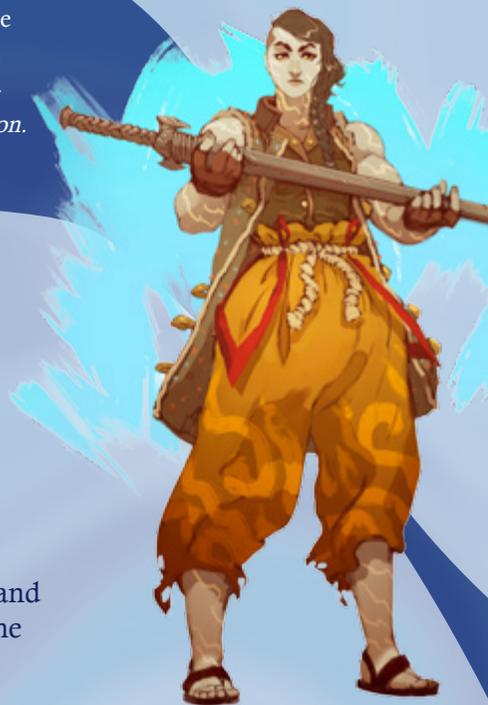
ESSENCE

Essence is the substance of the Realm Tenebrous. It is the energy of change, dream, and the soul. This is what the Lineages use to fuel their powerful expressions. See *Chapter 6 – Expression* for more information.

STONEKIN

Not all of the Lost Ones stolen were kept in the cities of the Fae. Not all were formed to be Glassborn or exiled to become the Sylvan. Some the Fae shaped to labor in secret beneath the bones of Arcadia. When the Stonekin and their secret works became known to the other Lost Ones, this revelation became the spark of rebellion.

The Fae had a deep and abiding love for Scáthán, the mirrored stone. So pure in form and essence was this white stone that it reflected the



STONEKIN

Realm Tenebrous as well as the Fae in bright and terrible ways. The Fae found it entrancing. They shaped their cities from Scáthán and Faeglass, crafting them into works of art. But the stone was only found in the deeps of the mountains, lying intertwined with the red ore that was an anathema to the Fae. The red ore was known as Faebane or Blood-Blighter.

So the Fae created the Stonekin and gave them forms suitable for the brutal labor under the Ironhold Mountains. The Fae infused them with the strength and endurance of the stone that surrounded them, and also kept segregated from the rest of the Lost Ones. The Stonekin grew proficient in crafting items from Scáthán and Faeglass and iron. Their essence flowed in sync with the stone of Arcadia, and they could transfer that permanence into themselves or other objects. The more they imbue an item, however, the more they draw permanence into their own forms, growing more rock like. In fact, it is whispered that statue graveyards exist within sacred chambers in the mountains.

The Stonekin serve as heavy infantry, siege experts, and quartermasters within the Armies of the Lost. They often provide the muscle for Shadow Agent teams. They are the foundation of the Ministry, providing much needed support for all who fight the Glamour War.

EXPRESSION

The trait that sets the Lost Ones apart from their mundane ancestors is the ability of Expression. Though they are mortal, the power of Arcadia flows through the Lost Ones. Upon their abduction, these people were altered by the Fae; molding their spirits for their own inhuman purposes. Part of this molding caused the Lost Ones to become anchored to the ebb and flow of the Realm Tenebrous, the spiritual plane of Arcadia. This use of the Realm Tenebrous is known as expressing.

The Lost Ones can use the anchor of their souls to express the essence of the Realm Tenebrous into the physical realm, enabling feats of supernatural effect. In channeling this spiritual essence, the Lost Ones rise above their mortal kin. Expression enables them to enhance their physical bodies, exercise their lineages' inherent abilities, and other wondrous effects.

Yet there is danger in the use of this power. For, despite their altered nature, the Lost Ones are not spirits and ideas made flesh like the Fae. They are corporeal, and therefore must remain cautious of drawing power too often from the Realm Tenebrous. The act of expressing creates cracks in the essences of the Lost Ones. These fractures spread, and expand, filling with the essence of the Realm Tenebrous and thereby exaggerating the innate changes wrought on the Lost Ones by the Fae.

THE REALM TENEBROUS

The Lost Ones understand very little of the Realm Tenebrous. They know how to access it, how to use it, and they know its dangers, but of its true nature they know next to nothing. In truth, 'Arcadia' and 'The Realm Tenebrous' are deceptive terms; imposing a dichotomy that fails to convey the underlying reality. To the Lost Ones, Arcadia refers to the physical lands they inhabit and the Realm Tenebrous is seen as a sort of spiritual plane that exists in parallel to those lands. But the Fae crafted Arcadia as surely as they crafted the Lost Ones, and they were beings of a singular nature; somehow both spiritual and physical. Whereas the Fae swam through the whole of Arcadia immersed in both the land and the Realm Tenebrous, the Lost Ones stand upon the land and wade through the Realm Tenebrous. The Realm Tenebrous lies like a shadow upon Arcadia, while simultaneously being cast by it.

The Realm Tenebrous is the source of the Lost Ones' expression and the essence that enables it. Powerful Lost Ones can access more of it than others. They may move through it, send their senses through it, or even recall those who have died and merged with it. Its essence is broken up into two areas: the Brightlands and the Shadowlands.

The Brightlands

Once, the Brightlands were all that the Lost Ones knew of the Realm Tenebrous. Its essence flows through the whole of Arcadia and its inhabitants. The Brightlands are the font of change and motion, reflecting the warmth and life of Arcadia. It still carries the flavors of the Fae, even though they have long since vanished from Arcadia.

Wielding the Brightlands is one way the Fae crafted the Lost Ones to their use. It made them more useful and relatable servants. When a Lost Ones expresses, she calls upon this bright energy. The Brightlands flows through them, bending itself in accordance to their will. The Lost Ones can express the Brightlands through ritual or thought, and it comes easily for them. But the term 'the Brightlands' is a new one; recently coined by the Ministry in response to the spread of the Shadowlands.

The Shadowlands

The Shadowlands are a relatively new phenomenon in the history of Arcadia. It is a darkness that pervades certain areas, where the energy of the Realm Tenebrous has been corrupted. Shadowland energy lashes out at the Lost Ones, preventing them from fully utilizing the Shadowlands for expression. Furthermore, it forces horrible essence fractures upon their souls. This dark energy seeps into Arcadia, tainting the land that co-exists with the

Shadowlands. The Spectres seem to be tied to these manifestations. They are able to draw upon the Shadowlands as easily as the Brightlands. The Shadowlands most often emerge around Kormillian-held lands, although they also spring up around battlefields and other areas of slaughter.

Just as the Brightlands flows through Arcadia, the Shadowlands pool and stagnate. They are doldrums within the Realm Tenebrous, and can even trap time within them. The Ministry has reports that tell of battlefields where spirits relive the slaughter of war on their anniversaries, castles that appear out of the mists and play through a night of betrayal on every full moon as unknowing travelers are pulled into their dark dramas. Through the expression of Expurgation, the Lost Ones have found a way to cleanse the Realm Tenebrous of the Shadowlands, but only at great cost and effort.

THE LOST UPRISING

For untold years, the Lost Ones chafed at serving under the fae/having to serve under the fae. Yet they bided their time; watching and learning as they served, absorbing what knowledge they could from their masters. They refined their expressions, secretly passing down techniques, as well as stories, from one generation to the next.

Vastly outnumbered by their servants, the Fae strove to keep them separated. The Glassborn were restricted to the cities, the Sylvan were banished to the wilds, and the Stonekin were hidden under the mountain. Not until Noralua the Glassborn discovered the existence of the Ironhold mines did the Lost Ones learn of the Stonekin or desire contact with other lineages.

By what means Noralua uncovered the existence of the Stonekin has been lost, but it is known that this revelation is what sparked the Uprising. In secret, she met with the other courts of the Lost Ones. To the Stonekin she offered a chance at freedom in exchange for iron weapons. She bought the loyalty of the Sylvan tribes with promises of freedom and vengeance on the Fae, and an end to their bitter curse. The Lost Ones stood united behind Noralua against the Fae.

The Uprising, as the conflict would be called, lasted generations; outliving its founder Noralua. Even with numbers, iron, and expression on their side, the Lost Ones still faced beings that were gods to them. The Lost Ones fought a secret war against their masters. They sabotaged where they could, and killed when they were able. Each little uprising was put down only to be picked up by the next generation. The Fae responded with atrocities of their own; a thousand dead, culled for the loss of a single Fae. Still, there were limits to what the Lost Ones could do. The buildings of the Fae, composed of essence, Scáthán and Faeglass, were immune to the powers of the Lost Ones. And although iron was anathema to the Fae, getting close enough to inflict a

killing blow was a feat of unimaginable difficulty.

The war seemed to toll the death knell of the Lost Ones, but it was a war they were unwilling to give up. Even in the face of annihilation, the majority of the Lost Ones continued to struggle to break the Fae's hold on them. A minority split off to follow Kormill, a new voice who spoke out against the teachings of Nuralua and taught reconciliation. The poets refer to the Uprising as a battle of wills, for it seemed that the body count was inconsequential to the outcome. And then one morning, the Lost Ones awoke to find their Fae masters gone.

THE VANISHING

What happened to the Fae is unknown. One day they were there, and the next they were not. No one knows where they went. Some believe they died out; the constant state of war finally overcoming them. Some believe they fled rather than face annihilation, either of themselves or their children. Others believe they merely withdrew into the Realm Tenebrous, biding the years with inhuman patience until they are ready to reclaim Arcadia from the Lost Ones.

What is known is that the Fae disappeared, and they sealed their sanctuaries, their towers, cairns, and temples, behind powerful wards. The power of these wards are such that to this day, the Lost Ones have only breached a handful of the Fae ruins that dot the landscape of Arcadia. The Ministry believes that within one or more of these ruins, the secrets of the Fae and the Vanishing will be uncovered.

The Vanishing was so monumental, that the Lost Ones began their history from that day. It is currently the year 116 after the Vanishing (AV)

KORMILLIAN PURGE

The sudden departure of the Fae, and the victory it seemed to herald, did not bring peace to Arcadia. For in the aftermath of the Fae disappearance, the Nuraluans turned upon the Kormillians immediately. They were targeted for being capitulators and traitors. The Kormillians had preached against Nuralua and the Uprising, betraying their brethren to the Fae at every chance. They now prophesied a return of Fae mastery, and a place of honor for those who held true to their master's wishes. After a hard fought and strangely won war, violence was still on the mind of the Nuraluans. The streets of Aileach ran red with the blood of Lost Ones. The Kormillians were in the minority and after a year of constant fighting, the Nuraluans had captured the core of the followers of Kormil.

THE CASTING

The Noraluans, having captured the majority of the Kormillians, were faced with what to do with their vanquished brethren. The simplest solution would be to slaughter the Kormillians, but the Noraluans found the ties of kinship ran too deep to sever in such cold blood. The Lost Ones as a whole had finally tired of war. The victorious Noraluan factions gave the Kormillians a choice: renounce their beliefs or head into exile. Most chose exile.

And so the Kormillians were cast out to live far beyond the boundaries of the Sylvan forests and the southernmost cities of the Fae. In the shadowy lands known as The Hedge, the Kormillians passed out of the history of the Lost Ones and Arcadia for over a hundred years. With the conclusion of what would forever be remembered as The Casting, Arcadia as whole then became a bright and pleasant land, with most of it having being claimed by the victorious lineages.

THE FORMATION OF THE COURTS

The Casting was the last thing the Noraluans agreed on. After that, the alliance of Lost Ones no longer had a threat to keep them unified. The Sylvans wished to return to the wilds. The Stonekin desired their underground mansions. And the Glassborn settled into unlocking the cities that were their homes, beginning with Aileach, which they now renamed Lancaster.

But to prevent the lineages from growing too far apart, the leaders of the alliance forged the Courts of Arcadia. The Courts were designed to give each lineage not only leadership, but a way to interact with the other Lost One communities. The Courts would meet in Lancaster to keep the peace, and lines of communication and trade open. They would share information, new expression techniques, and generally try to keep the lineages of the Lost Ones tied together. So the Noraluans forged four courts, one for each lineage, and one held in absentia for their brethren who had been cast out, in hopes that one day, they would be reconciled.

During the Glamour War, the Courts work in unison to garrison and supply the Armies of the Lost in enforcing the Fragile Peace.

SPRING

The Court of Spring is the court of the Glassborn. It governs the cities of the Fae, and as such serves as the backbone of the Lost Ones' culture. They are ruled from Lancaster by the Seven Lords of Spring. This council gives oversight and guidance more than actual rulership; providing resolutions to major conflicts among the Glassborn and the other Lineages. Since the advent of the Glamour War, the Spring Court was created and maintained by the Ministry. This intelligence organization recruits, trains, and sends Shadow Agents out into Arcadia, waging a hidden war against the Kormillians and their Spectres.

SUMMER

The forests are the domain of the Summer Court, and the Sylvans make up the lion's share of that court's members. Composed of the various tribes of the Sylvan and those who would make their homes outside of the former Fae cities, the Summer Court is ruled by the Pride of Bánwood. The Pride is the chieftain of the Bánwood tribe, the largest and most powerful of all the Sylvan tribes. The Bánwood is a matriarchy and the current ruler of the Summer Court is Mavis Wildborne, a Sylvan of power and a wisdom that is both deep and subtle. She has ruled the Court since the Fragile Peace and shows no sign of stepping aside.



AUTUMN

The Court of Autumn is the smallest of the courts, and is the most limited in geographic influence, being confined to the Ironhold Mountains. The Courts of Autumn bends their knee to the King of the Ironholds. The King appoints representatives to Lancaster for the seats of the Autumn Court, but has never left the confines of his hold. Some say that the same King has ruled under the Ironholds since before the Uprising. Others say it is merely a title, passed mysteriously to worthy successors when the current king passes.

WINTER

For over a hundred years, the Winter Court was merely an honorific. It was a placeholder to remind the rulers of the Lost Ones that they were not a whole people, and to serve as a reminder of the past and hope for the future. But with the return of the Kormillians and the establishment of the Fragile Peace, the Winter Court has become the embassy of the Kormillians within Noraluan society. The Ministry is fearful that the Kormillians abuse the office of the Winter Court by using it as a way to spy upon Lancaster. They wish to have the Winter Court banned, but have been overruled so far by the leaders of the Courts. The current delegate of the Winter Court is the Ambassador Donogh. He is the soul of courtly courtesy, and claims to seek only what is best for both sides.

THE RETURN OF KORMIL

Twelve years ago, an army emerged from the south, brutally crushing any resistance it met. The Great Southron Forest fell before its Sylvan inhabitants could send out the call for help. The cities of Bluewall, Farreach, and Sheerhome fell before Lancaster could muster a resistance. When fact was finally separated from fiction, the truth was revealed that the children of Kormil had returned, and they had returned changed.

But the exiled Lost Ones were not all that comprised this invading army, quickly dubbed as the Nightmare Horde. Monstrous creatures accompanied them, lending them numbers and strength that the Noraluans could not match at first. Formorions and Ogres, creatures from the myths of the Fae, slaughtered those that opposed the Horde. Strange beings that often inhabited the remote places of Arcadia were bound to the will of their army. Horrid, twisted, rabid version of natural creatures were unleashed from their front lines.

For two years the Courts warred, and the Noraluans were pushed back. The Army of the Lost finally clashed with the Nightmare Horde on the plains of Ceol, outside of the city of the same name. It was there that the Nightmare Horde was finally stopped. Seeking a parley, the Noraluans and the Kormillian forces came together for the first time in a century, and created the Fragile Peace. The territory the Kormillians had claimed during the war was ceded to them, creating the Treaty Line. Ceol was established as a city under joint control between the Noraluans and the Kormillians. In time,

the initial hope that Ceol would serve as meeting place of ideas and cultures and foster peace crumbled. Ceol has become the focal point of the Glamour War and a reminder of the rift that threatens to tear Arcadia apart.

THE FRAGILE PEACE

“The Accords of Ceol” is the official name for the document that sealed the peace treaty nearly ten years ago. However the Ministry refers to this as “The Fragile Peace”. They have been able to piece together that the Nightmare Horde was not stopped by the Armies of the Lost, but by a faction within the Horde. Since then, Spectres have been found operating far and wide in Northern Arcadia, searching for something. The Ministry seeks to uncover what this faction is after, and how to end the war once and for all. But until then, its agents live with the knowledge that today could be the last day of peace that Arcadia knows.

SPECTRES: THE DARK LINEAGES

When the Kormillians returned to Arcadia proper, some were changed. They still born the marks of Glassborn, Sylvan, and Stonekin, but carried within them subtle alterations to their natures. These changes became more pronounced as the Kormillians began to suffer from essence fracturing. Most undergo the ‘Bleaching’. Their skin grows paler, becoming sickeningly translucent, and their hair darkens. The Kormillians are able to draw upon the essence of the Shadowlands and wield dark and terrible expressions; works that the Lost Ones are unable to replicate.

The Lost Ones refer to their Kormillian brethren as the Dark Lineages. The Ministry refers to them as Spectres.

THE GLAMOUR WAR

The time of outright war has passed. The Armies of the Lost and the Nightmare Horde sit on either side of the Treaty Line, sometimes skirmishing, but mainly enforcing the edges of the status quo. Instead, the Glamour War rages in the streets and shadows of Arcadia. It has replaced the clash of armies with a battle of agents. It is a cold war, a war of manipulation, counter-moves, and most importantly, information. The Ministry seeks to win the battle with the Nightmare Horde through subtlety and guile.

Their Shadow Agents are spread throughout Arcadia, gathering information on the Nightmare Horde. They undermine Kormillian plans and personnel with misinformation. They turn those they can, and they assassinate those who are immune to subversion. Agents work tirelessly to open and delve into Fae ruins, searching for the relics and knowledge of the past. And the Glamour War spills into the Realm Tenebrous as the Shadow Agents risk life and essence, seeking to cleanse the Shadowlands that have spread throughout Arcadia

The Kormillians send their Spectres to oppose the Ministry's interests. The Glamour War is the push-and-pull between these two factions, as each seeks to find what they need to win the war before it starts anew.





CHAPTER

3

CHARACTER CREATION

WHAT A SHADOW AGENT IS

As a Shadow Agent, you are part soldier, part scholar, and part weapon. The Glamour War requires trained, competent individuals who are crafted into teams with the capacity to operate autonomously. Wielded by the Ministry, these agents are weapons pointed at the heart of the Nightmare Horde.

Shadow Agents undergo strenuous training to unlock the physical, mental, and expressional skills that will keep them alive in the Glamour War. Pushed to their limits and beyond, many never survive the training process. The expression training alone has an inhuman mortality rate. But those that graduate become Lost Ones that verge on contending with the glory of the Fae.

Shadow Agents have to be prepared for the vagaries of the Glamour War. They have to be equally at ease in a Glassborn sponsored ball, a rooftop chase, a back alley brawl, or deep within a Fae Ruin. They are skilled fighters, natural diplomats, seasoned explorers, and powerful expressionists. They are what their missions require them to be.

In short, they are the only hope for winning the Glamour War.

WHAT A SHADOW AGENT ISN'T

A Shadow Agent is not an itinerant wanderer, seeking his fortunes by murder and plunder. They are functioning members of Noraluan society; responsible to their superiors in the Ministry, as well as to the government of the Courts

While the Ministry does take in orphans, this is the exception to the rule. Shadow Agents have people they are fighting for, people they can count on for help, and people who will miss them when they are gone. They have homes, families, friends, and loved ones.

In short, they are not adventurers.

LINEAGES

THE GLASSBORN

Spread throughout Arcadia, the Glassborn inhabit the major population centers of the Lost Ones, and are therefore the most numerous of their kin. These cities form the backbone of Noraluan culture. Coupled with the fact that they were the servants of the Fae, the Glassborn are the most urbane of the lineages. With access to the inherent expression of Glamour, Glassborn are masters of illusion, disguise, and misdirection.

Glassborn Shadow Agents are refined, at home in the sprawling alleyways of Ceol, and are able to project glamours that can confuse the minds of other Lost Ones. Choose the Glassborn lineage if your character thrives on misdirection, appreciates the finer things, and is at home in a city.

THE SYLVAN

Sylvan arise from enclaves within the wilds of Arcadia. With the Southron Forest lost in the opening moments of the Glamour War, the largest of these enclaves of Sylvans is the Bánwood. In homespun wool and leathers, the Sylvan appear pastoral at best, and feral at worst, when compared with their Glassborn kin. Fewer in numbers than the Glassborn, the Sylvan tribes are still pervasive.

Sylvan Shadow Agents are at home in the natural landscapes of Arcadia that exists between the cities and the mountains. Their Naturalism expression makes any Sylvan a force to be reckoned with. Choose the Sylvan lineage if your character is at home in nature, scouts paths unseen, or wants the power of the natural world at her beck and call.

THE STONEKIN

Residing within the hearts of Arcadia's mountain ranges, a Stonekin's life is expressed through stone. The changes that the Fae imposed upon them limited their numbers, extending and slowing their lifecycles. They live long lives, and have few offspring. The changes also give the Stonekin their preternatural endurance and strength. A natural inclination for crafting and their Earthwright expressions makes Stonekin-wrought relics coveted items on any Ministry sponsored mission.

Stonekin Shadow Agents take a long term view of the Glamour War. They can be slow to react to new situations, as the Stonekin mind tends grind away at problems; seeking out a strategic advantage. From their warrens under the mountains, Stonekin Shadow Agents are recruited by the Ministry into the Glamour War. Choose the Stonekin lineage if your character is a strategist, quartermaster, or the muscle of a Shadow Agent team.

THE HALFBORN

Despite the changes that the Fae made to the Lost Ones, they are all from the same mortal heritage. While these changes resulted in the Lineages, and while the Lineages tend to keep to themselves, Lost Ones are still motivated by mortal passions. The fruit of these passions are often the Halfborn. Halfborn tend to favor one parent more strongly than the other in body and spirit. But this favoring is not always one sided. A Halfborn can look like a Sylvan physically, while having access to the inherent expression of Glamour.

While in ancient times these pairing were rare, the vagaries of the Glamour War often puts Lost Ones in intense situations where Halfborn are the outcome. Their dual-nature can be a great asset in the field, as they can masquerade as one lineage while wielding the expression of another. Choose the Halfborn lineage if your character is a mixture of two other lineages, struggles to find his place in the world, or has a conflicted and troubled past.

CHARACTER CREATION BASICS

All characters in Shadowcraft: The Glamour War have a number of things in common.

Five Aspects

Each character has five aspects, ranked on the ladder from Average (+1) to Good (+3). More seasoned characters can have aspects ranked as high as Superb (+5). The higher your rank in an aspect the better your character is able to perform tasks which that aspect represents. See chapter 4 for more on each aspect.

3 Stunt Slots

Each character has a number of stunt slots equal to their refresh. For a beginning character, that means three slots. Each slot can have any number of thematic stunt benefits, but if you ever have more benefits than you have stunt slots, the GM gets more fate points to use. See chapter 5 for more on stunts.

3 Refresh

A character's refresh is a measure of their ability to influence the story. The higher your refresh the less often you'll need to accept compels, the more you can refuse compels, and the more often you will be able to invoke aspects.

Starting characters have a refresh of 3.

Stress & Consequences

When shadow agents find themselves in harm's way—a fairly common occurrence when you're the best of the best, deep in enemy territory—they have two ways to stand their ground and stay on their feet: stress and consequences.

Stress is the immediate, short-lived toll that your mind and body suffer during conflicts. Consequences on the other hand, are the longer-lasting repercussions of contests and conflicts.

Starting characters have 2 stress boxes and one of each severity level of consequence: mild, moderate, and severe. See chapter 7 for more on stress and consequences.

CHARACTER CREATION

Shadow agents are far and away the best of the best, selected and trained for their specific and unique talents they bring to the organization.

Character creation tells a story about your character before he or she was recruited to be a shadow agent. This story is told in three discrete stages, each one divulging a little bit of your character's background and history.

Character creation is collaborative. Each step of the way, you can and should ask for input from your fellow players—as well as the GM—whenever you're stumped or have a tough choice to make.

Character creation is also world building. While building your character you will also be fleshing out the world of Arcadia. Each step of character creation also has a world-building section. Arcadia is not just a land for adventures; it's *your* land for adventures.

Character Creation Steps:

1. Character Idea
2. Core trio aspects
3. Other aspects
4. Rate aspects
5. Stunts
6. Refresh
7. Stress and Consequences
8. Develop faces and places

CHARACTER IDEA

The first thing you should come up with is your character idea: who they are, where they're from, and what they're good at. You can model them after your favorite character from a book, movie, TV show, comic book, or other media. Or they could be an idea completely from your own imagination.



You should discuss character ideas with your group. This not only helps prevent two players from playing the same kind of character, but bouncing ideas off of other people can help you refine your own idea and make it even better.

CORE TRIO ASPECTS

Your character has three aspects that are at the core of who they are: your **high concept**, **trouble**, and **lineage**. Your high concept aspect is what you are about, what makes you a bad-ass. It could be considered your “role” or “job” in the shadow agency.

Your trouble, on the other hand, is your “Achilles Heel”. It’s what hampers you most frequently and causes complications on a regular basis. Your trouble is the answer to a simple question: what complicates your character’s existence?

Each lineage has their own specialties and fault. This aspect tells us what facet of your lineage you have come to portray.

High Concept

- **Write a summary of why you were chosen to be a shadow agent.** No more than a paragraph describing how or why you became a shadow agent.
- **Compose an aspect that reflects your story.** Using your summary as a guide, write your character’s high concept aspect.

Trouble Aspect

- **Write a summary of a time when you got in big trouble.** No more than a paragraph describing what your flaw is.
- **Compose an aspect that reflects your story.** Using your summary as a guide, write your character’s trouble aspect.

Lineage Aspect

Choose one of the given lineage aspects or create your own. If you create your own, keep in mind what your lineage is good at, and use that as a base.

OTHER ASPECTS

These aspects tell the story about why your character was recruited as a shadow agent. What other skills, talents, or tricks have you gained either before being inducted or as part of your formal agency training?

These two aspects are wildcard aspects: they can be whatever you want. Some suggestions for these aspects are:

- A relationship or other connection to another player
- A mentor, friend, family member, lover or other influential NPC in your life
- A special or unique item that you have
- Membership in a secret or public organization
- An area of expertise not covered by another aspect
- A personality quirk

If you want to jump into the action right away, all you need is your high concept and your trouble aspects, and know what lineage your character is. Your other three aspects can be created using a flashback (see page 78).

I CAN HAVE A FAIR (+2) TROUBLE?! YES!

Just because it causes you grief and, well, *trouble*, doesn't mean you can't be **good at it**. Think of your favorite character from any popular media, I'm sure you can think of many times when they use their trouble to their advantage!

RATE ASPECTS

After you know what your aspects are, you need to rate them. The rating has nothing to do with how influential that aspect is in your life, but rather with how well you use them.

Whenever you roll dice to see if you can accomplish a task, you and the GM first decide what aspect best represents training or a knack at what you're trying to do, then roll the dice and add your aspect's bonus. If you have no applicable aspect, you'd roll Mediocre (+0).

Your high concept is rated at Good (+3), since that's who you are and what you're best at. For the remaining 4 aspects, you have the following bonuses to distribute: two at Fair (+2) and two at Average (+1).

STUNTS & REFRESH

All shadow agents start with a refresh of 3. This means that you'll start each session with 3 fate points. This also means that you have three stunt slots.

Each stunt slot can have any number of thematically linked stunt benefits. Be careful, though; for each stunt benefit in excess of your refresh, you give the GM one fate point in their stash.

You should define at least one stunt before play begins, but leave the rest to define during play. This not only speeds up character creation, but also means you're not stuck with an unwanted stunt.

STRESS & CONSEQUENCES

Each character starts with two stress boxes and one each of mild, moderate, and severe consequences. These are just a baseline and can change with judicious applications of stunts.

DEVELOP FACES & PLACES

Places and faces are used to flesh out the game world and gives players ownership over more than just their own characters.

A **face** is a person or group related to your aspect phase. They have a high concept and a short bit of backstory. Some faces are friends, some are enemies, while others can be neutral forces in the world.

A **place** is a location. It could be a small workroom, a safe-house, a tavern frequented, a specific division of the shadow agency.

Create one face and one place, using the two steps below:

- **Come up with a short description of the face or place.** No more than two sentences, just enough to get a feel for the NPC or location. Remember, you can always add more detail when interacting with the NPC or spending time in the location.
- **Compose a high concept for the face or place.** Just like player characters, faces are NPCs with high concepts. Places, while not a *character*, still *have character*.

Both faces and places are familiar and/or helpful. If your face or place has an aspect that can help out on one of your rolls, they provide a +1 teamwork bonus. Note that you only ever get a +1, even if multiple places or faces could assist. If someone else's face or place could help, you may pay a fate point to gain access to that face or place for the rest of the mission as if it were your own.

Note, however, that in order to use the teamwork bonus, the NPC has to either be present or you had to have interacted with them prior. The same goes for places: if you're there—or had been there prior—you get the bonus. Because of this, it's never a bad idea to spend time with your friends in your favorite hangout in order to claim the teamwork bonus later on!

THE BEGINNING

At this point you should have a character with:

- A name
- Five aspects, rated from Average (+1) to Good (+3)
- One or more stunts
- 2 stress boxes
- 3 consequences
- A Refresh of 3
- One face, one place

Now that you have a character, you are ready to start play. Your character's life as a shadow agent has just begun!





CHAPTER

4

ASPECTS



An **aspect** is a word or phrase that describes something special about a person, place, thing, situation, or group. Almost anything you can think of can have aspects. A person might be the **SNEAKIEST SYLVAN IN THE WILD WOOD**. A room might be **ON FIRE** after you knock over an oil lamp. After a time-travel encounter with a dinosaur, you might be **TER-RIFIED**. Aspects let you change the story in ways that go along with your character's tendencies, skills, or problems.

You spend fate points—which you keep track of with pennies or glass beads or poker chips or some other tokens—to unlock the power of aspects and make them help you. You earn fate points by letting a character's aspect be compelled against you to complicate the situation or make your life harder. Be sure to keep track of the fate points you have left at the end of the session—if you have more than your refresh, you start the next session with the fate points you ended this session with.

WHAT KINDS OF ASPECTS ARE THERE?

No matter where the aspect comes from, they all work pretty much the same. The main difference is how you acquire them and how they are removed.

Character aspects are the ones on your character sheet that you came up with in chapter 3, such as your high concept or trouble. They are an integral part of your character that describes who you are, where you come from, who or what you know, important pieces of gear, and the like. These aspects only change when you want them to, during any milestone.

Situation aspects describe the environment that a scene takes place in or temporary states of being for characters. These include aspects the GM places at the beginning of the scene, or aspects that are created or discovered using the create an advantage action. Situation aspects usually disappear at the end of the scene in which they were created, when an action (usually the overcome action) is taken to remove them, or when it seems narratively appropriate.

Examples: **ON FIRE; STUNNED; PITCH BLACK; CONFUSED.**

Consequences describe lasting injury or trauma that comes about from conflicts. They recover following the rules in chapter 7, page 76.

Examples: **TWISTED ANKLE; JITTERY NERVES; LOW ON MAGIC; WINDED.**

Boosts are super-short-term aspects that usually arise when you succeed with style on certain actions. They last until they are invoked once, the situation changes, or the scene in which they were created ends.

Examples: IN MY SIGHTS; TAKEN ABACK; STARTLED; DISTRACTED.

WHAT DO YOU DO WITH ASPECTS?

There are three big things you can do with aspects: **invoke** aspects, **compel** aspects, and use aspects to **establish facts**.

INVOKING ASPECTS

You invoke an aspect to give yourself a bonus or make things a bit harder for your opponent. You can invoke any aspect that you a) know about, and b) can explain how you would use it to your advantage—including aspects on other characters or on the situation. Normally, invoking an aspect costs you a fate point—which you pay by handing one of your fate point tokens to the GM. To invoke an aspect, you need to describe how that aspect helps you in your current situation.

When you invoke an aspect, choose one of the following benefits:

- **Add a +2 bonus to your total.** The most common use of an invoke is to increase your total.
- **Reroll the dice.** When the dice are against you (usually a -3 or -4 showing on the dice), you may rereoll the dice.
- **Confront an opponent with the aspect.** If an aspect would make an action more difficult, you may invoke it to either add +2 to the opposition of an opponents action. If they normally wouldn't roll the dice to do something, you may instead force them to overcome a Fair (+2) opposition that wasn't there before.
- **Help an ally with the aspect.** If you have an aspect that could help someone else out, you may invoke it to give them a +2 or reroll.

Free Invocations: Sometimes you can invoke an aspect without paying a fate point, this is called a *free invocation*. If the aspect was created or discovered by the create an advantage action, the first (or sometimes the first two, if you succeeded with style) invocation(s) are free. Note that although you may only pay to invoke an aspect once per roll, you may use as many free invocations as you wish on any roll. This means that with two free invocations, you may

spend a fate point and both invocations for a +6 to your roll!

COMPELLING ASPECTS

If you're in a situation where having or being around a certain aspect means your character's life is more dramatic or complicated, anyone can compel the aspect. You can even compel it on yourself—that's called a self-compel. Compels are the most common way for players to earn more fate points.

There are two types of compels.

Decision compels suggest an answer to a pressing decision your character has to make. If your character is **A LONER THROUGH AND THROUGH** you may abandon your comrades when they need you most. If you **CAN'T STAND BIGOTRY**, perhaps you'd stand up for a peasant instead of keeping your cover.

Event compels are for when the situation, rather than your character, conspire against you. If you are in a **CROWDED ROOM** you can easily get separated from your teammates. Or when sneaking through a **DARK CORRIDOR** you might accidentally bump into the only guard on duty.

Regardless of what type of compel occurs, the mechanics are the same. The one suggesting the compel offers you a fate point. If the compel comes from the GM, the fate point doesn't come from a limited supply, but if a player suggests a compel for a NPC, it will cost them one of their fate points. They then suggest how the compelled aspect makes the situation worse for your character. You may discuss and tweak the outcome a bit, but it must immediately change the situation *for the worse* somehow.

If you decide to accept the compel, you take the offered fate point and the complication happens as discussed. If you decide to refuse the compel, you must spend one of your own fate points. Note that this fate point is spent, it is not given to the one offering the compel. This means that if you do not have any fate points you cannot refuse the compel!

COMPELS MAKE THINGS INTERESTING...ONCE

Compels are designed to make the situation worse immediately. They are a story-driven mechanic, and cannot be "undone" by any dice rolls or further expenditures of fate points. Once a compel is accepted, it happens.

If a compel is refused, however, that means that the player or GM doesn't want this aspect to complicate the situation. Meaning, once a compel on an aspect is refused once, don't go back to it until a scene or two later. Don't keep offering the same compel just to bleed them of fate points.

ESTABLISHING FACTS

Finally, aspects can **establish facts** about your game. These facts are true regardless of fate points, dice rolls, or anything else—just by existing the aspect makes it so. For example, having **LEADER OF THE WELLSPRING MILITIA** as an aspect not only establishes the city of Wellspring, and that they have a militia, but also your character is the leader.

CREATING GOOD ASPECTS

Because aspects are such an important part of *Shadowcraft*, it's important to make them the best they can be.

The best aspects are **double edged and have clear phrasing**.

DOUBLE EDGED

When creating aspects, it's important to not just think about how the aspect can help you—dice rolls and invocations are important, yes—but also how it can *hinder* you. Compel-worthy aspects help you gain fate points easier, and add a dimension to your character that one-dimensional aspects lack.

When crafting your aspects, think of one to two ways that your aspect can be invoked, and one to two ways it can be compelled—or invoked against you. Of course, your trouble aspect should be more of a hinderance than others, but that doesn't mean it can't be useful every now and again!

CLEAR PHRASING

While it can be tempting to use clever prose, puns, and poetic language, it is very important that your aspect is clear. The phrase needs to say what it means, and the more “plain” the language the better.

Fancy words and flowery language can obfuscate the meaning of the aspect, leading to misunderstandings at the gaming table. It can be very frustrating when the GM and player are not on the same page as to what an aspect means. It is also a good idea to discuss aspects beforehand, so everyone knows what they're supposed to mean and how you, as the player, envision them working.

When in doubt, ask your fellow players and the GM. Especially for character aspects, it's never a bad idea to bounce ideas off of the others at your table, since they stick around longer than any other aspect in the game. Groups can come up with some amazing ideas that an individual couldn't.



CHAPTER

5

STUNTS



In Fate, stunts are tricks, pieces of gear, talents, or secret techniques that set your character apart. You might be one of many who have been **TRAINED BY WEAPONSMASTER ANELAR**, but you are the only one who mastered the Thousand Cut Technique.

BUILDING STUNTS

Like aspects, there is no definitive list of what stunts are available; players create their own. There are, however, two basic templates that you may use to construct your stunts.

The most common stunt gives you a +2 bonus to certain aspect rolls in certain circumstances. Use this template:

Because I [**describe some way that you are exceptional, have a cool bit of gear, or are otherwise awesome**], I get a +2 when I [**pick one action: defend, create an advantage, overcome**] with [**pick an aspect**] when [**describe a circumstance**].

For example:

- Because I **mastered the thousand cut technique** I get a +2 when I **overcome** with **TRAINED BY WEAPONSMASTER ANELAR** when **in combat with my short sword**.
- Because I **grew up in the wilderness** I get a +2 when I **create an advantage** with **BORN IN THE WILD** when **climbing or jumping**.
- Because I **carry a shield** I get a +2 when I **defend** with **Warrior of Honor** when **not attacking in combat**.

The other stunt template is used when a simple numerical bonus just won't do. It allows you to make something true, be awesome, or just break the rules in some unique and unusual way. Use this template:

Because I [**describe some way that you are exceptional, have a cool bit of gear, or are otherwise awesome**], once per mission I can [**describe something cool you can do**].

For example:

- Because I **have eyes and ears everywhere** once per mission I can **find just the right person who can be of help**.
- Because I **have an intimidating demeanor** once per mission I can **scare away anyone**.
- Because I **excel at Glamour** once per mission I can **immediately assume the identity of another individual**.

EQUIPMENT, RELICS, AND ARTIFACTS

In *Shadowcraft* your characters are assumed to have the necessary mundane equipment to make full use of their aspects. A thief is assumed to have lock picks, and a warrior their sword or dagger.

This gear merely allows for you to use your aspects as intended—there are no mechanical bonuses applied. Of course if you are captured, imprisoned, or are unable to access your gear for one reason or another it is within the GMs right to disallow certain aspect uses via compel or invoke said aspect against you to make it harder to succeed.

Relics, on the other hand, are magical items created to make your jobs easier. A length of rope enchanted to make climbing easier; a cloak with an avoidance charm; a portable hole. These items are powerful, but not unique. Most relics are shoddy copies of the artifacts of old.

In game terms, a relic is nothing more than a stunt. Each relic does one thing well, and can usually be created with the first stunt template—gaining a +2 to certain actions. Relics tend to have more leeway with the requisite aspect, since not everyone uses the same aspect for the same types of actions.

For example, the aforementioned enchanted rope would give a +2 bonus to overcome rolls that have to do with climbing, regardless of the aspect used: a **SECOND STORY EXPERT** would get the same benefit as the **STRONGEST SYLVAN IN THE NORTHERN WOODS**.

Almost all relics that rely on the rules-breaking template are powered by fate points instead of being once per mission. This allows them to be used more frequently. The prior portable hole is an excellent example: because I **have a portable hole** I may spend a fate point **to bypass any mundane physical barrier**.

Artifacts are to relics as relics are to mundane gear. Artifacts are the most powerful and unique magical items from the prior age. No two are exactly alike, and their abilities are far beyond what even the most talented magecrafters are capable of.

Artifacts are built with two stunt benefits, but also have a function aspect and a flaw. See page 49 in chapter 5 for more.

WEAPONS AND ARMOR IN ARCADIA

The Lost Ones are an industrious and wildly imaginative folk. The items they produce reflect this fact. There is no single point of reference for any of the items they create, whether they be for domestic use or war. Some craft their own personal pieces of armor or weapons, while others inherit items through ancestral lines. Shadow Agents are even more personal when it comes to their gear, often investing their weapons and armor with essence to make relics.

What makes armor and weapons stand out in Arcadia is not their form, but their material. Four materials are used in the crafting of items of war.

FAEGLASS

Faeglass is the most common material used in crafting in Arcadia aside from mundane stone and wood. It is stronger and lighter than stone, can be carved and shaped as the crafter wills, and takes in essence with ease. Additionally it can be tinged any color the Lost Ones can imagine, so it is favored by those who wish to stand out. Additionally, if properly crafted, a faeglass item will slowly repair damage to itself. The Fae used this property to render their structures inviolate to essence and time. However, it shares its great weakness with that of the Fae, iron. When faeglass meets iron, it can shatter. The degree to which iron can damage faeglass is related proportionally to the size of the iron implement to the faeglass object. An iron hammer will obliterate a faeglass sword, but merely spider-web a small section of a tower. However the scarcity of iron continues to make faeglass the most prevalent material for Shadow Agents to bring into the field.



SCÁTHÁN

The Mirrorstone of the Fae, also known as scáthán, is also used by crafters. While it can be carved and joined into a variety of shapes by clever expression and strong hands, its peculiarities limit its use. First, there is the issue of weight; no known expression technique can lighten the mass of scáthán. Its essence is just too dense to be practically manipulated. It is stronger than fae-glass, yet anything larger than a dagger requires significant strength to wield or wear.

Second, it reflects the local Realm Tenebrous when invested with essence, which is both a boon and a bane. While it may give great insight to the Realm, indeed most artifacts related to Displacement use scáthán for this reason: it can turn brilliant or flash in reaction to some unseen stimulus from the Realm, which can be detrimental to a Shadow Agent in the field.

However, despite these limitations, the advantages of scáthán make it very attractive to Stonekin and other Lost Ones with the strength or techniques to use it.

WHITEWOOD

The Whitewood is a controlled material, rarely seen outside of the Bânwood or the hands of a Sylvan. Currently the only other ways to obtain it are by receiving an item from the Pride, being gifted by a Sylvan, or through thievery. Those that possess whitewood items obtained illicitly face severe repercussions when discovered by the Sylvan.

The plague which ravaged the forests of the southern Bânwood scarred the flesh of the tree white, and gave them a strange resiliency. Able to be shaped like other woods, albeit with the use of essence-crafted tools, the wood is imbued with many strange properties. It is more resilient than other woods and also has a healthy spring to it. Resin pulled from it can be used to strengthen other materials. The whitewood is also very resistant to essence crafting, and few possess the ability to craft true artifacts from it. However, of all the materials of Arcadia, it is still the newest and most mysterious. Who knows what secrets the Lost Ones may uncover about it in the near future?

IRON

Faebane. Blood-Blighter. The Red Poison. These are all names given to the substance that the Stonekin named iron. Found in the Ironhold mountains, iron veins thread through those of scáthán. Where one is found, the other exists, although the iron ore is always found in minuscule amounts. The rare, strange, reddish ore must be smelted before it is usable, and requires extreme care by those who handle it. For while not as potent against the flesh of the Lost Ones as it was against the Fae, iron still can poison a Lost One quickly if not handled properly.

Relatively speaking, much of the iron weapons and armor of Arcadia are ancestral pieces that have been handed down for generations. They are valued above all other weapons despite the fact that iron cannot be essence-crafted. The material disrupts the flow of essence, and this effect is believed to be why it was so effective against the Fae. If held against the skin of a Lost One, it prevents the wearer from effectively using essence, but also increases ones resistance to essence techniques. To bear iron is to be isolated, both mentally and spiritually. Most Lost Ones cannot stand carrying iron except for the most desperate of times, as they feel as if some vital essence within them is ripped away and they are not themselves. This sickness, known as the Red Pain, doesn't leave until the iron is no longer touching the Lost One's skin.

REQUISITIONING ARTIFACTS FROM THE QUARTERMASTER

Artifacts, as previously mentioned, are rare and powerful items. Each one is given to a specific shadow agent for a specific purpose by the quartermaster. But due to the nature of roleplaying games, the GM doesn't know exactly what the players will need when, so the burden of artifact creation is made when it's needed, and is done so by the table as a whole.

Outcome	Stunt Benefits Chosen By:	Flaw Chosen By:
Failure	GM	GM
Tie	GM	Player
Success	Player	GM
Success with Style	Player	Player

CREATING AN ARTIFACT

When creating an artifact, the player and game master come up with it's three parts:

- Function Aspect
- Stunt benefits
- Flaw

The player gets to decide the **function aspect** when describing the artifact and what it does. Each has two **stunt benefits** that make it do its function better than any ordinary piece of equipment.

In order to create an artifact, the player must choose the most relevant aspect and make an overcome roll against a difficulty of Great (+4).

The outcome of the roll determines who gets to choose what part of the artifact.

Stunt Benefit

An artifact can have any stunt benefit. Since the artifact is specifically designed to aid your character in a specific situation the most common is a bonus to a roll. However, it is a magical artifact, so any stunt benefit can work.

Flaws

Each artifact is unique, advanced, special. Because of the rigors placed on the quartermaster and their team, no artifact is perfect. Each one has a flaw; some quirk that makes it act in unusual ways. Sometimes it's because of the material it's constructed out of, other times it's the spell-work laid on it.

Whatever the source of the flaw, they all share the same mechanical drawbacks. A flaw provides limitations on the artifact and acts as a detrimental aspect.

A flaw provides justification for actions.

All artifacts are limited in some way. They may be obvious, and thus unable to be used covertly. Some leave a telltale sign of use: a broken lock, a lingering scent of the grave, or causes migraines when used.

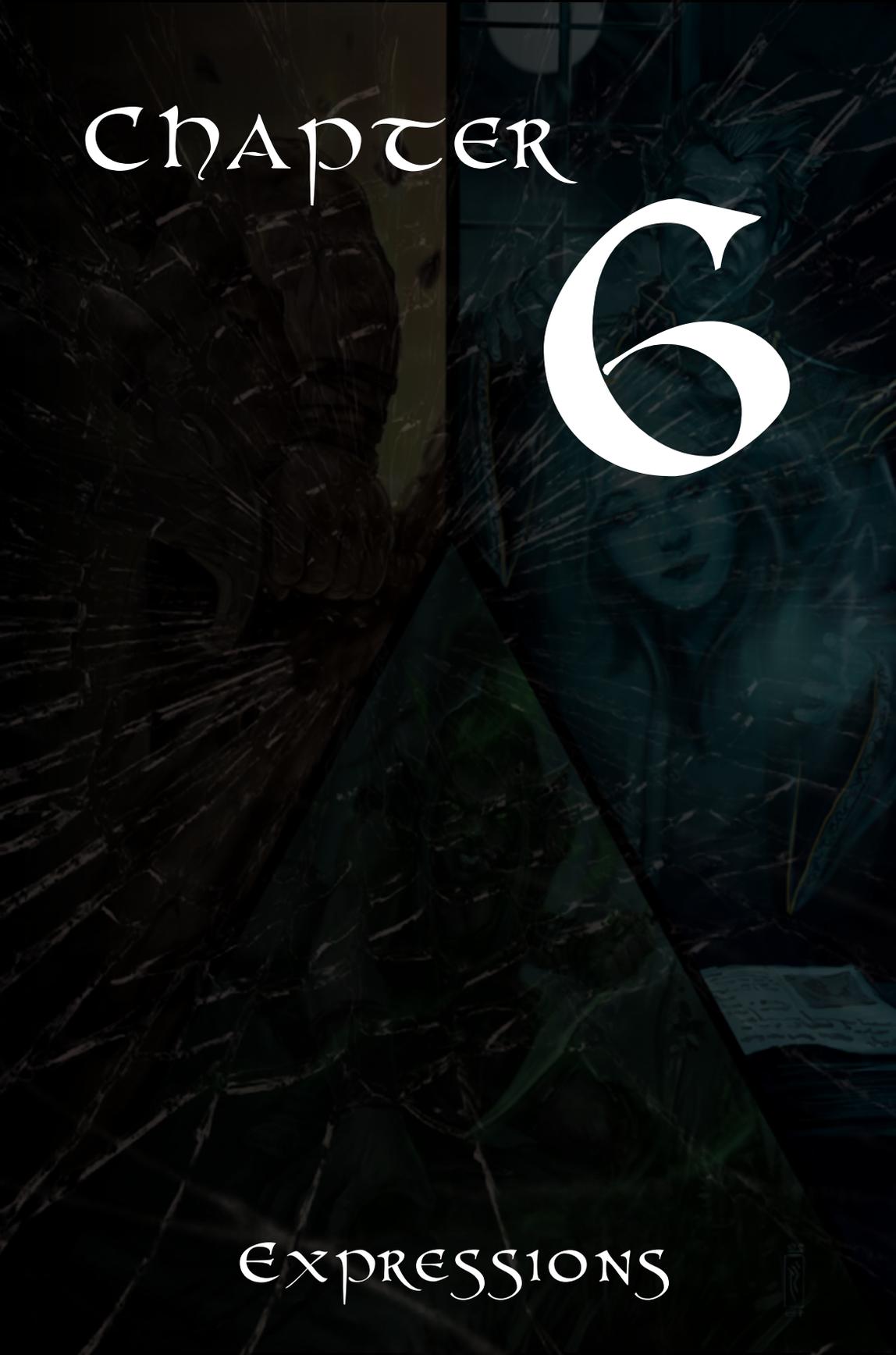
A flaw acts as a detrimental aspect.

The artifact's flaw is considered an aspect that can only be used against the agent carrying it. This means it can be used to compel the character or it can be invoked against them. Note that a flaw can never be invoked in the PCs favor.

RECEIVING ACQUISITIONS IN THE FIELD

Both relics and artifacts are requisitioned by the quartermaster before a mission is undertaken, but are not revealed until they are needed. See page 79 in chapter 7 on Quartermaster Flashbacks.



The background is a dark, textured surface, possibly a book cover or a piece of fabric, with a faint, monochromatic image of a person reading a book. The person is wearing a hooded garment and is positioned in the lower right quadrant. The overall color palette is dark, with shades of black, dark green, and dark blue.

CHAPTER

G

EXPRESSIONS

WHAT IS EXPRESSION?

Expression is the art of turning the essence of the Realm Tenebrous into reality through will alone. 'Expression' is a Fae term. When the Lost Ones originally were brought to Arcadia, they were awed by the power that the Fae wielded. As they were integrated into the fabric of Arcadian society, the Fae began to reveal their secrets to their servants. The Fae told the Lost Ones that they did not manifest their will through ritual and rote, or by arcane manifestations. For the Fae, they expressed their desires upon Arcadia through sheer thought. They expressed their will, uttering their thoughts into substance with imagination and the essence of the Realm Tenebrous.

But the Fae were beings of a singular substance, somehow both physical and essential at the same time, so this was not magical in their eyes. The Fae naturally warped reality with no more effort than breathing. For the Lost Ones, they had to learn and toil to express. It was an ability that was created by the changes the Fae wrought on their ancestors. During the time of the Glamour War, expression refers to the way that the Lost Ones draw upon the Realm Tenebrous. The Realm Tenebrous is a plane of spiritual essence that coexists with the physical world of Arcadia. By drawing up the essence of that realm, Lost Ones can manifest great changes, both to themselves and to the world around them. However, the Lost Ones possess a split existence; beings of spirit inhabiting a shell of flesh. Expression holds many dangers that the Lost Ones do not fully understand.

HOW TO EXPRESS

When making overcome or create an advantage rolls, the expressions available to you allow you to succeed at otherwise impossible tasks. In game terms, anytime you express your magic, you must make the accompanying dice roll as normal. However, you do not have the choice of failing the roll: even on a failure or tie, you must succeed at a cost.

When you do succeed at a cost, you gain an aspect (or boost, on a tie) that represents your essence fracture (see below). If you fail by 3 or more, you instead gain two aspects. This aspect can be invoked and compelled as any other by both the GM and the player, but it should be written as to be more harmful than beneficial.

Note that some things are still beyond the ability of even the Lost Ones, and thus the GM can veto any excess use of expression.

WHAT IS ESSENCE?

Essence is the substance of the Realm Tenebrous. It is the energy of change, dream, and the soul. It flows through Arcadia and its inhabitants, pooling within the creatures of the Land. The Lost Ones refer to this pooling within a physical form, this intrinsic investment of essence, as one's soul or spirit. When expressing, the Lost One opens her soul to the Realm Tenebrous and allows the ocean of essence there to meld with the pool within her own self. Through this mixing of energy, the Lost One is able to draw on the vast power of the Realm and express change into the world.

However, this harnessing of power is not without risk. The tides of the Realm Tenebrous are powerful, and drawing on them risks the fracturing of a Lost One's soul. Like the waters behind a flawed dam, the pressures of the Realm force their way through the flaws in a spirit. It is not uncommon for a Lost One to lose control of this power and have the raw essence of the Realm suffuse them, causing their essence to fracture, shattering the user's body and soul.

ESSENCE FRACTURE

When a Lost One draws too quickly or too deeply upon the Realm Tenebrous, their personal essence begins to fray. Tiny cracks develop in their soul, through which the Realm Tenebrous begins to shatter the Lost One with its own power. This is known as 'essence fracturing'. These fractures manifest as changes to the physical and mental fabric of the Lost One.

Physically, essence fracturing exacerbates the traits that the Fae afflicted upon the Lost One lineages. Glassborn grow more beautiful and ephemeral. Sylvan turn wilder, and Stonekin begin to petrify. In the short term, these fractures can seem like boons. For example, as the Stonekin fractures and takes on even more rock-like traits, their skin hardens and their weight increases. This provides the benefit of making them more resistant to damage. But continued expression can eventually rob a Lost One of their body, their mind, or even their life. Glassborn fade completely into the Realm Tenebrous. The Sylvan degenerate into beasts, and the Stonekin become trapped permanently within a body of stone.

Essence fractures also can affect the mind of a Lost One, causing them to lose touch with who they are. They grow distant to the friendships and ideals they once held, becoming isolated and lost as the core of their personality becomes untethered from their soul. In extreme cases, a Lost One can lose their sense of their identity, forget what they believed in, or suffer permanent personality shifts.

Your character can sustain up to five essence fractures before being lost to the Realm Tenebrous. If you would take a sixth essence fracture—even from a tied result—your character is lost.

HEALING ESSENCE FRACTURES

Abstaining from expression is the simplest means of healing one's essence fractures. A Lost One's soul is a resilient thing, and given time, it can regenerate from the damage of over-expression. Physical alterations revert and mental wrinkles smooth back out. However, even minor episodes of expression prevent personal essence from regenerating. And in the tumultuous time of the Glamour War, Shadow Agents rarely enjoy this luxury. Thankfully, there are other ways to heal fractures. By taking downtime to actively reinforce who they are, a Lost One may encourage their souls to heal the fractures faster. The more systemic the fracturing, the more intense the reinforcement must be. There are two main ways that the Lost Ones reinforce their sense of self: introspection and reinforcing actions.

If you have two or less essence fractures you can recover via **introspection**, but three or more essence fractures must be recovered by **reinforcing actions**.



INTROSPECTION

If the essence fracturing is minor, simply refraining from expression coupled with time spent in meditation is sufficient to recover one's essence. This meditation is focused on recapturing their sense of self. Typically a Lost One spends time contemplating who they are, the accomplishments they've achieved, who their allies are, and what ambitions drive them. After this process, the Lost One emerges renewed and healed of any minor fractures.

Performing an introspection is fairly quick. All it takes to heal one essence fracture is one scene dedicated to doing so. No dice rolls required. However, note that when you're resting and healing your soul, you aren't doing anything else. This means you're not participating in the mission for a scene, which could be detrimental to your fellow shadow agents.

REINFORCING ACTION

When a Lost One injures their essence by suffering deep and pervasive essence fracturing, they are beyond the aid of simple introspections. Reflection is not enough to shore up the fraying of their souls, because any expression at this point risks shattering their essence completely. In addition to refraining from expression, a Lost One must ritually reinforce their belief in their existence. This is usually a task that symbolically proves to themselves the truth of who they believe they are. Each ritual is unique, not just to the Lost One but to their current circumstances and the nature of their essence fractures. These rituals can be as simple as practicing a craft that defined who they were or speaking to an old friend similar reasons. Or they can be as intricate as defeating an enemy that was the cause of the fracturing, or taking a month long journey, visiting sites of personal importance to the Lost One. Coupled with introspection, the Lost One can eventually heal their fractures. Although, they very often bear lingering scars of that time.

If a Lost One suffering from any essence fractures is forced to express again, they risk their fractures growing deeper and more pervasive. Eventually, a Lost One can express beyond their essence's tolerance and shatter their minds or bodies.

As these rituals are very personal and specific to the Lost One who's soul is fractured, you must work with your GM to figure out what is an appropriate action. Whatever you decide upon it should be something that can be accomplished before the end of the mission, unless the mission is almost over, then it should be accomplishable before the end of the next mission.

When you complete the reinforced action, you heal two of your essence fractures. Note that this means if you're on the brink of losing yourself with five fractures, it takes two reinforcing action to bring yourself to the point where you can use introspection to heal your soul.

TYPES OF EXPRESSION

Expressional techniques fall into two broad categories: collective and inherent. Collective expression refers to the techniques that have been learned and passed down among the Lost Ones through their generations in Arcadia. Any Lost One lineage can manifest collective techniques. Inherent techniques are those that are tied to the original changes wrought by the Fae. These techniques have more to do with inborn Lineage talents than to any skill that can be learned, and are limited to the specific lineages who developed them.

Each and every one of the Lost Ones is able to use their lineage-specific expressions. It is such an ingrained part of who they are they can't help but express it.

If you want to use a collective expression, however, you will need to spend a stunt to learn it. More stunts can be used to specialize in a certain expression, and examples are listed below with each expression type.

COLLECTIVE

The ability to express runs throughout the lineages of the Lost Ones. Every one of them, from the farmer to the Shadow Agent, can and does express. The degree and ends of that expression is wildly different, but the core of the matter is that in Arcadia, everyone can express. Collective expressions are the techniques that are available to any Lost One. Beyond Enhancement, which all Lost Ones can instinctively use, all that it takes to use a collective technique is a bit of training to understand the guiding principles.

Below are the four most common types of collective expression. Who knows what innovations may be discovered by necessity during the course of the Glamour War, or be uncovered deep within a Fae ruin?

Displacement

Displacement is the art of moving through the Realm Tenebrous. Displacement breaks the 'laws' that govern distance, both physically and metaphorically. Through the arts of this technique, a Lost One may sense beyond the limits of his physical body, spying on a room while blocks away. They may send much needed information leagues away through the dreams of their recipients.

The essence of those who have died may be called back, temporarily. Essence fades into the Realm Tenebrous over time, but provided that a soul possessed significant strength of will while they were alive, they may be recalled months or even years later. The hazy uncertainty of the future may even be glimpsed among the whirls and eddies of the Realm Tenebrous as future events ripple back through the essence plane.

It is said that in days of the Fae, some Lost Ones were even able to step bodily within the Realm Tenebrous and cover seven leagues in the span of a single stride. However, those who seek to travel bodily within the Realm Tenebrous these days are never heard from again.

- **Displacement.** You are able to send messages to others through the Realm Tenebrous, as well as view remote locations.
- **Bi-directional Displacement.** (Requires Displacement.) You may send and receive messages via the Realm Tenebrous in real-time.
- **Sending.** (Requires Displacement.) When you view a remote location, you can also hear as if you were present.

Enhancement

All Lost Ones can instinctively reinforce their physical forms with essence. The average Lost One is stronger, faster, and far more resilient than their mortal ancestors. They draw upon the Realm Tenebrous as needed, supplementing their physical abilities and capabilities. But subconsciously, the average Lost One limits their expression in this way, never risking essence fractures. Normally, only in times of great stress can a Lost One express beyond these limits, usually to save their life or the life of a loved one. With training, however, these unconscious blocks can be removed, enabling truly supernatural feats of expressions, with all the risks they entail. Shadow Agents all receive such training.

Lost Ones can call upon their essence to leap great distances, dodge cross-bow bolts, and rip doors from their hinges. They can shore up their physical forms with essence to resist sword blades and poisons. Enhancement can aid in the recovery of physical wounds, forcing the wounds to close faster. A Lost One's senses can also be magnified to inhuman level. Reading lips from a hundred yards away, hearing whispered conversations through walls, or picking up the residual heat or scent traces to track a foe through a crowded city can prove far more valuable in the shadowy confrontations of the Glamour War than simply hitting harder or running faster.

- **Enhancement.** You are able to reinforce your physical prowess with essence, able to do more than most Lost Ones.
- **Regeneration.** (Requires enhancement.) Once per scene, you may spend a fate point to reduce your lowest consequence one severity (severe to moderate, moderate to mild, or remove a mild).
- **Tenebrous Strength.** (Requires enhancement.) When under an enhancement-related aspect, you gain a +2 to all rolls that involve main physical strength.

Essencecrafting

The Lost Ones when they were first transported to Arcadia, were in awe of the wonders of the Fae. Their cities were formed of mirrored stone and multicolored glass. The Fae were clothed in gossamer gowns of pure color and movement. And they wielded relics of unbelievable power. The Lost Ones, especially the Glassborn and Stonekin, were tasked with aiding in the crafting of these items for their masters. However, Essencecrafting is a lesser art compared to the powerful works that were created by the Fae.

Essencecrafting is used to imbue essence into objects for the crafting specialized effects. The advantage to Essencecrafting is that a Lost One can create an object of power designed for a specific effect. This allows their personal essence to heal, basically doubling their potential for expression. Also, any Lost One can use an object after it is created, without risking their own personal essence. Essencecrafting can be used in combination with other techniques, both Collective and Inherent, to product objects that mirror those effects. For example, a Glassborn-wrought faeglass sword is hardened through the Enhancement technique, while a Sylvan brewed potion could allow a Lost One to see into the Realm Tenebrous.

- **Essencecrafting.** You are able to use essencecrafting to create artifacts from the stuff of the Realm Tenebrous. The artifact can only mimic an expression you are able to use, and you may only create one in the field.
- **Mastercrafting.** (Requires essencecrafting.) When crafting an artifact, you may spend a fate point to include one additional stunt effect.
- **Share Essence.** (Requires essencecrafting.) When crafting an artifact, it may create an effect from an expression type of an ally who aids in the crafting.

Expurgation

Expurgation is a term given to a relatively new expression technique, developed only since the onset of the war with the Kormillians. In battling the Spectre lineages and their dark expressions, the Noraluans found themselves with the need to battle the corrupting influences that the Spectres wielded. Expurgation was formed around a number of different techniques whose common thread was purity and cleansing. Expurgators can cleanse a body of poison and disease, especially those that are spiritually tainted by dark expression. The creations of Shadowmancy and the curses of Hexing can be combated effectively with the powers of Expurgation.

The most potent use of Expurgation is in the cleansing of Shadowlands. Although there is no standard technique for removing an area of tainted essence from the Realm Tenebrous, Expurgation allows the Lost Ones to craft unique rituals that can break the stagnation of the region, and allow the natural flow of essence to return. Expurgation is most often used in conjunction with other techniques to produce specialized anti-Spectre uses of those techniques.

- **Expurgation.** You may use your will to cleanse a blighted area.
- **Remove Corruption.** (Requires expurgation.) Gain a +2 bonus to any expurgation rolls during a conflict against spectres and those tainted by Kormillian dark expressions.
- **Cleanse Essence.** (Requires expurgation.) Once per mission, you may immediately expunge the taint from an animal or other non-intelligent creature. This can prevent or end a conflict.



INHERENT

Unlike Collective techniques, Inherent techniques are limited to the lineages who manifest them. They are tied to an intrinsic quality of each of the lineages. Much like the Enhancement technique, these techniques are pervasive among the lineages, with their members subconsciously accessing them at all times. Also, like Enhancement, it takes special training to unlock the full potential of these techniques, transforming them from minor benefits to potent tools in the Glamour War.

It should be noted that the Dark Lineages have access to the Inherent techniques as well. A Defiler has access to his Siphon technique as well as the Earthwright technique of his Stonekin heritage. This makes Spectres doubly dangerous, as they have access to two Inherent techniques and possess the ability to merge them both with deadly effect.

Glamour

The Glassborn were the direct servants of the Fae. They watched as their masters manipulated the substance of Arcadia with no more than a whim. From the early days, they sought to emulate these abilities. But the Glassborn were unable to express true substance from the essence of the Realm Tenebrous. They could only create the appearance of substance; illusions. The Fae referred to these creations as figments, pieces of truth but possessing no reality to them.

With Glamour, a Glassborn can create echoes of a reality. Sights, sounds, scents, and tastes are all senses that a skilled Glassborn can deceive. Powerful uses of this technique combine all four senses into illusions so complex as to seem real. Unless one was to touch them. The fifth sense is beyond the scope of Glamour, touch always revealing the ephemerality of the figment. However, to a Glassborn Shadow Agent, this is but a minor inconvenience. Invisibility, illusory terrain or features, flawless disguises, and other figments are all very effective tools at his disposal.

- **Glamorous Eye.** (Must be glassborn.) When you roll your lineage aspect to create a glamour of what a target expects to see, gain a +2 bonus to your roll.
- **Pierce the Veil.** (Must be glassborn.) If you invoke your lineage aspect to see through a glamour, you gain a +1 bonus, in addition to the normal effects of the invocation.

Naturalism

The Sylvan have possessed a bond with nature since their exile from the Fae cities in the early days of the Lost One's history. Bereft of aid and cast into

the wilds of Arcadia, the Sylvan gradually left behind the Glamour techniques of the Glassborn. They instead nurtured their growing bond with the natural world and tapped into the animalism that the Fae's curse thrust upon them. From this they developed the technique of Naturalism.

With Naturalism, the natural forces of Arcadia are under the control of a Sylvan. They can summon and command the creatures of the wilds, see through the eyes of these animals, or drive off the more natural creatures of the Nightmare Horde. They can also bring rapid growth to plant life, animate plants to ensnare and attack their enemies, and use the natural world to ease and hide their travels. While a large part of the Glamour War takes place in the cities and towns of Arcadia, the vast majority of the land is wild. Naturalism enables the Sylvan to be the masters of these wild places, and control the battles that rage there.

- **Pathfinder.** (Must be sylvan.) When in a natural setting, you never get lost and gain a +2 bonus to any roll to follow a trail or tracks left by another creature.
- **Feral Blood.** (Must be sylvan.) When you have a Naturalism-related aspect on you, you grow claws from your hands. These give you a +2 bonus on rolls that would benefit from them.

Earthwright

Earthwrighting enables the Stone Kin to thrive beneath the mountains where they live. Indeed, in the past it was a technique that they developed to aid them in their Fae-wrought duty in the Ironholds. For a Stone Kin, the substance of earth is malleable, able to be shaped by hand and will. They possess the ability to move through earth and stone like air, pull sustenance from the rock around them, and shape stone, earth, and ore with their hands alone.

Worked stone is harder for them to manipulate, as the act of crafting seems to change the essence of the material. Still, it is not uncommon for a Stone Kin to walk through the wall of a building, sink beneath the cobbles of a road, or entomb their opponent within a hill. Stone Kin also combine Earthwrighting with Essencecrafting to create wonders hand carved from stone.

Stone weapons, plate armor, and war golems fill the armories of the Autumn Court. Some of these artifacts make their way out into Arcadia, into the hands of Shadow and Spectre agents alike.

- **Worked Hand.** (Must be stonkin.) When dealing with worked stone, gain a +2 bonus to your lineage aspect roll.
- **Fortitude of Stone.** (Must be stonkin.) Whenever you use earthwright to create a toughness-related aspect, gain an additional free invoke on said aspect.

DARK EXPRESSION

When the Kormillians returned to Arcadia, they returned as a dark mirror to their Noraluan kin. They possessed strange new techniques of expression that seemed to feed and spread the corruption of the Shadowlands. These techniques have more in common with the inherent techniques of the lineages. The so-called dark Glassborn manifest Shadowmancy, the Sylvan of the Nightmare Horde possess Hexing, and the corrupted Stone Kin use the Siphon technique.

To this day, no Noraluan lineage can manifest these techniques. Every known attempt of a Noraluan trying to express one of the following techniques resulted in fatal essence fracturing, as the Shadowlands consumed the essence of the Lost One attempting it. The Ministry believes that the Kormillians have developed a way to shield themselves from the more fatal aspects of the Shadowland's essence. They are uncertain whether this is due to training, or some inherent change within the Kormillians themselves.

Hexing

The Sylvan of the Nightmare Horde possess an expression technique that has become known as Hexing. Through their connection to the Shadowlands, the Hexer can taint the personal essence of a Lost One. This tainting causes a snarl within their essence, corrupting and stagnating it. This causes defects that manifest based upon the intent of the Hexer.

Hexes can induce debilitating essence fractures, causing a Lost One to undergo painful changes in form and spirit. They can impose curses, compulsions, and taboos upon the subject of a Hex; subverting their will as the Hex forces a change to thoughts and actions. Hexes can also cripple limbs, blind, render a target mute, or impose a variety of other debilitating physical effects. Out of all the Dark Expression techniques, Hexing is the most feared.

Shadowmancy

Shadowmancy is the province of the Wraiths, the Kormillian Glassborn. They haunt the dreams of the Ministry and Shadow Agents alike with their command of shadows. On the surface, Shadowmancy is strangely similar to Glamours, in that it creates something from nothing. However, the similarities end there. Shadowmancy, predictably, is limited solely to the sculpting of shadows. But, the shadow constructs of Shadowmancy possess substance. A substance that can be banished with bright light, but a substance that has the power to injure and kill.

Wraiths can create all manner of things with their shadowy essence. Indeed, they can imbue their essence into their creations; creating spies made of living shadow. Shadowmancers can construct shadowy weapons and implements, travel through shadows, and spread shadows out to occlude an area. They can even animate a Lost One's shadow, leaving him to fight himself while the Wraith slips away.

Siphon

Defilers are the Ministry-given title for the Kormillian Stone Kin. It is a name whispered in hushed tones, as it usually accompanies a report of how agents or civilians were killed. Defilers pervert their lineage-granted abilities, which are founded upon the permanence of earth that all Stone Kin embody. They draw upon the corruption of the Shadowlands to pull the essence from objects.

Withdrawing the essence that connects a person or object to the Realm Tenebrous destroys the fabric of its existence. Items break, age quickly, and dissolve to dust, and Lost Ones do much the same. Essencecrafted objects and Shadow Agents, who have better control of their personal essence and deeper reserves, can hold out for a time against the effects of Siphoning. But only for a limited time, usually enough to end a fight or run away.



CHAPTER

7

how to play

ROLLING DICE

You roll the dice when there's some kind of interesting opposition keeping you from achieving your goals. If there's no interesting opposition, you just accomplish whatever you say you're trying to do.

Characters in Fate solve their problems proactively. During the game, as players, you're going to be doing that a lot—investigating a mystery, interrogating a suspect, infiltrate behind enemy lines, or steal valuable intel.

Whenever you take action, there's a good chance that something or someone is going to be in your way. It wouldn't be an interesting story if the bad guy just rolled over and handed you victory on a plate—the mystery is baffling, the suspect is reluctant, the border guards are on alert, or the intel is behind a magical ward.

This is when it's time to roll the dice.

- Choose the character's aspect that is most appropriate to the action
- Roll four Fate dice
- Add together the symbols showing on the dice. A [+] is +1, a [-] is -1, and a [0] is 0
- Add your aspect rating to the dice roll. The total is your result on the ladder
- If you invoke an aspect, add +2 to your result or reroll the dice.

OPPOSITION

Whenever you roll the dice you're comparing the result to your opposition. Opposition is either active, meaning it's another person rolling dice against you, or passive, meaning that it's just a set rating on the ladder which represents the influence of the environment or situation you're in. GMs, it's your job to decide what the most reasonable source of opposition is.

In the case of most minor NPCs, they are considered passive opposition and do not roll dice. Major NPCs and other PCs roll active opposition against other players.

OUTCOMES

When it comes time to roll the dice, you're either going to fail, tie, succeed, or succeed with style.

Without fail, each and every roll of the dice is going to result in one of four outcomes. Each of the three actions have specifics on what happens with each outcome, but they all follow a general pattern.

Fail

If you roll lower than your opposition, you fail

This means one of several things: you don't get what you want, you get what you want at a serious cost, or you suffer some negative mechanical consequence. Sometimes, it means more than one of those. It's the GM's job to determine an appropriate cost.

Tie

If you roll the same as your opposition, you tie.

This means you get what you want, but at a minor cost, or you get a lesser version of what you wanted.

Succeed

If you roll higher than your opposition by 1 or 2 shifts, you succeed.

This means you get what you want at no cost.

Succeed with Style

If you roll higher than your opposition by 3 or more shifts, you succeed with style.

This means that you get what you want, but you also get an added benefit on top of that.

ACTIONS

Each roll of the dice is going to be for one of the three actions: **overcome**, **create an advantage**, or **defend**.

Before you pick up the dice and roll them, you have to decide—usually with GM input—which action you are taking. Most of the time the action attempted will be obvious based on what your intent is, the aspect used, and the current situation in-game. The line does blur sometimes, however, so sometimes you may need to discuss with your table which action best suits the situation.

FATE VETERANS: NO ATTACK ACTION?

Veteran Fate players may have noticed that the attack action is missing. For Shadowcraft we wanted a more back-and-forth feel for attacking and defending, so conflicts are run like contests. This means that the attack action has been subsumed into the overcome action.

OVERCOME

Use the overcome action to achieve a specific goal appropriate to your aspect.

The overcome action is used for, well, *overcoming* an obstacle in your way. A Glassborn trying to trick someone into revealing information, the Sylvan climbing a wall, or when a Stonekin is attempting to fix a broken artifact.

- **When you fail an overcome action, you have two options.** You can simply fail, which means you don't attain your goal or get what you were after, or you can succeed at a serious cost.
 - **When you tie an overcome action,** you attain your goal or get what you were after, but at a minor cost.
 - **When you succeed at an overcome action,** you attain your goal without any cost.
 - **When you succeed with style at an overcome action,** you get a boost in addition to attaining your goal.

[Sylvan] walks around the building like he owns the place, looking for the best way in. If he succeeds, he'll be able to search unhindered while everyone is away. With all the doors being locked, his best bet is to climb in through the second-story window.

[GM] says, "It's not that far above the ground, but there are guards patrolling the streets at regular intervals. The wall is solid with very few handholds, and made of slick marble. It looks beautiful, though."

"Looks can be deceiving," [Player] says, mulling it over. "Looks like I am the best person for the job, at any rate. I was climbing the impossible cliffs when I was just a kid." He grins ear to ear, "bring it on!"

"With everything working against you, That's going to be a Great (+4) difficulty."

Thankfully, [Sylvan]'s high concept is **CHILD OF THE WILDS**, which is great for climbing. He rolls a [+][0][-][-]. With his high concept rated at Good (+3), that's a Fair (+2) result, not enough to make it.

"I guess it's a good thing that I'm **MORE AT HOME ABOVE THE GROUND**, huh?" [player] says, paying a fate point to invoke his lineage aspect for a +2, bringing the total to Great (+4). "A tie, so I succeed at a minor cost, right? How about I make it in, but I have to scratch up the pristine walls, so it's obvious that someone broke in. I won't have all the time in the world, but hopefully I'll have enough time."

The table thinks it's a great twist, and agrees. [Sylvan] claws his way up to the window and disappears inside.

CREATE AN ADVANTAGE

Use the create an advantage action to make a situation aspect that gives you a benefit, or to claim a benefit from any aspect you have access to.

The create an advantage action covers a broad range of endeavors, unified around the theme of using your skills to take advantage (hence the name) of the environment or situation you're in.

Sometimes, you're actively doing something to change the your situation (like a Glassborn using glamour magic to obscure themselves), other times it could be learning something you didn't know before (a merchant's dealings with the Kormilians), or even taking advantage of something you're aware of or previously observed (attacking an opponent from their weak side).

Opposition might be active or passive, depending on the circumstances. If your target is another character, their roll always counts as a defend action.



If you're using create an advantage to make a new aspect...

- **When you fail**, you either don't create the aspect, or you create it but someone else gets the free invoke—whatever you end up doing works to someone else's advantage instead. That could be your opponent in a conflict, or any character who could tangibly benefit to your detriment. You may have to reword the aspect to show that the other character benefits instead—work it out with the recipient in whichever way makes the most sense.
- **When you tie**, you get a boost instead of the situation aspect you were going for. This might mean you have to rename the aspect a bit to reflect its temporary nature (Rough Terrain becomes Rocks on the Path).
- **When you succeed**, you create a situation aspect with a free invocation.
- **When you succeed with style**, you get a situation aspect with two free invocations instead of one.

[Glassborn] has once again bitten off more than she can chew and is on the run from some very unhappy creatures. [Player] asks [GM], "There's just this winding road and a bit of underbrush, right? I want to create an illusion of myself running off into the woods to draw them away."

"Sounds doable, sure! Since these creatures are minor NPCs they act as passive opposition of Fair (+2) to fool."

[Player] picks up his dice and rolls a [0][+][0], added to his Fair (+2) lineage aspect of **GLAMOUR IS JUST ANOTHER FORM OF REALITY** means he ties and gets a boost. "Well, I hope that's good enough to help me get away!"

On his next action, [Player] has a **CONVINCING GLAMOUR** boost to use.



[Stonekin] is in a tussle with [NPC] and recently hit him pretty good in the left leg, giving him a **BUM KNEE** consequence. [Stonekin] is eager to get this fight over with, so his player decides to try to strike the bad knee, making it worse.

“I’m going to faint right then swing my massive fist around to hit his left knee, hopefully in the same spot as before,” [Player] says, picking up his dice. Thankfully this is his strength, with a Good (+3) high concept of **BEEFY BRAWLER FROM THE STREETS**. His roll is a $[+][0][0][0]$, totaling +1, giving him a final result of Great (+4).

[GM] then picks up his dice, and says, “Seeing you go right, he takes a small step to the left, attempting to hop out of your way, using his Good (+3) **MY GRACE IS MY WEAPON** aspect to defend.” [GM] rolls his dice and gets a $[+][0][0][0]$, a net 0, and a final result of Good (+3). “Your feint catches him off-guard and your spin connects with his **BUM KNEE**. You have one free invoke on that aspect.”



If you’re using create an advantage on an existing aspect...

- **When you fail**, you give a free invoke on that aspect to someone else instead. That could be your opponent in a conflict, or any character who could tangibly benefit to your detriment.
- **When you tie or succeed**, you place a free invocation on the aspect.
- **When you succeed with style**, you place two free invocations on the aspect.

DEFEND

Use the defend action to prevent someone from using one of the other two actions against you.

Anytime you are the target of a create an advantage or overcome action and can potentially intervene, you get a chance to defend.

CHALLENGES, CONTESTS, AND CONFLICTS

Now that we know what the three actions are (overcome, create an advantage, and defend) and the four possible outcomes of the actions (fail, tie, succeed, and succeed with style), it's time to fit them into the framework of the game.

Most of the time, when you want to do something straightforward—fast-talk a guard, wade a stream, get information from a contact—all you need to do is make an overcome action against a GM-set difficulty. Resolve the dice roll, figure out the outcome and move on.

Sometimes, however, the situation is more dramatic and interesting. These are the main action scenes, like combat, chases, even intense interrogations and games of chance. For such scenes, Shadowcraft has three ways to zoom in on the action and allow for several aspect rolls to be made to determine the outcome.

- A **Challenge** is when one or more characters work together to achieve a mutual goal
- A **Contest** is used when two or more characters work against each other, competing for a mutually-exclusive goal
- A **Conflict** occurs when several characters are willing to cause lasting harm to achieve their mutually-exclusive goal

WHAT IS A CHALLENGE?

A challenge is a series of overcome and create an advantage actions used to resolve a complicated situation. Each overcome action resolves one portion of the overall goal. It isn't until all actions are resolved that the success or failure is resolved.

To set-up a challenge, the GM—with player input—decides on the tasks that need to be completed in order to complete the challenge. Each task then becomes its own overcome roll.

Depending on what's actually happening, one character may be required to make several rolls, or perhaps each character only gets one roll. Regardless of who makes what rolls, anyone may instead opt to create an advantage to assist someone else on their roll instead of tackling the challenge as a whole. The success or failure of the create an advantage roll has no bearing on the overall success or failure of the challenge, but a failed create an advantage roll could complicate matters immensely.

WHAT IS A CONTEST?

A contest is when two or more characters are opposing each other *without* the intention of causing lasting harm. Examples include chases, debates, and games of chance.

Setting up a contest is easy: each side declares what they're trying to do, the GM places a situation aspect or two, and the contest takes place over a series of exchanges.

In an exchange, each participant—you can have multiple participants on each side—rolls an overcome action to determine how well they do. Once every participant has their total, compare them.

Whoever has the highest result wins the exchange with one victory for their side—two, if you succeed with style—and describes how they gained the upper hand on your opponents.

If there is a tie, then no one gains a victory and an unexpected twist occurs. This can take many different forms, from turning down a crowded alley for a chase, an unanticipated argument in a debate, to a new player at a game of chance. Regardless of what the twist is, it is represented by a new situation aspect.

The first participant—or side, depending—to accumulate three victories is the winner of the contest. Whether it's the first participant or first side to three depends on the nature of the contest. Chases are great examples of participant-oriented victories. Just because two runners are close to their prey doesn't mean the prey is caught. Debates, on the other hand, are all about teamwork. Each victory gained during a debate goes to their side of the argument.

WHAT IS A CONFLICT?

Conflicts are the sword fights, the duels of magical expression, and brawls where the goal is to cause harm to your opponents.

Conflicts are played out much like contests, above, with some slight differences. Most conflicts are played out on a map with several zones, and you cause stress and/or consequences (see below) instead of gaining victory points when you succeed on your overcome actions.

Setting the Stage

As with contests, each side declares their overall aim and the GM comes up with a few situation aspects. In addition, the GM establishes zones for the conflict. If it helps, you can draw out a map to better understand where each zone is.

A zone is a nebulous area that's just small enough where you can physically interact with anything and anyone in the same zone (in other words, it's small enough for you to run up and stab them!). Most conflicts shouldn't have more than 2–4 zones, with smaller-scale conflicts having less, and more important conflicts having more.

Normally you may move one zone for free on your turn before or after you make your overcome roll. If there is something obstructing your movement—usually, but not always, an aspect—it costs your action to move. An overcome roll allows you to move 1 zone, while a success with style lets you move two zones. If there is no obstruction impeding your movement, you may combine this movement with your 1 zone free movement.

Creating Advantages During a Conflict

During your turn in each exchange, you may create an advantage instead of taking the normal overcome action. This could be used to boost yourself, assist a teammate, or to counter an opponent's advantage with one of your own.

PERFORMING ACTIONS

When you perform actions—either within the structured exchanges of challenges, contests, or conflicts, or more narrative time, they all tell a story.

THE CONVERSATION

Whenever two characters roll against each other, it's important to have a conversation. The dice are part of that conversation, determining the ultimate outcome, but the players are the most important part of the conversation, since they are the ones driving the story.

Follow these steps when rolling against another character:

- The active player describes their action, then rolls the dice
- The reactive player describes how their character reacts to the other player's action, then rolls the dice
- Aspects are invoked
- Consequences may be taken
- The outcome is decided

ROLLING THE DICE

Before any dice are rolled, the player must describe what their character is doing, and know what action it is: normally this would be to create an advantage or overcome.

Each participant rolls their dice and adds the appropriate aspect rank.

INVOKING ASPECTS

If you wish to bolster your total, you may invoke any aspect that is germane to the task at hand to either reroll your dice or add +2 (see **Invoking Aspects** on page 37 for more).

DETERMINING THE WINNER

Once all participants have their totals, you compare them. Whoever has the highest total gains one victory, or causes one stress in a conflict. This is increased to two with a success with style.

TAKING CONSEQUENCES

If you are on the losing end of an opposed roll, you may take a consequence to avoid taking stress, instead taking a short-term disadvantage to succeed at your overall goal.

A mild consequence reduces the stress you take by one, and a moderate or severe consequence reduces the stress you take by two.

STRESS AND CONSEQUENCES

When you are hit by an attack in a conflict, you can either absorb the hit or get taken out. You absorb the hit in one of two ways: with stress or a consequence.

WHAT IS STRESS?

Stress is your ability to stay in the fight. It is a combination of your luck, tenacity, stamina, and fortune. All characters have three stress boxes by default.

When your opponent succeeds in attacking you, you take one point of stress, unless they succeeded with style. In that case take two points of stress. Whenever you take stress, mark off that many boxes from your stress track.

GETTING TAKEN OUT

If you cannot absorb the hit from an attack, you are taken out. This is bad news: it not only means that you cannot participate in the conflict anymore, but whoever took you out gets to decide what happens to you after the conflict is over. This can take any form that makes sense for the character, including death!

If you don't want to get taken out, you can instead choose to **give in**.

GIVING IN

Anytime before you roll the dice, you may decide to give in instead. It could be because you don't think you can take another hit, or the stakes of the conflict isn't worth the pounding you've taken. Whatever the reason, you may choose to give in at anytime before you roll the dice. This part is very important—once the dice hit the table, all bets are off.

When you give in, you are giving the other person what they want—or are just removing yourself from the conflict if there are multiple combatants on the other side. You are now out of the conflict, period.

The good news is that you get a fate point for giving in. If you took any consequence during the conflict, you get an additional fate point per consequence

In addition, you get to avoid the worst of your fate. When you're taken out, your opponent decides what happens to you. But when you give in, *you* decide what happens to your character. Of course, you can't use this to undermine their victory. If they wanted to capture you, you would still get captured, but they miss that knife in your boot.

Most of the time, conflicts arise as an obstacle toward the ultimate goal of the mission, and once you give in, you are no longer in the way of that ultimate goal.

WHAT ARE CONSEQUENCES?

Whereas stress is the small things—luck, tiredness, etc—that keep you going, consequences are more lasting injuries. Once you take a consequence, it becomes an aspect on your character sheet, and whoever caused you to take the consequence has one free invoke on it.

There are three levels of consequence: mild, moderate, and severe. Each one allows you to reduce the incoming stress from a failed roll by a certain amount: 1 for a mild, and 2 for a moderate or severe.

RECOVERING FROM STRESS AND CONSEQUENCES

Stress is very easy to recover: after any conflict scene where you have a minute or so to catch your breath, you regain the use of all your stress boxes.

Consequences, on the other hand, are a bit longer-lasting. In order to recover from a consequence, you must explain what you do to recover from it, and then wait an appropriate amount of time:

- **Mild consequence:** Clear it at the end of the scene, provided you get a chance to rest.
- **Moderate consequence:** Clear it at the end of the next session, provided it makes sense within the story.
- **Severe consequence:** Clear it at the end of the mission, provided it makes sense within the story.

FLASHBACKS

In all spy stories, the protagonist is given all the tools they need to complete the plot as written by the author. For better or worse, there is no set script for the players to adhere to, so it gets difficult for the GM to know what tools or experiences are needed for the mission at hand.

Shadowcraft gets around this with **flashbacks**. The heroes still get what they need before the mission, but it's handled retroactively: when the PCs need something, they automatically have it. Shadowcraft uses two types of flashbacks to get this effect: **story flashbacks** and **quartermaster flashbacks**.

USING FLASHBACKS

Flashbacks of any kind are designed to speed up play when the players are not sure what to do or if none of the characters have the right aspect for a pivotal dice roll in order to proceed with the mission.

When the game starts to slow down, any player may call for a flashback scene—and if the players don't, the GM can gently remind them to do so.

A flashback scene is a very short scene describing something that has already happened that is germane to mission at hand. It showcases either a specific skill or artifact that each player character has that was unknown up until that point.

Story Flashbacks tell the tale of a time before the current mission. They help develop the backstory of the character and shows off some special talent that their current aspects don't speak to. **Quartermaster flashbacks** show the character receiving a specific relic or artifact from the quartermaster.

STORY FLASHBACK

Since the five aspects your character has talks about who they are **right now, and not who they were**, there are past experiences that aren't highlighted. That's where Story flashbacks come in.

Once per mission, each player may call for a story flashback. That player then describes a quick situation where they had a skill pertinent to the current scene, and gains an aspect relevant to that experience rated at Fair (+2). If you already have a flashback aspect you may pay 1 fate point to describe another flashback and replace your existing aspect with a new one.

Flashback aspects last until the end of the current mission or they are replaced, whichever comes first.

QUARTERMASTER FLASHBACK

Every shadow agent is given a magical relic and artifact at the beginning of the mission, but it isn't until the quartermaster flashback that the actual items are unveiled.

During the quartermaster flashback, the player describes the quartermaster demonstrating the relic or artifact for their character. If the flashback deals with a relic, then nothing else needs to be done aside from the flashback and creating the stunt. If the flashback unveils an artifact, however, the player must spend a fate point. See page 49 in chapter 5 for more information on relics and artifacts.



Ironhold Mountains

Slatesky Mountains

Highmawt

Lake Kyre

Lancaster

Greenpoint

Banwood

Clearwater

Holdfast

Stagwood

Whiterun River

Baymark

Ceol

Windcliff

Southron Forest

Gemstone Hills

Farreach

Sheerhome

Seawoods

The Hedge

Shadowlands

Bluewall

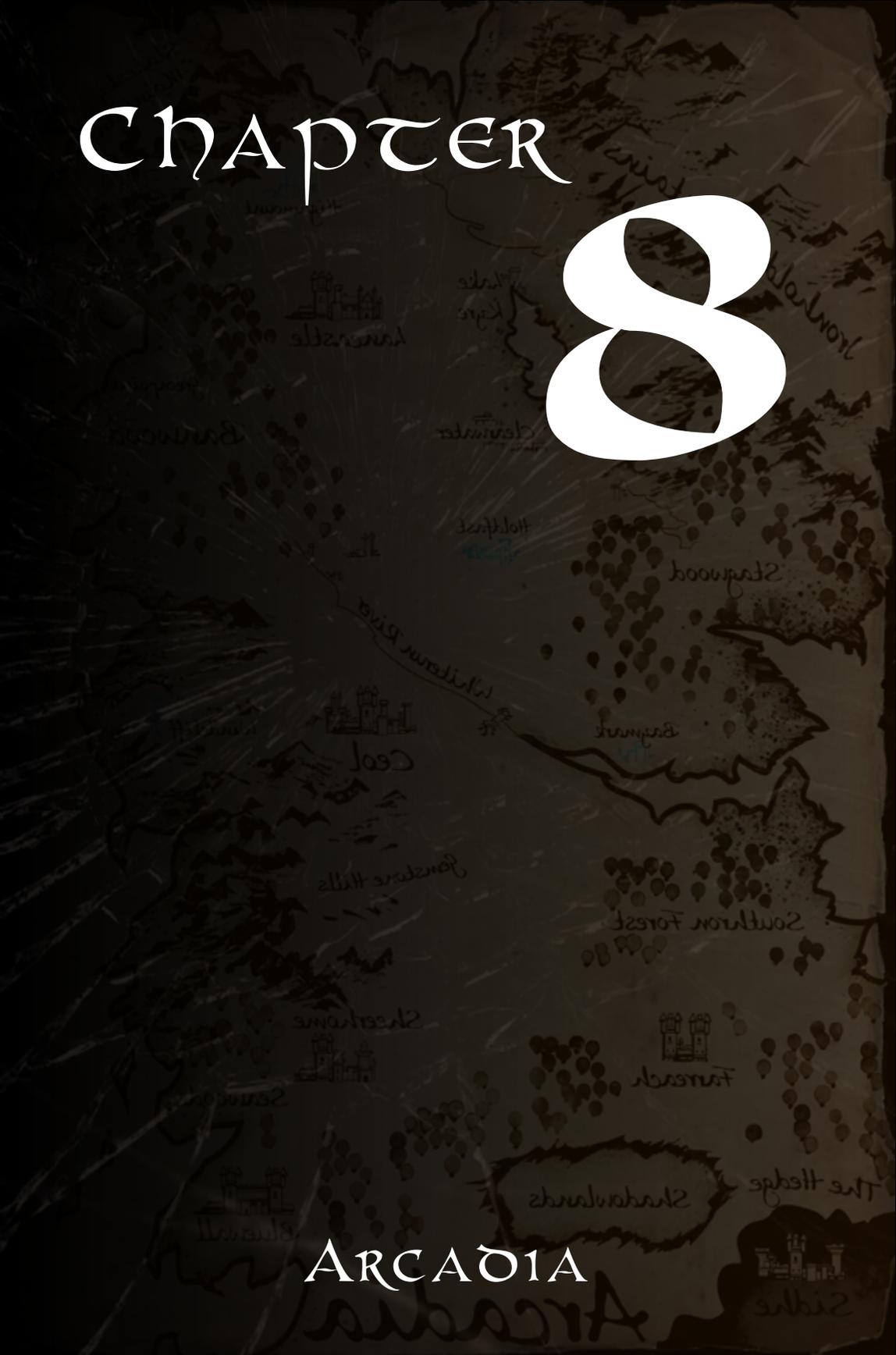
Sidhe

Arcadia

CHAPTER

8

ARCADIA



THE RECENT HISTORY OF ARCADIA

Twelve years ago, the peace of Arcadia was shattered. The children of Kormil returned to Arcadia from their exile at the head of an army of darkness. Since that time, Arcadia has known little respite. From the claiming of the south, to the battle of Ceol, the early years were marked by the massive loss of Noraluan life and land. And in the decade since the Accords, the darkness of the Kormillians has constantly leaked north, countered only by deeds of the Ministry and its Shadow Agents.

Contained within is the recent history of Arcadia. The events within have been deemed appropriate for all Shadow Agents. More complete files are available through Ministry channels.

ROLL OF RECENT YEARS

After Vanishing (AV)

336 AV

- **Autumn** – The first sightings of what would become the Nightmare Horde. The leader of the Sylvan rangers, Doria Leftstride, goes missing after a battle with a mysterious foe that leaves thirteen rangers slain.
- **Winter** – The Nightmare Horde reveals itself. The burning of the Sylvan homesteads in the Southron forests sends a flood of refugees north.

337 AV

- **Spring** - The first rumors of the Great Southron Beast are told by survivors flooding into Bluewall. The armies of the Summer Court fall back with each clash against the Nightmare Horde. Farreach falls in a single night. The only survivors are madmen who claim the Fae have returned.
- **Summer** – The Summer Court sends representatives to Lancaster to seek aid. The siege of Bluewall begins. The first of the Formorion tribes are seen as they assault the walls of Bluewall.
- **Autumn** – The Summer Court retreats to Sheerhome. The Armies of the Lost finally muster under the Glassborn general Faryd the Great. The siege of Bluewall takes a turn for the worse as a clan of Ogres breaks through the



walls and begins to devour the population. The Four Treasures, Fae artifacts of great power, are smuggled out by daring Sylvan but never make it to Sheerhome.

- **Winter** – The Summer Court begins the Greenward ritual. Bluehome falls, its population consumed by Ogres and Formorion. The Armies of the Lost are caught in an unnatural blizzard and are forced to weather it in Ceol. The first of the Shadowlands appears near Bluewall.

338 AV

- **Spring** – Minister Rydak, one of the Lords of Spring, encounters a group of Spectres near the Fae ruin of Windcliff. This harrowing experience causes Rydak to petition the Summer Court for the formation of the Ministry. The Night of Dark Dreams occurs. The Armies of the Lost are met by a significant portion of the Nightmare Horde before they can reach Sheerhome. The Battle of Green Fields commences. The Nightmare Horde brutally drives the Armies of the Lost to the east. The battlefield where they clashed quickly becomes a Shadowland.
- **Summer** – The Ritual of Greenward is completed. The Chasm of Greenward is torn open by powerful expression that reduces the Sylvan's Circle of Chieftains to a group of wild animals, robbing the Summer Court of all leadership. The Betrayal of Sheerhome occurs, and the city falls. Sylvan rangers bring reports of the Breach, an area where the Realm Tenebrous is bleeding into Arcadia. Minister Rydak travels about Arcadia, visiting the different Courts.
- **Autumn** – The Armies of the Lost regroup, and make a push to reclaim Sheerhome. The Colossi of the Ironhold Mountains join the Army of the Lost, and it manages to push within sight of Sheerhome. The dead from the Battle of Green Fields rise to reenact the slaughter.
- **Winter** – Through evidence of Spectres operating north of the battle lines, Minister Rydak gains enough support to form the Ministry. The first group of Shadow Agents are recruited and immediately sent to the ruins of Highmount, which opened for the first time in known history. Their reports abruptly cease after they encounter evidence of Spectre activity. The Armies of the Lost manage to briefly reclaim Sheerhome.

339 AV

- **Spring** – The Nightmare Horde renews its offensive, pouring out around both ends of the Greenward. The Armies of the Lost are forced back all the way to Ceol, where they are joined by fresh recruits from the Ironhold Mountains, Lancaster, and the Bânwood. The Battle of Ceol commences. Shadow Agents wreak havoc in the camps of the Nightmare Horde. The original Shadow Agents appear suddenly, bearing relics they recovered from Highmount. They sue for a meeting with the generals of the Night-

mare Horde.

- **Summer** – The Treaty of Ceol is signed, ending the war. Ambassador Donogh arrives in Lancaster as the Kormil delegate to the Courts. The Iron Seat of Winter is filled for the first time in Lost One History. The first of the Lancaster Shadowlands develops that evening.
- **Autumn** – The Ministry opens the Training Grounds, and begins aggressively seeking out new Shadow Agents. The Breach grows to consume a vast area of the Southron Woods. Shadow agents see new Nightmare Beasts being bred within the Breach.
- **Winter** - Minister Rydak is assassinated by Spectres. The Ministry's reins are taken up by the Masked Minister. The Nightmare Horde disappears behind the Greenward, and the area is claimed in truth by the followers of Kormil.

340 AV

- **Spring** – The Ministry partners with Lost One scholars to understand the nature of the Shadowlands. More shadowlands crop up throughout Arcadia, first near sites of recent battles. Soon they appear around Fae ruins as well. They grow slowly at first, but the Ministry believes they are a new way that the war for Arcadia is being waged.
- **Summer** – The Pride of the Bânwood takes the seat of the Summer Court. Within the first week, she is involved in six duels with members of the Winter Court. Spectres perform a raid within the Ironholds, and steal a sizable shipment of iron and Stonekin weapons.
- **Autumn** – Shadow Agents finally catch up with the Spectre thieves, who are all killed in the ensuing battle. The Shadow Agents are unable to recover the stolen cache. The Massacre of Cyl occurs when a Kormil Stonekin essence fractures, taking the town with her in a conflagration. The Ambassador decries this act of violence as the actions of a rogue Lost One.
- **Winter** – The winter of 340 AV is dubbed the Bleak Cold for its intensity. The whole of Arcadia is blanketed in snow, ending trade and communication for the year. The towns, villages, and cities of the Noraluans are isolated from each other. The Ministry refines the art of Displacement for use with communication.

341 AV

- **Spring** – As soon as the thaw sets in, the Ministry sends out scores of new Agent teams. Many are sent south of Ceol to assess the southern lands. None who go south of the Greenward are seen alive. Sylvan are called upon throughout Arcadia to bring life back to the lands left barren by the Bleak Cold.
- **Summer** – The first expurgation techniques are unlocked by Ministry scholars. This technique is shared, and soon the first attempt to cleanse a shadowland begins. These techniques are also used to unlock the sealed Fae city of Windcliff. However, initial attempts to delve into the city meet

bloody ends at the claws of some great shadowy spider cluster.

- **Autumn** – The King of the Ironholds dies of essence fracture at the Battle of Windlorn Chasm, and is succeeded by the current King of the Ironholds. This new king offers to host Ambassador Donogh for the season. The Winter Court travels west to spend the winter in the mountains.
- **Winter** – The Ministry establishes the Paladins, a subset of Shadow Agents which will strive to primarily keep Lancaster, the Bânwood, the Ironhold Mountains free of shadowlands and lend aid to the rest of Ceol when possible.

342 AV

- **Spring** – The Ambassador of the Winter Court is supposedly slain during his return trip from the Ironhold Mountains, but appears in Lancaster three weeks later. Riots break out in Ceol, although the cause is never discovered.
- **Summer** – A Fae ruin near the Bânwood is discovered to have been defiled. The Lords of Spring are attacked within their council chambers. Two are slain before the trio of assassins can be put down.
- **Autumn** – The Lords of Spring create the Thorns, a private police force that answers only to them. The Thorns begin to investigate the Ministry. Shadow Agents report increase in Spectre activity with Ceol.
- **Winter** – Another harsh winter settles in. The Stonekin, at the behest of the Ministry, begin working on new artifacts for the purpose of delving into sealed Fae ruins. Many members of this project, dubbed *Witchlight*, join the Ministry. Soon after, members of *Witchlight* established the Quartermasters of the Ministry.

343 AV

- **Spring** – The chill of winter never leaves southern Arcadia, leaving the land as far north as Ceol fog-shrouded and constantly rainy. Shadow Agents begin to be arrested by the Hawks. Skirmishes break out along the treaty line. Ambassador Donogh calls for retribution against the officers responsible.
- **Summer** – The days seem to grow shorter as shadows spread from the Southron Forest. The Great Southron Beast is seen again around Bluewall. Sylvan rangers are sent out to slay it.
- **Autumn** – A foul shadow spreads over the Bânwood. It begins to slowly choke the life from the forest. The Pride sends word to Lancaster for aid. A small town northwest of Lancaster disappears in the middle of the night. Rumor spread that the Ministry was involved.
- **Winter** – The Great Southron Beast is slain by Cerra, a Sylvan huntress of great skill. The southern trees of the Bânwood absorb the chill of winter, turning a stark white. Investigation into whether this transformation is a manifestation of the disease or a cure is inconclusive. Yet the trees continue to grow, flower, and bloom even in the midst of winter.

344 AV

- **Spring** – Sylvan expressionists begin studying the white wood of their forest. The Stonekin are once again visited by diplomats of the Winter Court. They allow the Winter Court to establish an embassy within the Halls of the King.
- **Summer** – The summer is cool, and brings pervasive rains. The Pride orders essencecrafted weapons be crafted from the white wood, for her rangers. Under the cover of the rains, a great army of Fomorian and Ogres slip north of the Greenward, massing in the northern part of the Southron Forest.
- **Autumn** – The cool damp weather does not relent, and soon the skies of Arcadia are crowned with clouds more days than not. The Masked Minister sends over thirty Shadow Agents south with the goal of getting at least one of them within the walls of Farreach by the winter solstice.
- **Winter** – Cerra goes missing from the town of Crescent days before the anniversary of her victory over the Great Southron Beast.

345 AV

- **Spring** – Ogres and Fomorian slip over the narrow bay, claiming Baymark as an independent city. Ambassador Donogh calls for a Conclave of Seasons.
- **Summer** – The Conclave of Seasons meets in Clearwater. Sylvan villages in the Stagwood are threatened by Fomorian patrols. The Great Southron Beast is seen wandering plains outside of Ceol.
- **Autumn** – The Armies of the Lost, supported by detachments from the Nightmare horde, assault and raze Baymark. Fighting breaks out between the Shadow Agents and Spectres among the armies, as an unknown Fae ruin is discovered under the city during the fight. Each side escapes with a portion of an unknown Fae relic.
- **Winter** – The Ministry uncovers a ring of ensorcelled Lost Ones throughout the Courts. It is unknown who subverted them, or how, but the Ministry begins a bloody purge of the Courts.

346 AV

- **Spring** – Scholars at the Ministry predict the opening of Highmount again within two years. The Ministry begins preparing Agents to delve the greatest of the Fae ruins. Bloody murders within Lancaster, the Sylvan enclaves, and the Ironholds spread panic among the Lost Ones.
- **Summer** – Shadow Agents are sent all over Arcadia searching for copies of the *Lays of the First Ones*, a book of poems from the Lost Ones' earliest days in Arcadia. The Ministry aids in rebuilding the Courts. The Great Southron Beast breaches the walls of Ceol. Shadow Agents slay it, at the cost of many lives. Rumors spread that the body of Cerra is found among the carnage. The bloody purge of the Courts comes to an end.
- **Autumn** – A pervasive fog seeps out of the ground around Holdfast. None make it out before the city is obscured. The Ministry seeks to

breach the wall of fog, but has so far been unable to breach it. Shadowlands expand and develop with alarming frequency throughout Arcadia.

- **Winter** – Reports filter in that Spectres are paying for information concerning a relic known as *The Veil of Forever*. The Training Grounds are breached by Spectres, and several top instructors are forced into essence fracture by unknown means, before Shadow Agents slay the intruders.

347 AV

- **Spring** – Highmount begins to open. Spectres battle with Shadow Agents on the rooftops of Ceol. Reports suggest aggressive troop movements on both sides of the treaty line. A White Stag is reported in the northern Stagwood.

IMPORTANT LOCATIONS

Arcadia is not a unified land. Discounting the loss of the southern half to the Kormillians, the rest of Arcadia is a patchwork of independent cities, town, forests, and mountain kingdoms that pay respect to the authority of the Courts. The Ministry is the only truly cross-lineage organization that exists with any real power or coherence. Even the Armies of the Lost, more often than not, separate into lineage-specific units.

This is purposeful. The Noraluans, after the vanishing, rebelled against any idea of a central authority set up over them. After all, they had just fought for their freedom from the Fae. Why would they replace one master with others, and who among them would be worthy? Instead a land of city states, independent towns and villages developed.

What follows is a highlight of the major points of interest in Arcadia. Each is taken from Ministry reports on the various locales. Arcadia is always in flux, so view the information that follows with a wary eye. The fact that Shadow Agents hold these reports mean they are already out of date.

LANCASTLE

Home of the Summer Court, Ailreach, The City of Glass and Mirror

Lancastle is the greatest of all the Fae cities claimed by the Lost Ones after the Vanishing. It is carved of faeglass and scáthán, making it the most beautiful of all the Lost One's cities. Home to the Lords of Spring, the Seats of the Courts, and the Ministry, Lancastle is the heart of Noraluan controlled

Arcadia.

The Fae-built spires stretch high above the inhabitants. Strong walls of scáthán encircle its borders. Broad thoroughfares end in open air markets. For the most part, the Lost Ones of Lancaster are insulated from the depravations of the Nightmare Horde, the Kormillians, and the Glamour War.

LANCASTER POINTS OF INTEREST

- **Ailreach** – In the center of Lancaster stand the foreboding spires of Ailreach. To the common Glassborn it seems that the Ailreach, the sanctuary that the city used to derive its name from, grows more malevolent every year. Once the most holy site in Arcadia for the Fae, the building has been sealed since the Vanishing; not with Fae power, like many of the ruins throughout the land, but rather by order of the Lords of Spring. All who enter the Ailreach return twisted of mind and body. In these days, the Glamour War makes harsh demands of the Shadow Agents who attempt to win it, and so many still seek to delve Ailreach.
- **The Hall of Noralua** - The Spring Court convenes within the Hall, the second largest building in all of Lancaster. The Ministry maintains a major presence here, as it is also the site of the Seats of the Courts. Delegates from all four courts are routinely found here, as it serves as the diplomatic center of Arcadia. The Hall has become the focal point of attacks led by Spectres.
- **The Training Grounds** – Below the streets of Lancaster lie the Training Grounds. The Ministry's compound for producing the highly-trained Shadow Agents remains its best kept secret. The old Training Grounds were abandoned after the Spectre assault in 346 A.V., but this more recent complex was already being developed. Home to quartermasters, analysts, and expressionists alike, the Training Grounds are the Ministry's nerve center.
- **The Winter Home** – The Kormil embassy in Lancaster. Home of Ambassador Donogh, it is the stronghold of the Ministry's foe. It is a hotbed of intrigue, violence, and shadowcraft. Within those walls, Spectres gather, safe behind the terms of the Treaty of Ceol. Any Shadow Agent caught within that compound is killed and disavowed by the Ministry. But that doesn't stop the Ministry from sending more to try and discover some kernel of information to swing the Glamour War in their favor.

CEOL

The City of Peace, The Front Line of the Glamour War, The Shadowscape, The Divided City

Ceol began as a Glassborn city. Founded and built by the Lost Ones, it was established to be a shining example of the lineages' power. Carved from the grey stone of the Gemstone Hills, it was the first city to be raised in Arcadia without Fae hands. Raised with stone blocks, gems, and capped with slate

roofs, it does not possess the eerie inhumanity of Lancaster. Still, the lineages are not without skill, and Ceol is a masterpiece of engineering. Squat where Lancaster is tall, Ceol also features smooth lines and has rough beauty of its own.

The treaty of Ceol, named for the city it was signed in, ended open war in Arcadia 12 years ago and it has imprinted itself on every facet of life within the city. In many ways Ceol is now a microcosm of Arcadia. The Kormillians possess the southern half of the city, and live in open worship of the Fae. Strange creatures roam the city, and the Kormillians are ever causing trouble for Noraluans caught below Straight Street. Shadow Agents and Spectres fight from the roof tops, and bodies are often found dead in alleys. The Glamour War front is ill-defined, but one can safely say that the heart of the struggle is Ceol.

CEOL POINTS OF INTEREST

- **Ambassador's Meet** – Located on Straight Street, at the center of Ceol, this building was erected after the signing of the Treaty. The location was built as a place where the rulers of the two sides of Ceol, could come and find peaceful solutions to the issues that would face them, and by extension, all of Arcadia. In practice, Ambassador Donogh moved his court to Lancaster, and the Ambassador's Meet quickly became a place for assassinations, bickering, and riots. The Ministry uses it as an access point to cross over from north to south, through secret tunnels that were built beneath it.
- **Marshall's Square** – This square is home to the permanent command of the Armies of the Lost. Located around the broad square, each lineage maintains barracks, officer's quarters, and quartermaster warehouses. The army's headquarters are located here, from which the Three Generals coordinate forces along the Treaty Line. The Ministry operates here more openly than in other parts of Arcadia as the Armies need to rely on them, and vice versa, to respond to Kormil's actions quickly.
- **The Night Market** – Rotating through squares of Ceol, the Night Market is a secret gathering of black market traders, illicit ne'er-do-wells, and dark folk from around Arcadia... and beyond, if the rumors are true. Each full moon, they meet for only one night in a different square within Ceol. Relics, artifacts, secrets, and people are just a few of the items that are routinely put up for sale. The Ministry would like to know who is behind the market, and why. But until that happens, they enjoy the benefits that can be bought there and attempt to keep the Spectres from doing the same.
- **Straight Street** – The street, also known as the Treaty Line and Hope's Loss, runs east-west through Ceol. Fortified on the northern side, the street marks the transition between Noraluan controlled Ceol and the Kormillian side. The Army of the Lost man the walls on the north side, but by treaty, cannot keep Kormillians from coming through the three Market Gates and entering northern Ceol.

Sidhe

Not much is known about the fabled city to the south. Scouts and rangers that have returned have told of a city of black and greens, nestled within a vast hedge. The city seems to be a part of that hedge wall, although no record of Sidhé exists within any history of Arcadia or the Lost Ones.

The Hedge

Running from coast to coast, the Hedge is a towering wall of brambles. With razor-sharp thorns the length of a Stonekin's arm, towering eight Glass-born-heights tall, and too deep to penetrate the other side, the Hedge has been always been considered the end of Arcadia by the Lost Ones. Even expression is no help, as the Hedge blocks Displacement attempts. The brambles shred the essence as easily as they rend flesh. The emergence of a city from the Hedge and the appearance of the Nightmare Horde to bolster the Kormillians are the two great mysteries that consume the leadership of the Ministry.



RUMORS CONCERNING SIDHÉ & THE HEDGE

- The purpose of *Witchlight* was to piece the veil of the Hedge.
- The Fae vanished over the Hedge.
- The Kormillians are immune to the thorns of the Hedge.
- Sidhé doesn't just sit on the edge of the Hedge, but it passes through it.
- High ranking Kormillians carry blades fashioned from Hedge Thorns.
- Like the Kormillians are a dark reflection of the Noraluans, south of the Hedge is a reflection of Arcadia.
- Spectres take their prisoners through the Hedge to speak with their true leaders.
 - The Hedge is a prison to keep the Lost Ones in Arcadia, and the Kormillians are the wardens!

IRONHOLD MOUNTAINS

Home of Autumn, the Realm Under the Sky, The Fastness of the King of Ironhold, The Mines of Death, the Edge of the World

Forming along the western border of Arcadia, the Ironhold Mountains are representative of the Stonekin holds. Founded during the Fae mastery of Arcadia, the Ironhold Mountains were delved for the rare materials needed for the creation of faeglass, and for the priceless stone scáthán. The Ironholds and the other mountains throughout Arcadia are still mined today. They are riddled with tunnels and mines, and punctuated by the vast cavern fortress-cities of the Stonekin. Concentrated in a few holds, the majority of which lie within the Ironholds, the majority of Stonekin mine, forge, live, and die beneath the rock canopy of the mountains.

The greatest foundries of the Stonekin lie within the boundaries of Ironhold. From there the greatest artifacts of the Glamour War are forged. The great War Colossi, essence-crafted items, and weapons of iron, are created and shipped off to the Glamour War. The Ministry is constantly troubled by the number of shipments that go missing every year.

IRONHOLD POINTS OF INTEREST

- The Caves – Referred to only by that oblique name, the Caves are the Quartermaster stockpiles for the Ministry. Hidden somewhere within the Ironholds, the Stonekin prepare for a renewal of the war. Weapons and relics of surprising power have been crafted and secreted away. The Ministry keeps the Caves as their best guarded secret, however some suspect that it has already been compromised.
- The Deeps – Mining in the Ironholds has continued for many years at the hands of the Stonekin. The Deeps are the newest level that has been excavated. Iron and Scáthán run in great veins through this region under the mountain, as well as other metals and gems prized by the Lost Ones. However, the tunnels and crews have been plagued by pervasive Shadowlands since its opening. Something foul lies somewhere in the Deeps; something that perverts the essence of the mountain, and all who seek to find its source.
- Glitterglen - The hold of Glitterglen is the seat of power for the King of the Ironholds, and by extension, that of the Autumn Court. Glitterglen is built into stone pillars cultivated in a cavern by the Rocksingers of the Stonekin. The mines are a source of constant activity. And the Nightmare Horde seems able to pierce the security of those mines with increasingly frequency.
- Highpass – The Stonekin established an outpost on the highest peak of the Ironhold Range within years of the Vanishing. Its purpose was twofold: both to watch over Arcadia and to scry the lands beyond for returning Fae. It is said that from the Tower of Highpass, one may see the whole of Arcadia for as long as their mind can withstand the strain.

THE BÂNWOOD

Home of The Pride, The White Wood, The Home of Summer.

Along the coast of eastern Arcadia lies the Bânwood. Like all of the wilds of Arcadia, the Bânwood serves the Sylvan like Lancaster serves the Glassborn. But these woods are the home of The Pride of the Bânwood, the current ruler of the Court of Summer. From here, The Pride sends out her rangers throughout Arcadia on missions that only she is privy to. The tribes of the Bânwood have no cities, nor towns. At most they have migratory villages that move silently through the woods as need or whim arises.

The lands of the Bânwood lie under heavy Fae-wrought expressions. Wanderers emerge from its confines to find time has not passed as they thought. Lost Ones can meet with strange expression echoes, be enthralled by the natural beauty around them, or drift into a yearlong sleep. Such is the terrible enchanting nature of the all the woods of Arcadia. The Glassborn consider their Sylvan cousins quite mad for making their homes in such a place, but the Sylvan have grown accustomed to their land's peculiarities.

It is said that within the Bânwood, summer reigns longer and fuller than anywhere else in Arcadia. In fact the darkening of the land has not touched the Bânwood. Within its borders lies the ruin of Greenpoint, the former home of the Fae within the woods. The southern sections of the wood have been turned a stark white color, due to the plague that ravaged through it in 343 A.V.. The trees still grow strong, but leafless, and the Sylvan have unlocked the secrets of essence-crafting with the pale wood.

BÂNWOOD POINTS OF INTEREST

The Great Hunt – Not a location, but an event that takes place at random throughout the woods of Arcadia. Great hounds that stand taller than Stonekin run through the woods at nights under the new moon. In the darkness, they slip between the distances that separates Bânwood from the other woods of Arcadia. Those that witness the pack's hunt risk becoming the harried target of it, or falling under powerful expression and joining it.

Greenpoint – A massive Faeglass ruin deep with the Bânwood, Greenpoint shifts between Arcadia and the Realm Tenebrous. The shifting seems random but The Pride believes that it is not. She has sent a number of Rangers on raids within Greenpoint successfully, but the massive structure is nowhere near to being delved completely. Those trapped within when the ruin shifts into the Realm Tenebrous must survive against essence beasts that have no name, but guard the ruins at the behest of the vanished Fae.

The Pale Wood – Targeted by a foul plague, the trees of the southern Bânwood were saved by the power of a unique expression ritual. Forever transformed by the plague and the ritual's power, the trees of the Pale Wood are leafless and alabaster in color. They still mysteriously grow and sprout new trees. The Sylvan harvest small amounts of the white wood for their essence-crafted weapons, including the infamous Ranger Whitebows. The Sylvan have partnered with the Ministry to keep the Pale Wood free of Spectre intrusions.

Pride's Fall – Once known as the Falls of Land End, the name was changed soon after The Pride claimed the Summer seat. Expressionists from all the courts had visions of The Pride dying in a great battle at the top of the falls. Although The Pride dismisses such dooms, the rumor of the foretellings have spread throughout Arcadia, and have changed the name of the falls.

THE BREACH

South of the Greenward lies the Breach. Little is known of this Shadowland, save that it is the greatest of all of the pools of darkness within Arcadia. So great is the stagnation of essence there that the edges of the shadowland suppurate the Realm Tenebrous into Arcadia. There, nightmares of essence walk the lands with the Lost Ones. Guarded by Spectres and the Nightmare Horde alike, the Ministry has yet to get Shadow Agents close enough to investigate the Breach, let alone attempt to expurgate it.

RUMORS CONCERNING THE BREACH

- The Fae walk in the darkness of the Breach.
- The Spectres perform dreadful rituals to expand the borders of the Breach.
- One can summon the spirits of the dead with ease there.
- The Breach is a natural response to the Greenward.
- One Masked Minister has disappeared within the confines of the Breach.
- One can step bodily into the Realm Tenebrous without Displacement in the Breach.
- Once you enter the Breach, only the most powerful of expressionists can escape.

THE FAE RUINS

The Fae left their mark on Arcadia, and not just upon the living. The landscape is dotted with structures of faeglass, stone, and scáthán. These ruins, built by the Fae, were locked by their hands when they vanished. Some were sealed shut, proof against the Lost Ones' attempts to access them. Others were protected by strange expressions, and others by unnatural guardians. The Ministry seeks ever to delve into these ruins for history, relics of the Fae, knowledge of ancient expression techniques, and other ways to win the Glamour War. They are not naïve, either; they know that the Spectres of Kormil seek the same thing. Each side is racing for the right combination of knowledge and power that will unlock a Fae ruin before their opponents. The greatest of the ruins are marked in blue on the map, but other can turn up wherever they are least expected.

LIFE UNDER THE COURTS

Noraluan Arcadia is controlled by the Courts of the Seasons. Formed in the days after the Casting, the Courts provided a framework for the Lost Ones' society. Each Court, while recognized as the representatives of their respective lineages, governs with different temperaments. The Spring court is ruled by a council of nobles, the Autumn by the sovereign King of Ironhold, and the Summer by cults of personality. Yet this patchwork alliance has stood the test of time against all tyrants and despots who sought to usurp it; for the Lost Ones are a wild and tempestuous people, and never again will suffer any rule that seeks to enslave them. Despite their differences, the main goal of the Courts is to keep the peace internally, and maintain relationships externally.

ECONOMIC MEANS

All members of the Noruluan Court use the same currency. Known as a *geas*, these coins have fallen out of common fashion. They are ovals of scáthán no bigger than a baby's palm and were the coinage of the past Fae realm. Worth a season's wages for the common folk, the majority of Lost Ones know of them only in principle. It is said that expressed oaths with *gaes* given as tokens bind both parties to terrible dooms if broken.

Most Lost Ones deal in *trades* and *favors*. A *trade* is a small faeglass coin, with a fleck of scáthán in the center, and is worth a week's wages for most of the common classes, or about a twelfth of the value of a *geas*. The unique property of *trades* is that they turn a specific color that matches the timbre and pitch of their owner's soul. Fair and freely given *trades* soon matches the color of that Lost One's other coins, as his essence expresses into the faeglass.

Far more common is the *favor*. A *favor* is a faeglass coin worked with the symbol of the court they were cast under, and is worth a half-day's wages. Each Court's *favor* possess a specific tone when struck against scáthán, from the bass tones of Autumn, to deep resonance of Summer, to the pure ring of Spring.

Kormilians, the Winter Court, possess their own coinage, forged in mockery of the Noraluan coins. Possessing the same value, and the same denominations, the Winter coins are cast in darker colors. And it is said they call to their brethren, so that when one possesses but a single coin, one starts to feel a gnawing desire for two...then four... then more.

LAWS AND CULTURE

The Courts enforce certain laws universally throughout Arcadia, with subtle difference between them. Personal sovereignty is to be respected. As such, thefts are taken quite seriously. As is murder, which the ultimate disregard for someone's freedom. Seeing as all Lost Ones descend from the same ancestors, murder is seen also seen as kinslaying. This was the reason for the Casting all those years ago, for the Noraluans came to put a heavy price on Lost One life. All the Courts however, ban the worship of the Fae. This is the oldest law in Arcadia – those who worship the Fae shall be banished to the shadows of the Hedge.



Each Court appends these main laws with ones that reflect their unique needs. The Spring Court has additional laws concerning trade, as does the Autumn Court. The Summer Court's laws against sovereignty are much looser than the other courts, as the right of possession goes to those who can keep it. The Autumn Courts laws of inheritance are among the strictest, passing along strict matriarchal lines.

But as the Ministry has found, there is a great unspoken law of the courts. Do not get caught.

THE SPRING COURT

The court of the Glassborn rules from Lancaster. All Glassborn are under its governance. Generally located within the villages, towns, and cities of Arcadia, the Glassborn of Noraluan live the most civilized existence in Arcadia. Very little has changed since the Vanishing for them, save now that Lords of Spring Court provide oversight in matters of law and security.

Lands

The Spring Court holds sway over the domains surrounding the cities of Arcadia. The main centers of Spring control are Lancaster and Clearwater. In the past, their influence was greater, before the coming of the Nightmare Horde. Baymark, Bluewall, Farreach, and Sheerhome have fallen under Winter control, and Ceol was always a more cosmopolitan city before the treaty to truly be claimed by any court. But the Spring is not limited to those two cities and the land that surrounds them. The Glassborn are spread through the land of Arcadia, forming bustling towns and quiet villages. Save for the depths of the forests or the heights of the mountains, the Spring Court can be found.

Social Strata

The thirteen Lords of Spring are drawn from the noble houses of the Glassborn. Each house is descended from one of Noralua's generals during the Uprising. They enjoy the benefits of their ancestors' choices, whether they deserve it or not. Within Lancaster they control the heights of the city and the choice seats of economics and power.

The commoners form the backbone of Spring civilization, and its largest population segment. They are the workers, tradesmen, scholars, soldiers, and artisans that inhabit the cities. More Shadow Agents are drawn from Glassborn of this class than any other, for they



live in the shadows and mid-levels of the great Faeglass cities, and aspire to the towers.

The lowest class of the Spring Court are the *mallacht*. This group is composed of the destitute, the cursed, and the wretched. They take the jobs that no other Glassborn wants and spend much of their days in hard labor or dangerous work environments. They are practically invisible to the rest of the Spring Court, many focusing their expression to just such effect.

THE SUMMER COURT

The forests and uninhabited plains of Arcadia are the dominion of the Sylvan and the Summer Courts. Banished to the space between the centers of Fae life, the Sylvan came to thrive within it. And so, the wilds of Arcadia are the provinces of Summer. By ancient custom, the roads of faeglass belong to the Spring Court, but they are few and far between. It is safe for any Lost One to assume if they are outside of a city or town wall, they are outside of Spring's reach.

Lands

The Lands of Summer are the largest of any court, even that of Winter. They extend from coast to coast, from Greenward to the Rocky Bay, discounting only the mountains and permanent gatherings of people. The Court of Summer rules no cities and governs no towns. The Sylvan move as they will, traveling in caravans throughout their territory. Some temporary towns are erected as weather, festivals, or tradition dictates, but for the most part, the Sylvan roam in concert with the rhythm of nature.

Social Strata

Clan chief sit at the top of the Summer Court. They rise to the top, based on merit, prowess, and sheer force of will. Chiefs lead the clan in battle, enforce the Court's laws, and enjoy the first fruits of the clan's labor. They meet annually for the Gathering of Chiefs.

The Rangers are looked upon as slightly beneath the Chiefs, but high above the clansfolk. They are the scouts, messengers, and wardens of the Lands of Arcadia. They run messages between cities, providing the clans of their main source of *trades* and *favours*. No one knows the land better than they, something the Summer Court places high value in. The Rangers of the Bânwood are the elite of the elite, gifted with the White Bows that mark their station.

Clansfolk make up the rest of the Summer Court. Composed of the extended families of the clan, they facilitate life for themselves. Some gather, some hunt, some weave, some carve. Each has a place with the Summer society, and each gives what they have talent in, and each is given according to what has been ascribed them.

Some of the younger Sylvan have been drawn into the military life of the Army of the Lost. They turn their backs on their cultural heritage for the excitement and relative luxury of the Army. Drawn from there into the Ministry, Sylvan are becoming much more common among Spring enclaves than in the past.

THE AUTUMN COURT

All the earth beneath the mountains, veined with Scáthán and iron was given to the Stonekin by the Fae. They were bred for such service and they established their holds beneath the mountains. When the Courts arose, Autumn was given to those who delved and forged. The King of Ironhold claimed the seat of Autumn, and hence he, or she, has ruled the whole of the Stonekin from Glitterglen.

Lands

The lands of Autumn are the smallest of all the holdings of the Courts. Confined to the Ironhold mountains in the northwest and the Seareach in the southwest, the rule of Autumn still has a wide reach throughout Arcadia. Or rather under Arcadia. For the provinces of the Stonekin fill the mountain tall and deep. Small trade enclaves exist within the cities of Spring or under the shade of Summer, but due to farsighted negotiations, they are extensions of Autumn's rule.

Social Strata

The King of the Ironholds rules the Autumn Courts. None dispute the authority of the king while under the mountain. Through means unknown to the other Courts, a new King (the appellation remains masculine whether the ruler is male or female) is chosen the moment the current passes. It does not matter where the King is when he passes; in that moment, a new king ascends the throne.

The Stonekin carry among them a high regard for those known as Makers, those who take the bounty of the mountain and render it into something else. They enjoy the ear of the King, the pride of their people, and the courtship of the other Courts, who seek always the works of the forgers' hands.

The Delvers are the largest of group of the Autumn society. They work the mines and refine the raw elements pulled free of the earth. They tend the holds, secure the mines, and perform the majority of the tasks within the lands under the mountain.

The Travelers, the smallest faction of the Autumn court, are looked down upon since they produce nothing in and of themselves. They are a necessary part of the Autumn Court, and travel abroad delivering and selling their better's wares.

Finally, there are the Abiders. They form the lower class, but because the Stonekin are fewer in number than the rest of the other lineages, they are rare indeed. These Stonekin forsake their duty, provide nothing to the holds, and most often leave the mines to wander Arcadia. Cast out, and bereft of ties, they often gravitate towards the cities of Spring to find their fortune.

THE WINTER COURT

Lands

All the lands south of Ceol belong to the Winter Court. The followers of Kormil have claimed the land, first with blood, then with words. Three of the major Glassborn cities, and two of the great woods of the Sylvan are now under the control of Winter. Within their realm lies the Breach, the Hedge, and the occult city of Sidhé. It is said by those that travel there that life indeed goes on more or less as it does in the north. But, there is a miasma that hangs around the necks of all non-Kormillians. They are now foreigners in their own lands, lands now controlled by the Dark Lineages.

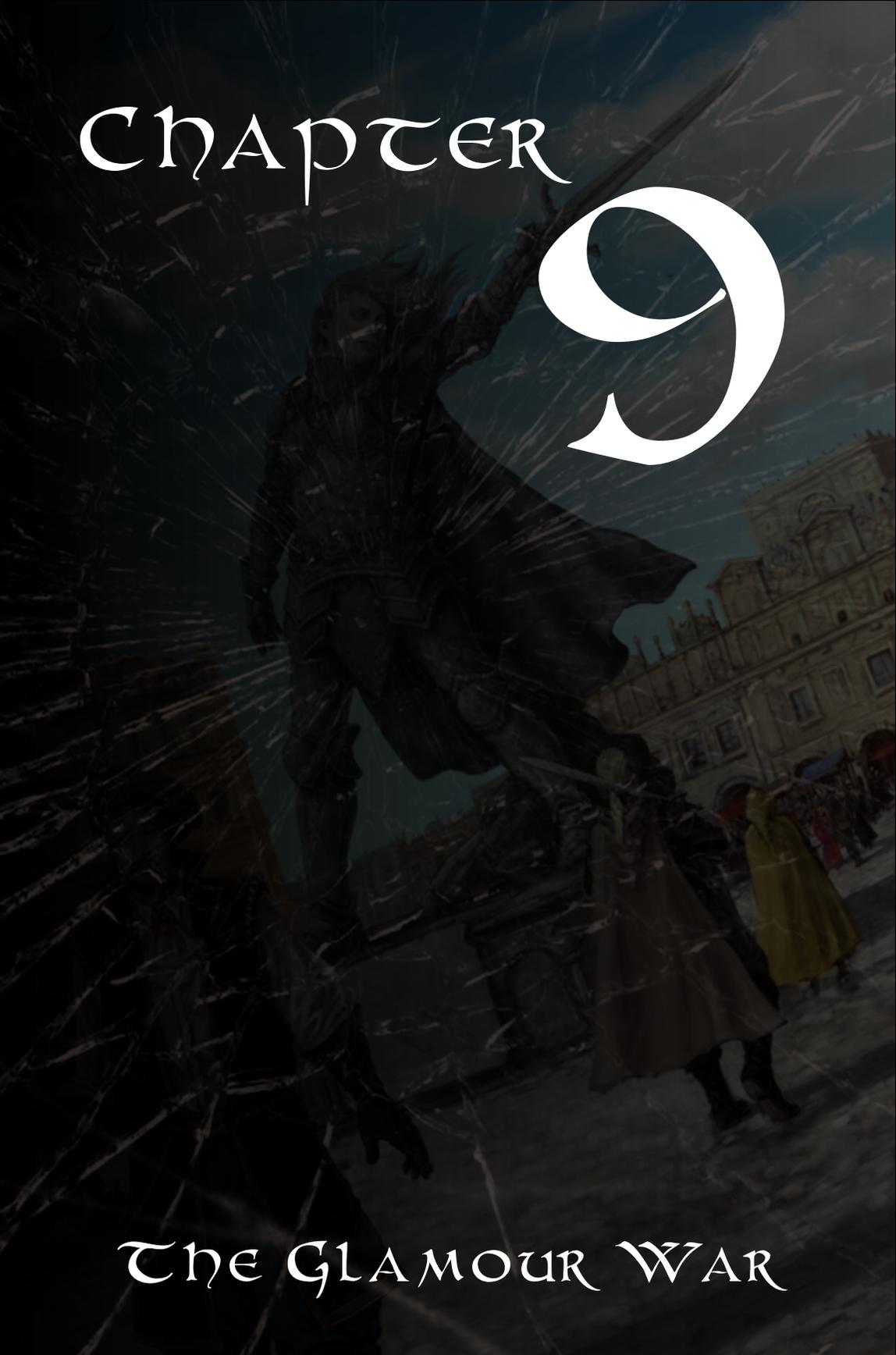
Social Strata

Very little is known about the social mores of the Winter Court. Most of the interactions with them have been violent, and since the treaty, there has been little civilized contact outside of Ceol and the Ambassador's retinue in Lancaster. The Ministry knows that a caste of nobles exists, much like that of the Spring Court. They rule over all of the Dark Lineages and direct the Spectres and the Nightmare Horde.

The Ministry also knows that those Noraluans trapped south of Ceol have become second class citizens at best, and slaves at worst. And that those that travel south, even with writs of protection, run the risk of accidents that will leave them trapped under the fist of Winter.

However, between these two states, the Ministry only has rumors and conjecture. After all, the Winter Court contains not only Lost Ones, but Formorion, ogres, and other fell beasts.





CHAPTER

9

THE GLAMOUR WAR

How Did We Get Here?

The Treaty of Ceol, on the surface at least, appears to be a fluke. The Kormillians had, and still possess, the military might to overcome the Noraluans. Their numbers, along with their Fomorian and Ogre allies, and their strange expression techniques give the Winter Court the ability to crush the defenders of Northern Arcadia. Why they did not, and still have not, remains a mystery. The Ministry bends its considerable resources to uncovering the secrets of this strange twist of fate.

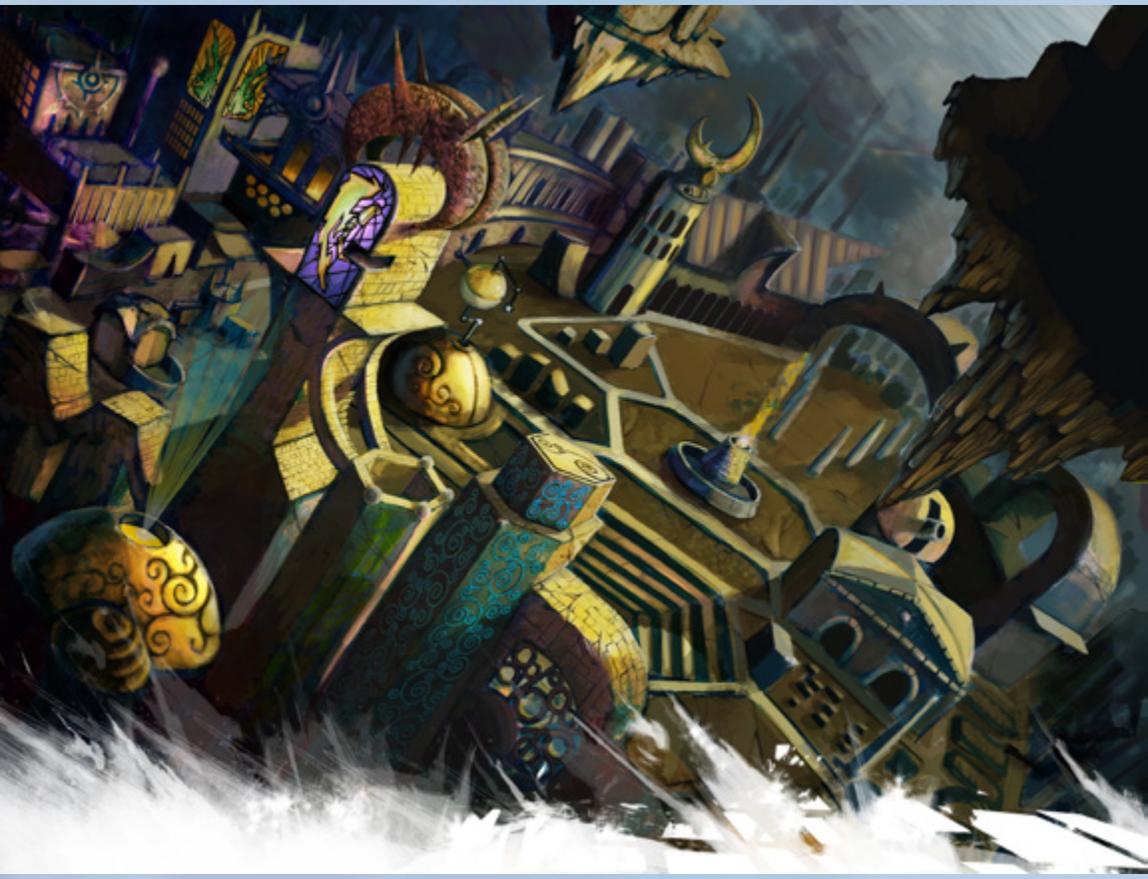
What is known is that in spring of 339, the original Shadow Agents reappeared after they had gone missing within the depths of Highmount the previous season. If not for the actions of those Shadow Agents in the closing days of the war, Arcadia would likely be under Kormillian rule. They appeared, suddenly in the midst of the Noraluan high command tent, bearing a strange stone chest. Only one of them spoke, a Sylvan named Deonaidh. She demanded the leaders seek a parley with the Kormillians. A hasty truce was called, and Deonaidh and the Shadow Agents with her disappeared across the battlefield. No Noraluan, not even those in the Ministry, know what she said or what the Shadow Agents brought forth from Highmount. Whatever was done, they were able to compel a truce from the Kormillians that has lasted, however fragily, until this day.

The Ministry speculates that Deonaidh was able to force a gaes from the Kormillian leaders, one which prevents outright warfare on the part of the Winter Court. The Ministry has advised the other courts to refrain from a retaliatory war as well for fear of breaking the treaty, or its magical implications, at least until they can discover the truth. So instead, each side pushes the limits of the letter of the treaty, in a shadowy conflict known as the Glamour War. The Courts of the Lost send their Shadow Agents into the field, matching them against Winter's Spectres.

THE MINISTRY

The Ministry is the legacy of one of the Lords of Spring, Minister Rydak. When faced with the terrifying revelation of existence of the Spectres, Minister Rydak sought to create an organization which could meet their threat and safeguard Arcadia. He could not have known how important the Ministry and the Shadow Agents would become, but in post-treaty Arcadia, they are the only organization actively working against the Winter Court.

The Ministry has begun to take a more active stance against the Kormilians. No longer content to just react, the Masked Minister has stepped up operations against Winter assets both in Ceol and, more recently, beyond the Greenward. Skeptics believe this is due to constant pressure from Winter sympathizers to hamper the Ministry, but at this time the Ministry has the backing of the majority of the Court members. However, after the events of the winter of 345, the Ministry finds itself on under greater scrutiny. Is it just the fallout of their purge, or are Spectre Hexers subverting the wills of nobles again?



The Ministry is led by the Masked Minister. Rumor has it that the Masked Minister has been replaced multiple times since the death of Minister Rydak, and that Glassborn Shadow Agents maintain the illusion of one unbroken line. Other say that the Masked Minister is merely the quasi-public persona of a council of Shadow Agents running the Ministry. Whatever the true tale, the Ministry remains vigilant in pursuit of its agenda.

THE MISSION

The Ministry exists for one purpose; to preserve the Noraluan Courts. All their methods, both admirable and deplorable, are executed with this mission in mind. With the treaty shifting Winter's methods, and with open warfare still a fool's hope for the Noraluans, the Ministry has joined the Spectres in the shadows of Arcadia.

The Ministry classifies their mission as one of containment, opposition, and elimination. Primarily, they seek to discover what activity the Spectres and the Kormillians are engaged in, and oppose them. They, and their Agents, have cultivated a network of informants and spies, coupled with dedicated expressers of Displacement to stay ahead of the Kormillians. Even so, many Winter operations are cloaked using Dark Expression and various other techniques, and the Spectres are every bit as good at misdirection as the Shadow Agents who hunt them.

The Ministry also executes more aggressive operations to strike at the Kormillians. These missions usually are aimed at sabotaging Winter interests and turning valuable Kormillian assets to the Ministry's cause. Preemptive strikes are often a valuable tool for the ministry though they can often place Shadow Agents in extreme danger deep in Kormillian controlled territory.

The final goal of their mission is the permanent elimination of the Kormillian threat. While expurgation of corrupted land and assassination of Kormillian and Spectre operatives aid in this, the Ministry leaders knows that this is not enough. To that end, they follow in the example of the very first Shadow Agents. The Ministry sends agents out into the field, seeking Fae ruins, relic, and lore through Arcadia. Their hope is that the answer to the looming threat will be found in the past, with the former masters of the land. Sadly, more agents are lost during these operations than any other, as the Fae left behind potent wards and guardians when they vanished. Still the Ministry believe the ruins of their former masters hold the key to the future.

To these ends, the Ministry develops, trains, and uses Shadow Agents.

SHADOW AGENTS

Shadow Agents are the sword and shield of the Ministry. They risk everything, life and essence, to preserve the Noraluan way of life. These Agents stand as a bulwark against Kormillian domination of Arcadia wherever they are needed. Shadow Agents are all crafters, diplomats, thieves, soldiers, and spies. They are placed into the field with a mission and little to no support. The Ministry trusts their agents to adapt to the situations that their meetings require.

The Ministry is constantly seeking new Shadow Agents. Their recruiters are active in vetting candidates, for the need for new Agents is always high. Some are patriots, others idealists. Still others are thugs and bullies, glad for an opportunity to hurt someone. The Ministry will use anyone who wants to fight for their cause, and who can survive the training.

Training

From delving mist-shrouded Fae ruins, to tense negotiations at a lord's formal ball, Shadow Agents are trained to operate in situations both varied and dangerous. Consequently, they are pushed beyond Lost One limits during their schooling. The Ministry teaches new recruits to fight, to lurk, to steal. They are taught to push past the natural limitations of expression, until they are capable of incredible feats. They are schooled in etiquette, logic, and intelligence.

Training is rigorous and deadly. Conservative whispers suggest that a third of those who seek to become shadow agents training never finish. Those who fail are not seen or heard from again. Those who wash out go on to support the Shadow Agents in various Ministerial roles. Those who succeed are guaranteed a life far from normal. They are exceptional people with the abilities to shape the future of Arcadia. They are also promised a short violent life. However the Ministry seeks to change that with help from the Quartermasters.

Artifacts

The Fae lords of old imbued their crafts with wondrous power. Their essence sprung eternal from the Realm Tenebrous, and they in turn grafted that essence into physical vessels. Relics of great puissance were pervasive in the early days of the Lost Ones, and even to this day, their tales are filled with the names of these very relics: items such as *The Cloak of Night's Heart*, *The Essential Winter*, *The First of All Covenants*, and *The Death of Endings*. But when the Fae vanished, the majority of these relics disappeared. Some might lie within Fae ruins, others may be gone forever.

While the Lost Ones aided their masters in the creation of relics, their own ability to craft such powerful items are stunted in comparison. Their knowledge of essence, as well as their personal reserves, lay ever in the shadow of the Fae's. Still, they are able to invest items with lesser powers, drawn from their own experiences and technique. These artifacts, as they became called, are boons in the Glamour War.

An artifact is an item with a specific use of a technique born within it, along with the contained essence needed to activate it. It allows a Lost One with the proper knowledge to use the contained ability without the need to risk an essence fracture. Typically, artifacts are only able to be activated once. While not possessing the flexibility of true expression, artifacts can provide a substantial boost to a Shadow Agent at a critical moment.

The Quartermasters are in charge of the creation of mission artifacts for Shadow Agent teams. Though any agent may learn how to craft these items, the process is draining. The crafter slowly pours his essence and will into the artifact. The slow nature of the ritual precludes essence fracturing. A Lost One can craft an artifact, rest to rejuvenate their spirit, and head into the field armed with the item as well as the whole of their personal essence.

Mission Teams

Shadow Agents can and do operate alone in the field. After all, they are highly trained and competent individuals. However, the Lost Ones know that together they can accomplish more than they can by themselves. When the Lineages drew together, they went to war against the Fae. So more often than not, the Ministry seeks to deploy teams of specialists into the field. These teams are usually formed for a single mission, but most last far beyond that.

In the Glamour War, finding people you can trust and rely on is a precious commodity. Mission teams quickly grow very tight-knit and insular. They

are able to execute more complex missions, and many are granted autonomy to go out and follow their own leads. However, the Ministry has started to notice that over time, loyalties begin to transfer from itself to the team. The Ministry has no plans as yet on how to deal with rogue teams, since aside from the first team it has not happened again. Teams are broken up occasionally with the goal of having experienced Shadow Agents lead new teams, though there have been a few cases where ulterior motives have been suspected by the Shadow Agents involved.

The Spectres operate in teams as well. The Kormillians have a much stricter hierarchy than the Ministry. These are called Wyld Hunts, and are led by Packmaster. The Ministry is also aware of a number of 'Huntmasters' who oversee a grouping of Wyld Hunts.

THE THORNS

One other organization bears mentioning in the scope of the Glamour War. The Thorns were created in 342 AV, by the Lords of Springs, although in the name of the Courts. They have turned into a secret police force that answers to the Lords of Springs, and often are used by the Lords against the Ministry. It was their action which led to the uncovering of the Spectre plot in 345 AV and the purge of the Courts. However, since then, the Thorns have proven both a useful ally and a dangerous threat, depending on which lord they are answering to at the time.







CHAPTER

10

THE GAME MASTER

WHAT DOES A GEMMASTER DO?

As a gamemaster, you have a different job than everyone else's. This chapter will give you the tools you are going to need to be the best GM you can be.

While GMing, you will be in charge not only of creating the missions that the players will play through, but also portraying the various NPCs the player characters will encounter, help apply the rules to any given situation, and a host of other tasks.

The GM's job was discussed a bit in *The Basics*, but let's take a more detailed look at your unique responsibilities.

RUNNING SCENES

One of your primary responsibilities while playing is running scenes. This entails knowing when to start a new scene, and when the current scene should end. It may seem obvious at first, but it's important because it sets the pace of the game session.

If you start a scene too early before anything dramatic happens, it will take forever to get to the "point" of the scene. If you don't end the scene soon enough, it'll take you that much longer to get anything important done as the game stalls.

Luckily, your players will be helping you with this. They'll tell you what they would like to do next, and when they are ready to move on, you know a scene is over. Sometimes, however, players will be inclined to chew the scenery past the expiration date of the scene. If that happens, it's your job to remind them that it's time to move on, "We've done all that there is to do in this scene, what do you want to do next?"

That being said, it's OK to let your players do this every once in a while. Role-playing, in-character, banter can get the creative juices flowing, and can help them recenter as their character. It can also lead to a surprise interaction with what was supposed to be a minor NPC. If everyone is enjoying themselves and your players are having fun, let the scene percolate a bit. But remember to step in and end the scene when the energy starts to wain.

PORTRAYING NPCs

While each player has one character they portray, as the GM you portray *every other character in the world*. It might seem like a daunting task, but it's really not. A quick description of the busy marketplace is enough to paint the picture of all the background NPCs that the players won't ever interact with. When an NPC attempts an action, you get to decide how they go about doing it. When a player character attempts an action against an NPC, you decide how they react. When in doubt, use their aspects to guide you.

Also, take cues from PCs aspects. Good aspects are double-edged, and so can give clues as to how NPCs might react to certain PCs. For example, a Stonekin who was **RAISED IN THE ISOLATED MOUNTAINS** approaches a merchant, the NPC might be amused at the lack of interpersonal skills the Stonekin has.

An offshoot of portraying NPCs is **portraying the world**. When you set scenes, you describe not only the situation and NPCs present, but also the whether, time of day, phase of the moon if at night, the oppressive atmosphere, and more. A clandestine meeting at a loading dock is boring—until you make mention of the fog blowing off the water, the tightly packed crates, and the unmistakable smell of dead fish.

These descriptions of the world are ripe for being turned into situation aspects, too! The above loading dock is **CRAMPED** with an **OPPRESSIVE ATMOSPHERE**.

JUDGE THE USE OF THE RULES

Most commonly, you're going to be making the decisions as to what can and what cannot be done in regards to the rules. Meaning that when it is time for a player to roll the dice, you need to decide if it's something the character can do, and if so what action it is and what the difficulty is going to be.

In addition, it falls to you to determine if an aspect is appropriate to invoke or compel, as well as if certain aspects can be created. For invocations, as long as the player's explanation makes sense, you're good to go. Compels get a bit more complicated, because you all need to agree on what the complication is going to be.

BRINGING ESPIONAGE TO LIFE AT THE TABLE

SETTING DIFFICULTY LEVELS

When a character is in opposition of another, their aspect ratings provide the difficulty of the action. If there's no character to oppose, however, you have to decide on how difficult the task is going to be.

Setting difficulties **lower** than their aspect rating is great for showing off the competency of your players. Difficulties **equal** to their aspect rating give a sense of tension, but not overwhelmingly so. **Higher** difficulties showcase unusual or dire circumstances, forcing the character to go all out.

Rules of Thumb

- If the task isn't very tough at all, give it a Mediocre (+0)—or just tell the player they succeed without a roll.
- If you can think of at least one reason why the task is tough, pick Fair (+2).
- If the task is extremely difficult, pick Great (+4).
- If the task is impossibly difficult, go as high as you think makes sense. The PC will need to drop some fate points and get lots of help to succeed, but that's fine.

DIFFICULTY BREAK POINTS

When setting difficulties for passive opposition, here are some guidelines to help you decide on how high—or low—to set the difficulty.

Anything that's two or more steps above the PCs aspect rating is most likely going to result in a failure or require the invocation of an aspect or two.

Any difficulty two or more steps below the PCs aspect rating is most likely going to result in a success, with a good chance of of a success with style.

Anything in the middle—within one point on either side of the PCs aspect rating—there's a roughly equal chance of tie or success, and roughly equal chance of needing to, or not needing to, invoke an aspect.

RUNNING SESSIONS

A session starts when everyone sits down to play, and ends when everyone gets up to clean up and go home. Sessions usually last for three or four hours at a time, but if you're pressed for time it could easily be 2 hours, and if you have no other commitments, you can play for as long as you like!

The best way to kick off a session is to throw the PCs into the action. This grabs the player's attention and lets them know what's going on. Once that is done, you can get out of the way and let the players drive.

Of course, during each session, you still need to fulfill your GM duties:

- **Run scenes:** A session is made up of individual scenes. Decide where the scene begins, who's there, and what's going on. Decide when all the interesting things have played out and the scene's over.
- **Adjudicate the rules:** When some question comes up about how to apply the rules, you get final say.
- **Set difficulties:** You decide how difficult tasks should be.
- **Play the NPCs:** Each player controls their own character, but you control all the rest, including the bad guys.
- **Keep things moving:** If the players don't know what to do next, it's your job to give them a nudge. Never let things get too bogged down in indecision or because they don't have enough information—do something to shake things up.
- **Make sure everyone has a chance to be awesome:** Your goal isn't to defeat the players, but to challenge them. Make sure every PC gets a chance to be the star once in a while, from the big bad warrior to the little sneaky thief.

SCENE FRACTALS

While it's always best to have the primary source of opposition prewritten and ready to go for your mission, sometimes your players will surprise you and go off on a tangent, follow a lead you didn't expect, or even turn a scene you thought would be inconsequential into a big deal. It's easy to get intimidated when this happens. Relax, and remember the bronze rule of Fate: **in Fate, you can treat anything in the game world like it's a character.** Scenes are no different.

If you need a quick and dirty fight, a chase scene, or an active marketplace, create it like so:

- Give the scene a difficulty. This is what the players will roll against to get their way in the scene.
- Create one or two aspects to describe the location, and one or two to describe the obstacles present in the scene.
- Give the scene a stress track (a number of boxes equal to the number of players present is a good rule of thumb).
- (Optional) Add consequences or an expression level or stunt to represent important resistances and abilities or dangers the scene, or elements within the scene, possesses.

Any attack actions the players make against the opposition in the scene is resisted by the scene's difficulty, and stress dealt is applied to the scene's stress track, regardless of what scene element was targeted. Once the scene is taken out (has no more stress to absorb incoming damage), give the PCs free rein to describe the outcome, just as though they'd defeated a major villain.

DEFINING MISSION PARAMETERS

WHAT IS A MISSION?

In Shadowcraft, the players are sent on **missions** to protect the realm. Whether to eliminate a key target, gather much-needed intelligence, or even to disrupt enemy communications, the mission is the player's goal.

Take Only What You Need to Survive

First of all, keep in mind that you're never obligated to give any NPC a full sheet like the ones the PCs have. Most of the time, you're not going to need to know that much information, because the NPCs aren't going to be the center of attention like the PCs are. It's better to focus on writing down exactly what you need for that NPC's encounter with the PCs, and then fill in the blanks on the fly (just like PCs can) if that NPC ends up becoming more important in the campaign.

ELEMENTS OF A MISSION

Most missions are comprised of the same basic framework:

- Mission Brief
- Travel to the Area of Operation
- Gather Information
- Plan Execution
- Deal with Complication
- Execute the Mission
- Debrief

Note that travel time and complications are optional, but they do add some great opportunity to not only meet new NPCs, but learn more about the world and explore new and exciting places!

The **mission briefing** is preferred to be done in person, but agents who are deep in enemy territory or operating far from their handler receive their briefing through magical—or even mundane—means. The GM informs the players of the mission parameters. This is also the time they are given their relics and artifacts, but remember they aren't defined until needed during the mission.

When needed, the PCs **travel** to the area of operation. Sometimes it can be quick and easy, but many times there are going to be obstacles along the way. Enemy agents, natural (or unnatural) phenomena, poor weather, and difficult and/or dangerous terrain can cause delays.

Once at the location, the characters must **gather information** about the area and their target. Each player makes a roll with their most relevant aspect. This represents talking to locals, hitting up their contact network, using magic, or casing a location. Whoever rolls highest either creates a detail about the mission in the form of an aspect with a free invoke or in the form of a contact. A contact is a face character sympathetic to the character's cause. If two or more players tie on their roll, they still succeed, but at a minor cost.

Whoever rolled lowest runs into a snag. This could be an old foe recognizing them, asking the wrong questions to the wrong people, or even getting so drunk they pass out. If they have an aspect that can be compelled to make the situation worse, and more personal, do so!

After the characters have the information they need, they then must **plan their execution**. Using the information they gathered, and with the help of any contact created, they formulate a plan to complete their mission.

Sometimes, before the characters can complete their mission, they have to **deal with complications**. Extra guards, outdated or missing blueprints, and targets in transit are common complications. When in doubt, ask your players what complications might arise during the mission, and create an appropriate aspect. If the players came up with the complication, compels from that aspect cost two fate points to refuse, but grant two fate points on acceptance!

Once any complications are dealt with, it's time to **execute the mission**. Make an attempt on their target, gather the intelligence, or cripple the enemy communication network, and get out again.

Once the characters are back at base or their safe house, they get **debriefed**. Provide proof of death, hand over the intelligence, or give word they completed their mission. During a debriefing, they characters return the relics and artifacts they were provided for the mission. This is also a good time to talk about the mission with the players and see if any aspect need changing or updating. At the end of a debrief, the players attain a milestone.

SELECTING SCENES

BRIEFINGS

Types of Missions and Important Scenes

There are a multitude of various types of missions and scenes that can be played out. The more common ones are listed below:

- **Assassination** missions are very straightforward. There is someone who you are tasked with killing
- **Counter-Espionage** missions are done in your own territory, trying to weed out spies and assassins sent to destabilize your leadership
- **Infiltration missions** require you to gain acceptance to an enemy installation or group, and stay there for further missions. The opposite of this, **exfiltration**, is when it's time to remove yourself from said installation or group. Sometimes this is part of another team's **retrieval** mission
- **Investigation** missions are when you are sent out to a location to get to the bottom of a mystery. It could be a haunting, a mysterious death, an unexplained phenomena, or other stranger things
- **Propaganda** missions require the spreading of select information in a specific place. It could be boosting morale in friendly lands or sowing distrust among your enemies
- **Reconnaissance** is straightforward intelligence gathering. Be on the lookout, however, of enemy counter-espionage teams, as they will make your mission that much harder to achieve!
- **Retrieval** missions have you getting something or someone, and bringing them back to your superiors. A captured prisoner, a mighty artifact, or plans for an invasion of allied lands are all prime targets for retrieval

- **Sabotage** missions are where the goal is to disrupt or destroy something of value. In a way, it's the opposite of retrieval—instead of grabbing something and taking it back, you are to find it and destroy it or disable it in some way.

THE SPECTRE THREAT

Although the treaty holds, and open war has not been seen in Arcadia for nearly a decade, the Kormillians have not simply retired to the southern lands below the treaty line. They seek to gain with stealth and intrigue what they are prevented from taking by force. Their leaders, for indeed there seems to be multiple factions within the Winter court, send forth spears of darkness into the north. Some are merely Lost Ones of Kormil, who infiltrate the lands of the Courts. They blend in with their Noraluan counterparts and subvert the Courts in subtle ways. However, the elite warriors of Winter in the Glamour War are the Spectres.

Those who know of the Spectres existence believe they are the Kormillian counterparts to the Shadow Agents. It is a lie that the Ministry encourages. The Ministry knows the Spectres entered into Arcadia long before the Noraluans were aware there was a Glamour War to fight. In fact, due to a chance encounter with Minster Rydak, the Spectres were the impetus for the creation of the Ministry, and a model for its Shadow Agents. Seeing these agents of darkness in the flesh, although what they were doing or how Rydak survived is a highly guarded Ministry secret, is what bound Rydak to the creation of an organization to oppose them.

Spectres are the agents of Winter in the Glamour War. Most of the Ministry's knowledge of them is taken solely from agents' field reports. How they are selected, how they were trained, and the source of their dark expression techniques remains occluded from the Ministry's Agents. What is known is they are as highly trained as Shadow Agents, possess powerful relics, and seem to be drawn to the north. They search for something in the north, although none have revealed what this may be. This hunt takes place between assassinations, counter-intelligence, kidnappings, and infiltrating or corrupting the Courts and ruins of Northern Arcadia.

The Ministry finds itself evenly matched with the Spectres. So far they have been able to field more Shadow Agents than the Kormillians can with Spectres. Leading expressionists believe it has something to do with the availability of the so called Dark Lineages.

DARK LINEAGES AND POWERS

Most Kormillians, physically at least, are indistinguishable from their Noraluan counterparts. When encountered abroad, in Ceol, or their ambassadorial enclaves, their fashion is more antiquated and possesses darker tones. Aside from this, they look just like other Glassborn, Sylvan and Stonekin. A small number of Kormillians possess a warped essence. The Ministry has been unable to establish how their essence has been changed, but it possesses a sinister similarity with Shadowlands which have developed around Arcadia.

This change to the fundamental spirit of the Lost Ones has given rise to describing the Spectres as the ‘Dark Lineages’. On the surface, Spectres resemble their parent lineage, down to the use of inherent techniques as well as suffering similar essence fracturing. It is only through the use of their twisted inherent techniques that a member of these lineages reveal their changed essence. These changes eventually produce pronounced physical alterations to members of the Dark Lineages, but only after severe essence fractures. This fracturing produces uniform effects, similar in outcome to the Lost One lineages’ fractures, however far more terrifying. Each of the three Dark Lineages bear some resemblance to the boogeymen of childhood stories told by the Lost Ones. Shadow Agents have begun to refer to the lineages by names taken from those tales. As those fairy tales harken back to the earliest recesses of the Lost One’s culture, the Ministry is currently seeking ancient versions of those stories to try to unlock their secrets to aid in the Glamour War.

Wraiths

The “Wraiths” are the most pervasive of the Specters, much as the Glassborn are among the Lost Ones. Similar in form to their kin, the Wraiths share the Glassborn’s inhuman beauty, but carry it with an aura of haughtiness, or distant coldness. Theirs is the beauty of tyrants captured forever in marble. They share the Glassborns’ preternatural empathy, as well as their inborn ability with glamour expression. They are most often found in the social battles of the Glamour War. Within the courts and cities of Arcadia, the Wraiths flit through the halls of power and wealth unnoticed during the day, and terrorize them at night. Like all the dark lineages, the Wraiths draw upon the power of the Shadowlands effortlessly. Wraiths also possess the dark technique of Shadowmancy. Like much of the lore of the Spectres, the Ministry’s knowledge of this technique’s ability is full of speculation and hearsay.

These abilities come at a price. The more darkly they express, the more a Wraith takes on the appearance of its namesake. Drawing too deeply upon their shadow manipulation causes a bleaching effect on the Wraith’s skin, pulling the color from it, while deepening their hair to a jet black. As Wraiths fracture, the darkness within their essence bleeds out into their flesh. Shad-

ows flicker about them in an inky nimbus; the edges of their physical nature slipping in and out of the shadows. Eventually they pass completely into the realm of shadow, although it is unknown what happens to them after that.

Hexers

The so-called “Hexers” are clearly a derivation of the Sylvan lineage, although far more at home in the city than their wilder kin. Their kind is feared by the Shadow Agents, their name whispered among the halls of the Ministry’s due to their ability to create snarls within the essences of others. As Spectres, they use this ability to cripple Ministry and Court members, subvert Lost Ones beneath weighty geasa and are believed to be the ones who mint the Kormillian coins that induce the so-called Winterlust. Hexers also fill a parallel role to the Rangers for the Winter Court. They are the border wardens of Winter, the bounty hunters of Kormil, the seekers of people and places obscured. It is said that once a Hexer has placed its mark on someone, they can follow them for the rest of one of their lives.

The older or more expressed a Hexer is, the gaunter and more stretched out they appear. Rumors place essence fractured Hexers as tall as the Formorions seen in Ceol, or the ogres found in the wilderness around the Greenward. The same bleaching effect that is pervasive through all the Spectral Lineages is present in the Hexers. However it takes root the most around a Hexer’s eyes. Their pupils expand to consume the iris, the veins blacken, and bloody cracks appear the edges of the lids. Couple this with the Sylvan ‘animalistic’ fractures, Hexers can take forms that are truly nightmarish to behold.

Defilers

The “Defilers” are the tainted lineage of the Stonekin. Fewer in numbers than Lost One kin, the Ministry speculates that there are less than fifty Defilers in all of Arcadia. This scarcity is something the Ministry considers quite fortunate. The Defilers are gifted with the strength and endurance of physical form that their Stone-Kin brothers possess, making them dangerous for any Shadow Agent who gets within arm’s reach. Coupled with their fae-damned ability to siphon the essential spirit from whatever they touch, and the Defilers are a terror unmatched in Arcadia.

While noticeably resistant the bleaching effect of the Specters, it can and still does happen to the brethren of the Stonekin. Defilers begin to show cracks in their skin from the overuse of their entropic powers. These cracks heal with stony protrusions. These rock-like veins erupt into violent heat as the Defiler expresses, growing wider and more pervasive. Eventually the Defiler cannot quench the flames and they glow painfully within their skin at all times. This is a sign that a Defiler’s corporeal flesh is soon to fracture apart. Usually, these Defilers express until they become a blazing pyre, destroying all within reach as they die. Even in death, the Defilers exist to breed terror within the hearts and minds of the Courts.

CORRUPTION OF ARCADIA

One of the Spectres' main missions within Arcadia is the corruption of the land's spirit. They create and encourage the growth of Shadowlands in the north. While this increases the power of Winter's agents, it is still unclear why the Spectres engage in this activity, or why it is so important for them. Most Spectres willingly throw their lives away in ferocious battle to ensure their comrades' opportunity to complete the foul rites of corruption.

Shadowlands often spring up around sites with strategic value, battlefields, Fae ruins, places of power, and the land around Ceol. But more puzzling, some sites seem selected at random and yet the Spectres are no less adamant in their zeal for establishing Shadowlands in this worthless territory. Some in the Ministry believe there is a pattern behind the Shadowlands which they cannot see, and that the Spectres are guided towards sites by some unseen hand. The Ministry-developed technique of Expurgation allows Shadowlands to be cleansed, at great cost. While it has proven effective on a small scale, the Ministry does not yet have enough Expurgators to cleanse even a fraction of the existing Shadowlands, and so instead the focus is on disrupting newly developed ones.

CREATING THE OPPOSITION

One of the most important tasks as a GM is portraying the world the PCs live in. No place is Arcadia more vibrant and alive than with the NPCs you create and portray. These NPCs are allies, foes, informants, and any other character the PCs will encounter on their various missions throughout Arcadia.

When creating NPCs, it's important to strike a balance between creating tension and uncertainty, and having the PCs defeat all but inevitable. Making the players sweat as their characters encounter opposition is part of the fun; having your players give up because of overwhelming odds is not.

TAKE ONLY WHAT YOU NEED TO SURVIVE

First of all, keep in mind that you're never obligated to give any NPC a full sheet like the ones the PCs have. Most of the time, you're not going to need to know that much information, because the NPCs aren't going to be the center of attention like the PCs are. It's better to focus on writing down

exactly what you need for that NPC's encounter with the PCs, and then fill in the blanks on the fly (just like PCs can) if that NPC ends up becoming more important in the campaign.

In Shadowcraft, there are two types of NPCs: **minor** NPCs and **main** NPCs. Each type is detailed below.

MINOR NPCs

Minor NPCs are the unnamed merchants, the random town guards, even the duke. Their impact on the mission is minor—as their name suggests—and they rarely get more than a scene or two of attention. Just because they're minor *NPCs* doesn't mean they're minor *characters* in the game world. It just means that they only get a minor role in the mission.

On their own, minor NPCs aren't much of a challenge, threat, or nuisance to the PCs. Individually they're like a low difficulty roll: a chance to show off how awesome the PCs are. In conflicts, they are little more than a distraction, delaying the PCs while the villain goes about their business.

Follow these easy steps to create minor NPCs:

1. Come up with a high concept aspect
2. Rate their aspect
3. Consider Stunts

High Concept Aspect: Give the NPC a high concept aspect just like any other character would have. This aspect is very important because it not only lets you know what they're capable of, but when they should be an obstacle to the players. Examples include **ROTTING ZOMBIE HORDE**, **GUARDSMEN OF ARCADIA**, and **KNOWLEDGEABLE BARTENDER**. In addition to a high concept aspect, you may give minor NPCs a second aspect, most commonly a trouble aspect.

Aspect Rating: Like PCs, NPC's aspects are ranked. The majority of minor NPC's high concept aspect is Average (+1), but exceptionally well-trained or powerful minor NPCs can have a Fair (+2) high concept. If you're tempted to give your NPC a competence rating of Good (+3) or higher, you should make them a **main NPC** instead. If the NPC has two aspects, the second is almost always rated at Mediocre (+0).

Just like when player's roll the dice, the NPC only gets their aspect rating if their aspect would allow them to do so. Anytime a player would roll against a minor NPC, their aspect rating is used as the passive difficulty *if* their high concept gives them permission to do so. For example, **GUARDSMEN OF ARCADIA** can use their competence rating when fighting, chasing, and standing guard.

When faced with something outside their area of expertise, they don't get to apply their aspect to the task. For the aforementioned guards, lying or recognizing obscure magic symbols wouldn't gain the benefit of their aspect

rating.

NPC Stunts: An Average (+1) NPC can have up to one stunt, but in order to use it you must spend one fate point. Fair (+2) NPCs get one stunt, and can have a second stunt that costs a fate point to use. Once the fate point is spent, the NPC has access to the stunt for the rest of the scene. Of course, you must still fulfill the requirements for the stunt. If the stunt in question costs a fate point, it is in addition to the fate point spent to activate the stunt.

NPC Groups: NPCs who work together as a group are much more efficient than those who work alone. When two or more minions of the same type—a patrol of guards, a horde of the undead, a mob of peasants—they get a bonus to their competence rating. For every doubling of the number of minor NPCs, they receive a +1 bonus to their rating. This gives 2–3 minor NPCs a +1 bonus, a +2 for a group of 4–7, +3 for a group of 8–15, and a +4 for groups of 16+. You can continue to gain higher and higher bonus with more NPCs, but it's usually better to split that many NPCs up into multiple smaller groups.

This bonus is based on the highest aspect rating of all NPCs in the group, so if a Fair (+2) guard sergeant had three Average (+1) guards with her, the group would have a combined rating of Good (+3): Fair (+2) for the sergeant and a +1 for her three underlings.

The Mob Rule

A group of minor NPCs always get the teamwork bonus, even if their aspect doesn't allow their aspect rank.

Passive NPCs

Whenever a player character encounters a minor NPC, their competence rating is treated as passive opposition for any roll the player makes. Minor NPCs *never roll dice*, they are considered passive opposition. As the GM, you can always invoke an NPC's aspect to increase their opposition by +2.

In a conflict, minor NPCs don't have stress or consequences. Instead, their rating decreases by the amount of stress they are dealt. See Chapter 7 for more information.

Face NPCs

A subset of minor NPCs are faces. They are characters regularly interacted with that are the face of a certain location, group, or idea. While PCs don't usually roll against a face NPC, they are recurring friendly NPCs.

MAIN NPCs

Main NPCs are your equivalent to player characters. They have a full character sheet with ranked aspects, stunts, stress, and consequence. Main NPCs are the most significant characters that your PCs will interact with—whether friend or foe.

Since main NPCs take up the most of your time and attention, it's best to come up with them beforehand. Like player characters, main NPCs are *major* movers and shakers in Arcadia. That being said, it's not that difficult to come up with a main NPC on the fly: each time they attempt an action, see if one of their existing aspects covers the action. If not, add an appropriate aspect and rank it accordingly.

When creating your main NPCs, it is important to note that even though PCs have limitations on their aspect ranks and stunt slots, main NPCs have no such limits—They are as powerful as they need to be. When coming up with your main NPCs aspects, ranks, and stunts, keep in mind the “difficulty break-points” as discussed earlier .

NPC PROMOTIONS

Sometimes it will become necessary to promote an NPC from minor-status to major. It could be a recurring henchman who takes over the business, a betrayed ex-ally, or a double agent. Whatever the reason, it's very easy to promote a minor NPC.

Since all minor NPCs have one or two aspects, you can start there. Increase their high concept aspect to an appropriate rank, add one or two more aspects—fill out their aspects entirely if you have the time—and come up with a stunt or two.

PLAYING THE OPPOSITION

Here are some tips for using the opposition characters you create in play.

RIGHT SIZING

Remember, you want a balancing act between obliterating the PCs and letting them walk all over your opposition (unless it's a mook horde, in which case that's pretty much what they're there for). It's important to keep in mind not just the skill levels of the NPCs in your scenes, but their number and importance.

Right-sizing the opposition is more of an art than a science, but here are some strategies to help:

- Outnumbering the PCs is fine, as long as they're outnumbered by mobs of minor NPCs
 - Main NPCs should be able to interact with PCs within one point of their highest aspect rank
 - Limit yourself to one main NPC per scene, unless it's the climactic confrontation of your story
 - Most of the opposition the PCs encounter should be minor NPCs
- Creating Contacts

Contacts, as discussed earlier, are NPCs that are discovered or created during the **gather information** stage of the mission. Normally, they are created as a minor NPC with one Average (+1) aspect that the player comes up with. Of course, a very sociable character could easily have a stunt to make contacts Fair (+2) or even give them a bonus stunt!

As the GM, contacts are your characters that are sympathetic to the PCs' plight or cause. This doesn't mean they are going to do everything the PCs ask them or tell them to do. The contacts have to stay after the PC's mission is complete, which can cause trouble for them if their involvement is ever discovered. Some contacts might have ulterior motives, or require payment, reassurance of safe passage someplace else, or some other request before they are willing to help the PCs.

COMMON NPCs

The Hawk

Formed by the Spring Court in response to the brutal assassination of their ruling council, The Hawk are ruthlessly efficient spy hunters and investigators. Independent of The Ministry and with no great love for its machinations and plans, Shadow Agents tend to give them wide berth if they wish to remain unmolested in their duties.

With faces hidden behind identical masks, The Hawk are a secretive lot and are thought to answer directly to key members of the Spring Court. Members of The Hawk are each referred to as The Hawk and there is no known system of ranking. The Hawk is each given the full authority of the entire organization and granted the dispensation of the Spring Court to commandeer resources and if needs be kill in pursuit of their duties.

Soldiers of Winter

The main host of Winter is made up of the descendants of the Kormillian exile. When Shadow Agents encounter guards, couriers, squads of soldiers, etc., they are Soldiers of Winter. The Courts propaganda paints them all as hateful malcontents bent on destroying the Noraluan way of life. Shadow Agents find that the Courts propaganda about the Kormillians is not as universal as one would like to believe.

Soldiers of Winter have diverse reasons for fighting in the Glamour War, just like their Noraluan counterparts. Shadow Agents are given great latitude in the field in dealing with Soldiers of Winter. Some are slain outright, other are turned, and still others defect.

USING MINOR NPCs TO THEIR FULLEST

Even though minor NPC's aspects can't rank higher than Fair (+2) doesn't mean they can't be a threat to the PCs, even when alone.

Keep in mind that even Average (+1) minor NPCs can have one stunt, and their high concept aspect is *still an aspect*. This gives you a range from Mediocre (+0)—something outside their aspect permissions—to Fantastic (+6)—a Fair (+2) NPC invoking their aspect and using a stunt.

Give them some support in the form of other minor NPCs, and watch them get even more formidable.

Shadow Agents

As the field operatives of the Ministry, Shadow Agents can be found all over Arcadia engaging in a variety of covert missions. Most of these involve countering or sabotaging Spectre interests abroad.

However, it is a dangerous fallacy to assume all Shadow Agents in the field can be counted on. The Ministry and the Courts are filled with different factions, each with their own agendas and ideas on how best to win or control the Glamour War. The reality of this political landscape can mean that multiple Shadow Agent teams can be active in the same locale, operating with counter orders and purposes. Sometimes these factions will even task members of the same team with ulterior missions.

SPECTRES

Wraiths

Wraiths are only encountered in the field by very competent or very dead Shadow Agents. These masters of shadows thrive on the confusion and terror their unseen manipulations cause. Wraiths tend to be the masterminds and assassins of the Winter Court. Their talent for striking from the unknown darkness means it is rare that a Shadow Agent would ever see the attack coming.

To uncover a Wraith's plot is to have its baleful eye turned towards you. To foil it is to be marked for death, or worse marked as the subject for a Wraith's demented obsession.

Hexers

Shadow Agents generally cross paths with Hexers in one of two ways. As the wardens of Winter, most Shadow Agents encounter Hexers when they venture south of Ceol. In the Kormil lands, Hexers act as the enforcers of Winter's will and as spy-hunters against Shadow Agent operations.

Hexers also operate as 'recruiters' in the north. Many loyal Noraluans have found themselves bound under heavy geasa by coin or expression into betraying the Courts. Shadow Agents often find themselves pitted against Hexers and their thralls.

Dealing with a Hexer is dangerous enough as it is, as encountering one usually leaves a Shadow Agent fighting a horrible curse. But dealing with the confused and broken Thralls after a Hexer is dealt with can be even more troubling.



Defilers

Spectres most visible agents are the Defilers. In terms of raw damage potential, no other foe comes close. Physically powerful and capable of siphoning essence from items or Lost Ones alike, Defilers are used as one person weapons of destruction in the Glamour War. The vulgar acts of violence and destruction which Winter carries out in the Glamour War are usually perpetrated by the Defilers.

Shadow Agents in the field have learned to deal with Defilers with care. Ministry protocol is to lure them away from the populace and take them down from afar, as they have the tendency to fracture explosively rather than be captured.

Members of the Court

Despite their hatred for their creators, the Fey, the Lost Ones found themselves adrift in their absence. Without the threat of the Fey, the fragile alliance they had formed threatened to shatter into cross purposes and self interest. It was only a matter of time before more than verbal infighting occurred. So, the Courts of Arcadia were born. Meeting in the newly renamed high city of Lancaster, each lineage would find representation and the Fragile Peace would be preserved.

In more recent times, with the Winter Court falling to Kormillia, the remaining courts have appointed themselves representative of their various factions and serve to forward each their own interests. The cultured and civilized Glassborn took up the mantle of the Spring Court, while the wild and wandering Sylvan took that of Summer. Often tasked with warlike preparations of arms and fortifications, the Stonekin took the Autumn Court. Guided by an immense number of rules, established both by tradition and necessity, maneuvering within the courts is an art unto itself.

With significant magical and monetary resources at their disposal, it is impossible to ignore the influence of the courts as a Shadow Agent. Members of the court are, to the man, canny and complicated, calculating gamblers whose schemes have schemes. Rarely to be trusted, members of the court can be powerful, if often temporary allies, when properly compensated. A successful Shadow Agent rarely ignores the requests of the courts and tends to cultivate friends among it's more trust worthy members.

VILLAINS

The Sinner King

In a previous life, Beck Madeyes was little more than a small time mercenary adventurer, criss-crossing the wilds of Arcadia in search of fame and fortune. Rarely successful but never disheartened, when the money ran out and job ended, Beck would always shrug, shoulder his pack and soldier on to the next town. That is, until, so the story goes, he found the tomb of the First Formorian on an island to the East. Said to be haunted, Beck rightly assumed the island would be a trove of untouched treasure, tomb raiders and local fishermen too frightened to plunder it's glowering black necropolis. Whether it was some kind of natural Sylvan immunity to curses or his indefatigable good cheer, Beck found himself in halls the Fey themselves feared to tread.

With almost more treasure than he could carry, Beck was already making his escape when a simple blade of ancient make caught his eye. Utterly unadorned and without a makers mark, he shrugged and stuck it in his belt. He awoke the next morning to find himself surrounded by monsters and beasts of every description, staring at him fixedly.

The next time anyone saw Beck Madeyes it was at the head of a monstrous army. With Formorians, ogres, fey-cursed and constructs in his train, it wasn't long before both sides of the Hedge took notice. When he invested and captured an ancient coastal fortress and started calling himself the Sinner King, he could no longer be ignored.

Thankfully for the Noraluans, The Sinner King hasn't changed his mercenary ways. Ensnconced in his fortress and surrounded by monsters of legend, he pledges no allegiance and offers his services to the highest bidder. Often this is the Kormillians but more often than not, he is content to accept an even larger sum from the Noraluans to do nothing. Even so, everyone knows it's only a matter of time until Beck's wanderlust resurfaces and this time with an army.

For his part, whatever power was to be found in the Sword of the First Formorian is only amplified by Beck's own unflappable nature. The only one unafraid of his army, he has an uncanny understanding of the motivations and intents of most monsters and has observed them more than even the most intrepid field researcher. He is a fine host and has been known to hold lavish and decadent parties, though he occasionally feeds obnoxious guests to his favorite sphinx.



Jobar Cricket-Song

As is often the case, in Arcadia, the most dangerous men rarely appear so. Such is the case with Jobar Cricket-Song. A glassborn of lowbirth and boundless curiosity, Jobar found his way into the halls of learning by sheer bumbling impetuosity. That and nobody wanted to know what might happen if left to his own devices.

Graduated out of exasperation by exhausted masters, Jobar set up a small magical laboratory in a tower in old town Ceol. It was here that he first caught the attention of both The Ministry and the Winter Court. Using ancient fey travel magic, he opened a portal to the Realm Tenebrous and siphoned off the greater part of a realm of fire to be used in hand warmers. The objecting efreeti demolished Jobar's tower, but not before he secured the patronage of several wealthy investors. After destroying no less than a dozen labs in similar fashion, each time barely escaping with his life, Jobar was banned from the city for life.

Moving into a fey ruin he turned his attention from portals to the creation of life itself. Before long, a small army of humunculi had transformed his ruin into a haywire, ramshackle compound of magical madness. Cheerfully simple minded, Jobar now spends his days collecting manuscripts and testing all the theories everyone is afraid will kill everyone and/or reality.

Jobar's antics are off set by an intrinsic grasp of expression and old fey magics rarely to be found in modern times. While his temperament renders him completely unable to share this knowledge in any tangible way, the magical establishment has begrudgingly acknowledged his genius. In constant search of patronage, Jobar has more than once unwittingly found himself in the employ of the Winter Court. His curiosity has also imperiled Arcadia on several occasions and Jobar is said to owe his freedom, sanity and life to certain long suffering Shadow Agents.



Ram Jerson

The Glamour War is fueled as much by courtly gold and Ministry cunning as the blood of anonymous Agents and their assets. A good deal of that gold and blood passes through the hands of Ram Jerson, stonekin crimeboss and profiteer. When the Onyx Legion, a Stonekin resistance group turned crime family broke up beneath the combined pressure of the Ministry and the Autumn Court, Jerson was well positioned to begin anew. None suspected he was the mastermind of their downfall. In future years, when Jerson suggested this was the case, none doubted it.

With friends both high and low and hands in every unsavory establishment from Lancaster to the Hedge, Jerson is an institution in the Arcadian underworld. The Glamour War has been very good for Jerson, the ultimate opportunist, as the flow of blood and money has taken place almost entirely within his shadowy realm. Need someone disappeared? An exchange disrupted? Need that money trail obscured? Need to use banned expressions to interrogate the dead? Your mistress getting politically inconvenient? Those artifacts and grimoires unreachable in your rivals collection? Say no more. Jerson will handle it. For a fee. Which is probably not money.

In addition to basic, less than legal services, much of Jerson's business is the sale of secrets. With access to hundreds of little black books and their sycophantic owners, Jerson is said to have more pull within the Spring Court than many of its junior members. Jerson himself plays no favorites and bears no great love for Noralua. Word of any business conducted with Jerson may well make its way beyond the Hedge and vice versa.

Like most Stonekin, Ram Jerson is himself a force of nature. Foolish rivals and over-confident Agents assuming that Jerson's mental cunning must reflect physical weakness, learn the error of their ways only once.



The Winter Weaver

Opposite the casual bureaucratic chaos of the Courts and the ideological infighting of The Hawk and The Ministry, the Kormillian Spectres operate with an almost uncanny level of coordination and unity. The Ministry attributes this to a single man, a Glassborn member of the Winter Court known to most as the Winter Weaver.

Well bred and silver tongued, Jaem D'Mistan is thought to be a former Spectre, a wraith who somehow survived the corrupting fate of his peers. A regular in the Winter Court at Lancaster, he never takes the fore, always to the rear and left of the Ambassador or other Kormillian dignitaries. Ostensibly the Ambassador's personal adviser, The Ministry believe him to be none other than the head of Spectres, a spymaster without equal.

Perhaps more puzzling than his brazen presence in Lancaster, is his ability to travel unseen almost anywhere in Arcadia at a moments notice. Agents tasked with tailing D'Mistan have reported losing him in an alley, only to have him reappear across the country later that same day. The Ministry's scholars have proposed numerous theories to explain this phenomenon, from dark pacts with beings in the Realm Tenebrous, illusory duplicates, or even ancient fey mirror magic.

Even apart from these abilities, attempts to surveil the Winter Weaver have never proved successful. Reliable agents become mysteriously distracted, magic eyes detect nothing but empty rooms, and intercepted messages are invariably lost, their very memory erased from prying minds. Worse yet, the single agent who got within striking distance of D'Mistan was found having impossibly stabbed himself in the back, breaking his own arm in the process.



Scripter Bann, Taker of Faces

The death of Minister Rydak, the founder and first spymaster of The Ministry in the winter of 339 AV was a blow to Noralua and the fledgling Ministry in particular. While broadly attributed to Spectre agents, those within The Ministry recognize the work of one man: Scripter Bann, the Taker of Faces.

Gifted with an extraordinary iteration of the Glassborn illusory expression, Scripter is capable of reshaping his very flesh. Perhaps due to his constantly shifting face or maybe the moral gymnastics required to justify his body count, he is by no means entirely sane. He has a certain penchant for wearing the illusory faces of his victims as trophies. This has resulted in numerous sightings of Minister Rydak in Ceol and Bluewall and fed ongoing rumors that the spymaster actually faked his own death.

Considered a serious personal threat to The Ministry and it's agents, there exists a standing kill order out for Scripter Bann along with a significant bounty. Given the nature of his abilities, this has likely made the hunt for him even harder. With each new graduating class of Shadow Agents, Scripter becomes more and more a boogey man, a legend told to scare the rookies.

As elusive as he is, Ministry Veterans know the signs. It's theorized that Scripter is, by dark magic or perhaps some mental conditioning, only able to take the faces of those he has personally killed. A new Scripter job is often heralded by a series of highly specific disappearances as Scripter makes the required preparations for his final kill. It's theorized that if this pattern were somehow detected in progress and his final target ascertained, Scripter Bann could finally be made to pay for his crimes.



MONSTERS

Ogres

Before the Kormillan returned from beyond the Hedge, ogres were creatures of legend, glimpsed only rarely by the most keen eyed Sylvan and blamed for the otherwise inexplicable loss of farm animals. When the Kormillan's returned however, it was with an unstoppable army of ogres in the vanguard. Slow witted and brutal, ogres have become ubiquitous in Arcadia and synonymous with the savagery and rapine of the Kormillian army.

Easily swayed by the corruption and power of the Winter Court, ogres are not however entirely without a sense of self or reason. Ogre rebellions occur across Kormillian controlled territories with fair regularity and small, unaffiliated settlements of the creatures can be found in remote regions of Arcadia. The fate of these settlements is always a topic of intense debate among the Courts of Arcadia. Even members of The Ministry hold a variety of opinions on whether the only good ogre is a dead one.

Formorians

The legendary enemies of the Fey, it is not without irony that these oversized abominations have become the Kormillan's most unshakable allies. Born of chaos and blasted by the ill winds and blackest magics of the Realms Tenebrous, it is said that Formorians were once a faction of the Fey itself, until cursed and driven into a forgotten sea. Perhaps remembering long ago slights, they revel in the destruction of Fey cities, monuments, relics and creations, including their former servants the Lost Ones.

Every Formorian is unique, each with their own strengths and weaknesses. Often given colorful battlefield titles such as Chainbreaker, Corpsechewer, or Lord of Spikes and Blood, these titles and accompanying intelligence are recorded in the Ministry's Formorian Codex. A vital piece of military intelligence, the existence of the Codex has given Norulan Shadow Agents and generals an edge in recent encounters and made the blood spilled in it's compilation meaningful.

Giants

Despite standing some twenty to thirty feet in height, giants are elusive creatures often dwelling alone in deep forests and hidden mountain valleys. This is probably a good thing. While not inherently unfriendly or aggressive, the intervention of a giant in battle is often more than enough to push the odds in your favor. During a siege, a single giant can replace several hundreds of men as it plods undeterred to batter down the thickest walls. As such, the location and loyalties of giants are considered matters of Noruluan national security. Only the most trusted Shadow Agents are tasked with recruiting a giant to the Noruluan cause, and turning a corrupted Kormillian giant is a feat worthy of legend within The Ministry.

Golems

It is rare to find a stonekin without statuary nearby. Capable of capturing the most detailed nuance of form and motion thanks to their talent for stone-shaping, even the poorest Stonekin has a lifelike bust of his mother on the mantle. Far rarer however are the sturdy, overbuilt monstrosities known as golems.

Created in secret during the long rebellion against the fae, a golem is shaped whole from the living rock deep within a mountain. Often the work of several master craftsmen, the exact methods of their creation is one of the stonekins most guarded secrets.



Rarer yet are the stonekin born with the will to pilot these mighty creations. Any stonekin can pass through stone and many possess the skill to shape it. The ability to become one with a golem however, taking it as an extension of ones body is a gifting found in only one out of every thousand stonekin.

Valuable in the extreme to both sides of the Hedge, golem stoneminders are especially important to the Noruluans as a counter to the cursed savagery of the Formorians. Several stoneminders are national heroes and their battered golems are the stuff of legends.

Fey Constructs

The pegasus, the chimera, the sphinx, the centaur, the griffin; all are creatures of myth, a combination of seemingly disparate parts both human and otherwise. While variously attributed to gods, most in reality hearken back to the same magical tinkering which resulted in the Glassborn and Stonekin lineages.

Often found alone and well nigh immortal, fey constructs are usually built to serve a specific purpose such as guarding treasure or knowledge or as a mount for a high ranking fey. Rarer still are those imbued with free will and awareness of self. Usually created as companions or familiars by more eccentric fey magicians or nobility, they are often lonely and confused, stranded with the sudden disappearance of their creators.



Fey Cursed

The fey were a cruel and capricious race, a fact perhaps no more readily realized than in the fey cursed souls who roam Arcadia. Often bizarre in appearance, the curses which bind these souls range from periodic transformation to crippling deformity to manic desire and fruitless self destruction. In some cases, these curses effect entire family lines or segments of society, the Sylvan serving as a prime and prevalent example.

The manner of dispensing these curses varies widely. Opening the wrong door, putting on a seemingly non-descript ring, or failing to enact a series of otherwise pointless activities can result in becoming cursed. In more recent times, Fey-cursed creatures have made a resurgence in Arcadia as victims of the Shadowlands. Often referred to as Nightmare Beasts, many speculate that dark and ancient fey magics are at work, swelling the ranks of the Nightmare Horde and making the wilds of Arcadia increasingly dangerous. For their part, Ministry scholars have become adept at identifying curses in the field and an expedition into fey ruins is never without a specially magicked tuning fork or other device for locating potential curses.

Inhabitants of the Realm Tenebrous (Banshees, ghosts, ect.):

Beyond, and some might even say behind, the magical realm of Arcadia lies yet another a land of chaos, order, motion, stillness, life and death. Broadly referred to as the Realm Tenebrous, it is also home to a variety of dangerous and powerful beings and creatures.

Lost souls, unable to pass on to their reward often find their way into the Realm Tenebrous where their rage, torment, or sorrow takes on physical form. These ghostly beings generally return to Arcadia as one of dozens of different monstrosities, haunting the place of their death or feeding upon familiar emotions.

More terrifying even than the dead, are creatures native to the Realm itself. Demons, jinni, and others have each carved out their own lands and strongholds within the vagaries of the Realm, often vying for territory and angling for rank and place among themselves. Distant relatives of the fey, these beings are often incomprehensible to the Lost Ones and encounters are often dramatic and bloody. In rare instances, these beings may seek to negotiate or manipulate individuals within Arcadia, forming cults or providing power in exchange for services rendered. The Ministry recommends it's agents against interaction with these forces, but has in the past managed to make allies in the lands beyond time and space.

Specially trained Shadow Agents have also been known to serve as ghost-hunters and exorcists. These rare individuals tend to be survivors of close encounters with the Realm Tenebrous and possessors of iron will and unbreakable spirit

