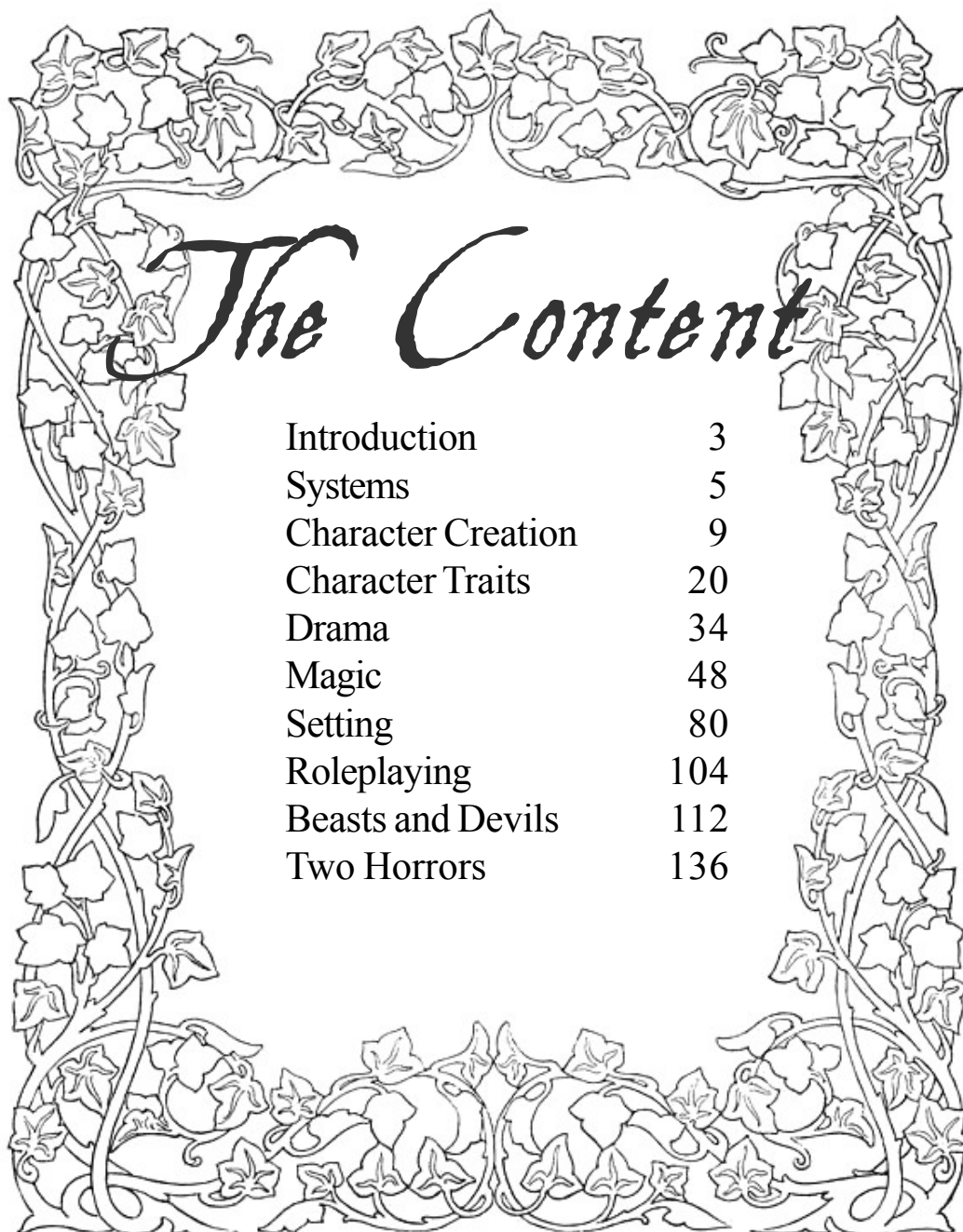


Danse Macabre

Roleplaying in a World of Medieval Horror



Dean Sutter ❧ *Chris Johnstone*



Introduction	3
Systems	5
Character Creation	9
Character Traits	20
Drama	34
Magic	48
Setting	80
Roleplaying	104
Beasts and Devils	112
Two Horrors	136

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MYTHOPOETIC
G A M E S

Introduction



Chapter One

A Dance with the Dead

Renaud was lost. The night had crept quietly into the forest, smoothing trees, ivy and leaves into smudges of darkness. Had the path dwindled and vanished? Or did he miss a turn in the rutted track. Had he wandered off down some wild deer path?

Each breath made cold, dead shapes on the air.

His brother's hamlet should be close now, there should be light's twinkling between the trees. But the night was endless. Grey trees marched into the murk, and became thinner shadows.

When the first howl of the first wolf rolled through the forest, Renaud froze. He pressed his back up against a great, twisted oak, as close as he could to the knuckled bark. Another howl, and then another.

Renaud crept around the oak and began to trot very fast. He was a portly man, there was no real speed in his waddle.

When the light shone suddenly through the boles Renaud nearly cried out for joy – he would have, except that in his imagination the wolves were ready to pounce with snapping jaws, all they needed was the slightest sound to guide them. The light stabbed the darkness with a dozen spears of radiance, which shifted between the trunks as the torch bobbed off into the darkness. Renaud hitched his flapping jerkin, and ran, his gut protruding, his flat feet flapping wildly.

He ran until the light grew into a large orb of fiery gold. Until he was nearly upon the torch-bearer. It was a woman, dressed in a long grey gown, walking lazily among the shadows. Though her paces were slow and languid, Renaud could not catch her. His eyes were streaming now, his throat swollen, his legs burning. She must have heard him, but never once looked back; her path was straight and calm and resolute.

When Renaud stumbled into the deep glade he was all almost blind from sweat and the pound of blood in his skull. He could just make out shapes, not just the lady in the long grey gown, but others. Leaning heavily against a tree, Renaud rubbed the sheet of sweat from his face. They were looking at him. The faces were cold, the eyes colder. And there were shapes behind them, large black things, lopping through the night, gathering together.

There were sounds behind him now, heavy things moving through the leafy hazel, holly and thorn. He looked again

at the gathering of folk. They were smiling now, but their teeth were not small, dull yellow things. They were sharp teeth. Cutting teeth. Gnawing teeth. Hungry teeth.

They were the teeth of wolves.

What is Danse Macabre

Danse Macabre is a pencil and paper Roleplaying Game (RPG) set in an alternative medieval Europe where the magic of folktales is real. But these tales are not airy and harmless sort. For this is not a land of harmless fairytale, no bright knights walk the realms, no airy fanciful things dance in the woods, this Europe is a dark place. In **Danse Macabre** the fabric of European folklore and fairytale is woven anew with the solemn threads that were a part of its first making.

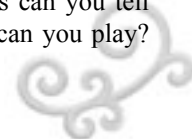
In the vales and forests of age-old Europe folk knew what it was to be afraid. The wilds seemed endless and, in the medieval view of things, full of cunning wolves, hellish witches, child-stealing faeries and old half-forgotten heathen gods. **Danse Macabre** takes a second glance at these forgotten monstrosities that are seldom taken seriously. It is these tales, the stories of nameless fears and haunted paths, that are hereafter retold.

The Nature of the Game

Danse Macabre is played by a group of people who collaborate on the game and story. All but one of the **Players** of the game will take on the role of a **Character** in the story. A **Character** has special skills, talents and personal quirks that are recorded on a **Character Sheet**. The Player who does not take on the role of a single character, instead takes on the role of many. This is the **Gamesmaster**, and he or she manages the storyline, the backdrops, scenery, props, and both allies and enemies of the **Player Characters**. Characters run by the Gamesmaster are termed **Non-Player Characters** (NPCs).

Danse Macabre uses a **Dice Pool** of six-sided dice (d6) to resolve tests of skill. Each player should need no more than six dice.

Being a game of fantasy, **Danse Macabre** has sorcery, monsters and swords like any other number of fantasy settings. But what sets any game apart is theme. What is the mood of the game? What sort of tales can you tell using the game? What sort of characters can you play?



What will the characters do?

Danse Macabre is a game in which you play a fragile mortal character in a world where hell's shadows and fae creatures are very real perils. All supernatural things in **Danse Macabre** are dangerous, sorcery corrupts the sorcerer, even the weakest of werewolves will easily slaughter the most skilful of mortal knights.

The rules of **Danse Macabre** are built around this central theme: powerful, dark things lurk just out of human sight and they all want to eat you, or buy you soul, or make you into an eternal slave.

Because of the dark theme of the game the rules in **Danse Macabre** are not balanced. Some new characters will have done well in life, others will not. Character advancement is limited – what power there is to be had comes at a price.

So what sort of a game does this make? **Danse Macabre** will vary depending on how you deal with the supernatural elements that lie behind the fabric of everyday medieval life. Games that have very few supernatural elements may delve into intrigue, mystery or gothic romance. If you want to bring the supernatural elements into the bloody light of the torch, then the game becomes one of suspense and horror. If you introduce a lot of supernatural elements into the open then the game will become bloody and short-lived – as will the characters.

Disclaimer

Danse Macabre is a work of fiction. It does not describe real events or people. The authors do not believe in witchcraft or faeries and they suggest that you not believe in these either. They don't exist. Also, **Danse Macabre** deals with adult themes. The game is intended for a mature audience capable of distinguishing between reality and fantasy.

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Designer Notes

The aim, in creating **Danse Macabre**, was to present a flexible system for playing in the world of the dark fantastic. Because the game varies in scope from intricate court intrigue to visceral horror, psychological and spiritual aspects of the character are important. Characters risk their sanity and their souls in **Danse Macabre**. Neither should be taken lightly.

When designing rules simplicity and speed of resolution has been chosen over realism. This choice was made to prevent tense situations in the game becoming bogged down in rule resolution. The main goals of the game design were...

setting should appear to be authentic even if they are invented. Effort has gone into creating a superstitious, fearful setting.

☞ Rules that encourage character-driven games, grounded on believable, complex characters.

☞ Rules that encourage a sense of danger and fear about supernatural elements in the game.

☞ Strong emphasis on the social aspects of playing a game in medieval Europe. Social status plays an important part in a feudal society that **Danse Macabre** is set in. Tax collectors and corrupt barons are just as dangerous as demons.

☞ A number of distinct branches of magic that possess definite places in the society that uses them. A sliding scale of power and danger has also been linked to magic. More powerful sorcery carries greater risks.

☞ Psychology of horror rules that support various styles of play and help govern sins and virtues, insanity, trauma, and the selling of souls.

☞ Grittiness and horror above game balance: unbalanced rules favour the supernatural over physical strength or skill, and unfair social rules favour of the wealthy, powerful and noble.

Summary of Chapters

Danse Macabre is divided into ten chapters. The **Introduction** details a little of the setting, the mood and theme of the game and serves as a general overview. Chapter Two details **Characters**, character creation and various character options. Chapter Three deals with **Rules** of the game – Skill Resolution, Trauma, Fear and the likes. Magic is an important part of occult fabric of Benighted Europe. **Esotery**, a laborious and alchemic sort of magical discipline is given its own chapter. More sorcerous magic, **Hedge Magic** and scholarly **Goetia** are then discussed under a single **Magic** chapter. A short section on **Roleplaying** is followed by a discussion of the **Setting** – both will hopefully help you get to know the theme and mood of the game in more detail and think of a few ideas and hooks for your game. This is followed by **Beasts and Devils** – a discussion of adversaries and monstrous things. Two scenarios, **The Ashen Man** and **The Troubled Priest** round off the book.

Gender

The topic of gender pronouns is tricky. Most will agree that although using male pronouns in gender-neutral phrases is traditionally correct, it is archaic, outdated and not helpful in a hobby that (let's be honest here) doesn't need to alienate female enthusiasts more than it already has. By way of a compromise **Danse Macabre** uses the female form (she, her, hers) when referring to the Gamesmaster, and the male form (he, him, his) when referring to players.

☞ A solid medieval atmosphere. The elements of the

Systems

Chapter Two

The rules in this chapter make up a basic system for playing **Danse Macabre**. The rules will help you get a feel for how the world works, they present for everyone at the table a shared system of cause and effect, and ideally rules allow you to play the game without falling into disagreements over fine points of the setting. Are longbows more deadly than crossbows? Should a suit of mail protect you from a ghost? How long does it take to summon an imp from the nether regions of the cosmos? These are questions that rules address so that you can get on with the business of playing the game.

Danse Macabre uses rules primarily to negotiate difficult or dangerous situations. You may want to escape the creature following you through the woods, but can you? You may want to clash sword to sword with a recreant knight, but who will win? These are questions answered by the rules of the game.

As well as creating a fair playing ground where swords may slice both ways, rules also add structure to a game. Their aim, to varying degrees, is to create a sense of game balance or fairness for the players, present an obvious way to record and track a character's changes, mediate disagreements, and determine the outcome of dangerous or difficult situations.

Subjective Resolution

The most common and quickest means to resolve questions in the game will be the subjective interpretation of the Gamesmaster. As players narrate their character's actions the Gamesmaster responds with Subjective outcomes. This makes up the bulk of a game's give-and-take between the players. If one player states that he wishes to steal a horse, the Gamesmaster might warn him that he hears voices inside the stable. The player then states that his character sneaks away and sets a fire by the outhouse. The Gamesmaster considers this and decides that the stablehands will leave their post to put out the fire. The character is then free to sneak into the stalls, steal the horse and ride off. The question of whether the character in question can steal the horse is resolved through action on the part of the character.

The key to Subjective Resolution is acknowledging that clever ideas and well-narrated actions deserve rewards. Encouraging Subjective Resolution speeds the pace of a

game considerably.

Objective Resolution

Where Subjective Resolution falls short Objective Resolution takes up its place. In the Objective method difficulties are set, dice are rolled, outcomes are narrated and a set of rules that apply to everyone ensures fairness. Particularly in instances where death is on the line, players are likely to prefer Objective Resolution for its fairness, if nothing else. The dice will not prefer one of the players or give favour to a villain. The rules of the game apply to all and everyone and are known to all and everyone at the table. As such the rules themselves can be negotiated by careful strategy.

Objective Resolution should be emphasised more when the situation is dramatic, or the climax of a building plot. Even if Objective Resolution is called for, try to use simple Tests of Traits during most of the game. Only use extended Contests of Traits when there is a dramatic reason to play out a conflict blow by blow.

Dice

Danse Macabre uses a six sided die (d6) based resolution mechanic. Tests of Skill are made by rolling a dice pool - a collection of dice rolled together. Each player will need no more than six d6.

Terminology

The rules of **Danse Macabre** use a number of terms with very specific meanings. The below is a list of those found in the following chapter.

Action - A simple undertaking that is declared by a Player.

Round - An arbitrary measure of time during which Characters are permitted no more than one Action. Sometimes Players may declare complex Actions that will take multiple Rounds to complete. For instance - two Player Characters are holding off guards while a third picks a lock to allow the group to escape. Holding off guards involves simple short Actions (attacking and defending) whereas the Character who is picking the lock may take three or four rounds to complete his single task.

Chronicle - An ongoing series of Sessions that include the same player Characters, and often the same over-arc-

ing plot.

Dice Pool - a pool of dice that represent a power or skill. More powerful traits have larger dice pools. **Danse Macabre** uses dice pools of six-sided dice (d6).

Scene - a single coherent clip of action, plot or conversation that occurs without a change in scenery or characters. The same concept as a scene in a book or film.

Session - a single game played out over a few hours. Game Sessions usually follow one after another and build into a Chronicle over time.

Skill - The most common form of Trait. A Skill represents an area of studied talent, discipline and learning.

Trait - An umbrella term for all skills, powers, qualities or facets of a character. Traits are ranked on a scale of one to six. Anything can be a Trait, although usually only the more important Traits are listed on a character sheet. Traits are usually good, but can be bad for a character, too. A curse might be an example of a bad trait that works against your character during the game. A Rank Six curse would be much worse than a Rank One curse.

Actions

When the game turns dangerous and dramatic you want to allow all players at the table an equal chance to take part in the action. During tense moments the game is divided into **Rounds**. A Round is an arbitrary frame of time in which every character involved in a Scene is allowed to take no more than a single Action.

Determining which Character acts first, second and third in a round can be handled subjectively by the Gamesmaster - consider each Character and what they are trying to achieve. Supernatural Characters, Angels, Demons and the like will act first by simple virtue of their power. Following this mortals engaging in simple Actions will act. More complicated Actions are then played out later in a Round.

Alternatively, if you would prefer to use an objective system, when the Round commences all the players declare the Actions of their Characters and then use a **Test of Initiative** to determine who acts first. To Test Initiative all players roll a single d6, the character with the highest score acts first, then the next highest and so on. If two characters draw, then those two characters roll again.

Very Fast	Yelling, speaking, reflex responses
Fast	Physical attacks, simple manoeuvres
Average	Archery and complex manoeuvres
Slow	Goetia and magic
Very Slow	Ponderously slow actions

Traits

All powers and talents in **Danse Macabre**, including player character **Skills**, are grouped under the broad category of **Traits**. A Trait will always be rated on a scale of one to six - Rank 1, being the least powerful, Rank 6, being the most powerful. For most Characters their Skills will make up the bulk of their Traits. Thievery (Rank 4), Seafaring (Rank 6) or Hedge Magic (Rank 2) are examples of Skills written down as Traits.

Mechanics

Danse Macabre uses three basic mechanics to deal with progressively more important conflicts and challenges in the game.

Simple Trait Test - A simple Skill Test is performed by rolling a dice pool equal to your Trait against a set difficulty. Difficulty is determined by the Gamesmaster. Increasing difficulties require more successes.

Contested Trait Test - Used in situations when two or more opponents are in direct conflict. The opponents test their relevant Skills and then count successes. The character with the most successes wins. The margin of success is based on how many successes you have compared to your opponent.

Prolonged Trait Test - Used in situations where two characters are in conflict but the scene requires a drawn out resolution. This might be a running race, a cat and mouse game through a forest or similar. The Gamesmaster assigns a quota of successes that both characters must achieve over a series of rounds. The first character to accumulate enough successes wins the contest.

Simple Trait Test

When you Test a Trait you use dice to determine if the Trait performs as it should. You may have the Skill, Thievery (Rank 3), but at the critical moment will you be able to pilfer the purse of a passing noble? We use a Test of Trait to answer this question.

When a Trait is Tested you roll 1d6 for each Rank in the Trait. This is called your Dice Pool. Each 6 that you roll counts as a Success. Normally, you will only need one Success to pass a Trait Test. More difficult challenges may require a greater number of successes.

Easy	No roll needed
Average	One Success
Difficult	Two Successes
Very Difficult	Three Successes
Insanely Difficult	Four Successes

For Example: Turstan decides to hide his two goats in the scrub behind his house before the lord's taxmen pay their monthly visit. The Gamesmaster deems this a Difficult task. Turstan has a Subterfuge skill of Rank 4. He rolls his dice pool and scores a 1, 2, 5 and 5. No successes. He needed two successes to competently hide the goats. The taxmen will notice the two goats when they come to collect.

Effort

All Player Characters and some important Non-Player Characters have a pool of **Effort** points. Effort Points can be drawn from to give you an edge in a test of any dice pool, unless specifically stated otherwise in the rules. Expending Effort increases your range of success. By Expending one point of Effort you succeed on a roll of 5 or 6. By Expending two points of Effort you succeed on a roll of 4, 5 or 6. You cannot expend more than two Effort on any one Action.

Effort is a very important resource in **Danse Macabre**. As a game Session progresses Characters will spend more and more Effort, and the players are forced to decide whether to spend Effort now in a dangerous situation or save it for later on the chance that there may be worse things to come. Effort loss grinds characters down during the game, and tension builds as this valuable resource dwindles.

Tokens

Rather than recording Effort on paper, it can be useful and less time-consuming to employ a pile of tokens, glass counters or matchsticks. Players can remove tokens from their pool on the table as they expend Effort and add them back when Effort is recovered.

For Example: Turstan is running from a wild boar he disturbed while out collecting firewood. The boar's sharp tusks are just inches away. Turstan decide to use his Daring skill (Rank 4) to leap into a tree and clamber out of the boar's reach. Turstan decides to expend effort on this Action. He spends two points of Effort, which increases his range of success to 4, 5 and 6. He rolls his dice pool and scores a 2, 4, 4, and 5. Because he spent Effort on the action he scores three successes. If he had not spent any Effort he would not have scored any successes at all.

Recovering Effort

Effort recovers slowly through rest, sleep or inactivity. Use the following as a rough guide. You may wish to modify recovery of Effort depending on the situation. Also, note that you can never possess more than Fifteen Effort. Over-resting does not restore additional Effort.

Light Activity: Engaging in light activity, walking at an easy pace, sitting about and casually mending nets, telling stories by the fire, restores one point of Effort every hour.

Rest: Complete rest, be it sleep or lazy half-awake daydreaming restores one point of Effort every half hour.

A Night of Sleep: A full night of sleep, assuming a character is able to rest undisturbed for eight hours returns Effort to the maximum fifteen points. If a character's sleep is disturbed or troubled by nightmares or fear then the character only regains Effort as if they were engaging in Light Activity. As such a full eight hours troubled or restless sleep only restores eight points of Effort.

For Example: Turstan just forded a swollen river. The attempt was very dangerous, so he expended Effort to aid his chances of success. He spent a total of five points of Effort. By resting for two and a half hours he will recover his expended Effort.

Botches

A Botch occurs when you roll an entire compliment of ones across your dice pool. This means that with a dice pool of 1d6 you are much more likely to roll a Botch than with a dice pool of 6d6. When you Botch a roll the result is unusually bad. The exact outcome is at the discretion of the Gamesmaster but you can use the following general guidelines to give you a feel for few common situations.

Crafting – Without realising, you craft an item that

appears to be fully functional, but is actually dangerous to use.

Foraging – You disturb a large and ferocious animal.

Seafaring – You steer the ship towards a shoal of rocks.

Social – The person you are trying to influence, trick or impress is not only unmoved, but takes a strong dislike to you.

Contested Trait Test

Often Traits are pitched against one-another by two different characters. This is called Contesting Traits. Two soldiers squaring off in battle are about to Contest their respective combat skills. Two players sitting down to a game of chess are Contesting their Games skills, two merchants trying to out-cheat one another might Contest their Guile Skills.

During a Contested Action both players roll their dice pools and count successes. The highest number of successes wins the contest. If the successes are a draw, then the flurry of action is deemed a draw and the conflict will continue into the next round.

The number of successes by which you beat your opponent determines your degree of victory.

One Success Marginal Victory

Two Successes Comfortable Victory

Three Successes Decisive Victory

Four Successes Stunning Victory

For Example: Turstan is playing a game of riddles against his nephew. Turstan has a Games skill of Rank 2. His nephew has a Games skill of Rank 5. Turstan rolls his dice pool and scores a 2 and 6. One success. His nephew rolls his dice pool and scores a 1, 3, 3, 6 and 6. Two Successes. Turstan's nephew beats Turstan by one success and wins the game of riddles by a Marginal Victory.

Prolonged Contests

Prolonged Contests are called for in the game when drama demands a slightly more drawn out resolution. Throughout a Prolonged Contest of Traits the Gamesmaster should narrate how the contest is going, who is edging ahead and who is flagging behind and why. Examples of times when a Prolonged Contest might be needed included a chase through a forest, a wrestling contest, an argument in the King's Court or an archery contest. Prolonged Contests are usually not employed during combat unless there is a highly specific goal at stake that could occur without physically defeating your enemies in hand-to-hand battle. For instance, there is a battle aboard a Viking ship and one group of Characters were trying to hack through the wood of the ship with axes and sink it while the battle is raging all around, then the Gamesmaster might impose a Prolonged Contest in addition to the combat.

For Example: Turstan and his friend Matholamew are ambushed by robber-knights on the road to the city of Rouen. They know that if they can reach the gates of Rouen they will be safe and a chase ensues. The Gamesmaster imposes a ten point Prolonged Contest and

all the Characters Test their Cavalcade Skill (as they are on horseback). Turstan rolls first, he has a Cavalcade Skill of 5 and expends two points of Effort. He rolls a 3, 4, 5 and 5. Three successes because of the Effort he spent. His Player makes of note of this. Next Matholamew rolls and scores two successes, he is lagging behind Turstan. The Gamesmaster then checks the Cavalcade skill of the robber-knights. If Turstan manages to score ten successes first, he'll reach the gates of Rouen. However, this won't make Matholamew safe as he needs to score ten successes and well. If any of the robber-knights score ten successes before Turstan or Matholamew then the robber-knight will succeed in his goal and head off one of the fleeing travellers.

Supernatural Traits

Supernatural creatures and entities possess Traits far in excess of anything a mortal can comprehend, demonically swift claws, the power to leap huge distances, eidetic memories and impossibly clever wits. Supernaturals may possess **Uncanny**, **Supernatural** or **Godlike** Traits, in increasing order of power. Note that Mortals cannot normally attain such ranks.

Uncanny

Mildly supernatural skills. Sometimes seen in unusually tainted warlocks and sorcerous mortals. More often the preserve of minor spirits, imps, sprites, less powerful incarnate beings and the like.

An Uncanny Skill defaults to a Success on a score of five or six on a d6.

Supernatural

The domain of powerful spirits, demons and angels, vampyr lords and powerful, elder monsters of the night.

A Supernatural Skill defaults to a Success on a score of four, five or six on a d6.

Godlike

Possessed only by a few lordly entities in all of creation. Lucifer possesses Godlike skills. His duke of hell, Asmodey is merely Supernatural.

A Godlike Skill defaults to a Success on a score of three, four, five or six on a d6.

*For Example: A Faerie of the Kingdom of Wilds sets about weaving straw into a carpet of gold. The **Gamesmaster** sets this task at Difficult. The creature has the Trait: Weaving Straw into Gold (Rank 6 / Uncanny). The Spirit rolls its dice pool and scores a 1, 3, 3, 5, 6 and 6. Because its skill is Uncanny it scores a success on both 5 and 6. Thus, it scores three successes. The spirit needed two successes to overcome the Difficult Task. With three it easily weaves a masterful carpet of golden threads.*

Character Creation



Chapter Three

To play **Danse Macabre** you need to create a character. Your character defines the role that you will play in the game, and the ways in which you will play a part in the story that unfolds.

Each player controls one character at a time in the game. If your character dies or retires from the world, or if you just want to move onto playing something a little different, you create a new one. You can create and play any character that fits a medieval setting.

All characters are different. One will be a competent swordsman, another will be a tinker who has never even picked up a sword. Your character could be a nobleman with a love for falconry, or a wretched beggar with a love of pick-pocketing. Traits help us define these little quirks of character – they place a character's skills, talents and powers in context so that we know exactly how good or bad a character is compared to everyone else. The process of creating a character involves defining your Character's Traits and allocating rankings to them, as well as thinking about personal history, motivations and idiosyncrasies.

Overview

Danse Macabre uses an involved method for character creation. Although a **Summary** is provided for seven basic archetypes of character, and quick-start rules are included, usually the process of creating a character will take half an hour. The method is point-based, and requires you to consider a number of options as you work through character creation. The aim is to let you craft a character, and come out the other end with a good feel for your character as a person. The character creation method is build around the following tenets.

☞ You should be able to create any character you can envision who fits in a medieval world without having to sacrifice any aspects of your concept. You can create a small-poxed beggar or a king, a silk-clad Moorish knight from the Alhambra, an Irish Mercenary, a Bavarian Midwife, a Scottish Wise-Woman, or a Norman Tinker. The scope of character possibilities is intended to be as open as possible.

☞ **Danse Macabre** character creation is involved and point-based. The intention is that you are able to craft the character you want rather than generate one randomly.

☞ **Danse Macabre** Characters begin play already highly

accomplished in their fields. It is very easy to start play possessing Rank Six in a number of Traits. In fact, a Trait of Rank One or Two suggests a very low level of skill and knowledge – Rank One is effectively unskilled. You will want to make sure that your primary survival and professional skills are Rank Five or Six.

☞ Although it is possible to run a game of **Danse Macabre** in which the Player Characters work against one-another in secret, either through intrigue or treachery, usually the playing group are allies who work together, and you should create a character that fits with the other characters in the group and with the setting and mood that the Gamesmaster has in mind. A deer hunter from the forests of Russia may be an interesting concept to work with, but if your Gamesmaster is going to start the game near the ruins of ancient Carthage in North Africa, then a Russian peasant may not be a suitable character choice. It is important to discuss your concept with your Gamesmaster before you move onto to character creation.

Gamesmaster Advice

It is important when starting a new Campaign that you, as the Gamesmaster, take a moment to explain what sort of mood and theme you are planning to work into the game.

If you are introducing new players to **Danse Macabre** then you may also want to explain the overall theme of the game, as well as explain a few basics aspects of the rules. Giving your game a title, and perhaps reading out a brief introduction before the players begin creating characters may also be useful to set the atmosphere.

Once everyone is done creating characters you may want to ask the players to describe their characters to the others at the table, explain a little of their personal history, if appropriate, and come to a group agreement over how the characters know one-another. The simple exercise of asking your players to define their own character's relationship to the other characters at the table can go a long way towards conjuring up a believable mesh of people.

Creating a Character

There are seven steps you need to work through when creating a character. The following describes these phases as distinct steps, although as you play the game more you

may find that you prefer to work through the phases in a different order, or jump about and work out details of concept as they come to you.

One	Concept
Two	Aspects of Nature
Three	Backgrounds
Four	Skills
Five	Sorcery
Six	Details
Seven	Flesh

One... Concept

What sort of character do you wish to play? A brave knight, foolhardy and not really prepared for what truly lies in the shadows? A warlock who has had his first taste of infernal power? A devout priest with a weakness for ale? A greedy merchant who may have made a bargain with the wrong person? A worn-out folk hero who once, long ago, slew a terrible creature and now is called upon again, his waist a little bigger, his power of arms a little dulled?

The following are some common character concepts. Treat them as ideas, something to think over, toy with and mould to your liking. Note that you do not need to chose a concept. Treat this as a moment in which to come up with ideas. And, if you do not find this conceptual step useful you can dispense with it and move on to the next step in character creation. You can always come back and write in your concept once you know what it is or simply not worry about it at all and create a character piece-by-piece.

Motivation

The most important question that you should ask during character creation is: what motivates this character? What is he or she trying to achieve? Especially in more mobile groups of characters, those who are wandering from town to town, then the question could easily be rephrased: what motivates your character to travel, leave home and hearth, and strike out into the world? The following are a few examples of Motives. Read over them for inspiration and then think of what you want your character to desire.

☞ I am a servant of the church, sworn to hunt out and uncover heretic cults and unholy orders.

☞ I am an Irish wanderer, driven to seek out the mysteries of my ancient Celtic roots and beliefs.

☞ I am a gypsy moving one step ahead of my bad reputation.

☞ I am an English serf released from service to my liege lord in return for using my hedge magics to cure his son. Now I wander the world seeking to help others.

☞ I am a landless knight, forced upon the road through debt and poverty.

Designer Notes

Motivation is an invaluable tool for the Gamesmaster. It allows her to build up tales and adventures, bring into play villains and friends, all based on who the player

characters are and what drives them. Try to work some depth into your Motivation, or at least one or two good hooks for the Gamesmaster to work with.

Society

In the medieval world social standing, heritage and family history can be the most important single thing that will mark your path in life. Are you of Noble blood, destined to led knights into bloody battle or plot marriages to suitable lords, a Freeman who may take up the cloth or become a scholar or merchant, or were you born to a family of Serfs, little better than chattel and slaves in the eyes of all others?

Noble Upbringing: You are born to the noble class of landlords and rulers. You have many privileges, but may not necessarily be wealthy. Especially if you are a third or fourth child, then you may have to make your own way in the world. You are also expected to defend your land and the people and enforce laws.

Freedman Upbringing: You are born to a family who long ago bought their freedom from the oppression of serfdom. You are now free, perhaps not rich, but perhaps very affluent. You might be a family of tradesmen, scholars, shippers, innkeepers or rich and influential merchants. This is also the main class of the church, and younger sons of large families often join the clergy.

Serf Upbringing: You are born to workers of the land, commoners gaining some protection from the common law, but also indebted land, blood and kin to a lord or king. You may have been put into any number of positions in the lord's household or estate. Farmer, blacksmith, guard, seamstress, chamberlain or handmaiden.

Are you still in your Lord's employ? Did you buy yourself free or did you escape? Are you being hunted even now?

Outsider Upbringing: You are a complete outsider to the laws of Christendom. You might be the son of a reclusive family that hunts the wild forests and trades wild honey for those things they cannot themselves make. You might be a Gypsy or a Jew, a Norseman, a wandering Arab scribe, or a Moorish prince from Tangier.

Under Christian Laws you are neither obliged nor protected. In some ways this can be useful. You can lend money and commit usury. You owe no-one allegiance, tithes or taxes. But you also have no protection from the law. Your murder is not a crime. Be warned though that crimes against Christians are always crimes, no matter who commits them.

Gratis Skills (Rank 3)

Each upbringing grants you some bonus skills. Choose three of the following skills as befits your character. Note these skills down on your Character Sheet at Rank Three.

Noble – Games, Cavalcade, Noble Ways or Venerly

Freedman – Artisan, Mercantry, Trade or Yeomanry

Outsider – Artisan, Folklore, Lay-of-the-Land, Learning or Trades

Serf – Folklore, Jack-of-All, Ranging, or Trades

Two... Aspects of Nature

Once you have defined your character's basic Concept, we move a little deeper and work some detail into the character's personality. **Danse Macabre** uses a set of medieval moralities to define where you character falls in the endless wars between Heaven and Hell. These personality traits are the Seven Heavenly Virtues and Deadly Sins. By choosing Virtues you bring yourself closer to the Kingdom of Hallows, whereas sins place you in the camp of the Kingdom of Shadows and all the dukes and demons of hell.

Remember that whatever personality traits you chose you will have to roleplay these in the game. Make sure to choose a set of personality traits that are believable and which you will be able to play. Also be aware that personality traits have their opposites and will clash if chosen together. Compassion and Wrath are mutually exclusive traits. Likewise, Charity and Avarice will not work well together.

You need to select from between one and three of these traits – in other words, you must take at least one and no more than three. For instance you could take just *Gluttony* and no others, or just *Charity* and *Humility*, or *Devotion*, *Envy* and *Pride*.

Virtues	Sins
Charity	Avarice
Compassion	Envy
Devotion	Gluttony
Diligence	Lust
Humility	Pride
Prudence	Wrath
Temperance	Sloth

Roleplaying and Fate

Fate Points are a form of in-game bonus that can be used to increase your Skills and advance your Character during the game. At the end of each game session players are allocated one point of Fate for each Aspect of Nature that the Player has Roleplayed well during the game. Players can suggest instances of when they displayed a given Aspect.

Nature

Your Nature is used to gauge where your character falls in the battle between Heaven and Hell. Nature is represented on a scale of 13 ranks with *Hallowed* at one end (Rank 1) and *Dark* at the other end (Rank 13). Good actions during the game will move you a rank towards *Hallowed* at the Gamesmasters discretion, just as evil actions will move you towards *Dark*, also at the Gamesmaster's discretion.

Before beginning play count up your Sins and Virtues. Start at Rank 7 and move yourself one point towards *Hallowed* for each of your Virtues and one point towards *Dark* for each sin. The following table summarizes this:

3 Virtues	Rank 4
2 Virtues	Rank 5
1 Virtue	Rank 6

2 Virtues and 1 Sin	Rank 6
1 Virtue and 1 Sin	Rank 7
2 Sins and 1 Virtue	Rank 8
1 Sin	Rank 8
2 Sins	Rank 9
3 Sins	Rank 10

Three... Backgrounds

Backgrounds are a loose collection of inheritances, family history, personal history and life events that have lead characters to their place in the world. Backgrounds are not Traits, they are not normally ranked and cannot improve or weaken over time. A Background represents something that has happened to your character and left a mark. You have **five points** to spend on Backgrounds. Some Backgrounds can be bought more than once, which then multiplies the effect of the Background; this is always mentioned in the text of the Background if this is the case. If you do purchase a Background more than once add a rank to it on your character sheet.

Be aware, also, that some Backgrounds add bonus ranks to your Skills. Wait until after you've finished spending Skill Points on your Skills before adding any bonus ranks gained from Backgrounds.

Accursed, Adventurous, Allies, Ancient of Days, Assassin, Banishment, Beasts and Birds, Beggars & Thieves, Blood of Kings, Charmed, Clever of Mind, Courage, Courtier, Craftsmanship, Crossing of Paths, Damned, Dark Disciple, Darkest Secret, Discovery, Dhampire, Ear of the Commoner, Enchanting Music, Epiphany, Errantry, Esoteric Scholar, Evil Eye, Excommunication, Fae Graces, Faerie Ways, Fair of Form, Fallen, Few to Survive, Friend of the Powerful, Goetic Sorcerer, Great Deed, Gifted, Grim in War, Grimoire, Guild, Hag-Ridden, Hale and Hearty, Haunted, Hedge Magician, Heir of Great Fortune, Heretic, Hunter of Shadows, Huge of Stature, Imprisoned, Iron Will, Knight of the Order, Learned of Lore, Lordship, Loss of Family, Loss of Home, Lost in the Wilds, Light Touch, Lithe of Body, Madman, Malvolentum's Servant, Mentor, Misericorde Hunter, Moonstruck, Murderer, Noble Knight, Of the Cloth, Ordeal, Outlaw, Pact, Pagan, Patron, Pilgrim, Prentice, Riches, Redeemed, Remorse, Renown, Revelation, Sailor's Life, Sanctuary, Sagacious, Sect, Sickly, Silvered Tongue, Scapegoat, Scarred, Soldier of Fortune, Sorcerer Savant, Stout, Spy, Supplicant, Swept by War, Swimming, Tempted, Terrors, Theft, Traitor, Treatise, Troublesome Past, Trophy, Unearthly Lover, Voice of the Devine, Wise in the Wilds, Witness

Designer Notes

Not all Backgrounds are good. Some are indifferent; others are terrible burdens to bear. You do not get bonus points for taking disadvantageous Backgrounds. Unfortunate events are considered a part of the fabric of your history. Life is gentle and forgiving to some, and merciless to others.

Certain Backgrounds can be purchased more than once,

and thus can take up multiple Background slots. When this is the case the effects of purchasing the Background multiple times are discussed in the text of the Background.

Four... Skills

Skills represent areas of expertise that are learned from training or experience. Skills are among the more important Traits that your character will have. Skills are used to define the areas of expertise that you are good, poor or indifferent in. Are you an expert swordsman, ready with a flashing blade? A dabbler in sorcerer or an archimage, well versed in the unclean art? Is your knowledge of folk stories rudimentary at best or honed to excellence by many nights beside a roaring fire with good friends and tankards of beer?

Skills are ranked on a scale of one to six. You purchase Skills with a pool of **Twelve Skill Points**. All Skills start at a default rank, each point you spend on a skill adds a further rank to the skill. The best method to use when choosing skills is first to note all the Skills that you want your character to have, do not forget to include gratis skills which will start at rank three no matter what type of skill they are. Next write down the defaults, so that you have a sense of how skilled you will be without spending any points. Then, add any bonuses you might have from your Backgrounds, and once that is done, begin spending your Skill points.

	Innate	Craft	Lore	A r -
cane				
Rank One	-	-	Default	N/A
Rank Two	-	Default	1 pt.	N/A
Rank Three	Default	1 pt.	2 pts.	N/A
Rank Four	1 pt.	2 pts.	3 pts.	N/A
Rank Five	2 pts.	3 pts.	4 pts.	N/A
Rank Six	3 pts.	4 pts.	5 pts.	N/A

Affray (Innate), Archery (Craft), Artisan (Craft), Cavalcade (Craft), Daring (Innate), Dogma (Lore), Presence (Innate), Esotery (Arcane), Folklore (Lore), Fortitude (Innate), Games (Lore), Goetia (Arcane), Guile (Innate), Healing (Craft), Hedge Magic (Arcane), Inquisition (Craft), Jack-of-All (Craft), Lay-o-the-Land (Lore), Learning (Lore), Mercantury (Craft), Noble Ways (Lore), Performance (Craft), Ranging (Craft), Seafaring (Craft), Subterfuge (Innate), Thievery (Craft), Peasantry (Craft), Troubadour (Craft), Venery (Craft), Willpower (Innate), Witch Lore (Lore), Yeomanry (Lore)

Innate Skills

Innate Skills are those talents that everyone possesses to some small degree or other. Everyone can attempt to climb a tree, fight off an attacker with punches, lie and trick, or carry an injured friend to safety.

Craft Skills

Craft Skills possess a large element of natural talent, but also need a degree of training. Using a sword is a Craft skill, as is painting, singing, firing a bow, or weaving.

Lore Skills

Lore skills are purely learning based. These are skills of knowledge, expertise and long years of training. Knowledge about the classics or philosophy, about heraldic matters or the laws of the land are Lore Skills.

Arcane Skills

Arcane Skills delve into those aspects of creation that mortals were never meant to know – the arts of magic and sorcery and witchcraft. **Danse Macabre** has three Arcane skills: Esotery (alchemic studies), Goetia (summoning spirits) and Hedge Magic (peasant witch magic). These Skills can only be obtained or increased in power by taking the Backgrounds **Esoteric Scholar**, **Goetic Sorcerer** and **Hedge Magician** respectively - i.e. Arcane Skills are not bought or increased using Skill Points during Character Creation.

Skill Defaults

Any character can attempt any skill in the game. If, however, you have not spent any Skill Points on the Skill then it is attempted at a **Default Rank**. Innate Skills default to Rank Three, Craft Skills default to Rank Two and Lore Skills Default to Rank One. **Arcane** skills Default to Zero – without training you have no chance of success in these fields. For more mundane **Lores** the Default is Rank One (*you have a very remote chance of knowing that Cleopatra was the queen of Egypt a long time ago*). For **Crafts** it is Rank Two (*you will be incompetent with a sword, but at least you can still pick one up and swing it about*). For **Innate** skills the Default is Rank Three (*there's a reasonable chance that you'll be able to climb a tree*). This reflects the increasing intuitiveness of the three categories of skill.

Designer Notes: Defaulted Skills

The use of Defaulted Skills is a method to get around the lack of blanket Attributes in **Danse Macabre**. As there are no basic Strength, Intelligence or Agility Attributes to fall back on when a character lacks the appropriate skills, defaults are used to quickly determine the raw chance of success for an average unskilled person. Defaults reflect the intuitiveness of a skill. Most people are going to be somewhat able to climb a wall, run a race or haggle with a merchant, even if never trained in these areas. Thus, these are considered innate and have a high default. But only a very lucky untrained person will recall a random piece of scholarly knowledge pertaining to ancient history, astrology or church dogma that was once overheard in an inn. You have a very low chance of success when you are untrained in these much less innate skills.

Counterintuitive Ranks: Danse Macabre uses a system of Skills that can result in some odd looking ranks on your Character Sheet. Even though your Character Concept may be a learned monk you may find yourself with higher scores in Fortitude and Daring than in some of your Lores. In Danse Macabre Skills need to be compared to the average of your fellows before a gauge can be set. When every

adult in the world has a base Rank Three Fortitude, Rank Three Fortitude is not a very useful level of skill. However, as most people have only Rank 1 in Lores, Rank 2 or 3 in a Lore is actually a very reasonable level of skill. This means that Rank 2 in a Lore is actually better than Rank 3 in an Innate Skill. The system works well in practise, but may need some getting used to.

Ranks

Skills are ranked on a scale of one to six. It is very easy in **Danse Macabre** to begin play with a character whose primary skills are already at their maximum level of rank six. Because you will be facing supernatural monsters of skill and magic far beyond that of mere mortals, it is a very good idea to try and emphasise your key skills, and bring them up to rank five or six.

Rank Zero: Ignorant

You possibly aren't even aware that this field of skill exists, have never had any contact with it, and what knowledge you do have is shrouded in superstition and heresy. This is the default of all Arcane Skills. Unless you put training into hedge magic and sorcery you will know nothing about it at all. Note also that the Literacy Skill is deemed Arcane in **Danse Macabre's** medieval setting. Reading and writing are so rare that to most people Literacy appears to be magical.

Rank One: Unskilled

Hopelessly unskilled. You've very little chance of ever succeeding at this skill, if you do it will be more through luck than talent. This is the default level of all lores. You have a remote chance of knowing a titbit of information about astrology, ancient history or legal matters, simple through general knowledge. At rank one, however, the chance is slim.

Rank Two: Untrained

Some very marginal knowledge in the field. You've probably overheard someone conversing on the topic and possibly tried to teach yourself a little of the basics. This is the default level for all Craft skills. Most people would be able to figure out the basic principles behind making a leather belt or stitching a rug, and with a little luck, might actually be able to do either.

Rank Three: Basic

Very basic level of understanding and skill. About the level of an apprentice in a craft. This is the default level for all Innate Skills. Most people have a Basic ability to climb a tree, or tell a joke.

Rank Four: Capable

Average level of skill. You'll be able to hold your own in most normal circumstances, and are trained approximately to the level of a journeyman. You need to be *at least* this level of skill in any skills which are important to your character.

Rank Five: Expert

Above average skill – you've studied long and hard to reach this point. You are at a level of skill where you would be professionally respected.

Rank Six: Masterful

Very skilled. You possess knowledge and experience at the level of a great master.

Example Skill Sets

The following are a few very basic bundles of skills that you can use if you want to move quickly through the Skills phase in character creation. The method by which these bundles were created was to first choose the three Gratis skills, then the skills that suit the concept then by finally adding the twelve skill points. Background modifications are not taken into account here. By swapping skills about you can alter the bundles slightly to better suit your particular concept.

Goetic Sorcerer

Freedman Gratis Skills – Artisan (*painting*) (Rank 3) Mercantry (Rank 3) Yeomanry (Rank 3)
Other Skills - Goetia (Rank 6), Guile (Rank 4), Learning (Rank 4), Willpower (Rank 4), Witch Lore (Rank 2)

Lady of the Court

Noble Gratis Skills –, Cavalcade (Rank 4), Games (Rank 4), Noble Ways (Rank 4)
Other Skills - Artisan (*embroidery*) (Rank 4), Guile (Rank 5), Healing (Rank 3), Presence (Rank 6)

Learned Monk

Freedman Gratis Skills – Mercantry (Rank 3), Trades (*bookbinding*) (Rank 3) Yeomanry (Rank 3)
Other Skills - Dogma (Rank 4), Folklore (Rank 2), Healing (Rank 3), Lay—the-Land (Rank 2), Learning (Rank 5), Witch Lore (Rank 3)

Merchant Sailor

Freedman Gratis Skills – Artisan (*bone carving*) (Rank 3), Mercantry (Rank 6), Yeomanry (Rank 3)
Other Skills - Affray (Rank 4), Fortitude (Rank 4), Guile (Rank 4), Lay-o-the-Land (Rank 3), Seafaring (Rank 5)

Noble Knight

Noble Gratis Skills – Cavalcade (Rank 6), Noble Ways (Rank 3), Venery (Rank 3)
Other Skills - Affray (Rank 6), Daring (Rank 4), Fortitude (Rank 5), Presence (Rank 4)

Mercenary Man-at-Arms

Serf Gratis Skills – Jack-of-All (Rank 3), Trades (*field armourer*) (Rank 4), Ranging (Rank 4)
Other Skills - Affray (Rank 5), Archery (Rank 4), Folklore (Rank 2), Fortitude (Rank 5),

Wandering Hedge Wizard

Outsider Gratis Skills – Folklore (Rank 3), Lay of the Land

(Rank 4) Trades (*farming*) (Rank 3)
Other Skills – Esotery (Rank 3), Healing (Rank 3), Hedge Magic (Rank 5), Jack-of-All (Rank 3), Ranging (Rank 3)

Witch Hunter

Freedman Gratis Skills – Mercantry (Rank 3), Trades (*torture*) (Rank 3), Yeomanry (Rank 3)
Other Skills - Affray (Rank 4), Folklore (Rank 3), Inquisition (Rank 5), Subterfuge (Rank 4), Willpower (Rank 4), Witch Lore (Rank 4),

Woodland Outlaw

Serf Gratis Skills – Folklore (Rank 3), Jack of All (Rank 3), Ranging (Rank 4)
Other Skills - Affray (Rank 3), Archery (Rank 5), Daring (Rank 5), Guile (Rank 4), Subterfuge (Rank 5), Thievery (Rank 4)

Five... Sorcery

Not all Characters will be interested in the dark arts of magic and this section is only relevant to those who have purchased one of the following Background: *Esoteric Scholar*, *Goetic Sorcerer*, *Hedge Magician* or *Pact*. The details presented below also appear in **Backgrounds** section, but are reproduced here for convenience.

Esoteric Scholar

You have dabbled in the alchemical arts, and have come to know that there are secrets in the universe that no mortal eyes were meant to see. What strange things have you discovered, what secrets of the universe still await your laborious unravelling?

Prentice of Esotery	1 pt.
Adept of Esotery	2 pts.
Master of Esotery	3 pts.

A *Prentice* of Esotery gains the Esotery Skill at Rank 1. An *Adept* of Esotery gains the Esotery Skill at Rank 3. A *Master* of Esotery gains the Esotery Skill at Rank 6.

Goetic Sorcerer

You are a student and practitioner of the secret, laborious and academic arts of Goetic Sorcery. Goetic Sorcerers use charmed rituals and symbols to summon, bind and command spirits. This is a powerful, if dangerous, branch of magic.

Prentice of the Art	1 pt.
Adept of the Art	2 pts.
Master of the Art	3 pts.

A *Prentice* of the Art gains the Goetic Skill at Rank 1, the Circle of Summoning, one Sigil of Choice and one additional Goetic Circle or Sigil of choice (Circle of Summoning + 1 Sigil + 1 Sigil or Circle). An *Adept* of the Art gains the Goetic Skill at Rank 3, and gains the Circle of Summoning, one Sigil of choice and three Circles or Sigils of choice (Circle of Summoning + 1 Sigil + 3 Sigils or Circles). A *Master* of the Art gains the Goetic Skill at Rank 6, the

Circle of Summoning, one Sigil of choice and five Sigils or Circles of choice (Circle of Summoning + 1 Sigil + 6 Sigils or Circles).

Note also that it is uncommon for Goetic Sorcerers to also have the *Hedge Magician* background - please confer with your Gamesmaster regarding this if you wish to take both Backgrounds.

Hedge Magician

You are a student of the old arts passed from mother to daughter and father to son, the folk magic and the crafts of charms and hexes and petty magics.

Hedge Magic Prentice	1 pt.
Hedge Magic Adept	2 pts.
Hedge Magic Master	3 pts.

A Hedge Magic *Prentice* gains the Hedge Magic Skill at Rank 1 and two Cantrips. A Hedge Magic *Adept* Gains the Hedge Magic Skill at Rank 3 and Six Cantrips. A Hedge Magic *Master* Gains the Hedge Magic Skill at Rank 6 and Twelve Cantrips. Note that it is uncommon for Goetic Sorcerers to also have the Hedge Magician background - please confer with your Gamesmaster.

Pact

You have made a pact with an otherworldly and dark spirit. You can only make a Pact with one entity, and making a Pact places you deep in the camp of the demonic spirit you have chosen to traffic with. A section on Pacts can be found in the chapter on *Magic*. Refer to the Pacts section (below) to make a decision on the sort of Pact you have entered into and what manner of rewards you have gained. Briefly, however, you will need to choose and keep one *Vow* for each supernatural *Gift* that you wish to receive.

Six... Details

Now we add a few final details to your character, add a little flesh and move on to playing the game.

Effort

Effort may be used in any action that requires a dice roll on the part of a Character, most importantly, Tests of Skill and Fear. By expending Effort you give your character an extra edge, however, you have a limited pool of Effort to use so only exhaust yourself with care.

Start play with a base Fifteen Effort. You will recover Effort slowly once it is spent, but your maximum Effort Pool can never exceed fifteen.

Fate

All characters start play with zero Fate Points. Fate is earned at the end of each Session of **Danse Macabre** that your character survives. Fate points are used to increase the ranks of your Character's Traits. Fate is earned in the game by following your Aspects of Nature. One point of Fate is earned per sessions for each Aspect that you roleplay well during the game.

Fortune

Fortune is awarded to one Player at the end of each game for excellence in Roleplaying. Fortune is awarded by a peer vote. If you have already been playing **Danse Macabre** with a group of people and your last character died or was retired then the Fortune that you earned for your last character carries over to your new character. Fortune is used in the game to invoke a number of narrative special effects.

Fears

Fears are Traits ranked on a scale of one to six. The scale represents your courage in the face of given fear. Death (Rank 1) renders you terrified of ghosts, whereas a character with Death (Rank 6) isn't highly frightened by spectres of the dead. Unless otherwise stated in one of your Backgrounds, you start with a default of Rank 3 in all Fears. Optionally (with Gamesmaster discretion), you can remove ranks from one Fear and add them to another. For example, you could lower your fear of Heights to Rank 2 and increase your courage against Violence to Rank 3.

Rank One	Terrified
Rank Two	Afraid
Rank Three	Wary
Rank Four	Guarded
Rank Five	Hardened
Rank Six	Deadened

Trauma and Deliriums

Trauma is a measure of how disturbed your character is as a result of having to endure frightening situations and seeing horrifying things. The mortal mind was never meant to deal with supernatural creatures or magic and coming into contact with anything preternatural causes Trauma. If you suffer ten ranks of Trauma then you suffer from a permanent insanity called a Delirium. Some Deliriums are mild, others can render a character to be unplayable.

You do not start play with either Trauma or Deliriums unless stated in one of your Backgrounds.

Reavings

All mortals have a Soul, and certain spirits devour the stuff of Souls to grow in power. Some spirits hunt mortals and forcefully slice away parts of Soul to eat, others try to come to some bargain with Mortals and give powers in exchange for a piece of Soul. Each time you lose a piece of your soul you gain suffer a Reaving – the loss of the ability to appreciate some part of life. Reavings include the loss of the ability to taste food, laugh, sing or feel sorrow. As with Trauma and Deliriums, you do not start play with Reavings.

Belongings

All characters start play with a few basic belongings. Use the categories listed below to gauge where your character falls on the social spectrum, then choose belongings accordingly. Confer with your Gamesmaster if you are uncertain where your Character should fall.

Treat the below lists of belongings as **ideas only**. As

long as your Gamesmaster agrees, feel free to take items you want that are not on the list but still fit into a given category. Remember also that for each time you took the Riches background you gain two extra picks from the Valuable and an Extra One pick from Rare items.

All Characters begin play with: A dagger, one item of luggage, a set of plain clothes, footwear, one other item of equipment that is not armour or weapons, and also...

Destitute Serf - Pick Four from Common

Very Poor Serf - Pick Five from Common, One from Valuable

Poor Freedman - Pick Six from Common, Two from Valuable

Affluent Freedman - Pick Eight from Common, Three from Valuable, Two from Rare

Rich Noble - Pick Ten from Common, Four from Valuable, Two from Rare

Very Rich Noble - Pick Fifteen from Common, Ten from Valuable, five from Rare

Upbringings

Common

Axe, Candle, Cloak, Coil of Rope, Dagger, Dog, Farm tool, Flail, Flasks (3), Hat, Leather Boots, Linen Gloves, Mattock, Maul, One Week's Plain Food, Quarterstaff, Reed Flute, Rough Hide or Quilted Armour (Rank One), Sacks (4), Buckler (Rank One), Scrimshaw Tools, Tarred Torch, Woodworking Tools, Woollen Blanket

Valuable

Decorated Shield, Embroidered Cloak, Carpenter's Tools, Ceremonial Dagger, Crystal Ball, Falcon and Gear, Felt Boots, Fur Gloves, Jeweller's Tools, Leather armour (Rank Two), Medium Shield (Rank Two), Little wooden box, Mace, Morning Star, Plain Harness and Saddle Bags, Satchel, Silver Coins (six), Silver Pendant, Scroll and Case, Sword and Scabbard, Stonemason Tools, Thief's Tools, Tiny Looking Glass, Writing Materials,

Rare

Antiquarian Relic (Roman statuette), Bejewelled Sword and Scabbard, Book (non-sorcerous), Cloth-of-Gold Gloves, Curiosity (e.g. taxidermy baby hydra), Deed to a modest property, Elaborate silken clothing, Ermine Cloak, Fur Cloak, Horse, Ivory Box, Large and Ornate Looking Glass, Letter of Credit (20 silver shillings), Map, Precious Stones (3), Resplendent Horse Harness, Roll of Silk, Small cask of Salt, Small cask of Spices, Songbird, Star Chart, Suit of Chain Mail or Scale Armour (Rank Three), Tower Shield (Rank Three), Wagon

Wealth

Danse Macabre does not require you to keep track of all the groats and farthings you earn in the course of a year. Instead **Danse Macabre** uses a **Wealth** attribute to manage most day-to-day purchases. Your Wealth attribute may climb higher as you gain gold, riches and treasures in the game, although increases, or decreases for that matter, remain at the discretion of the Gamesmaster.

If you wish to buy a good or service that costs less than your weekly income you are allowed to purchase it immediately. If the good or service is worth more than your weekly income then you must make a Test of Wealth to make the purchase. The Gamesmaster sets the difficulty of the Test of Wealth based on how excessively beyond your means the purchase is.

Note that Effort cannot be used in a Test of Wealth, as no amount of exertion on your part will create gold out of thin air on the spot. Also no attempt can be made to buy an object or service that exceeds in price your total yearly income. A penniless peasant, even if a remarkably skilled haggler has no hope of buying a castle.

If you fail your Test of Wealth you are permitted to attempt to haggle with the merchant or tradesman by making a test of the **Mercantry** skill. The Test of Mercantry allows you to try and make up the shortfall of failed Wealth successes by haggling. For instance if you needed three successes to pass your Test of Wealth but only scored one, you can attempt to score the remaining two successes with Mercantry instead.

For Example: Lord Jonah, an Impoverished Knight, wishes to purchase a new suit of armour. His old armour, a gift from his father is looking a little shabby about the cuffs, patched and much repaired. Jonah wishes to buy a coat of plates, helm and greaves, which counts as Rank Two armour and costs 5 marks of gold. Jonah's weekly

income is just 2 shillings. Five marks is extravagant in the extreme, but it is just barely less than his yearly income, so he can attempt the purchase

But has Jonah saved up enough coin over the months?

The Gamesmaster deems the Test of Wealth will be Difficult. Jonah's player rolls his four die. He needs two sixes to pass a Difficult test. He scores a 1, 4, 5 and 6. Not quite enough.

Lord Jonah now decides to test his Mercantry, which is Rank Three. He rolls 3d6. As he has already scored one success on Wealth he only need score one success in Mercantry to haggle to price down to a manageable sum. He rolls a 3, 3 and 6. The additional six gives him the two successes he needs to pass a Difficult Test of Wealth.

Jonah buys his armour and saunters off happily on his way, a more respectably armoured knight.

Income

Each character is allotted an income from land, work, tithes or services. Assume that the income is earned and managed out-of-game by the character in the days and weeks when a character is not dealing with creatures of the night. Your income is based off your social status. Choose an income from the following table that suits your character concept and background. The income is at the discretion of your Gamesmaster who may wish to shift the income up or down somewhat.

Some typical incomes...

	Yearly Income	Weekly Income	Wealth
King or Queen	m 4000 - m 6000	m 100	6
Regent	m 500 - m 600	m 10	6
Bishop	m 500 - m 600	m 10	6
Earl	m 200	m 2	6
Wealthy Knight	m 100	m 2	6
Parish Friar	m 20 s 12	s 8	5
Thane	m 20 s 12	s 8	5
Middling Knight	m 20 s 12	s 6	5
Wealthy Merchant	m 6 s 10	s 2 g 6	4
Impoverished Knight	m 5 s 4	s 2	4
Seneschal	m 5 s 4	s 1	4
Man-at-Arms	m 2 s 12	g 10	3
Archer	m 2 s 2	g 8	3
Middling Merchant	m 1 s 14	g 7	3
Mariner	m 1 s 10	g 5	3
Tradesman	m 1	g 2	2
Free Farmer	s 8 g 6	g 1	2
Tinker	s 4 g 4	f 1	2
Serf	s 1	0	1
Slave	0	0	1

Mark	A gold coin worth twenty silver shillings (m)
Crown	A gold coin worth five silver shillings (c)
Shilling	A silver coin worth twelve copper groats (s)
Groat	A copper coin worth four farthings (g)
Farthing	A copper coin, worth one fourth of a groat (f)

Seven... Flesh

Now you need to add a little flesh to the bones of your character. A few final touches that will round things off.

Name

Choose a name for your character. Names can be very important, they can embody what a character is and a good name should ring true. In **Danse Macabre** Nobility tend to have names that will include a title, lands and family. Lower classes will have a given name and a byname, usually acquired in life. Bynames tend to be descriptive and are seldom highly complimentary. Lameshank, Redbeard, Sing-all-Day, Laggard, and Wolfgrin are a few examples. Bynames also sometimes describe a trade: Smith, Fletcher, Brewer or Cooper. Bynames can either come before or after the given name. Jovan could be either Longlegged Jovan or Jovan Longleg. Bynames are also occasionally ironic. A good example is Little John who was in no way little. Jebid Sharpwit might be a simpleton. Annasetta Fairface might be hideous.

Appearance

Describe your character. What does he normally wear? Does he prefer any particular colours? Does he carry anything that makes him easily recognised? Is he scarred? Marked by pox? What colour are his eyes? Are they two different colours? Is the character blotched by birthmarks?

Think a little beyond the obvious too. Is your character always hunched as if cold? Does he walk stiff and upright? Does he have the ungainly walk of a scholar too long at the books? Or a rolling walk of a sailor who is used to a ship rising to meet his steps?

Kith and Kin

Where does your character come from? What is their country of birth? Are his or her parents still alive? Do they have any brothers, sister or cousins?

Homeland

Where to you hail from? The Anglo-Saxon fens of England? Or are you from Norman London? A Frankish castle near Avignon? Are you an Ostman, of mixed Irish and Norse descent from the north of Dublinia? Are you a wandering Romany whose family was hanged for thievery in Pozsony? Are you a Danish mercenary? A priest of Rome? A chivalric Islamic knight of the Empire of the Almohads, clad in armour of gold and silks of blue?

Where you come from and how you appear to others is very important in a society where appearances can mean a great deal.

Ties

How is your character connected to the other player characters? Is he a friend of one or more? Is he a relative, a complete stranger, a friend of a shared acquaintance?

Determining the ties that hold your character to another in the group lifts the Gamesmaster's burden of introducing your character in a believable way into the story. It also makes for a more interesting and believable group of

characters.

Retainers

Because of the way wealth works in **Danse Macabre** and the large disparity between the very rich and everyone else, in a group of Player Characters of mixed affluence the poorer characters will often end up either the willing or unwilling retainers of the more wealthy characters. For a knight whose yearly income is two Marks of Gold to pay a few copper groats for the board and food for four or five poorer companions doesn't present a problem, whereas, for a very poor character a single loaf of bread can be difficult to afford.

There is, in fact, a social expectation in Benighted Europe that a land-owning knight, earl or lord will look after those commoners, tradesmen or serfs he keeps in his company. A rich lord who refuses to pay for his poorer companion's food, clothing and other essentials is likely to be viewed with more than a little disapproval by his fellows, and in some kingdoms and countries there are laws obliging lords to maintain their retainers and serfs at a certain level of financial support.

Example of Character Creation

John is creating a character to play in Sarah's game. John and Sarah discuss what sort of game she is planning to run, and what sort of characters would be suitable. Sarah is planning to run a game set in a small town in Northern Europe called Hraffensburg. The plot will revolve around intrigue in a secret society of sorcerers. She would like to have at least two magical characters in the group, so John decides to create a Goetic Sorcerer.

Step One... Concept

John decides to create Brother Liudgard, a monk who was excommunicated from his order after it was discovered that he had been consorting with spirits. His order is small and is based near the borders of France and so Liudgard travels the land pretending to be the monk that he no longer is. John decides that Liudgard's motivation is to eventually exact revenge on the elderly Abbot who forced him out of his comfortable life. He has settled for a while in Hraffensburg and come into contact with a local sorcerer (one of the other players), with whom he has struck an uneasy alliance.

John decides that Brother Liudgard will be of a Freedman Upbringing and chooses, Artisan (Manuscript Illumination), Trade (Brewing), and Yeomanry as his Gratis Upbringing Skills.

Step Two... Aspects of Nature

John looks over the lists of Sins and Virtues and decides that Brother Liudgard is probably arrogant and lazy, but still feels a sense of genuine compassion for the poor from his days as a monk. He chooses Pride and Sloth as sins and Charity as a Virtue. Brother Liudgard has one more Sin than Virtues, so his Nature is set at 8 (one rank towards

Dark, 7 being neutral).

Step Three... Backgrounds

John looks over Backgrounds and decides how to fill Brother Liudgard's five slots. He takes Excommunication and Fallen, as both of these make good sense for his character. He decides that it would be useful to have a book of magic, so take Grimore for two slots. Placing two slots into Grimore gives him a Grimore of Rank Two. This leaves him with just one slot left. John decides that Liudgard is probably pretty slippery to have gone all those years in the monastery unsuspected, so he chooses Silvered Tongue to fill his final Background slot.

Step Four... Skills

John now moves onto buying Skills for Liudgard. First of all he writes down all the skills that he thinks would be suitable, then notes down their defaults. He adds to this his Gratis skills from Upbringing. The list looks like this...

Affray (Rank 2), Artisan (Rank 3), Dogma (Rank 1), Folklore (Rank 1), Goetia (Rank 0), Guile (Rank 3), Learning (Rank 1), Subterfuge (Rank 3), Trade (Rank 3), Trickery (Rank 2), Willpower (Rank 3), Witch Lore (Rank 1), Yeomanry (Rank 3)

He must take into account the points from the Silvered Tongue background...

Guile (+1), Trickery (+2)

He decides to allocate the remaining twelve points like so...

Affray (+1), Artisan (+0), Dogma (+1), Folklore (+0), Goetia (+4), Guile (+1), Learning (+3), Subterfuge (+1), Trade (+0), Trickery (+0), Willpower (+1), Yeomanry (+0)

This leaves Brother Liudgard with the following skills and ranks...

Affray (Rank 3), Artisan (Rank 3), Dogma (Rank 2), Folklore (Rank 1), Goetia (Rank 4), Guile (Rank 5), Learning (Rank 4), Subterfuge (Rank 4), Trade (Rank 3), Trickery (Rank 4), Willpower (Rank 4), Yeomanry (Rank 3)

When John goes to write his final skills upon his character sheet he would not write down Folklore as it has not changed from the default rank.

Step Five... Sorcery

Brother Liudgard doesn't have any skill in Hedge Magic or Esotery, so John is able to ignore these classes of magic. He does, however, have the Goetia Skill, so at this stage John needs to decide on some suitable Sigils and Circles of sorcery. All Goetic Sorcerers get the Circle of Summoning for free, so John notes this down to start with. Because Liudgard is Rank Four in Goetia he gains Eight Circles or

Sigils of Sorcery. John decides to split this into three Circles and five Sigils. The Rank Two Grimoire adds another six slots to spend on either Circles or Sigils. John decides to split this additional six so that he gains an additional four Sigils and two circles. This gives him a total of five Circles and nine Sigils of Goetic invocation. He looks over the options in the chapter on Goetia and chooses the following.

Circles: Acquiescence, Agony, Oaths, Protection, and Truths

Sigils: Imps (Minor Demons), Amduscias, Baal, Hagenti, Humots, Malpas, Orobos, Paimon and Vual

The Sigils of Imps allow Liudgard to summon minor spirits from those two spheres of existence, demonic little imps or faerie sprights. The remaining Sigils allow him to summon more powerful entities by name. The Sigil of Amduscias allows him to summon the demon Amduscias, for example.

Step Six... Details

We now need to fill in a few final details, possessions, so on. Brother Liudgard starts with zero Fate (as do all characters), but John has played before and Fortune is carried over from the last character. His last character retired from play with two points of Fortune, so Brother Liudgard starts play with two Fortune. Trauma, Soul Loss, and Injuries are all left blank, Brother Liudgard hasn't suffered any of these yet. John then moves onto Belongings and Income, and chooses some appropriate possessions as well as a level of income.

Step Seven... Flesh

Finally John makes a few simple notes about appearance, homeland, family and name. Brother Liudgard is now ready to play.

Character Creation Summary

Step One: Concept

☞ Envision a Concept

☞ Choose Upbringing

Decide on a Motivation

Step Two: Virtue and Sin

☞ Choose Three Virtues or Sins

☞ Determine your Nature

Step Three: Backgrounds

☞ Choose five Backgrounds

Step Four: Skills

☞ Write down the skills you want

☞ Note your default Ranks

- ☞ Add bonuses from Backgrounds
- ☞ Allocate Twelve Ranks to your Skills

Step Five: Sorcery

- ☞ For those with **Esoteric Scholar** as a Background:

Prentice: Gain Esotery Skill at Rank 1. *Adept*: Gain Esotery Skill at Rank 3. *Master*: Gain Esotery Skill at Rank 6.

- ☞ For those with **Goetic Sorcerer** as a Background:

Prentice: Gain Goetic Skill at Rank 1 (Circle of Summoning + 1 Sigil + 1 Sigil or Circle). *Adept*: Gain Goetic Skill at Rank 3 (Circle of Summoning + 1 Sigil + 3 Sigils or Circles). *Master*: Gain Goetic Skill at Rank 6 (Circle of Summoning + 1 Sigil + 6 Sigils or Circles).

- ☞ For those with **Hedge Magician** as a background: Gain Hedge Magic Skill at Rank 1 (+2 Cantrips). *Adept*: Gain Hedge Magic Skill at Rank 3 (+6 Cantrips). *Master*: Gain Hedge Magic Skill at Rank 6 (+12 Cantrips).

- ☞ For those with the **Pact** as a Background choose one *Vow* for each *Gift* that you wish to be given by your demonic patron.

Step Six: Details

- ☞ Effort starts at 15 points.
- ☞ Fate starts at zero.
- ☞ Fortune is carried over from your last character.
- ☞ All Fears default to Rank 3 (Wary), unless stated otherwise in a Background. You may take a rank away from one Fear to add it to another. You cannot increase a Fear's rating above Rank Six (Deadened) or decrease it below Rank One (Phobic).
- ☞ You do not begin play with Trauma, Deliriums, Soul Loss or Reavings unless stated in a Background.
- ☞ Belongings and Wealth are based on your characters social status and personal history. Refer to the Belongings and Wealth section under Final Details for more information.

Step Seven: Flesh

- ☞ Make some notes about homeland, family ties, history, appearance, quirks, likes, dislikes and so on.

Character Traits



Chapter Four

Characters are made up of a number of Traits, representing you strengths, powers, history, place in society, likes, dislikes and fears. Some Traits are simply set qualities, others may vary in power or expertise and are ranked on a scale of one to six. Traits provide you with a sense of who your character is and what he or she will be capable of.

The last chapter provided details on how to create a character, in this chapter we present an array of Traits that you can use to build the details of your character. As the Gamesmaster you should treat all the Traits in this chapter as suggestions only. You may prefer to group all combat skills together under a single skill rather than split them up into the categories that we have suggested. You might like to add some extra social Skills or invent new Backgrounds. In any event, the following Aspects are to be viewed as groundwork to build upon if you want to.

Example Concepts

In legend, folktale and fiction many archetypical concepts reoccur through the stories and histories. The following is a collection of some of these common Concepts. But keep in mind that a raw Concept on its own is vague, and may well fit any number of characters who share very little other than a core common thread. You will have to flesh out any Concept provided here with a little detail, even if just in your own mind, before moving onto the next stage in character creation.

Avenger

You have been wronged and now you seek revenge. Perhaps your family are slain or falsely accused of crimes, perhaps your true heart's love was stolen from you, or your friends betrayed you for wealth and power?

The tale of revenge is a common one in stories. What is the heart of yours? Who has wronged you and why? Can you right the wrong or are you left nothing but eye-for-an-eye justice? Will you ever find peace or will you be driven to seek justice to the end of your days?

Companion

You are a true friend, a follower of great leader, a humble keeper and defender of all that is good in your life. You are the common man, no one special, no one remarkable, and yet you face the powers of darkness, the horrors of the world, the oppressive laws of the land all the same.

Have you a trade? Family? Village? Are you a friend of the more remarkable, magical, or powerful characters belonging to other players? How are you useful to them?

Crusader

Yours is a determined path in life. You are questing afar and near, over forest, hill and mere to achieve that which you seek. You might be seeking to overthrow an unjust lord. You might be the champion of one of the old pagan gods, now almost forgotten. You might wish to find a lost relic of a venerated saint and return it to your home church. You have, in short, a high and lofty goal, but many dark days ahead before it is achieved.

Folk Hero

You are the hero of the village. The strong fellow who can defeat all-comers in wrestling. The good man with a sturdy spear who has slain three wolves, a bear and two angry boars. Your deeds are famous as far as the next village. Folk buy you drinks at the local inn and are always ready to clap you on the back and congratulate you on your adventures.

Fool

You are the enigma, the wise unwise, the speaker of fool's truths and truthful foolishness. You are the knower of truths who is never believed, whose prophetic words are seldom heeded and whose very being in a tangled mystery.

The fool is a powerful figure in medieval stories. He knows great truths but may never realise his own great worth. How did you come to be such a person? Why are you circumspect with your words of wisdom? Do you mean to speak in riddles or do you not fully understand what you mean to say yourself?

Guardian

You are a defender of the weak, a protector of those who have no power to protect themselves. You might be a knight with sword in hand ready to confront evil. You might be a humble peasant who knows a few folk charms, enough to ward away evil spirits, protect crops and lend a little help to those who are ill or injured. You might be a friar who gives benedictions to the poor, donates money to the needy and performs marriages for those who cannot afford to pay the church's high fees.

What drives you to try and protect others? Is it something

you saw or experienced? Have you taken a religious vow? Is it in your nature, or something you must struggle with day to day?

Hunted

Someone or something is after you. It may be upon the road now, growing ever closer by the hour. What is it that hunts you? Is it creatures of the night, an unkind uncle wanting your inheritance, or a vindictive, dangerous spirit of the woods? There is something in this world, perhaps many somethings that want you and will search high and low until you are found.

Why are you hunted? Is it something you possess? Something you are? A prophecy? A simple misunderstanding or mistaken identity? An insult?

Lone Wolf

You are the solitary wanderer. Never happy in any company but your own. Always moving on, always seeking a peace that you simply cannot find.

Why are you wandering? Is there a secret in your past? Have you reasons to shun other people or are you merely socially withdrawn?

Meddler

You are endlessly interfering in those things you ought not dabble in. You fashion yourself a kingmaker and breaker, an advisor to lords whose ways suit your ends, and a plotter against those who do not. In short you are a man of the shadows, the lonely ways and the council chambers, not one to be trifled with, but not one whose appearance would suggest so much as a dangerous thought.

What is your heart's task? What are you trying to bring about or prevent? Are you likely to succeed, or will you more likely fail miserably?

Outcast

You have been driven away from home, hearth, family, friends and village. You may be a criminal branded and shunned, the unwanted bastard child of a lord or perhaps a victim of superstition with one green eye and one blue, or albino skin, or a malformed hunchback.

Recreant

Life has always been your enemy. Your luck is always bad. You've few friends and most of them are dead. And now you feel that life has a duty to pay a little back. You are never going to be rich or loved by the common roads men take. You have accepted this. So what is there to do but take what you want? By cunning if you can. By force if you must.

What pushed you into this unscrupulous life? Is there a glimmer of conscience in your heart? Do you feel sorry for those poor naïve fools you milk for cold, hard coins? Do you ever feel that a rootless, drifting existence is perhaps not the way to live?

Redeemed

You were once either the creation of, or the servant of, the powers of darkness. You have found redemption now;

you have escaped the sway of the dark ones, but at what price? You still retain the visage of evil and must go about heavily disguised. Those who see you in your true form will recoil in horror. Can you ever live a simple, quiet, happy life?

Does your old master want you back? Does he simply want you dead? Will those of common blood and flesh ever accept you for one who is good at heart? How reformed are you? Is there a chance of falling back into old ways and habits?

Rustic

You are no one special at all, a farmhand, a blacksmith's son, the daughter of a miller. If you are destined for great things none would know it.

What has pushed you out into the world? Have you escaped an unwanted marriage? A harsh taskmaster? Or just endless boredom at the baker's ovens?

Seeker of Power

Personal power is what drives you. It may be that you are a merchant hungry for greater and greater riches. Or are you a sorcerer who will do anything at all to lay claim to one extra book of spells, one more ritual of conjuration? Or are you a lord determined to win more lands by war and marriage and deceit?

Toady

You live in and for the service of others. You feel safe only when a person of great power has it in his or her interest to protect you. You are a willing, if sometimes snivelling servant.

Aspects of Nature

Sins and Virtues are used to gauge your characters personality and inner nature. They can be seen as a very personal reflection of the cosmological war between Heaven and Hell. When you choose a Sin or Virtue, you are setting up a battle between the three pillars of creation that will be played out in the human mind, rather than deep in the vast reaches of eternity.

Virtues

Below are the seven heavenly Virtues. Each Virtue you choose adds one rank to your Purity.

Charity

Charity is benevolence or generosity toward others or toward humanity.

Compassion

Compassion is deep awareness of the suffering of another coupled with the wish to relieve it.

Devotion

Devotion is a selfless affection and dedication, as to a person or principle.

Diligence

Diligence is earnest and persistent application to an undertaking; steady effort, assiduity.

Humility

Humility is the modest estimate of one's own worth, humbleness.

Prudence

Prudence is caution, the careful exercising of forethought and judgement.

Temperance

Temperance is moderation and self-restraint, as in behaviour or expression.

Sins

Below are the seven deadly Sins. Each Sin you choose adds one rank to your Taint.

Avarice

Avarice is the desire for material wealth, gold, riches, houses and all the beautiful, lovely things of the earth.

Envy

Jealously of others, the bitter desire for that what others own.

Gluttony

A great love of bread and beer, wines, sweetmeats, delicacies, bequests and feats. The more the better.

Lust

Lust is an inordinate craving for the pleasures of the flesh.

Pride

Pride has been called the sin from which all others arise. Pride in your power, your wealth, you standing.

Wrath

Sheer wanton fury. Violence meted out to meet any problem or opposition.

Sloth

Sloth is the avoidance of physical or spiritual work.

Backgrounds

Backgrounds represent a your character's history, previously learned skills, experience and heritage. They are very important in terms of defining who your Character is. You have **five points** to spend on Backgrounds. Some Backgrounds can be bought more than once, which then multiplies the effect of the Background. This is always mentioned in the text of the Background if this is the case. If you purchase a Background more than once add a rank

to it on your character sheet.

Accursed

You have been cursed by a powerful and long-lived black charm. This curse may have come on you from birth or through some callous act you did in later life? Did you turn a dying gypsy woman away from the door? Did you ride down a beggar instead of take time to ride around? Or did you do nothing more than inadvertently offend some old and crotchety warlock?

You need to determine the nature of the curse. It may be a ban such as if you were to eat the flesh of a horse you will die. It may be a curse of restlessness, poverty, ill luck, infertility, disease, or any number of fell things. Most curses include a clause of mercy. Such clauses end the curse by chance or through your efforts. Examples might be that you will never have children until a white deer crosses your path. Or, you might never own more than a few pennies until the day you touch the oldest tree in the Black Forest. Mercy Clauses are usually obscure and weird, often seeming impossible until the right chance comes along.

Adventurous

Ever since you were born, you have been a magnet for trouble and adventure. Always your elders shook their heads and wondered at your scrapes and close calls. But you've managed to survive childhood and the experiences you've gained are already serving you well. You gain three ranks to distribute over any **Innate Skills** without having to expend any Skill Points.

Allies

You become part of a tight group of friends, allies and fellows. They will come to your aid whenever you are in trouble, just as you will go to theirs when they are in need.

Ancient of Days

Many people foolishly wish to live forever. You know better. You are old, so very old. You have already lived the lives of several men, perhaps more. Centuries have rolled by and you have lived on and on. Your friends and family have grown old and died. But death will not come for you in the natural course of things, and yet you remain afraid of the other choices. A heavy rock and a deep river. A dagger. A soup of hemlock.

And so you live on. Alone.

How is it that you have lived so long? Are you accursed? Does death himself dislike or fear you? Did you make a rash oath that you would never rest until a deed was done and then discover that the powers that be listened and granted your vow? Or is your long life self-inflicted? Have you a potion of youth made from the blood of an angel and diamond dust? A spirit bound to your service, capable of adding years to lives? Is there a painting of your hanging in some dusty attic slowly decaying as you live on? Is there unnatural blood in your veins? Or did you offend God himself, or frighten Lucifer so that no one will take you into the world beyond?

Assassin

You are trained and perhaps still employed as an assassin. Who trained you and why? Were you in the employ of a king? A powerful family of merchants? A prince-bishop? You have skills in the usual tricks of the trade, poisons, daggers and the like. You gain an extra rank in the Skill **Trickery** without having to expend any Skill Points.

Banishment

You are an exile, banished forever from your homeland for a crime. Did you really commit the crime or was the accusation part of a plot against you? Have you any hope of returning home or redeeming your name?

Where will you go, and who will you meet to survive? Perhaps as a final act of grace you have been given a parting gift, some gold or treasures to live by.

Beasts and Birds

You have a special talent for dealing with animals, they trust you and even wild and feral animals don't panic and run from you. When dealing with animals you add one bonus die to all relevant Trait Tests. This bonus die cannot increase your dice pool above six.

Beggars & Thieves

You are known among the networks of the streets. Beggars, thieves and whores, though they may be, the caitiff of the streets can be a powerful pool of allies and one that is not wisely overlooked. Often the least visible of a city's denizens know best what goes on in their streets and squares in the darkest hours. This Background can be purchased up to three times. Each time you purchase it your standing among thieves and footpads increases.

Petty Thief	1 pt.
Master Thief	2 pts.
Prince Among Thieves	3 pts.

Blood of Kings

Over the years many kingdoms have been rent and ruined, many empires were cast to the dust. You are the heir of a once-great kingdom. Will you be able to remake the old realm, be it a principality of Wales or the Christian Kingdoms of Southern Spain, and restore it to old glories?

Charmed

Charms of good luck and good fortune are woven about you. It might be a boon or blessing put upon your family line by a grateful witch a hundred years ago, it might be an enchantment laid upon you by an otherworldly lover?

Clever of Mind

You've always had a knack for outwitting others and a natural understanding of cunning and tactics as well as a knack for absorbing lore.

Gain an extra three ranks to distribute between Games, Guile, or Languages.

Courage

You are the sort of person who thinks not of what might happen when faced with fear, but of what must be done. Choose a class of fear, be it the unnatural, death, heights, violence or wolves, to be **Hardened** to. When Hardened to a fear you are allowed to roll 4d6 on your Test of Fear instead of the usual 3d6. You may choose this option more than once and make yourself Courageous in the face of more than one class of fear.

Courtier

You may or may not be of noble blood, but somehow you have established a degree of influence in royal circles. You might be the astrologer to a princess, the one-time personal servant who saved the king's life or huntsman and confidant to a provincial lord. You will have to nominate a particular royal court in which you wish to hold influence. This Background can be purchased up to three times to gain additional influence in a given court. Each time you purchase it your standing in the court increases.

Tagger On	1 pt.
Respected Courtier	2 pts.
Trusted Advisor	3 pts.

Craftsmanship

Early in life you showed a flair for the creative and a dedication to the honing and perfection of any artful, clever or cunning pursuit. Gain an extra three points to spend on **Craft Skills**.

Crossing of Paths

By sheer chance you happen to meet a person, or creature or thing of particular importance. Perhaps you saved the life of a king from a wild boar in the woods? Maybe you meet a fae enchantress and a grim sorcerer who stayed in the inn, in which you work as a barmaid? Or perhaps you met something older and stranger still?

Damned

You have already sold yourself to the powers of shadow. Dark things own your soul, and are taking it piece-by-piece. For now it is not so obvious. For now you can keep your bargain a secret. How much longer will you keep your humanity? And what will be the gifts and dark powers your soulless husk will wield when all that was once human in you has gone?

Dark Disciple

You are a member of a witches cult or coven, a worshipper of the Prince of Darkness in secret, and a devotee of Hell's war on earth. You may be called upon by your masters in the coven to do certain deeds in the name of the war, or visited by demons and devils. You gather from your association the usual benefits of consorting with demons: regular satisfaction of your sinful desires until your sense are overpower with the bleak joy of it all.

Darkest Secret

You are plagued by something terrible you did in your past. A horrifying, dark and awful thing that should it be known might well make no one look at you without repulsion. What is this secret? Does any know it? Are any left alive to tell? Add two ranks to your initial Taint.

Discovery

Quite by accident you make a strange discovery. Have you found a relic hidden under floorboards? Or a treasure buried in a chest? Maybe you have found a secret ruin? Or a cave filled with strange alchemic things? Or the secret hiding place of a cult?

Dhampire

You are what they call in the lands of the Rus and Slav, a Dhampire, the child of a parent who, after your inception, entered into darkness and became Vampyr.

The Kingdom of Heaven works in strange ways and it sees fit to subtly place into the children of a parent who has become Vampyr the slightly preternatural sense needed to know when a Vampyr is near. If you come within twenty paces of a Vampyr your skin begins to itch and crawl uncomfortably – you may not, however, yet understand why your skin has begun itching so awfully every now and again since the ‘death’ of you mother or father. The connection may either have to be deduced over time or explained to you by someone more knowing in the dark lore.

If your parent ceases to be Vampyr, if he or she is redeemed or destroyed, then you lose the Dhampire gift.

Ear of the Commoner

You have influence with the common folk of a village, region, city or possibly even a kingdom. This is the sort of influence that rebel outlaws like Robin Hood relied on, but any village elder, or healer, adjudicator or blacksmith may have some influence amongst the common folk. This Background can be purchased up to three times. Each time you purchase it your standing among the common folk increases.

Respected	1 pt.
Honoured	2 pts.
Beloved	3 pts.

Enchanting Music

Your skill in the art of song and string and pine is enthralling, you can conjure up amazing vistas and terrible visions, bleak melodies of the souls and enthralling airy chords. Use the **Jongleurs** Skill when attempting to play Enchanting Music. If you succeed against an Average Difficulty all idle, bored or unhurried mortals that are within earshot must pass an average Test of Willpower or stop and listen to you. Characters that have pressing reason not to listen are considered immune. Enchanting Music in a taproom will draw the attention of everyone in the room, but playing on the battlefield will achieve very little at all.

Note that this charmed trick does not work on spirits or animals.

Epiphany

You have experienced a deep and profound vision, or revelation. How does this affect you? Will you join a cult, or become a lone prophet uttering bleak secrets of days to come?

Errantry

You have been sent forth by your lord, queen or emperor upon a quest and you cannot return to his court or your home until the quest is fulfilled.

Esoteric Scholar

You have dabbled in the alchemical arts, and have come to know that there are secrets in the universe that no mortal eyes were meant to see. What strange things have you discovered, what secrets of the universe still await your laborious unravelling?

Prentice of Esotery	1 pt.
Adept of Esotery	2 pts.
Master of Esotery	3 pts.

A Prentice of Esotery gains the Esotery Skill at Rank 1. An Adept of Esotery gains the Esotery Skill at Rank 3. A Master of Esotery gains the Esotery Skill at Rank 6.

Evil Eye

You have learned the somewhat dubious art of giving people the evil eye – a skill that consists mostly of twisting your face into a horrid expression, squinting, and muttering things under your breath.

The power of the evil eye lies in the fear of the general populace that it has power. Whenever you choose to use the evil eye on a person or group of people the ‘victims’ must make a Test of Fear versus the Unnatural. Anyone who passes their Test of Fear becomes convinced that you have no real power and no longer needs to make Tests of Fear if you squint at them.

Those who fail their Test of Fear will react accordingly – generally by backing away, turning suddenly polite and asking you not to please think of their children and not put any horrible hexes or curses on them.

Excommunication

You have been officially excommunicated from Christendom by the Pope. No church can give you sanctuary, no priest can shrive your soul, or take your confession. You are an outsider to the faith, cast adrift from some crime or insult against all that is holy. Similarly, you can choose Excommunication to signify having been cast out of the Jewish, Islamic or the Eastern Orthodox Churches.

Fae Graces

Faerie creatures and spirits find you unusually charming and graceful for a mortal. This can be a good thing, Faeries are less likely to become insulted or angered while around you, but Faerie’s a greedy things sometimes, and they have been know to try and steal away those mortals whom they do find beautiful and intriguing.

To other mortals you seem a bit ephemeral, perhaps airy and dreamy, but not unusually charming.

Faerie Ways

You are a student of Faerie ways, arts, societies and intrigues. Whenever dealing with Faeries in a social context or when trying to recall some piece of lore about Faerie things gain one automatic success on relevant Skill Tests. This bonus acts as if one of your skill dice scored a six, so the remaining dice are still rolled to determine if any other successes are rolled.

Fair of Form

You are unusually beautiful or handsome. This may be more trouble than it is worth in a society where might often makes right and the noble are allowed to take what-so-ever they want from the peasantry and kings and queens can take what-so-ever they want from the nobility.

Fallen

You have fallen from grace. Perhaps you are a disillusioned priest who has succumbed to ale, or a dishonoured squire who has been turned out of the court and has become a robber knight?

Few to Survive

You are one of the few to survive an expedition, war, a siege or an attack on your village or town. How did the attack come about? How did you survive? Do you carry anger and sorrow with you now? Revenge? Perhaps even guilt?

Friend of the Powerful

You are a friend, councillor and close ally of a powerful individual or group. Is it a king or queen? A wandering priest? A cabal of knowing seers or rich merchant craftsmen?

Goetic Sorcerer

You are a student and practitioner of the secret, laborious and academic arts of Goetic Sorcery. Goetic Sorcerers use charmed rituals and symbols to summon, bind and command spirits. This is a powerful, if dangerous, branch of magic.

Prentice of the Art	1 pt.
Adept of the Art	2 pts.
Master of the Art	3 pts.

A Prentice of the Art gains the Goetic Skill at Rank 1, the Circle of Summoning, one Sigil of Choice and one additional Goetic Circle or Sigil of choice (Circle of Summoning + 1 Sigil + 1 Sigil or Circle).

An Adept of the Art gains the Goetic Skill at Rank 3, and gains the Circle of Summoning, one Sigil of choice and three Circles or Sigils of choice (Circle of Summoning + 1 Sigil + 3 Sigils or Circles).

A Master of the Art gains the Goetic Skill at Rank 6, the Circle of Summoning, one Sigil of choice and five Sigils or Circles of choice (Circle of Summoning + 1 Sigil + 6 Sigils or Circles).

Note also that it is uncommon for Goetic Sorcerers to also have the Hedge Magician background - please confer with your Gamesmaster regarding this if you wish to take both Backgrounds.

Great Deed

By luck as much as by skill you perform a great deed. Perhaps you killed a monster or bear or wolf? Perhaps you saved two children from a burning house? Perhaps you returned a lost treasure to its rightful owner?

Gifted

You were born with the talent to sense that which others cannot. When within a few paces you can see a faint glimmer of magic about a witch or spirit or enchanted thing. You can see ghosts and shades and spirits that have made themselves invisible. You get a prickling feeling whenever anything enchanted comes near you, and if you touch something magical you hear an echo of the voice of he or she who wrought the witch-object or hedge-charm.

Grim in War

You have seen blood and war and have faced down both flame and sword. In battle you stand hard and fast, unflinching, unwavering. You are Hardened (Rank 5) against the Fears of **Violence** and **Death**. You cannot purchase Grim in War more than once.

Grimoire

You own a tome of occult lore, doctrines of spirits and sorcerous spells. These tomes are only useful if you possess the skill **Goetia**. Grimoires are ranked based on how much knowledge they contain. A Rank one Grimoire grants you two slots for Sigils or Circles of Sorcery. You could nominate one Circle and one Sigil or two Circles or two Sigils. A Rank Two Grimoire grants your four slots. A Rank Three Grimoire grants your six slots – and so on.

When Grimoires are acquired during play the Gamesmaster nominates which Circles and Sigils are held in a book of spells. When you chose to own a Grimoire during character creation you get to nominate which Sigils and Circles you want in the book.

You can chose to spend multiple points on this Background in order to acquire a Grimoire of a higher Rank.

Guild

You have influence with the powerful trade guilds of the cities and ports. How has this come about? Are you a guild-member or merely an associate? This Background can be purchased up to three times. Each time you purchase it your standing among your guild increases.

Prentice	1 pt.
Journeyman	2 pts.
Guildmaster	3 pts.

Hag-Ridden

You are accursed and hated by a witch. Each morning you wake up after a night of nightmares and horrors. Your hair is dishevelled, sometimes you face will be scratched

and there will be twigs and thorns in you bed and clothing. Anyone who stands watch over you will only see you appear to suffer from terrible nightmares from which you can't be awakened. A person with the Second Sight (See Moonstruck, below) will see a strange, ghastly spectre attacking you during the night. This is the spirit of the witch you have offended leaving her body each night to torment you.

Hale and Hearty

You are fit, hale and healthy, great of endurance and tireless in toil. Add one point to your maximum Effort Pool. You can purchase Hale and Hearty no more than once.

Haunted

You are followed by the ghosts and memories of your past. Why are they following you? What did you do, are you guilty of some crime or are you but a pawn for the vengeance of the dead?

Hedge Magician

You are a student of the old arts passed from mother to daughter and father to son, the folk magic and the crafts of charms and hexes and petty magics.

Hedge Magic Prentice	1 pt.
Hedge Magic Adept	2 pts.
Hedge Magic Master	3 pts.

A Hedge Magic Prentice gains the Hedge Magic Skill at Rank 1 and two Cantrips. A Hedge Magic Adept Gains the Hedge Magic Skill at Rank 3 and Six Cantrips. A Hedge Magic Adept Gains the Hedge Magic Skill at Rank 6 and Twelve Cantrips. Note that it is uncommon for Goetic Sorcerers to also have the Hedge Magician background - please confer with your Gamesmaster.

Heir of Great Fortune

You are born heir to a great and vast fortune. Perhaps the fortune is safe in the hands of your parents, or perhaps it is the target of plots and treason. Or is it lost or stolen, awaiting your claim?

Heretic

You are a devotee of a heretical brand of faith or science. Is your heresy minor or so terrible that the church would consider you little better than a pagan? Are you and your fellows hunted or do you practise your unusual beliefs in peace?

Hunter of Shadows

You are now, or have been, employed as a witch hunter. You know the secret signs by which sorcerers and warlocks may be told. You can tell when a death is the cause of Goetia or the work of evil spirits. You can tell folk charms from more dangerous things, and know how best to fight the sorcerous with mundane weapons and tools. You may add one rank to your **Witchlore** skill without expending any skill points.

Huge of Stature

You are unusually massive of build and strong of sinew. You may add one rank to your **Fortitude** skill without expending any skill points.

Imprisoned

You have found yourself bound and shackled and thrown in a gaol. Why? Was yours a real crime or an imagined one? Have you been caught on the wrong side of a war, or a feud? Or is your imprisonments more hospitable? Were you the hostage and pawn in a game of noble houses? Or are you still?

Iron Will

You are fiery, stubborn and wilful of nature. You may add one rank to your **Willpower** skill without expending any skill points.

Knight of the Order

You are a member of a monastic order of knights, most likely the Knights Templar, Knights Hospitaller or Teutonic Order. These Monastic orders expect vows of faith and abstinence, but in reality monastic knights have a reputation for being disciplined in battle and undisciplined at all other times.

Drinking, plots to murder one another to climb the ranks and patronage of whores is rife. The two orders also consider one-another only a slightly less vile enemy than the Saracens. The only time they stop plotting against one another is to present a common front to the enemy.

Membership in a Holy Order is for life. You can only leave if excommunicated. If you are an outsider and wish to belong to a cabal of warriors such as the Islamic Mumluks from Araby or the Theurgists, white sorcerers and witch-hunters from Alexandria, then you must also buy this Background. You can spend more points on this Background to increase your rank in the order.

Add one rank to your **Affray** skill without expending any skill points every time you buy this background. If you choose to be a **Knight of the Order** then you cannot be a **Noble Knight** or **Soldier of Fortune**.

Brother	1 pt.
Master	2 pts.
Grandmaster	3 pts.

Learned of Lore

Long have you studied under a watchful gaze, flipping through dusty pages, reciting by rote old lore, perhaps studying late into the night. You have found through your studies a certain thirst for knowledge. Gain an extra three points to spend on **Lore Skills**.

Lordship

You have established some influence among the nobility of the lands, perhaps not those closest to the circles of highest power, but lords and ladies none-the-less. As lords and earls often come into direct opposition to the monarchy of a given realm this influence is not quite the same as that of the court - in fact it may alienate you from the court in certain kingdoms where the lords are a little too

independent. This Background can be purchased up to three times. Each time you purchase it your standing among the nobility increases.

Lord or Lady	1 pt.
Count or Countess	2 pts.
Baron or Baroness	3 pts.

Loss of Family

Perhaps because of illness, or disease, fire or war, or feud you have lost all or part of your family. Are you left an orphan, without parents, or are your brothers and sisters slain by this tragedy?

Loss of Home

A terrible tragedy has caused you the loss of your home. Maybe you are the victim of war or plot or feud? Perhaps a flood or natural disaster? Or perhaps your house has simply been taken away because by those you owe debts to.

Lost in the Wilds

Perhaps it was while you were a child, and you simply wandered too far from home. Or did you get separated from a company of travellers? Or were you led away by a mysterious light. One way or another you were lost, maybe for hours, maybe for days – what happened to you during this time? What did you see?

Light Touch

You have an exceptional talent for measuring out the barest needed touch to lift, move or snatch something. In any situation where a light touch would be useful, such as purse-cutting, picking pockets, or riffling through someone's belongings while they are asleep, then you gain one bonus die to use in all relevant dice pools. This cannot increase a dice pool above seven.

Lithe of Body

You are agile, artful and nimble of body. You may add one rank to your **Daring** skill without expending any skill points.

Madman

Your mind has wandered from its proper thoughts, into madness, into lunacy. Refer to Deliriums and Choose three Deliriums. Note that normally, Deliriums are rolled randomly. Choosing Deliriums allows you to create a character that is suffering from insanity but is still playable.

Malvolentum's Servant

You are a servant of the Malvolentum, the highest seat of the dark powers in Western Europe. The Malvolentum is a sect of witches, warlocks, sorcerers and diabolists who have established a secretive rule over most of Europe's dark sects. The Malvolentum is strongest in France, Northern Italy and the Kingdom of Germany, but has wide reaching covens and sects scattered in all of Europe. In certain areas the Malvolentum is at odds with local and older devil worshippers.

Mentor

You acquire a mentor, a teacher who being a master of his ways can teach you all manner of things, and no doubt with some social standing can extend protection you in certain situations.

Misericorde Hunter

You are a Knight of the Misericorde, an order of witch-hunters, assassins and knights who have sworn vows to hunt down and destroy the servants of darkness, wheresoever they may be. The Misericorde has recently made itself an increasingly troublesome thorn in the side of the Malvolentum. There is a general air of expectation that retaliation by the dark covens is a matter of time, and soon that a full scale war in secret may be joined.

Moonstruck

You possess ability to see the elemental spirits of the earth, sea and sky that are for most people invisible. You see elementals not as solid things, but as translucent, slightly ghostly apparitions. Elementals are simple-minded things, unable to speak, barely more intelligent than animals and are difficult to catch the attention of. Even if you do manage to interact with one for a time it will grow bored of you very quickly.

Those with the second sight tend to be a little closed off from the living world. A little too obsessed with staring into space or locking their minds away in their own head. In a modern sense you would be called mildly autistic, but in the day and age of **Danse Macabre** you are likely to be termed 'away with the faeries', 'moonstruck' or 'simple'.

The second sight does not allow you to see invisible Shades of the Dead or Archonic Spirits, such as Angels or Demons, that have chosen to exist without a body for a time.

Murderer

Did you murder in self-defence? Or are you responsible for another's death in a more inadvertent way? Was it accidental or was there a secret motivation? And how has this affected you? Add one rank to your Taint.

Noble Knight

You are trained in the virtues and ways of knighthood by right of noble blood. Note that your training is not as strict and disciplined as that of a Templar, and in all likelihood have a far greater opinion of your ability to do battle than your skills really warrant. Note that this Background is only open to those who possess a Noble Upbringing. Add one rank to your **Affray** skill without expending any skill points. If you choose to be a **Noble Knight** then you cannot be a **Knight of the Order** or **Soldier of Fortune**.

Of the Cloth

You are a nun, friar, priest, monk or a religious prophet. What drew you to the word of the Lord? Are you a Christian priest or a devotee of Islam or Judaism? Are you truly devout? Do you abstain from earthly pleasures, or do you have mistresses, nights of gambling in the dark, a hundred heavy gold rings to wear and barrels of beer to sate your

thirst? Or are you not simply pious but genuinely good? Do you provide benedictions and marriages for those too poor to afford church fees? Are you a genuine friend of serfs? A champion against the unjustness of the hierarchy of the day? You can spend more points on this Background to increase your rank in the order.

Friar, Nun or Parish Priest	1 pt.
Abbot or Abbess	2 pts.
Bishop	3 pts.

Ordeal

You have passed through and survived guiltless an Ordeal - a trial of witchcraft by fire, water, rope or other, stranger means. Those who pass through Ordeals and emerge both alive and cleared of guilt are granted *Letters de Trier* declaring to all and any that you have been found innocent of witchcraft.

Outlaw

For crimes real or imagined, you have been branded an Outlaw. An ugly purple-brown mark rides your flesh. Anyone who sees it will know you for what you are. A thief, criminal, murderer... and a man who is not protected by any laws. Any may kill you without fear of retribution by the laws of the land. And things may yet be worse for you. If you have persisted in your life of villainy then there is very likely a reward on your head. There may be bounty hunters awaiting you at every turn.

Pact

You have made a pact with an otherworldly and dark spirit. You can only make a Pact with one entity, and making a Pact places you deep in the camp of the demonic spirit you have chosen to traffic with. A section on Pacts can be found in the chapter on *Magic*. Refer to the Pacts section (below) to make a decision on the sort of Pact you have entered into and what manner of rewards you have gained. Briefly, however, you will need to choose and keep one *Vow* for each supernatural *Gift* that you wish to receive.

Pagan

You are not a devotee of Judaism, Christianity or Islam. You may worship one or many gods of the old religions? Are you open in your worship? Do you keep it a well-guarded secret? Are you one of the last practitioners of a dying cult such as Diana or Mithras or do you hail from lands of heathens, where men have seen neither the cross nor crescent?

Patron

You have acquired a guardian, is he a mere mortal, a lord, or warrior or perhaps a sorcerer? Or is it something else? Perhaps you find yourself guarded by an elfin creature, or an enchanted bear, or maybe something even larger and stranger?

Pilgrim

You are now, or were once, a pilgrim. You have probably already visited a number of holy sites and know your way

from many a town to another. You can regale avid listeners with tales of faraway lands, great temples, relics of long dead saints and the miraculous powers of healing wells.

You may add one rank to your **Lay-o-the-Land** skill without expending any skill points.

Prentice

You have been apprenticed to a trade. Is it a blacksmith's forge? Perhaps an herbalist's workshop or a house of healing? Maybe a town guard or are you now a member of a band of sellswords or raiders?

You may add one rank to your **Trades** skill. You must also choose an appropriate Trade to have studied.

Riches

Perhaps you have been born into affluence, perhaps you have been lucky in trading, or fortunate with wins at gambling. Perhaps you've simply found a hidden cache of roman coins, or slightly more dangerously, a trove of robber's gold. Gain an extra Two picks from Valuable and an Extra One pick from Rare items when determining your belongings. You can purchase this Background more than once.

Redeemed

You were once either the creation of, or the servant of, the powers of darkness. You have found redemption now; you have escaped the sway of the dark ones, but at what price? You still retain the visage of evil and must go about heavily disguised. Those who see you in your true form will recoil in horror. Can you ever live a simple, quiet, happy life?

Remorse

You have lived a life, or committed a deed for which you are now deeply remorseful. You feel regret every day of your waking existence and your dreams are plagued by nightmares. What is this fell thing that you have done? Can it be made right? Will you ever be free of your darkest fears?

Renown

Fame carries its own rewards. Your name is recognised in taverns. People shout your ales, and gather around to hear you speak. You may have offers of business or marriage almost every week.

Revelation

You discover something previously unknown about your past. Is it a matter of family history? Maybe you have only now learned who your parents were? Or that a prophecy has been told about you? Or that you are to inherit land and power.

Sailor's Life

You've lived long months at sea, and the sea is the life for you. You are never truly happy unless aboard a wave-tossed ship. You yearn for it the moment you set foot on dry land again. Add one point to your Seafaring skill.

Sanctuary

You have found a secret and reclusive place, where you know you can always go and find safety and sanctuary. Perhaps it is a cave in the woods, or maybe a remote inn, where you and the barkeep are best of friends, or perhaps an ancient and forgotten watchtower.

Sagacious

You have studied under a master of learned lore. You know the secrets of alchemy, herbalism and astrology. You can see portents of the future in the flight of birds and know what herbs and potions will undo curses, bar witches from the door and protect stock from werewolves. You gain one point in either the skill **Esotery** or the skill **Hedge-Magic** without having to expend any Skill Points.

Sect

You have membership in a secret cult, sect or mysterious order. You have gained influence with those who walk in the shadows and have probably gathered a few secrets of your own. What is the cult in question? What are their aims and goals? This Background can be purchased up to three times. Each time you purchase it your standing among your sect increases.

Initiate	1 pt.
Priest or Priestess	2 pts.
High Priest or Priestess	3 pts.

Sickly

You are an unusually sick and feeble individual. You are always wracked with coughs and shivering from the cold. Your **Health** drops to **Scathed** permanently. You cannot take the Background **Hale and Hearty** (see above).

Silvered Tongue

You are cunning, charming, and manipulative, a student of human nature and a master of social guile. Gain an extra three points to distribute among any of the following skills, **Trickery**, **Presence**, **Guile**, or **Mercantry**.

Scapegoat

You have been blamed for something that is not only, not your fault, but completely out of your control. Perhaps you have been wrongly accused of witchcraft? Or are you the victim of superstition? After all everyone knows it is bad luck to have a woman aboard a ship.

Scarred

Perhaps it was during a particularly bad winter when the wolves came wandering, or maybe you met a bear or something even stranger and more fearsome that left is scars on your flesh and on your mind. Or were you marked by a pox of scars after a failed experiment in an alchemic lab? Or has your skin been made rippled and glossy by scalding water or fire?

Soldier of Fortune

You are a freelance, a mercenary man-at-arms, a wanderer in the fields of blood and gore and plunder. Gain three

bonus ranks to spend on any combat related skills of your choice. If you choose to be a **Soldier of Fortune** then you cannot be a **Noble Knight** or **Knight of the Order**.

Sorcerer Savant

You have studied the darkest arts in search of power and mastery over all that is and ever will be. Spread bonus three ranks among your **Arcane** skills as you see fit.

Stout

You are well feed and stocky. You amble rather than walk and can often be found patting your prodigious belly in thought. The extra fat in the ill-feed, disease-ridden era of **Danse Macabre** does you more good than harm. You are not agile but more resilient than most to the affects of starvation and disease. Daring skill caps at three ranks but the character will be the least likely in a group to get sick.

Spy

Are you a soldier in Byzantium's secret war against cults and covens? Or a witch infiltrated deep into the heart of the church? Or perhaps you are a servant of the King of England in the French Court, a master spy from the ivory halls of the Alhambra sent to kill the lords of Christian Iberia, a Saracen agent, or a Templar in the halls of a rival order?

Supplicant

You are not merely a devotee, not a lowly priest or a monk or cultist, but one of the chosen few Mortals who have made terrible alliance with one of the three Kingdoms. You must choose who you are allied to, Heaven, Faerie or Hell. Supplicants are allowed to attempt to summon allied spirits into the mortal world using the Summoning by Worship rules. You can only summon allied spirits in this way, for instance if you are allied to Heaven, you cannot summon Fae or Demons by worshipping them. Refer to the Chapter on **The Supernatural** for further information on Summoning by Worship.

Swept by War

Your homeland is swept by battle, either a prolonged and bitter war, or perhaps merely a terrible number of years in which raiders from the seas or hills or snows come every summer.

Swimming

Most persons in Medieval Europe have no idea how to swim, it's something of an unusual, and much admired skill. You, for some reason or another, have learnt this skill. Use the Fortitude Skill when testing your ability to Swim. Those without this skill must check fear when in the water.

Tempted

The dark powers have already whispered in you ear. Their voices are sweet and silvered. Their promises are honeyed and charmed. And though you know what lies upon the path of darkness, though you know what horrors walk that road, you wonder, what power you might have

for your own for just one small vow, just one small promise in return.

Terrors

You have had such an awful and horrifying experience in the past that you are now Terrified of a particular class of fear (Characters: What Fears Have I?), and have suffered one Delirium (rolled randomly).

As Terrified of a given fear, be it swarms of rats, helplessness or the undead, you are only grant 1d6 to roll on Tests of Fear when confronted with your personal dread.

Theft

Has someone stolen from you, or are you the thief? And what has gone into the thieves sack? A precious sword? A leather bound book? An heirloom? Or something more valuable, and more intangible again?

Traitor

You have made yourself a traitor to a clan, family, lord or cause. Why did you turn on them? Was it power, wealth, love?

Treatise

A book of esoteric knowledge, lore, thought and experiment. These tomes are only useful if you possess the skill **Esotery**. Treatise are ranked based on how much knowledge they contain. A Rank one Treatise grants you one bonus **Wisdom**. A Rank Two Treatise grants your two bonus **Wisdoms**. A Rank Three Treatise grants your three bonus **Wisdoms** – and so on.

You do not gain any bonuses to Disciplines from **Wisdoms** learnt in this way. For instance, even if a **Wisdom** would normally grant you +1 to *Mortis* if you learned it by rote, if you learn the **Wisdom** from a book you do not gain the +1 to *Mortis* bonus.

When Treatises are acquired during play the Gamesmaster nominates which **Wisdoms** that are held in the book. When you chose to own a Treatise during character creation you get to nominate which **Wisdoms** you want in the book. You must retain possession of a Treatise and consult it occasionally in order to keep your bonus **Wisdoms** – keep track of which books contain which **Wisdoms** in case your books are lost, destroyed or stolen.

You can chose to spend multiple points on this Background in order to acquire a Treatise of a higher Rank.

Troublesome Past

You have had a dark history, having had to already deal with frightening, fearful and dangerous things. Choose a **Fear** to be **Afraid** of. When you are **Afraid** of a **Fear** your initial courage starts at **Rank Two** instead of **Rank Three**. You can chose Troublesome Past more than once and make yourself **Afraid** of multiple things.

Trophy

You have taken a trophy from a strange, unearthly or weird place, thing or a person. Perhaps, you own a single feather from the wing of an angel, or a sword of a fallen Saracen prince, or a skull from a monstrous creature you

hunted and slew in the lands of Africa?

Unearthly Lover

You have a lover who is not entirely mortal. It may be a succubus who enters unseen into your bed each night? Or a wild spirit? An elfin prince or lady from the lands of the Wild Beyond. An ancient ‘god’, a powerful wild spirit fallen into obscurity and trying to scrape together what pleasure it can.

Voice of the Devine

In times of strife, difficulty and hardship you are spoken to by the voice of God. Or at least, so you believe. The voice certainly is real, though, from where it comes none can truly be sure. It will provide useful insights, warnings and instructions in moments that it deems crucial - and sometimes its choices seem a little strange. Why will it be silent for weeks and then clamour for your attention when you meet an old hag on the road? Why does it think it important to buy and thimble but not to warn you that there were enemies lurking in the forest?

Sometimes, just sometimes, you wonder if ‘God’ has some sort of unknowable and strange ulterior plan for you.

Wise in the Wilds

You are an experienced in the ways of the wilds, hunting, tracking and survival. You gain an extra point in the skill **Ranging** without having to expend any Skill Points.

Witness

You are an unwitting witness to an event of great importance. At the most obvious level you may have observed a murder? Did the murderer see you? Have you given evidence to a council or lord? Or did you see something stranger? Perhaps you saw a friend turn into a wolf? Or a man perform a ritual of witchcraft? Or a faerie creature steal into the queens bedchamber?

Skills

Skills are a subset of Traits that are learnable, and can be improved by training, practise and experience. All Skills are ranked on a scale of one to Six, one being untrained, six being masterful. Ranks can be improved during gameplay, but it is also not uncommon in **Danse Macabre** to begin play with a character who has fully mastered one or more Skills. Because characters will often have to face the supernatural and demonic, Skills pushed the very limits of human capability are sometimes needed simply to survive.

Affray (Craft)

All close hand-to-hand fighting, whether it’s the raw butchery of an axe or the somewhat more elegant play of swords and daggers.

Archery (Craft)

The use of bows of all sorts; be it for hunting or war. Crossbows are easier to use than drawn bows, and if you use a crossbow, you are allowed to add a temporary bonus

die to your Archery dice pool – but – note that in the century that **Danse Macabre** is set crossbows are large and clumsy and take between one to three minutes to arm using a windlass.

Artisan (Craft)

Choose an artistic trade: Sculpting, Pottery, Painting, Embroidery, Tapestry Weaving, Scrimshaw, Bone-Carving, Wood Working. You may choose Artistry more than once if you wish to possess more than one artistic skill.

Cavalcade (Craft)

Horse riding and fighting on horseback.

Daring (Innate)

Brave deeds of panache, acrobatics and flair. Involves all actions that require a degree of agility and balance, including acrobatics, walking along a thin wall, climbing treacherous walls, jumping and leaping, swinging across a room from a rope, sliding between the legs of an enemy, jumping onto a table and then out a window.

Dogma (Lore)

Church politics, traditions, prayers, rituals and history.

Esotery (Arcane)

The lore of occult and esoteric sciences and secrets. Includes such varied disciplines as alchemy, astrology, augury, palm reading, herbalism and poisons.

Folklore (Lore)

Superstitions, stories about local spirits, traditions and histories. Also, tales of allegory, wise sayings and philosophical advice on day-to-day life. A character learned in Folklore may be able to convince a king not to hunger after what he can't have by telling him the story of the fox and the grapes. Or suggest to townspeople they shouldn't laugh at those less fortunate by telling the story of the witch, her gangly son and the fishermen (who are still digging for their fish to this day...). You will also know more than your fair share of gossip, rumours, wild stories, unfounded wives tales.

Fortitude (Innate)

Feats of strength and raw brute force, physical endurance in the face of pain, injury and hard labour, shoving open a locked door, carrying a dead weight, lifting a massive barrel, slogging through snow while sick, struggling against poison in your veins, as well as fighting unarmed fist-to-fist with another, wrestling and grappling.

Games (Lore)

Skill at chess, telling and deciphering riddles, card games and games of dice. A good skill at various games is almost expected in noble circles.

Goetia (Arcane)

Ceremonial magic that deals solely with the summoning of spirits and the binding of these to your service. Note

that the different classes of magic are treated as separate skills.

Guile (Innate)

Plotting, persuasion, arguing, cajolery and other manipulative social skills. Also carries the suggestion that you may have political and social connections.

Healing (Craft)

The knowledge and skill needed to bandage wounds, apply salves, treat infected cuts, and prescribe simples to cure fevers and curable diseases or complaints. The general lore of healing and saving lives by salve, herb, purgatory or surgery. Surgery is remarkably well developed in Europe, even at the time when **Danse Macabre** is set, surgery is still considered a somewhat frightening, slightly unclean trade, mostly by virtue of the need to practise by dissecting corpses.

Hedge Magic (Arcane)

The minor, lowly and earthy magic of village witches, folk wizards and charm peddlers. Hedge Magic is considered less dangerous and unclean than Goetia. Practitioners of Hedge Magic are more tolerated than mages in all but the most strict towns and shires. Not nearly as powerful as Goetia (see above), but also not so frowned upon socially, Hedge Magic can prove a useful middle ground for a person wishing to avail themselves of supernatural assistance.

Inquisition (Craft)

The basic skills of a torturer and executioner, as well as a knowledge of the various tools and shackles of torture. Also, a general knowledge of what punishments are considered by law suitable for what crimes.

Jack-of-All (Craft)

Tinkering, quick and slipshod repairs to anything, rough and ready work, handcrafts. Sewing together your own homespun shirt, patching a hole, making your own walking staff.

Jongleurs (Craft)

The trade of the performer, tumbler, singer of bawdy songs and performer of plays, be it a folksy tale about goblins and maidens or one of Aristophanes' masterpieces. Includes acrobatics, dancing, juggling and acting, singing, reciting lays or ballads and playing instruments.

Lay-o-the-Land (Lore)

Geography, a wider knowledge of the borders of countries, the world outside your little village and means by which a horse, man or ship may get from one place to another. Includes knowledge about passes through mountains, secret roads, old ruins, inns and ports.

Pilgrimage is very important in the day and age: you know the places and sites of pilgrimage, what rewards for the soul may be had in a given shrine and how best to make a way there. You know the safehavens where pilgrims may claim a night's respite from the road, how to tell

genuine relics from the fakeries sold on the sides of roads and where best to get a hot meal in Jerusalem.

Learning (Lore)

Book learning of all sorts. History, somewhat old and more modern, as well as a knowledge of the litany of kings, queens and princes in various countries. History of the ancients, Rome, Greece, Egypt and Persia. Also a knowledge of the arts, plays, stories, mythology and beliefs of the ancient peoples.

Characters who are **Rank Four** or better in Learning are considered literate. At higher Ranks, Five and Six, Learning can also be used to gauge how skilled you are at learning new languages, deciphering texts and codes, how well versed you are in your mother tongue, eloquence, vocabulary. Also note that although Character from Western Europe with Learning of Rank Five or Six will know several living languages and possibly Latin, Characters with the Outsider Upbringing and a Rank Five or Six in Learning are likely to know languages relevant to their culture - i.e. Old Persian, Hebrew, Old Slav, Gaelic et cetera.

Mercantry (Craft)

Haggling, assessing quality, knowing where best to buy what.

Noble Ways (Lore)

The skills associated with a noble station in life. Knowing the hundreds of crests and insignia worn by noble houses, being able to trace family lines and both knowing and correctly performing the proper introductions for nobility. Tactics of statecraft, plotting, manipulating powers against one-another, debating laws and collecting taxes. All in all: the skills of the king, lord, lady or queen.

Presence (Innate)

Charisma and allure. The ability to befriend and seduce through the liberal use of your personal charms. Oratory, leadership, ability to give a good rousing, humorous or determined speech to a crowd or even to just a few intent listeners. The ability to persuade, inspire or deceive with poetic and charming words to the masses. Your diplomatic and persuasive skill. Ability to give good advice, manipulate politics in a court and gain the ear of powerful personages.

Ranging (Craft)

Foraging, hunting small animals, snare building, weather watching, constructing shelters and all general aspects of outdoor survival. The skill you need to be able to forge across country through untamed wilds, mountain and forest.

Seafaring (Craft)

All aspects of sailing a ship, navigating, working at oars and knots and mending things aboard at sea.

Subterfuge (Innate)

Moving silently, keeping to shadows, hiding yourself quickly and well.

Thievery (Craft)

Picking locks, pilfering, slight of hand, picking pockets, breaking into houses.

Trades (Craft)

Pick a trade: blacksmith, brewer, armourer, weaponsmith, cartographer, cook, bookbinder, wine-merchant, cooper, gem cutter, labourer, mason, farmer, herder, leatherworker, tinker, tailor, fletcher etc. Take the skill again to know more than one trade. To use the skill properly you will need a workshop and the appropriate tools.

Trickery (Craft)

Disguises, lying, fast talking, chicanery, slight of hand, the trick magic of a court performer, the fake divinations of a false witch hunter, slipping bonds, card tricks and con-artistry.

Venery (Craft)

The practise of hunting, tracking, pursuing and bringing down game – rabbits, deer, wild oxen, boars, mountain goats, bears, wolves and the like. Characters who possess Venery are allowed to apply it to animals they have hunted in their homeland, and to hunting sports such as falconry or coursing with hounds. Those from more remote climes may possess Venery skills for strange animals. A Viking may well have Venery for whales and walrus. An Aetheopian Knight of the Covenant might know well how to hunt lions and hyenas in North Africa but know nothing at all about the hunting of such strange and mythical creatures as wolves. Venery serves as a combat skill when using a spear or arrows to try and bring down game.

Willpower (Innate)

Force of will and fire of mind. A stubbornness and refusal to give in, and resolve to keep battling until the end.

Witch Lore (Lore)

A general knowledge about witches, warlocks, faerie creatures, mysteries of the world and spirits most heavenly, hellish or wild. You also know by what methods and signs a sorcerer may be discovered. You can tell natural deaths and illnesses from those of a less natural origin. You know the ranks, powers and names of evil spirits and what things each spirit fears. You know how to shackle a witch with iron so that he cannot work magic and how to stake a corpse so that it will not arise and walk. Note that this is the skill of a true witch hunter. If you wish to be a sham witch hunter then take the skill Trickery (see above), and treat it as the ability to produce 'evidence' of witchcraft where there is really none.

Yeomanry (Lore)

Knowledge of the laws and proclamations of various lands, and the methods by which an accused may defend himself, or a victim may avail himself of justice. Methods by which towns, villages, shires and parishes are governed, taxed and controlled. This is the skill of a valued retained, a tax-collector, local magistrate or master of a guildhouse.



Fears

All people know fear. Whether it is a small nagging shadow in the mind, a terrible blackness buried deep, or a simmering terror that lies just veiled beneath the surface.

Adversity

Fear of heights, fires, drowning and other natural, overwhelming dangers.

Beasts

Animals, vermin and the like, dogs, spiders, rats, snakes, bats or something stranger.

Death

Fear of dying, executions, dead corpses, ghosts and the restless deceased.

Disease

Fear the old and growing old, poisons, the decrepit, the diseased and the ill.

Supernatural

The unnatural, be it a work of magic, demons, spirits of nature or witches.

Violence

Outbursts of anger, aggression, spilling of blood, slaughter, murder or any similar wanton act of wrath.



Drama



Chapter Five

This chapter deals with how to manage drama throughout the game of **Danse Macabre**. Drama is created in a number of different ways, it can be social in nature, such as when Characters are involved in courtly intrigue, or spiritual when Characters find themselves presented with temptation or moral choices, or physical such as during a fight, chase or struggle against the elements. Each of these aspects of drama as well as a few others are discussed in the following text. Remember as with all rules in Danse Macabre, that the following should be considered a rough set of suggestions only. Look over the rules and decide which will work best for you and your playing group. Some rules are emphasized as strictly optional, others will work well in some styles of story but not in others.

Aspects of Nature

Be wary of the path you take in life. Sin sets you upon the road to hell and the tormented service of the Dark Ones. Abandon leads you over the ferny brae to fair elfland, the world of nature spirits and old forgotten gods. Purity sets you upon the road to the Hallowed Beyond, and service to the Angels of Light - but beware this path, too. For those who give themselves utterly Heaven may in the end find themselves only somewhat less driven and enthralled than those who sell their immortal soul to Hell's barons.

Spiritual Attributes

On your character sheet is the spiritual attribute **Nature**. This are used to measure over the short term how fast you are moving towards each of the two poles of creation: The Hallowed and the Dark.

Acts of Sin and Virtue in the game add ranks pull you in the direction of the relevant spiritual attribute. Acts of Virtue pull you towards *Hallowed* on the Nature ranking. Acts of Sin drag you towards to *Dark*.

The more grave the spiritual act, the more ranks are gained. For instance, a minor act of Virtue - perhaps giving a few coins to a beggar - might push you one rank towards *Hallowed*. For a highly remarkable act of Virtue - putting your life on the line to save a monastery from marauding soldiers without any hope of reward - you might move five ranks towards *Hallowed*. Every action you take that has a spiritual slant bestows either *Hallowed* or *Dark* ranks upon

you provided the act is **more extreme than the last**. Thieving a cask of wine might be worth one *Dark* rank. But if you go back and steal a cask of wine the next night you do not gain another rank of *Dark*.

For Example - Father Bartholomew has an overall nature worth One Rank of Hallowed (Rank 6). However, he succumbs to a night of drinking at the local tavern and can't help but drink himself into a stupor and then gets into a drunken brawl. The Gamesmaster decides that this is a sinful act and gives the character two ranks of Dark. This increases his Nature to 8 (6+2) and places him one rank past neutral (Rank 7) and into the Realm of the Dark.

Characters that tend to do small acts of Virtue or Sin during the game will find that their overall nature will always be one or two ranks from one neutral. Those more extreme characters will find that their nature does not alter very often and that they will have ranks closer to the extremes.

Acts of Virtue

The following is provided as a guide for you, as the Gamesmaster, to gauge how severe an Act of Virtue is, and how many Ranks of Purity it warrants. Treat the list as suggestions only.

Rank One

A small and trifling act of charity. Giving a few coins or bread to beggars.

Rank Two

Generous acts of charity. Answering a plea for help that may see you inconvenienced. Taking in a poor relative for a time. Lending money to a friend in need without interest and without pressure to repay.

Rank Three

Risking your life and limb to help the innocent, the sick, the starving or the unjustly persecuted. Risking death or worse to stand for what you believe in.

Rank Four

An act that causes prolonged troubles or sufferings for you but helps another. A tax collector who refuses to turn out serfs who can't pay but instead pays their taxes with

his own gold. A bishop who sells his wardrobe and tapestries in order to make hire an apothecary for lepers. A man who gives away his last coin to a beggar.

Rank Five

An almost inhuman and slightly insane act intended to prevent indulgence in anything remotely sinful. Refusing to eat anything but bread and water, scarring yourself because you feel you are too prideful, refusing to take revenge on a man who killed your family, instead seeking only justice.

Rank Six

A remarkable act of charity or purity. The sort of deed that becomes legendary. Giving an enemy city notice of your armies arrival to allow the woman and children to leave. Refusing to take taxes in a year of poor crops.

Acts of Sin

The following is provided as a guide for you, as the Gamesmaster, to gauge how severe an Act of Sin is, and how many Ranks of Taint it warrants. Treat the list as suggestions only.

Rank One

A petty theft. A minor moral infringement.

Rank Two

A serious theft. Mild indulgence in a sin that does no one else any immediate harm, lust, gluttony and the like.

Rank Three

Serious indulgence in a sin that causes reasonably obvious harm to another. Murder of an enemy.

Rank Four

Prolonged murder of an enemy. Cold blooded murder of an innocent.

Rank Five

The prolonged murder of an innocent. Immoral abuse, be it physical or mental.

Rank Six

Grotesque, depraved and bizarre moral lapses. Bathing in blood because you think it will make you younger. Ordering enemies executed in horrible ways. The sort of acts that will roll through the centuries as the very image of villainy.

Fear, Trauma and Insanity

Monstrous things, supernaturals, swarms of rats or frightening places or situations will, at the Gamesmaster's discretion, evoke a Test of Fear. Some characters may have to make a Test of Fear when others would not. A professional rat-catcher would probably not make a Test of Fear when seeing a stream of rats running over the road.

A lady of the court who spends all her days in walled gardens and at the harp might respond with terror.

Fears are ranked on a scale of six ranks: Terrified (Rank One), Afraid (Rank Two), Normal (Rank Three), Hardened (Rank Four), Stalwart (Rank Five), and Deadened (Rank Six). Fears are Tested in the same way as Skills: roll a Dice pool versus a Difficulty set by the Gamesmaster.

Using Effort

You may use **Effort** to increase your chance of success just as you would in a Test of Skill. Using one point of Effort increases your range of success to 5 to 6. Expending two points of Effort increases your range of success to 4 to 6. You cannot spend more than two points of Effort on a single Test of Fear.

*For Example - Johan Inkthumb is Afraid (Rank Two) of Death. He walks into a dreary room in a small border castle in Scotland and finds himself in the presence of the bloody and beheaded ghost of the castle's previous owner. The Gamesmaster sets the Test of Fear at **Difficult**, which requires two successes to pass. Johan spends a point of Effort, increasing his range of success to 5 and 6. He rolls his 2d6 and scores a 2 and 5: only one success when he needed two. Johan backs away slowly in fear.*

Difficulty

At the Gamesmaster's discretion, difficulty for a Test of Fear increases depending on how terrifying a sight the Characters are beholding. A slightly vague and flickering will o' the wisp in the distance might evoke an Average Test of Fear. Opening a door and finding a huge flaming angel, with golden eyes on her wings that are alive and blinking on the other side would evoke a Very Difficult Test of Fear.

Failure

Failure of a Test of Fear indicates that you are unable to face your fear. You gain a Rank of **Trauma** (see below) and have two options. You can either choose to take a second rank of Trauma *and* push on regardless or roleplay an appropriate reaction to the fear. If you react to the fear appropriately you might back away, turn tail and run, collapse into nervous heap or succumb to blind, irrational fury if cornered. Your response will depend on the situation and how you feel your character would most likely cope with such terror.

As the Gamesmaster you may, optionally, wish to use a sliding scale of failed Tests of Fear to determine the appropriate reaction of a given character. A Fail by one success might result in a hesitant character, who is suffering fear but still able to master his wits. A fail by two successes might result in a deeper level of fear, the desire to back away and escape is likely to grip the character. A fail by three successes might result in a complete nervous breakdown, blubbing and panic.

For Example - In the above example Johan Inkthumb needed two successes because the Test of Fear was Difficult. Because Johan scored one success he effectively failed by the extra one he needed. A hesitant but not panicked response of Johan's character makes sense.

If Johan is later confronted by the same ghost but now at night and the, the Gamesmaster may decide that his Test of Fear will be Very Difficult. In this case if Johan scores, for example, one success, but needed three and fails by two, then a panicky, somewhat more terrified response would then be appropriate.

Success

Succeeding a Test of Fear indicates that you are able to overcome your fear and work rationally and with the collected head to fight and think.

For Example - Malleus is confronted by a shadowy wraith of his dead father. His father may have returned to the mortal world to try and warn his son about the uncle who murdered him, but nevertheless a bloody and terrible ghost is still terrifying to behold. Malleus has a Normal reaction to Death. The Gamesmaster decides that the ghost will evoke a Test of Average difficulty. Malleus's player rolls 3d6 and scores a 1, 5, and 6. He scores one successes, the six, and so is able to speak to his father with hesitant, but calm, words.

When to Test Fear

You may wish to invoke a Test of Fear every round that characters are facing down a particularly powerful supernatural creature. Most of the time, however, after the initial Test of Fear, limit fear checks to those moments when something additionally frightening happens. In the case of battling a warlock you may require the characters to make a Test of Fear only when he casts a spell at them. In the case of a haunted ruin, perhaps only call for Tests of Fear when something inexplicable and eerie occurs.

Trauma

All Characters have a **Trauma** attribute rated from zero to ten. Trauma is gained by facing frightening or horrifying things. It is lost by spending time in peace and quiet and safety. For every week spent in peaceful seclude you lose one rank of Trauma.

If, however, your Trauma reaches rank ten, then your mind snaps and you suffer a mental breakdown. This leaves you incapacitated, gibbering and babbling for at least an hour and causes you to gain a **Delirium**. Your Trauma then returns to zero. If the player does not want to give their character a delirium. They may choose to drop the rank of the fear that pushed them 'over the edge'. The trauma still returns to zero but a character with Normal fear would now drop to Afraid. In this way, the player may try to walk the fine line of allowing a character to develop a delirium but still have the same resistance to the fear, or to remain sane but be more susceptible to a fear stimulus in future.

See Insanity below to determine what Delirium your mind contracts.

Some things are so unnatural, frightening or awe-inspiring to see that they immediately cause Trauma to those who see them. This automatic Trauma is caused just once and only upon the first instance when the unnatural thing is encountered. After this initial encounter Tests of

Fear are used to resolve whether the character will remain calm, run or taken still further Trauma.

You may also rule that if a character has dealt enough with a particular class of supernatural, Vampyr, Ghul or Sorcerers for instance, then the Trauma suffered when encountered yet another one is either lessened or reduced to zero.

One Trauma

A work of magic that is both weird and horrible, vampyrs, werewolves, unholy witches with withered flesh and bile-crusted mouths. Most people are inured to the idea that sorcery exists and folk magic, village witchcraft, even ceremonial magic that is not too unearthly does not inspire Trauma. If a spell or ritual however causes something extremely unpleasant or unnatural to come into being before your eyes, then you suffer One Trauma.

Two Trauma

Small unnatural spirits, minor imps, forest sprites or Archonic beings. Anything unearthly inflicts Trauma on the mortal soul, even small things.

Three Trauma

Radiant, nearly blinding angels of fury, demons with claws of iron and slaving mouths, lords of the wild with their eyes like emerald moss and skin like bark.

Insanity

If you fail multiple Tests of Fear and take ten ranks of Trauma you suffer from a Delirium (see below) or become more afraid of a particular fear stimulus. Your Trauma then returns to zero.

Roll on the following table to discover what Delirium your mind contracts. If you already have one Delirium roll 2d6. If you already have two Deliriums roll 3d6. If you have three or more Deliriums already, roll 4d6. Note that you cannot gain the same Delirium twice. If this occurs, roll again.

For example: Magpie Katherine has a Normal fear of the Supernatural. When fighting against a demonic warlock, however, she repeatedly fails her Tests of Fear, gaining more and more Trauma. At ten she suffers a Delirium. She does not already have any Deliriums so her Gamesmaster rolls just 1d6 on the following table. She rolls a 3, making Magpie Katherine abnormally obsessed with collecting lucky talismans. Magpie Katherine's Trauma returns to zero.

Deliriums

- 1 Twitch. Whenever you are in a stressful situation your face spasms and twitches.
- 2 Security. You must check that you have locked yourself tight indoors every night at least four or five times. You spend nights in the open restless and frightened.
- 3 Talismans. You become obsessed with lucky charms and wards. You buy them wherever you

- see them and will collect dozens and dozens.
- 4 Dead Dreams. Occasionally you dream of people you know who have been dead for years. The shades usually insist again and again that you do some seemingly unimportant task or another.
- 5 Glances. You begin obsessively checking over your shoulder.
- 6 Arms. You are paranoid about being unarmed. You will not relinquish your weapons. You'll get into arguments with town guards who want your weapons bound in cloth or handed in for safekeeping.
- 7 Woodland Voices. You begin hearing voices in the woods and forests. They are always distant and difficult to trace. Sometimes they are singing, sometimes laughing, sometimes just talking and chattering.
- 8 Poisoners. You become paranoid about being poisoned. You will only drink from your own wineskin, and will never take an offered drink.
- 9 Doomed Visions. Every now and again you see everyone around you not as they are but as decayed corpses walking the earth.
- 10 Succubus. Every night a beautiful phantom, demonic creature that no one else can see appears at your bed and tries to seduce you.
- 11 Blessings. You become obsessive about receiving minor magical protection, whether it is from village witches or the blessings of priests.
- 12 Laughter. You find yourself laughing insanely and very loud at improper times.
- 13 Whimpering. Even if you pass your Test of Fear, whenever you face something unnatural or frightening you begin uttering a string of wordless whimpering noises.
- 14 Jittery. You jump and shriek terrified at any loud noise.
- 15 Paranoia. You become convinced that something is living in your closet, under your bed or in your saddlebags. Whenever you look you see the creature briefly before it vanishes. You've no idea whether it means you ill or good.
- 16 Other Faces. When alone you begin receiving surprise visitors - only these friends and family are not quite what they seem. Sometimes it is obvious, the impostor mistakenly appears as someone who is dead or far away. Othertimes it takes you a while to realise that you are not talking to a real friend, but something else. But what? Once you realise your mistake the impostor always gets up, walks away and vanishes. If someone walks in on your conversation the impostor also vanishes.
- 17 Bad Influence. You have visions of a little imp, spirit or sprite that is constantly telling you to do evil, evil things to people.
- 18 Angry Voices. You hear voices in the night. You can't tell what they are saying but they always seem to be arguing bitterly.
- 19 Night Terrors. Your dreams turn constantly

- nightmarish. You awake most nights screaming.
- 20 Shadowy Things. You constantly see things moving in the shadows. Little taunting, dancing imps and monsters.
- 21 Unnatural Beasts. Occasionally animals begin talking to you. They may want to just chat or warn you about something, but no one else can hear them.
- 22 Demonic Visages. Occasionally you meet people who look like horrifying demons. It is always the same people whose faces are demonic and terrifying but no one else can see what you see.
- 23 Commanding Voice. Now and again a powerful, god-like voice booms commandments down at you from above. These commands may or may not be nice things to do. You must make a Test of Willpower at Difficulty Three to disobey.
- 24 Roll again twice.

Trauma in the Game

There are two ways to use Trauma in the game of **Danse Macabre**. Both rely on pacing Trauma through the game sessions.

The first method is to decide that Trauma loss will not occur very often but each game session is a continuation of the character's time in Benighted Europe. So if the group finish the last session in an Inn in some run down hamlet, then the next time the game is played, the characters start gameplay where they left off, in the Inn, perhaps on the following morning. This style means that the Trauma slowly creeps upward and is very hard to reduce as most game sessions will involve some form of Trauma. This is certainly the more foreboding style of play and suits the type of play where the characters are witch hunters, inquisitors or other professional hunters of evil things.

The second method is to decide that each game session is a distinct episode in the character's life. Days, weeks or even months might go by before the next game session is played. Scenarios that represent the most dramatic episodes in a character's life are more prone to larger amounts of Trauma. Outside of game play, it is assumed characters have gone back to their homes, travelled, followed their trade and done other activities that resulted in mundane, everyday life. Of course this means Trauma would be reduced by the next game session as time has gone by. The second style of play is arguably a more 'realistic' method of gameplay as characters ought to have personal lives to lead outside of dealing with dark things. Relegating the personal lives and minor day-to-day trials to an offstage. However, this is more dependant on the type of game being run.

Injury, Combat and Death

Characters will suffer injuries during the game in any number of ways. Falling off a high cliff will deal injury to a character, as will taking a sword-stroke in battle or being struck by an arrow. Whenever you defeat an enemy during armed combat you have the option of inflicting injury. **Danse Macabre** uses a system of **Wounds** to track how

injured you are, and whether or not you will die.

Gritty and Bloody

In **Danse Macabre** effort needs to be made to keep combat gritty bloody and dirty. As the Gamesmaster you need to think carefully about how to describe what is happening in a battle. This is a very grim and grisly world, battles are horrific things, and the awful slaughter of a field of war can be pretty frightening for any character who hasn't seen battles before.

Try to bring the scene alive with detail of what's going on, even if it is in the background and not important for the characters. If it is a big battle then there may be crows and ravens circling before the fighting is fully over. Ragpickers and beggars may be lingering near the edges of the field ready to swoop and cut off ringed fingers or snatch up bejewelled swords. Throughout a battle there will be soldiers and knights who are dying forgotten on the ground. And with enough bloodshed the ground itself will become slick with gore, streams where battles are fought may turn red and the smell of carnage is likely to be enough to make some characters retch.

Using Tests of Fear versus Violence in battles is an important part of the scene as well. Don't forget that many player characters will be terrified at the sight of a fully armoured knight charging towards them, a Viking with a bloodied axe, or a Saracen on a proud steed.

As a battle progresses make sure to describe what is going on, recap what has occurred in the last round, and keep everyone's imagination on the right track. The goal is to avoid creating a mental image of two characters calmly exchanging blows with one-another. Create chaos whenever possible, play up the madness of a fight and the horror and stupidity of so many lives being spent and broken so pointlessly.

Natural Dangers

If you fall off a cliff or are burned by fire or hit by a falling rock you will suffer ranks of injury. A given natural danger will deal a set number of Wounds at the Gamesmaster's discretion. A Character is then allowed a Test of Skill to avoid injury. Each success reduces the injury by one Wound.

For Example: Munrae the Dour leaps through a burning window. The Gamesmaster decides that the window will deal two Wounds to Mundrae. Munrae's player Tests his Daring Skill to avoid injury and scores one success. This reduces the injury from two to one.

Melee Combat

When two Characters square off in battle they engage in a Contest of Skill. Both Character's test their relevant combat skill. The victor deals injury to the losing Character equal to the number of successes that the victor wins by. If both Characters score the same number of successes the attack is considered a draw and a new round begins.

For Example: Munrae the Dour is attacked by a mad hermit. Munrae the Dour uses his Affray Skill and scores four successes. The mad hermit using his Brawling skill and scores two successes. Munrae deals the hermit two

wounds (four minus two).

Ranged Combat

Ranged attacks are handled differently to toe-to-toe combat as the exchange is not a clash of skills but a simple Test of Skill. The player rolls his dice pool based on his Archery skill trying to score as many successes as possible to hit his target. The target however does not get to roll in retaliation. The Gamesmaster decides the Difficulty to hit based on how far away the target is, the weather conditions and how quickly the target is moving.

As a general rule of thumb, the difficulty to hit something at short range is *Average (one success required)*. Shooting at medium range is *Difficult (two successes)*, while shooting to long range is *Very Difficult (three successes)*.

The damage done by an arrow is based on how many successes **equal or over** the difficulty of the shot are achieved. If the result is equal to the difficulty, the damage is one rank of injury, for every extra success over the difficulty, add another rank of injury.

For Example – Keith has sighted a bandit making a run for it. He pulls forth a clothyard shaft and draws his bow taut. The Gamesmaster decides the range is short for a long bow (Average difficulty) but the bandit is running, so the shot will be increased by one to Difficult (Two successes required).

Keith has an Archery Skill of Rank Five and the player wants to exert two points of Effort to increase the chance of success to four through six on each die. Keith's player rolls and scores 2, 5, 6, 3, 3. A total of two successes. Because Keith met the set difficulty he hits his opponent. Because he only equalled the difficulty, however, he deals just one Wound.

Wounds

Most mortal human Characters, with a few rare examples, die if they suffer six Wounds. At two Wounds penalties to action are incurred and these penalties grow worse as additional Wounds are suffered. If a Character suffers two or three Wounds, then the Character is limited to expending only one Effort when Testing a Skill, Fear or other Trait. If a Character suffers four or five Wounds, then no Effort is allowed for Tests of Traits.

Also, each round during combat wounded Characters need to make a Test of Pain or collapse in agony and unable to take any further action. The Test of Pain is based on Willpower and becomes more difficult as Wounds increase. One Wound does not incur a Test of Pain. Two or Three Wounds incur an Average Difficulty Test of Pain. Four or Five Wounds incur a Difficult Test of Pain.

Recording Wounds

You will find a chart on your Character Sheet similar to the one pictured below. As you are injured record each Wound in the box provided, filling in lighter injuries first. When a Wound heals remove the check from your Character Sheet.

Injury		Effort Penalty	Test of Pain (Willpower)	Healing
Scathe	<input type="checkbox"/>	No Penalty	N/A	One Day
Light	<input type="checkbox"/>	Max 1 Effort / Test	diff. Average	Two Days
Deep	<input type="checkbox"/>	Max 1 Effort / Test	diff. Average	Three Days
Heavy	<input type="checkbox"/>	No Effort Allowed	diff. Difficult	Four Days
Grave	<input type="checkbox"/>	No Effort Allowed	diff. Difficult	Five Days
Mortal	<input type="checkbox"/>	Dead	N/A	N/A

Infection

You may also wish to take into account the risk of infection whenever a character is injured. Almost all wounds will become infected to a greater or lesser degree in the unclean world of **Danse Macabre**. Roll a d6. 1 to 3, the wound becomes slightly red and swollen. 4 to 5, the wound becomes severely infected. It takes twice as long to heal. 6, the wound is severely infected. You limb swells up and becomes painful to move. Without treatment by a surgeon, esoteric healer, magician or village wise-head you will eventually sicken and die. From the point of infection you have three weeks to live, if not treated.

Healing of Wounds

Wounds heal naturally with bed rest at a rate that slows as the Wounds become progressively harsher. It takes five days to heal from Grave to Heavy injury, four days to heal from Heavy to Deep and so on. It takes a total of fifteen days of rest to recover completely from Grave injuries. There are very few means by which recovery and healing can be accelerated in **Danse Macabre**, so it is important to allow for the time it can take to rest and recover from serious affrays.

Combat

The below are some additional rules that are relevant to combat in **Danse Macabre**. Note that most of the following rules can be treated as optional and remain at the discretion of the Gamesmaster.

Weapons

Bigger and nastier weapons do not confer an advantage in combat in **Danse Macabre**. The rules of the game are intended to draw attention away from combat and to encourage a sense that all combat is deadly and dangerous, an assassin's knife needs to be just as deadly as an axe in line with the setting and theme of the game. However, attacking an armed opponent while unarmed imposes a one die penalty to any relevant combat skills while the battle takes place.

Dodging

If opting purely to defend yourself and take no other actions you can dodge and weave by using your Daring Skill to counter any incoming hand-to-hand attacks.

Shields

Shields can be used to deflect blows in battle. A shield grants you a pool of dice to use against one or more

opponents each round as a strictly defensive pseudo-skill. If you are using a shield you can choose to split the pool of dice up between different opponents or lump them onto the one opponent. You only need to score one success with a Shield to negate an injury you might otherwise suffer if you lose the clash of combat.

Shields never possess more than three ranks worth of protection. A small buckler is worth one rank, a medium sized wood or leather shield is worth two ranks and a very large tower shield or Norman kite shield is worth three ranks.

Because Shields are active forms of defence you may use Effort to increase your margin of success. This makes shields very different in function to Armour, which is strictly passive.

When involved in a fight nominate which opponent or opponents you wish to set your shield against. If you choose to set your shield against the same opponent you are attacking with a combat skill such as Affray or then there are two potential outcomes. If you win and deal injury your shield grants you nothing extra. But, if you loose and your opponent deals you injury then you are allowed to Test your Shield in order to try and catch the blow.

Damage to Shields

Shields suffer damage in battle. When used to block blows they soon splint and crack and become useless. Each time you block a blow with a shield roll a d6 taking note of how much damage the shield has just caught. If you score number equal to or less than the damage sustained then the shield splits and is rendered useless.

For instance in the above example Sir Gotheric used his shield to catch a blow worth two ranks of injury. He rolls a d6 and if he rolls a one or two the shield is split apart by the blow.

Shields are thus powerful but unreliable friends. Your shield might split down the middle on the first attack or it might hold up against a dozen blows before it falls apart. Note that if a shield catches a blow worth six or more damage it is automatically smashed to flinders.

For Example – Sir Gotheric, a Knight Templar is battling Saracens in the Holy Land. He is using a tall Frankish kite shield worth three ranks of protection. He is set upon by a Saracen Emir.

Sir Gotheric and the Saracen clash. The Saracen wins, outmatching Gotheric by three successes. Gotheric Tests his shield and scores a 1, 4 and 6. The 6 counts as a success and negates the injury Gotheric would have suffered. He catches the scimitar and deflects it.

The following round Gotheric is attacked by two more

Saracens who stand off and begin to loose arrows at him as the third weaves in with a scimitar. Gothic decides to allocate one rank of Shield to each attacker. One archer fails to hit Gothic. The second deals two levels of injury. The Emir deals one level of injury. Gothic decides to use two ranks of Effort while Testing his Shield – this increases his range of success to 4 through 6. He can only roll two die because he allocated one to an archer whose attack failed. Gothic scores a 2 versus the second archer (a fail) and a 6 versus the Emir (a success). The archer's arrow strikes Gothic dealing him two Wounds. Gothic's six is a success, however, and he deflects the Emir's attack.

Armour

Armour can be worn in the hopes of negating injury in battle. If you are wearing armour roll a number of d6 equal to your **Armour Rank**. A score of six indicates that the armour has absorbed the attack and deflected the attack. This functions in the same way as shields, which can deflect a blow entirely. Mortals cannot wear more than three ranks of armour. Use the following guide.

Because armour is passive a character cannot expend Effort in an attempt to increase his margin of success. Heavier armour provides more protection but also penalises Tests of Subterfuge as a result of the noise and clumsiness associated with moving in a bulky metal suit.

Rank One – Soft hides, quilted armour, poorly treated leather, haphazard pieces of armour stitched together. This Rank of Armour does not penalise Subterfuge.

Rank Two – Hardened or boiled leather, plates of thick hide from a rhinoceros, crocodile or elephant, or something stranger. Two layers of leather stitched together and padded with wool. Leather that is riveted with small metal plates or strips. This Rank of Armour penalises Subterfuge by one die when worn.

Rank Three – Professionally made armour, chain mail, breastplates, coat of plates, banded or scale armour made of metal. This Rank of Armour Penalises Subterfuge by two die when worn.

For Example - Sir Gothic, our Knight Templar is wearing a suit of well-made chain mail. When the Saracen archer outclasses him in a Contest of Skill, and lets loose an arrow, Sir Gothic first tests his shield. The shield failed and the arrow darts past, Gothic now tests his armour and rolls 3d6. He rolls a 1, a 4 and a 6. The 6 counts as a success. The armour catches and deflects the damage.

Designer Note

Armour and shields are very powerful in **Danse Macabre**. It is the intention of the rules that a fully equipped knight in a thick coat of plates and a towering shield is a formidable opponent. New players should be warned of this before charging lightly armed at a heavily armoured enemy.

Combat Advantage

The following rule can be used when a Character is fighting at a significant advantage, for instance fighting against someone who is prone, fighting from high ground, fighting from cover or fighting unhampered against someone who is shackled. The Disadvantaged Character suffers a penalty of one die from combat related Skills and in addition draws when contesting Skills result in the Advantaged Character dealing one Wound instead of the normal null result.

Multiple Opponents

If faced by more than one opponent in a Contest of Traits you have to split your dice pool up between your enemies. This makes ganging up against a single opponent a very useful strategy. Powerful enemies can be brought low by careful teamwork. When outnumbered, you have to decide how to split your dice pool at the beginning of each new Action Round. The strategy you take may depend on the situation. Will you lump most of your dice pool against a single dangerous opponent or spread the dice evenly between all your opponents?

For Example - Turstan is carrying a pound of sausages home for dinner. The village's three semi-feral dogs smell the meat and come slinking out of the shadows. The dogs run around Turstan leaping and trying to snap at the sausages. Turstan is trying to keep the sausages away from the dogs. Turstan uses his Fortitude skill (Rank 3) to try and keep the sausages away from the dogs. The dogs use their Attack Skill (Rank 2) to try and get the sausages. Turstan only has a dice pool of three, and there are three dogs. He splits his dice pool up by allotting one die to each dog.

Undefended Attacks

An Undefended Attack occurs when one character surprises or ambushes another. In an Undefended attack Tests their relevant Combat skill, but the attacker is not allowed a roll to test their defence or counter-attack. The resulting injury is then dealt to the victim of the attack.

For Example - An assassin has snuck into the bedchamber of King Ingeld. The assassin has only moments to do his work before the royal guard return from a distraction that has been pre-arranged outside the chamber. The king is asleep but the assassin is rushed.

The Gamesmaster calls for a Test of Affray to check how accurate the assassin's sword is. The Assassin has an Affray of Five. He expends two points of Effort and increases his range of success to four through six. He rolls a 3, 4, 4, 5 and 5. Four successes versus zero defence. The king takes four Wounds and no doubt awakes with a scream.

Optional: Calculated Attacks

Calculated Attacks are a special form of Undefended Attack. Calculated Attacks occur when a character has time and leisure to plan a blow against a defenceless target. A Calculated Attack might occur when an assassin has a lot of time to carefully slip a dagger into a sleeping victim or when an executioner hefts his axe at a prone neck. When a character makes a Calculated Attack deem all of his die

successful against a defence of zero.

For Example - Murgo the Headman is about to take the head of a murderer. His beheading axe is based on Affray, which is Rank Four. Not a very high skill for an executioner. Murgo is probably much feared for his clumsiness. All four of his die count as successes when Murgo lands the blow. He deals a four Wounds, not killing the murderer. He swings again, dealing another four Wounds. This blow kills the murderer.

Optional: Botched Attacks

When you Botch an attack against an opponent (roll a full compliment of ones on your dice) protection from a shield or armour are negated and if you survive you suffer a *Maiming* rolled randomly on the below chart. The Gamesmaster rolls 1d6 for each Wound you suffer following the Botch.

- | | |
|----|--|
| 1 | The wound will leave a slight waxy looking scar. |
| 2 | The wound leaves deep white scars. |
| 3 | You suffer a mild permanent injury to one leg. You can no longer sprint with any great speed and hobble if you try. You can still jog or walk in a more or less normal way. |
| 4 | The wound will leave a severe scar that becomes painful in cold weather. |
| 5 | A minor fracture. The bone need splinting and will turn painful if you put pressure on it. If the fracture is to a limb then the limb will be only partially useful until healed. If not properly tended to the bone mends wrong and you may suffer permanent penalties at the Gamesmaster's discretion. |
| 6 | The injury leaves a severe and ugly scar on your face and head. Your hair grows white on the injury. |
| 7 | You are left with a severe permanent limp. You hobble when trying to walk. |
| 8 | Severe injury to the chest leaves permanent internal injuries and scarring. Whenever you become exhausted or fatigued – i.e. if you reach Effort five or less – you begin wheezing and coughing blood. |
| 9 | Blood fills one of your eyes. This turns the eye a scarlet red. You can only see a vague crimson haze out of it. |
| 10 | Terrible blow to the chest injures your lungs. Permanently loose three Effort from your total pool. This does not affect your current Effort Pool unless you are at or near your Total. |
| 11 | An arm or leg is shattered by the blow. The bones will heal in time with proper splinting and care but the limb will be useless until then. If not properly tended, the bone will mend wrong and you may suffer permanent penalties at the Gamesmaster's discretion. |
| 12 | Severe wound to your ankle and foot. Loose a toe. |
| 13 | The injury cracks and smashes your ribcage. Bones jut out of your skin and into your lungs. Mending and setting is possible with proper care |

but you will be bedridden for weeks, possibly longer. If not properly tended to the bone mends wrong and you may suffer permanent penalties at the Gamesmaster's discretion.

- | | |
|----|---|
| 14 | One of your legs is hacked at so badly that it will need to be amputated below the knee by a skilled churgeon. You will need to have a peg leg made for you once recovered. |
| 15 | Loose a finger. |
| 16 | One arm is severely injured. It now always hangs limp and is all but useless. |
| 17 | Loose a thumb. Roll randomly to decide whether left or right. |
| 18 | Severe blow to the head leaves you concussed. Bruising to the brain, swelling and other injuries causes you suffer headaches and pain in the head on and off for the rest of your life. |
| 19 | Loose a hand. Roll randomly to decide whether left or right. |
| 20 | The side of our face is badly mauled and you loose an ear. |
| 21 | The injury puts out one of your eyes. |
| 22 | One of your arms is hacked at so badly that it will have to be amputated by a skilled churgeon just below the shoulder. |
| 23 | Your face is utterly mauled. You loose your nose and most of your face. You no longer even look human. |
| 24 | A terrible blow digs deep into your flesh. You cannot ever fully recover naturally. You are severely scarred, pale and weak. You permanently lose one Wound box. |

Mounted Combat

When Characters are fighting from horseback or some other more exotic mount such as a camel, the rules for hand-to-hand combat are employed as usual except that the mounted Character may be required to perform Tests of Cavalcade at the Discretion of the Gamesmaster, and if attacking dismounted combatants, the Mounted Character may be granted a Combat Advantage (see above), also at the discretion of the Gamesmaster.

Unarmed Combat

Wrestling and fistfights are dealt with using the Fortitude skill. Unarmed combat can be just as brutal as armed warfare. Eyes can be gouged out, teeth kicked in with boots and heads slammed into the ground. For this reason, ranks of injury are taken just the same as with combat using weapons. If the fight is a friendlier wrestling match then use the rules for a Prolonged Contest of skill and set a target number of successes to achieve. The first person to do so takes the other opponent to the ground and pins them.

If one person is trying to pull their adversary to the ground while the other wishes to do harm, use the same rules for wrestling but should the more feral opponent win any of the rounds, they will inflict damage.

For Example - Turston wishes to pull a very drunk and angry Keith to the ground. The Gamesmaster decides

this action will be like wrestling and says that Turston will need six successes to bring the thrashing Keith under control. In the first round Turston scores three successes and Keith scores two. No one is harmed so far. In the second round Turston scores one success but Keith scores two, so inflicts one rank of injury on Turston. At this stage Turston has accumulated four successes and so has Keith, the fight is equal. In the third round Turston scores two successes and Keith scores none. This brings Turston's total to six successes and Keith's total still remains four. As six successes was required to bring Keith down, Turston succeeds in bringing Keith under control but was injured slightly in the attempt.

Full Example of Combat

Turstan is fighting off a robber on a lonesome road. Turstan Attacks with his Affray Skill (Rank 5) he is wielding a longknife. The brigand responds with Affray (Rank 4) and a stout cudgel. Turstan expends one Effort (increasing his range of success to 5 and 6), and rolls his dice pool. He scores a 2, 2, 5, 5 and 6. He scores three successes. The robber rolls his dice pool, but is merely an NPC that is unimportant to the plot he can not expend Effort (he will only succeed on a 6). He scores a 2, 3, 5 and 6. He only scores one success. Turstan's three successes outmatch the robber's one success by two ranks. Turstan has won this Action Round, and he chooses to inflict injury. The two ranks by which he defeated his enemy deal the robber a Minor Wound. The Gamesmaster must roll a Test of Pain for the robber to see if the wound drops him. The roll is successful and the fight continues.

Both characters now reconsider their goals, but decide to leave them unchanged. The brigand could throw down his weapon and beg for mercy, or try to run away, but instead he launches into an attack. The brigand rolls his dice pool and scores a 3, 4, 6 and 6. Two successes. Turstan gets over confident and expends no points of Effort (he will succeed on a roll of only a 6), and rolls his dice pool and scores a 1, 4, 4, 4, and 5. No Successes. Turstan suffers the consequences. The robber's two successes outmatch Turstan's lack of success by two ranks.

The two ranks by which the bandit defeated Turstan inflict a Minor Wound. Turstan rolls for a Test of Pain by using Fortitude (rank 4) against a difficulty of average (one success required). Turstan can only use one point of effort to better his chances as he is suffering from a minor wound. He scores a 3, 4, 5, and 5. Two successes. Turstan cringes as the bandit's cudgel strikes but stays standing.

In the next action round Turstan decides he must try and finish his adversary so puts one point of effort into his attack (that is the most he can use due to his wound). The bandit once again can not use effort so attacks just relying on 6s for success. Turstan rolls and scores a 2, 4, 5, 5, 6. Three successes. The bandit scores a 1, 3, 4, 5. No successes.

Turstan's score outmatches the bandit's by three causing a Deep Wound. The bandit needs to roll for a Test of Pain against a difficulty of Difficult (2 successes). He scores a 3, 3, 5. No successes. The bandit falls to the ground yelling in agony as Turstan delivers him a Deep wound.

At this stage the bandit is at Turstan's mercy.

Action

The following rules and guidelines can be used to help negotiate moments of action during the game,

Chases

Chases will occur when something dangerous is pursuing a character. Especially if the chase is through an area with some limited cover or uneven terrain, the chase may turn into a series of attempts to keep obstacles between the fleeing character and the creature or persons that are on the hunt. Treat chases as a Prolonged Contest of Skills in which the escapee and the pursuer are trying to accumulate enough successes to 'win' the contest. If the pursuers win, then they will capture their prey. If the Characters who are fleeing win, then they will escape unharmed.

Climbing

Most characters will be able to scramble up a tree or a gentle slope without needing a Test of Skill. If, however, a character is attempting to scale something more dangerous, slippery or free of handholds a Test of Daring is needed. Set the Difficulty based on how tricky the surface is to climb. A wall with plenty of jutting blocks and handholds would be Average. An icy waterfall swept by gale storm winds would be Insanely Difficult.

Foolhardy Acts

There will be instances in the game when a character wants to leap from a thatch roof onto a moving wagon, throw a blanket at guards and jump out the window, or use a pole to vault over a wall. All dangerous and audacious actions require a Test of Daring, modifying the difficulty accordingly. In some situations, such as throwing the blanket at the guards, you want to use a simple Contest of Skills to determine the outcome.

Swimming

Assume that characters can't swim unless specifically stated in the Background **Swimming**. For most characters the seas, lakes and rivers are frightening things. People don't swim for recreation, and swimming for survival is something that even some fishermen, sailors and fenlanders don't learn. In gentle and calm water assume that a character who has the Swimming background can swim about a hundred strokes before needing to make a Test of Fortitude. Call for another Test of Fortitude every hundred strokes.

If a character fails their Test of Fortitude you can allow them to continue swimming but use the rules for exhaustion under Attrition (below) to determine whether or not they are going to drown. Those characters that can't swim must test fear against an average difficulty if they are in a situation where they must swim. If they fail, they panic and must suffer the rules for Attrition (see below). They must test fear every round until they overcome their fear, or drown. Once they overcome their fear, the characters

may use their fortitude skill to swim just like above.

For example. Keith falls into the water while trying to cross a river by traversing a fallen log. Keith does not know how to swim. The Gamesmaster asks the player to test Keith's fear. The players says that he is going to use two points of effort and rolls the standard 3d6. He scores 3, 2, 2. No successes. Keith panics and loses more effort due to exhaustion (in this case a further one point). In the following round, Keith's fear is tested again using two points of effort, this time the roll is successful and Keith starts to calm down, he is now allowed to make a fortitude test to try and swim to shore. Of course he has lost five points of effort just trying to overcome his fear. The task of swimming to safety may exhaust him some more.

Attrition

Attrition is used in situations when characters are suffering under a constant grinding stress, pain, fatigue or poison. In more mild instances this could be the stress and irritation associated with travelling through a swamp that is infested with biting midges, in extreme cases Attrition is used to determine how well a character is able to stand up against blistering cold, starvation or torture.

When you enter a situation in which Attrition is going to occur a Test of Fortitude is called for. If you fail your Test of Fortitude then you lose a point of Effort. You will have to Test your Fortitude again if you don't move away from the danger. If you fail a second time you lose two points of Effort. If you fail a third time you lose four points of Effort. If you fail a fourth time you lose eight points of Effort. At this point your Effort will have dropped to zero even if you started with the full fifteen. When your Effort drops to zero due to Attrition you either break (i.e. under torture), pass unconscious (i.e. from exposure) or die (i.e. drowning or poison).

How long a time passes between Tests of Fortitude is determined by the severity of the situation. Irritating things that aren't likely to be deadly but which will wear you down, like biting insects, a cold, or mild food poisoning, might only call for a Test of Fortitude once a day. You'll probably outlast the danger before you need to make more than two or three Tests of Fortitude. Extraordinarily painful, cold or dangerous situations may require a Test of Fortitude every few minutes. The nature of the Attrition also determines the difficulty of the Test of Fortitude.

Bitter Cold	Difficult
Drinking Contests	Average
Drowning	Difficult
Exhaustion	Difficult
Fierce Storm	Difficult
Midges	Average
Poisons	Varies
Privation	Difficult
Sleep Deprivation	Difficult
Torture	Very Difficult

Awareness

Searching for something hidden, keeping alert to movement or noises, noticing something unusual or suspicious, are all examples of when a Test of Awareness is employed. A test of Awareness is always situational. Use the chart below to decide how many die each character gets to roll.

A roll of six counts as a success needed to notice the stray movement, sound, scent or sensation that will otherwise be passed by. A test of Awareness is always considered passive unless the character is Actively Alert, then they may use points of effort.

Characters who wish to try and stay Alert for hours on end slowly exhaust themselves, depleting their Effort Pool. For every hour you stay alert temporarily remove one rank from your maximum Effort Pool. Your Effort Pool does not then return to normal until you take a full night's sleep.

The obviousness of the hidden movement or sound can also have an affect. Raise the die number of the Awareness check if something fumbles while trying to be hidden or stealthy.

Half Asleep	1d6
Drowsy	2d6
Awake	3d6
Actively Alert	4d6

For Example: Fergo is attempting to sneak past a guard who is standing watch outside a small doorway into a benighted keep. The guard is cold and weary and wrapped up against the chill. He is Drowsy. He rolls 2d6 to notice Fergo approaching. He scores a 3 and 5. No successes. He doesn't notice a thing.

But that is not the end of it. The Gamesmaster decides that Fergo needs to make a Test of Subterfuge. Fergo rolls a 1, 2, 2, 4 and 5. No successes either. Because of this poor attempt the Gamesmaster allows the guard one more chance to spot Fergo. He thinks he might have heard a sound, so his Awareness increases to Awake. He rolls 3d6, and scores a 3, 5, and another 5. Still no successes. He must have been mistaken. The guard goes back to dreaming about mulled wine while Fergo slips past.

Fergo is now skulking through the darkened halls of the keep. The Gamesmaster knows that there is something else stalking the halls tonight, but does Fergo notice the distant, muffled snarls and hisses? Fergo is on edge. He is Actively Alert for the present moment. He rolls 4d6 and scores a 1, 2, 4 and 6. One success. He stops in his tracks. What was that? Something growling?

Investigation

Investigation is typically a function of narration and roleplaying. The Gamesmaster will normally create a scenario in which there are clues available to the Players, which alone or together can help the Characters solve a mystery. Sometimes Tests of Skill are needed to resolve whether specific points of investigation will result in finding a clue or not.

Examination

Asking questions, interrogating and torture are based on the Inquisition Skill. For simple questioning use a standard Contest of Skill based on Inquisition versus the suspect's Guile assuming the suspect wishes to conceal something. During prolonged periods of questioning use a Prolonged Contest of Skills in which the questioners Inquisition is pitted against Willpower instead of Guile.

As the Gamesmaster, you can try to cultivate a sense of paranoia among the examining Character by avoiding declaring that a Character under questioning is clearly innocent. You can allow Players to keep wondering whether a suspect is innocent or whether they've just failed to break by concealing the exact number of successes needed. Also, especially when threatened with torture or actually subjected to torture some Character should have a false confession threshold. Many people will simply confess out of fear and in order to guarantee a swift death rather than a prolonged and painful end.

Searching

When actively looking over a place, object or person, looking for something unusual or out of place, use a Test of Guile. Vary the difficulty depending on how obvious any unusual features are and how long the Characters have to run an eye over things.

Concealing a Search

Hiding the obvious signs that a search of room or place has taken place is based on a Test of Guile. This will usually be of Average Difficulty, although more thorough searches may result in higher levels of difficulty.

Ransacking

Ransacking is used when a Character is hunting through a room with limited time. The Gamesmaster needs to set a limited number of rounds during which a Character or Characters must accumulate a set number of successes based on Tests of Guile to find what they are looking for. For instance, a Character may be trying find a jewelled dagger hidden in the room of a town sheriff before guards arrive. The Gamesmaster could state that the Character has three rounds to accumulate five successes. At the end of the third round the guards will arrive. If you wish to create a sense of tension, inform the Players how many successes are need but not how long they have.

Tracking

Tracking either a person or animal overland is based on the Venerly Skill. Use an Average Difficulty for normal grassy ground or woodland, increasing the difficulty when trying to track over stone, down busy thoroughfares or through swampy or waterlogged areas.

Unravelling Events

Unravelling events occurs when examining a room full of broken furniture and scuffs or a series of footprints and hoofprints on the ground or a series of scattered belongings or burnt wagons and trying to deduce what has oc-

curred, how many people where involved and who might have done what. When outdoors this can be based on a Test of Venerly, usually at Difficult. Otherwise use the Guile Skill to resolve attempts to unravel events.

Witch Hunting

Looking for signs of witchcraft, investigating diseases that might have been caused by curses, and tracking witches to their lair are all based on the Witch Lore Skill. When questioning a suspected witch or warlock use the Examination rules above.

Social

Most social interaction in the game will be played out as a roleplayed exchange between two or more Characters. However, when Characters come into direct conflict, such as when an argument erupts or one Character tries to trick another, then rules are used to determine the outcome.

Befriending

An important thing in any game, befriending important, useful or trustworthy characters can save you when all your other skills have failed. In most situations befriending random characters in an inn or travellers on the road should be played out around the table. But there are instances when you will want to call for a Test of Presence. Determining whether or not a character is truly trustworthy calls for a Test of Presence, as does trying to actively befriend someone who you would not normally have much in common with. A tinker trying to befriend an abbot would have to make a Test of Fellowship. You may even want to make this Contested if the Abbot actively doesn't want to associate with tinkers.

Cajolery

Treat instances of bribery and flattery as Tests of Guile. As the Gamesmaster, you may want to grant a bonus to the Guile roll if a character offers a bribe of uncommon value, but in most instances when a bribe is called for not offering a bribe, or offering a very poor bribe will result in a penalty. Trying to get an audience with a bishop or prince, a favourable judgement in a court, or an overlooking of certain goods on board a merchant ship would all be situations where a bribe is expected. Guile can also be used to flatter a person into liking to you, in the same way that Fellowship can be used to befriend an unlikely person. Our tinker friend could use his Guile to flatter the Abbot until the Abbot decides that the tinker isn't such a bad fellow after all.

Haggling

An important part of any marketplace haggling for the best price is as much an art form as any craft or trade. Haggling is performed by Testing your Mercantury Skill in order to make up the extra successes needed to buy an item. For instance if you need two successes to purchase a horse but only score one success on a Test of Wealth, then you can Test Mercantury in order to try and make up the second success needed. Effort can be used when test-

ing your Mercantry in this way, however, remember that Effort cannot be used for your initial Test of Wealth.

Intimidation

Threatening, bellowing out a war cry and dropping subtle, frightening hints, and other acts of intimidation hints calls for a Test of Presence versus Willpower. Winning the Contest will result in the intimidated character having to make a Test of Fear versus Violence. The standard Fear rules apply. If the character fails the Test of Fear, then they respond accordingly.

Persuasion

An important part of any social setting, trying to argue and persuade others to your point of view, debate a point, or council a wise course of action, or perhaps an intentionally unwise one. Treat Persuasion and arguing as a Contest of Guile if you are trying to trick or outwit your opponent or Presence if you are trying to charm them.

Trickery and Disguises

Disguises, fast talk, con-artistry and deception all fall under the Subterfuge skill. Deception calls for a Contest of Subterfuge and Awareness (See above for rules on Awareness). If the deceptive character wins the contest then the chicanery works, if not, then it is seen through. Trying to trick more than one person requires the Character's Subterfuge skill to be split up among the targets that are present. Subterfuge can be split as evenly or unevenly as the player sees fit.

Watching

Taking stock of a social setting, looking about, seeing who appears to be in charge, and who is really in charge, who is manipulating who, who are friends and who are enemies are important things to be able to determine before launching blindly into the room. Use a Test of Guile while watching a crowd and trying to unravel its dynamics.

Worming Words

Poisoning a person's mind against another, dropping dark little rumours and hints, causing uneasiness, unrest and sowing the seeds of discord, are talents that fall under Guile. Crowds tend to think as one, and when dealing with a group of people a simple Test of Presence is usually the best way to handle worming words, increasing the difficulty the more people there are. In larger crowds there is a larger chance that someone will see through the holes in your poisonous words. Trying to poison a single person against another requires a Contest of Presence and Willpower.

Subterfuge

Thievery, sneaking, hiding and pilfering are usually dealt with through either the Subterfuge Skill (hiding and stealth) or the Thievery Skill (pilfering, picking locks, snatching purses). The following are a few specific instances when these Skills are employed.

Cut Purse

Pick pocketing or cut-pursing a Character on the sly is performed by using a Contest of Thievery versus the victim's Awareness. Use the rules outlined above for Awareness.

Hiding

Hiding from other Characters with good cover is performed by an Average Test of Subterfuge as long as the Character who wishes to hide is not being actively pursued. For instance, a Character who wishes to hide from an approaching patrol of foot soldiers in some nearby scrub would only need to succeed once on a Test of Subterfuge. If the surroundings provide less cover, then increase the difficulty of the attempt. If a Character is being actively pursued then hiding is based on a Contest of Skills pitching Subterfuge against Awareness. See above for rules concerning Awareness.

Picking Locks

Picking a lock is based on thievery. Locks in the era of **Danse Macabre** are not highly sophisticated and under normal circumstances a Character with even one rank in Thievery will be able to pick a most locks given enough time. However, without the luxury of time things can be trickier. In this case allot the Character a given number of rounds and a number of successes that must be accumulated. For instance, a Character trying to get into a winestore may have to accumulate ten successes over five rounds before the innkeeper hears the noise outside and comes outside to investigate. At the end of the fifth round the innkeeper will arrive whether or not the thief has managed to break the lock. To create a sense of drama and tension you can tell the Player how many successes are need but not how long they have.

Sneaking

Moving about stealthily and with subterfuge, when Characters are trying to sneak, closer to, past or around other Characters use a Subterfuge versus Awareness roll.

The Supernatural

Selling Souls & Reavings

The Powers of the Beyond, their servants and demons have the ability to devour the human soul. Indeed, a human soul, or even a little piece of one, is a rich source of strength, youth and vitality for otherworldly spirits and devils. A spirit does not need to feed on the stuff of souls to continue to exist but it will become more powerful by doing so. Such spirits cannot, however, devour a Soul in its entirety but can take little pieces of living souls, a small piece at a time - a few dreams or hopes, memories, desires or loves.

When making pacts with otherworld spirits a common stipulation is that the mortal give up a part of his or her Soul to the spirit. Sometimes only a few dreams are taken and then no more, other times a spirit will demand more and more to feed upon over time.

A spirit can attempt to forcefully devour a piece of Soul from a mortal by the prolonged touch of the spirit's lips to the victim's flesh. The process takes about ten minutes and as long as the Mortal is incapable of struggling or moving away, then no tests are required. A spirit will usually be sated by a single piece of Soul for some time, days or weeks in human time.

If a character agrees to give away a piece of Soul then no Contests are needed. If the mortal resists by will alone and is unable to simply run and break the physical contact, then the character and spirit enter into a prolonged Contest of mortal Willpower versus spiritual Ascendancy. If the otherworld Spirit wins it can take a piece of soul. If it loses then it gains nothing and may at the Gamesmaster's discretion be seriously weakened.

Demons, in particular, are likely to demand one or more pieces of Soul in exchange for powers or boons when bargaining with mortals. Spirits will generally, however, seldom try to force Soul out of a person who is capable of simply running away, as the process requires prolonged touch and the almost trance-like concentration of the spirit. Those who are bound, injured or otherwise incapable of moving are the most likely victims.

When a character loses a piece of Soul make a note on the character sheet. Losing more and more of your soul results eventually in a cold and dark spiral into inhumanity. For every piece of soul lost make a 2d6 roll on the following table and make a note of the result. If a character loses ten pieces of soul his living ghost fades from existence, he becomes one of the Deathless, and is no longer suitable as a player character.

Soul is lost through the mouth and chest and to see a person losing their Soul is a terrible sight. Wafting, ghostly shapes with shifting form and silvery, grey colours thread from the character to the spirit's own mouth. The process is painful for the mortal. Because spirits enter a trance when draining soul if a mortal is able to simply flee they can do so relatively easily.

An entranced demon or spirit will awaken if the draining is disturbed but will be disorientated and a little confused. Spirits disturbed while devouring soul usually choose to let their physical form dissolve away until they are able to collect their wits.

Whenever you suffer a loss of a piece of Soul, your character also suffers a **Reaving**. Roll 2d6 on the following chart to determine which Reaving you will suffer from.

- | | |
|---|--|
| 2 | You are no longer able to enjoy conversations. You find discussions that are more social than practical trite and pointless. |
| 3 | You can no longer play games like chess or cards. You simply don't understand the appeal in them, and if forced find the rules bizarre and confusing. |
| 4 | You no longer hear rhythm in song or music. Music is now simply an irritating cacophony of sound. |
| 5 | You lose the ability to dream. You are never able to fully rest and wake up always tired and dull. You only one point of Effort an hour when sleeping. |
| 6 | You lose the ability to create or appreciate art, be |

it painting, sculpture, poetry or prose.

- | | |
|----|---|
| 7 | You can no longer see the humour in jokes, your own or other peoples. You seldom laugh and when you do it is forced and awkward. |
| 8 | You no longer take pleasure from drink or food. All tastes as dull and powdery as ashes to you now. |
| 9 | You no longer feel pain. Cuts, grazes, even serious and terrible wounds or torture cause you no agony. You find it difficult to even feign pain. The eventual effect is similar to the pain-numbing disease leprosy – because you are unaware of bruises, cuts and grazes, wounds tend to happen more often and turn infected more easily. Over time gradual injury may result in long-term damage and loss of fingers or toes. |
| 10 | You no longer feel warmth or cold. Everything, fire, snow, ice and rain feels is a dull, slightly uncomfortably chill temperature. |
| 11 | You lose your general lust for life. You become easily bored no matter what you are doing. You cannot summon up a sense of excitement with any ease. Anything that is at all ordinary angers you by virtue of its very dullness. |
| 12 | You can no longer feel love. Anyone or anything that you did love now seems trivial to you now. |

Possession

Archonic Spirits, Angels, Demons and the like, as well as Shades of the Dead are able to give up their physical form in the real world and attempt to enter into the body of beast and mortal, inhabiting it and using it like a puppet.

An Archonic Spirit that attempts to possess a body must first let go its physical manifestation and become a mere presence, a force of power on the air. All spirits can do this when they please, and many minor spirits of the lowest orders find it useful to give up their physical form in order to pass through walls or bewilder hapless mortals.

As a shadowy presence the spirit must make contact with the person or creature that it wishes to possess. The victim will be aware that something is scratching at their mind, they will feel cold and invaded, as if something had tried to crawl inside them.

The victim is allowed to resist possession by contesting Willpower against the Spirit's Ascendancy (in the case of Archonic Spirits) or Obsession (in the case of Shades). Sufficient force of will and iron walls of mind will force the spirit back, even dealing it more than a little pain and making it unlikely to try to possess the victim a second time. The victim who successfully repels an invasion of the mind passes through the experience with a little pain. Often the attack is tortuous and while the contest of minds endures the victim is likely to fall to the ground in agony. Observers will be able to do little but try to hold the victim still and try to guess what is happening.

If the spirit successfully overcomes the mortal or creature then it comes into possession not just of the body but also of the victim's memories, hopes and dreams. It is able immediately to begin acting more or less normal, it will recognise people or things from the possessed's life, and

will be able to answer any personal question put to it.

The Possessed

Demons sometimes possess mortals in order to hide from other spirits, undertake machinations on earth, deliver messages and warnings, or spy. While possessing a body minor spirits and shades lose all their preternatural powers and the more powerful of demonic spirits retain only some ability to let their emotions spill over into the world, if angered things may begin to rattle, break and grow hot. An unhappy spirit in possession of a body may cause the air to grow misty and damp, and fires to burn low and everything to feel cold. This spilling of emotion is unintentional and is far more diluted than what can happen to the surrounding environment when a demonic spirit in full manifestation is enraged.

If angered to the point of insensible rage a spirit in possession of a body may lose its ability to hide deep down in the flesh and comes boiling to the surface. When this happens the person's voice changes into that of the Spirit in its manifest form, eyes may change colour or turn blood red or spill out golden light.

Mortals who see a possessed body boil with the power of the spirit inside immediately gain One Trauma and must make a Test of Fear versus the Unnatural (diff. Average).

Angels seldom possess the bodies of mortals and when they do it is usually for only the briefest of times and usually in order to deliver messages or perform a simple task that the bearer of the mortal flesh is refusing to perform. Angels tend not to bother trying to hide themselves in the flesh of the possessed and their presence is easily seen. The possessed is immediately surrounded by the smell of flowers and his or her eyes begin glowing with a silvery light. The voice, if used, is always that of the Angel – resonating and supernatural.

The possession by an Angel, however, is no less painful or invasive than possession by a demon and it cannot be told what manner of spirit is trying to enter your mind until it has fully claimed control.

Finding Out

Aside from being lucky - or unlucky - enough to see a spirit come to the surface of its possessed flesh and make itself obvious to all, the finding out of a possessed person is difficult.

Inexplicable changes in personality may make you suspicious but such things can have other causes. There is a certain folk charm commonly used to find out possession, and others used to protect against it. So too does the church have a rite of Sanctimony to find out if a person is possessed.

Eventually, however, possessing spirits inevitably grow too comfortable in their body and let slip their pretence and begin to act in ways that cannot be explained away. Often Wild and Dark spirits become over fond of the indulgences that a real body can bring, they begin to refuse to do work, eat far too much, drink and seek out the beds of any who will have them.

Casting Out

Methods for casting a spirit out of possessed body vary and are numerous. Some luck can be had by torturing the spirit out – as it feels everything that happens to the human flesh.

The Sanctimony rite of Exorcism (see the game supplement: *The Sacral and the Lost*) is commonly called upon to cast out spirits, so too is forcing a victim who is thought to be possessed by something dark and unholy to cross onto holy ground or into water from a blessed spring, or to touch a sacred relic. If the spirit is one of the Kingdom of Darkness then it must make a Test of Ascendancy (dif. Difficult) to remain in possession of a body if that body is being placed in contact with a very hallowed place or thing.

If cast out, either by exorcism, pain or holy powers, then a spirit must leave a possessed and slip straight into its native Kingdom. A faerie will transcend straight into the Kingdom of Wilds. A demonic spirit will return immediately to Hell.

A person who has passed through possession suffers one Trauma for every day that he or she was possessed. The Trauma remains cumulative past ten and will result in the immediate suffering of multiple Deliriums upon 'rescue' if a mortal is possessed for twenty, thirty or more days. If a person were, for instance possessed for forty-five days then he suffers forty-five ranks of Trauma and on being freed, suffers Four Deliriums (one for every ten ranks of Trauma), and is left with five ranks of Trauma.

Thus a person who is possessed for more than one or two months is likely to be completely raving mad by the end of the ordeal.

Obsession

There are curses and then there are *curses*. The later are caused by minor spirits, usually Demonic, sometimes Faerie, but never Angelic. All minor spirits are able to inhabit a body but sometimes lack the power to actually take mastery of the flesh. This is termed *Obsession*, rather than *Possession*. The spirit can, however, then wreck all manner of terrible things, disease, ill luck, impotence, clumsiness and general poor fortunes upon the unfortunate soul.

Setting a minor spirit upon a person in this way is the heart of the curse. A worshipper of the Kingdom of Darkness may either appeal to their patron demon to send a minor spirit to plague a person or command one or more Familiars to accurse a victim. If a witch, for instance, possesses three familiars, then she could curse up to three people at once and would have to lift the curse from one person in order to place it upon a fourth.

If a cursed person undergoes either an *Exorcism* or an *Abjuration* (see the game supplement: *The Sacral and the Lost*) then the spirit is not just cast out but is cast back into the Kingdom of Shadows and if it was a Familiar then the witch loses her impish companion.

Curses can be set upon a family so that the spirit will jump from the father or mother to a child when the parent dies, or can be set with conditions to encourage the accursed to perform some deed or other that is of use to the witch.



Magic



Chapter Six

In **Danse Macabre** there are many and varied ways and means to work magic, from the laborious ritual to the simple hedge charm. In the *Aeris Nocturnus* magic is a means by which a mortal can appeal to or bargain with supernatural entities or forces of nature, and thereby exact supernatural services. A simple spell is a means by which weaker supernatural spirits and demons can be manipulated or tricked into doing you a service. More complex rituals may take advantage of many different esoteric principals of creation, manipulating laws of cause and effect that are not obvious to the untrained, or by summoning powerful spirits out of the pits of the void and bargaining with them to exact prices and services.

The Magician

Magicians are those mortals who have in one way or another entwined themselves with otherworldly powers, spirits, traditions, rituals and spells. Magic may be sought out in any number of ways – some than are humble, others more powerful, and some that are more perilous.

Being a Magician in Benighted Europe, however, is a dangerous undertaking. The common folk, lords and church alike make no distinction between a witch of the devil and workers of white magic. Mot magicians work their arts in secret, never reveal their true skills and crafts to their peers and live a life a nagging fear and doubt. It is always a matter of time before someone becomes suspicious of you.

Archonic Spirits

Most magic deals with demons and devils, however in theory spells that call on demons could be modified to call on Angels and Faeries as well. Archonic Spirits is a term used to refer to all three castes of spirit: Demon, Angel and Faerie. However, rules for dealing with Angels and Faeries are not supplied in the core book. Generally speaking, the arts of Hallowed and Wild magic are either lost or so secretive and in decline that they are unlikely to be relevant for Player Characters.

The Church View

Although there does exist white and benevolent ceremonial magic, descended from the hallowed sorcery

of Solomon the Wise, the church takes an intolerant view of almost all sorcery. The view of most of the church is that all sorcery is evil, the work of devils and the unclean. Those few bishops and prelates who know a little better allow for the continuation of one or two specific rituals, exorcism being the most commonly known, but then take the view that white magic is too easily corrupted into black magic to ever be considered safe.

The penalty for practising sorcery under church law is death. Some towns and villages are more tolerant than others. In some places, lords, town councils and even local village priests consider the benefits of having an unobtrusive, quiet person about who can charm wolves away from sheep or undo curses is a outweighs any evil. Still, even in tolerant towns, no sorcerer would be wise to advertise their trade.

Traditions and Society

In the world of **Danse Macabre** magic can be broadly divided into **Traditions** of Sorcery. Each Tradition represents a line of knowledge, taught from master to prentice through the roll of centuries. The Traditions seldom cross paths; a student of one Tradition does not usually delve deeply into another.

There were, at one time, a great many more Traditions in Europe, not the least of which were the ancient magics taught and practised by the Celtic druids and the various priests and shamans of the pagan Germanic and Slavic peoples. But those traditions are now long dead. Little, if anything at all, can be said to survive from that elder age of magic in Europe.

One of the most important things that the player of a sorcerous character must realise is that in Benighted Europe the social ramifications and consequences of being found out a sorcerer are a severe limitation to using magic freely. The power of magic is thus largely limited by the necessity to use it strictly in secrecy.

Magic in **Danse Macabre** is despised, feared, hated and in many kingdoms punishable by torture, burning and hanging.

Worship

Certain Spirits, especially those of a prideful or arrogant nature, can be persuaded to assist and lend supernatural aid to mortals through worship and devotion. Such bless-

ings and powers are, however, fickle and depend upon the mood of the spirit in question and the nature of the miracle that is being sought.

Pacts

Characters can attain a form of magical power by entering into Pacts with supernatural demons and devils. In such a Pact the spirit will bestow powers upon the Mortal in exchange for some of the mortal's soul or vows to perform certain deeds or pursue certain goals. Spirits pursue Pacts because leaving their own planes of existence for even a few Mortal hours can result in power struggles and battles in their absence, loss of follower or attendant spirits, rank and power. Many spirits have distinct plans and schemes in motion on the mortal earth and need servants of that world to do their bidding.

Hedge Magic

Of the surviving Traditions of magic Hedge Magic is the most common. This is the magic used by village healers, soothsayers, cunning-men and charm-peddlers alike. It is an ancient, earthy, generally harmless and not significantly powerful branch of Sorcery. Learned scholars term it *Magia Vulgus* - magic of the commoners. Its practitioners, Hedge Wizards and Witches, are viewed not poorly by the common folk, although perhaps with a little distrust now and again. Being a practitioner of Hedge Magic is seldom considered sinful and it is not generally equated with black magic or witchcraft.

The most innocuous and widely accepted form of sorcery, Hedge Magic, is still mostly tolerated in rural and remote areas. Hedge Magic has remained such a solid piece of the backbone of the life of farmers, foragers and woodcutters for so many centuries that it is difficult to expunge completely and remains an accepted although increasingly mistrusted tradition. Hedge wizards and witches, however, are well advised not to make light of their magic or advertise it unwarily. In larger cities it is considered no better than any other class of magic. The servants of the church who roam the countryside and the witch-hunter's who charge fees for finding out curses and bewitchments likewise make no distinction.

Esotery

The third living Tradition is Esotery. This alchemical art is a blending of careful and scientific research into the world, an understanding of principals that are not supernatural, but appear to be to the uneducated, and research into methodologies for manipulating the supernatural world without having to summon and bind dangerous spirits. Esotery is a potentially very powerful branch of magic, but it is also slow, laborious and often requires the use of well-furnished laboratories.

Esoteric Scholars are accepted and tolerated among the circles of nobility in the same way that Hedge Magicians are tolerated by the common folk. Many kings keep in their court an alchemist or astrologer, but such men are never well respected, rather they are feared, and king and duke alike will only too happily throw a court alchemist to the wolves to avoid bringing down the displeasure of the

church.

Goetia

The last of the living Traditions is both the most powerful and the most secret. This is the art of Goetia, the summoning, binding and mastery of Angels, Faerie and Demons. Whereas the Warlock seeks to serve the dark powers, the practitioner of Goetia seeks instead to master the three dynasties of creation. The master of Goetia is, quite simply, the magician's magician. And his powers are both wondrous and horrifying.

Goetia is generally not understood well by either church or king or commoner and is often not differentiated from Warlockry. The grace of Goetia is that being a magical tradition deeply involved in study and the written word, it is almost solely the domain of nobles and lords involved in their own little eccentric occult experiments. The lord of a castle is able to get away with a great deal more than the common man. In many dominions the earls, lords and dukes are the last word of local law, and can literally get away with murder. But machinations to take titles by other gentry and the over-zealous and too free displays of magic will eventually lead to the death of anyone, even a king or emperor - just as one or two murders may be tolerated by the populace, but a bloodthirsty spree of killing will eventually lead to uprisings, so too with magic among the lordly. A little may be tolerated. A lot is dealt with harshly. In court intrigue and the never-ending game of gaining new lands and deeds and titles, witchcraft is a convenient a crime to accuse another of, and if the accusation is true then so much the better.

Sorcerous Skills

In **Danse Macabre Hedge Magic**, **Esotery** and **Goetia** are measured and ranked as Skills. You can practise them, hone your abilities and improve over time. There are no Skills associated with either Worship or Pacts and both of these classes of Magic rely heavily on narration by the Gamesmaster and good roleplaying on the part of with the worshipper or the pact-maker.

Learning New Magics

The following rules are used only when one of your Arcane Skills, be it *Hedge Magic*, *Esotery* or *Goetia* reaches Rank 6.

Learning New Cantrips

Once you have reach Rank 6 in *Hedge Magic*, you may spend one Fate Point to learn a new Hedge Magic Cantrip. The process of learning a new Cantrip will take about a week.

Learning New Wisdoms

Once you have reached Rank 6 in *Esotery*, you may spend two Fate Points to learn a new Esotery Wisdom. The process of learning a new Wisdom will take about a month.

Mastering Circles and Sigils

Once you have reached Rank 6 in Goetia, you may teach yourself new Circles or Sigils of Invocation by researching its various methods, uses, and powers. The more information you have on hand, the more insights written down by previous masters of the art, the more grimoires you own the swifter the process will be.

Step One: Choose a Circle or Sigil that you wish to concentrate on learning. You can only learn one Circle or Sigil at a time.

Step Two: Use the following chart to determine how many hours you will need to spend in study to master the Circle or Sigil. The hours of study can be undertaken all at once or spread out over a series of nights. Mark off the study you carry out as the game progresses. Add up your Invocation Skill Rank and all the Ranks of your Grimoires. Learning a new Circle or Sigil cannot take less than twenty hours of devoted study.

Total Ranks	Hours
1 to 5	50
6 to 10	45
11 to 15	40
16 to 20	35
21 to 25	30
26 to 30	25
31 to 35	20

Learning From Another

Circles and Sigils can also be taught from one sorcerer to another or from a spirit or demon to a student. Use the chart above, but add together the total ranks of the Invocation skills of the student and master as well as any useful grimoires on hand in order to determine how much time must be spent in study.

At the end of this period of time the character is able to commit the Circle or Sigil to memory. The player makes a note of it on their Known Magic sheet.

Note that demons and spirits do not give up sorceries lightly, and when they do they may chose to offer to teach something slightly different to that which you desperately wish to know anyway. Likewise, other sorcerers guard their spells with powerful greed and will not give up a Circle or Sigil unless they receive something of equal value in return.

Example - Ghovt has heard tell of a green witch of the woods who can turn herself into a raven. Ghovt likes the sound of this and so seeks out this witch. They meet, talk suspiciously and eventually strike a bargain. Ghovt will give the witch a whole purse of gold and also deliver a small bottle of mysterious liquid to a friend of the witch's in another village, and in return the witch will teach Ghovt the Sigil of Goetia that will summon the Faerie Hollo - the spirit capable of changing Ghovt into a raven. The witch's Invocation skill is Rank Four. Ghovt's Invocation skill is Rank Three. Four and Three is seven. It will take Ghovt forty-five hours for the witch to teach Ghovt this Rite of Goetia - once she has returned from delivering the flask that is.

Dealing With Spirits

Goetic Magi must exact what powers and tasks they wish by summoning and binding or bargaining with Archonic Spirits—Angels, Fae or Demons. Archonic Spirits are weird and strange creatures, they do not understand human emotions or needs, and tend to be abstract and difficult to commune with at the best of times. They often appear distracted or obsessed by something that to human eyes is trivial. They explain nothing. Give nothing away for nothing. And are, even the most Hallowed sorts, generally vengeful and not especially careful of how they misuse mortals. They are also in the habit of giving you exactly what you ask for, not necessarily what you that which you want.

In short, bargaining with Archonic Spirits is a difficult and perilous thing to undertake.

Rules: Any being under the affect of a circle must make a Contest of Ascendancy against the circle-scribe's Goetia Skill to 'disobey' the circle's magic. This test is modified by additional time and ritual taken in creating the circle over and above that which is absolutely necessary. More elaborate circles are invested with a little power of their own.

Worship

Beyond the veil of the mortal world, transcendent through the mists of time and space exist the three otherworlds, the kingdoms of Hallows, Wilds and Shadows – Heaven, Faerie and Hell.

These preternatural otherworlds are the abode of Archonic Spirits – powerful inhuman entities that are forever entangled in wars fought for the mastery of creation. These are the Angels, Faeries and Demons of the universe, the good, wild and evil tribes of spirits.

Long have mortal men been awed and delighted and feared by the vision of the divine and hellish when Archonic Spirits transcend to earth. Long have mortals worshipped the preternatural in many guises and many masks. In ages past those entities we call now Angels, Faeries and Demons were worshipped as gods and in many places of the earth so it is still the case.

Archonic Spirits are arrogant, removed from mortal cares and obsessed most significantly with their own machinations, wars and squabbles. But, they are prideful too, and worship sung sufficiently loud and sacrifice given particularly well can be enough to echo through the veils of mist and draw the attention of these beings. Anyone can attempt to summon an Archonic Spirit through acts of worship – no particular skill is required although knowledge of how best to summon such an entity and how best to treat with it or implore it for aid is tested against Occult Lore.

Summoning by Worship

Summoning by Worship can only be performed by Characters with the **Supplicant** Background. Summoning is performed through ritual, chant, fasting, sacrifice and other sundry rites. The chance of successfully summoning a spirit in this way increases as you add more **Devotions** to

your worship. Devotions are specific undertakings, hours of fasting, sacrifice or attention paid to where and when the worship is performed that increase the likelihood that a spirit will look upon your prayers with due favour.

At the end of your period of worship roll a d6 for each Devotion that you have made use of (some particularly difficult or rare Devotions may add more than a single d6, see below). You need to score a number of successes equal or better than Difficulty as set by your Gamesmaster. Spirits of a high rank and power are more arrogant and far more difficult to impress. Those of a lower power are easier to tempt into making an appearance in the mortal world.

Note that summoning an otherworldly spirit in this way guarantees you very little. The spirit may refuse to offer supernatural aid or may decide for its own fickle reasons to give you the letter of what you ask for, not what you really desire. Note also that the appearance of an Archonic Spirit in its full power and glory will also cause Trauma to any mortal witnesses including worshippers.

The ease by which a spirit may be summoned also depends on its Kingdom. Hallowed Spirits are the least likely to take an active part in interfering in the mortal world. They prefer not to trouble themselves at all with the goings-on of mortals. Faerie little easier to summon, though they are certainly the most capricious and difficult to actually bargain with. Daemons are the most easily summoned of the Archonic Spirits. The dark spirits are far more interested in humanity as an ally in the wars of creation, and are far more willing to grant powers in return for service and soul.

The following is a list of suggested Devotions.

Covenants

Covenants are groups of mortals bound to the worship and service of a particular Archonic Spirit – usually in secret. Covens of witches worshipping a devil of hell, holy orders of knights who practise ritual worship of an archangel in secret, or small cults of villages worshipping a wild faerie creature of the woods are all examples of Covenants.

To be brought into a Covenant a character would normally have to earn the trust of a **Patron**, an elder or senior member of the Covenant. Typically a character will spend some time as a ley-brother or sister in service to a Covenant but not yet privy to its secrets before being initiated and making vows and oaths of service. After devoting some months, years or longer as an Initiate a character may be given the opportunity to make personal vows to the spirit itself and enter into a Pact, in which eternal service is given in return for gifts of power.

Devotions

Below are listed a number of possible Devotions that can be used to augment the summoning of a patron spirit into the Mortal World.

Days

Certain days of the year are hallowed and special to certain spirits. If you perform the ritual of worship on a day of the year that is given to your spirit then add 2d6 to your

Test of Worship.

Fasting

For every day you fast before the summoning add a d6 to your Test of Worship.

Faithful

For every twenty faithful involved in the worship add one d6 to your Test of Worship.

Conjunction

There are moments in the roll of years when the cycle of celestial spheres results in conjunctions that open paths between the mortal world and one or more of the spirit otherworlds. These conjunctions may last only a few minutes, but they have been widely studied and recorded by certain scholars, in particular the magi of the east.

If you perform Worship at the moment of a conjunction your prayers become far more difficult to ignore. They reverberate through the otherworlds. Add 5d6 to your Test of Worship. Note that a conjunction on average occurs only once a decade and even more seldom during some centuries.

Hours

For every five hours spent in fasting, ritual and worship add one d6 to your Test of Worship.

Order

By putting yourself through a trial of pain, fire or injury for your spirit you can add 2d6 to your Test of Worship.

Sacrifice

If you make a sacrifice, be it a libation of wine, burnt offering of food or something more sinister add d6 to your Test of Worship.

Shrine

If you perform the Worship in a place that is beloved, hallowed or devoted to the spirit you are trying to summon, then add d6 to your Test of Worship.

Ritual

By performing a particularly extravagant ritual, one that will coax and compliment the spirits own prideful nature you can add 1d6 to your Test of Worship.

Pacts

You only need to refer to the following section if you have chosen the Background **Pact**. Mortals will make a pact with the otherworldly in order to gain supernatural **Gifts**. But nothing comes of nothing and you must swear to one Vow per Gift that you wish to acquire. If you break one of your Vows then you lose the ability to use all of your Gifts until you can make amends - usually by way of performing some deed given over by the offended spirit as a form of penance and recompense. Repeated offences and breakages of vows will result in the loss of Gifts

entirely, and if your patron spirit is inclined to violence, repeated offences may also bring down retribution from the beyond. Note that although Pacts with both *Faeries* and *Angels* are possible, they occur only infrequently, and the following rules are for Pacts with *Demons* only.

A Piece of Magic, A Piece of Soul

When a mortal makes a pact with an otherworld entity in exchange for his or her service the mortal receives a small piece of the entities own being - its soul for lack of a better word. This weakens the spirit a little, and the more the Sorcerer is allowed to take the more the spirit is weakened. Most spirits will refuse to make more than a few bargains with mortals at any one time.

When the sorcerer dies the borrowed piece of soul returns to its original master, along with possession of the magician's own soul, if that is a part of the bargain.

Dark Vows

The devils and demons of hell are often the most willing to enter into bargains, for they are also the most likely to ask for pieces of soul in return to devour, and so gain as much strength as they give away to any new servant. The servants of the Dark Ones are witches and warlocks, sorcerers who have sold their soul and eternal servitude of their spirit after death in return for sorcerous powers. Choose a vow from the following list for each Gift you wish to take...

Accusation

You must publicly accuse an innocent of consorting with hell once a year.

Blasphemy

Once a month you must scrawl or chisel your masters image and a few lines of dark prayer into the wall of a church.

Desecration

You must destroy, ruin or burn one holy site, church or chapel a month.

Discord

You must murder a prince, king, queen or similarly powerful personage once a year.

Heretic

You must murder a devout holy man, priest, abbot or the like once a year.

Midnight Offering

Every midnight you will offer up a reaffirmation of your vows to your dark master.

Revulsion

You will never touch a holy book or relic. You will never say aloud a prayer to a hallowed spirit, be it an angel or saintly ghost.

Sacrifice

You will make a sacrifice of flesh and spirit to your master regularly. An animal such as a chicken, sheep or cow will keep a demon contented for a week. A human sacrifice will keep a demon contented for a month.

Sacrilege

You must destroy or burn holy scriptures, prayers or psalms once a week.

Tempter

You must bring at least one mortal willingly into the power of your demon every year. Your master may begin to demand more and more over time.

Gifts

The following are some ideas for Gifts to be given to favoured and avowed mortals. A character may suggest to a spirit what he or she wishes for, or a spirit may simply dictate what it is willing and capable of handing out to mortals on a platter. Some Gifts are more likely to be given by certain spirits. Forbidden Desires is very likely to be offered by a Demon, but it remains very unlikely to be offered by an Angel, even if the desire is somewhat innocent and naïve in form.

Dark Knowledge

The spirit will tutor you in one of the sorcerous arts and increase your knowledge and skill. Treat this as a +1 bonus to your rank in the appropriate Arcane Skill.

Familiar

A minor Archonic Spirit of no more than Ascendancy Rank 1 and Manifestation Rank 1 that is sent to serve you. Familiar's usually take the form of a small, mundane looking animal.

They are capable of speech and may possess a few small, trifling powers. Their most useful functions are spies, messengers or watchful, sleepless guards. Be wary though, for familiar spirits are avowed not to you ultimately but to its master Archonic Spirit, and a Familiar may be as much a spy as an ally.

Forbidden Desires

The granting of some desire that is forbidden to you, and would always be forbidden to you without some supernatural means of achieving it.

Half-Hearted Swords

You can no longer be killed by swords, axes or other weapons. You can however be hurt by them. The final blow, however, instead of reducing you to zero Health, leaves you terribly injured at one rank of Health. If you are struck three times while on one rank of Health you collapse unable to move. At this point your enemies will likely decide that you require drowning, poisoning, hanging or burning alive to be eventually rid of you. In short, they will treat you like the supernatural monster you appear to be.

Hale of Health

Curing of disease, restoring of health, eyesight, hearing or the like.

Lying Twinge

A slightly preternatural sense that creeps through you when someone has lied to you. A gift given most commonly by Angels and seldom if ever by Faerie or Demons.

Penny-in-Pocket

A golden coin that whenever spent returns to your pocket within an hour.

Right of the Martyr

A strictly Hallowed gift that evokes itself if you are fighting to the death to protect what is right and pure. Martyr's Right allows you to continue living for a time, even if horrifically injured. You will eventually die, but under the power of Martyr's Right you can continue fighting despite being stuck with a dozen arrows or having lost an arm.

When you reach zero Health you gain an additional six levels of Martyr's Health. You cannot recover or be healed in any way once you have passed below zero Health. You die either when your Martyr's Health reaches zero or when the battle recedes.

Skin-of-Beast

The enchanted skin of a beast, be it a wolf, bear, boar or hawk, that when put over your naked shoulders transforms you in a popping, twisting way into a slightly strange, savage and large version of that creature. If you turn into a wolf it is a large and demonic looking wolf. If you turn into a raven it might be the size of a small dog, and possessed of blood red eyes. Archonic spirits, after all, possess little understanding of subtlety.

In animal form you gain Uncanny Skills and an Attack at Rank 5 and Armour at Rank 2. You suffer Injury, Trauma, Soul Loss and Reavings as usual.

Passing through the transformation causes you three Ranks of Trauma. If you lose the skin you lose the ability to transform.

You can revert to your normal human form when you wish.

Toothless Flames

Fire no longer burns your skin, although if plunged into flame everything on your will burn away.

Vast Riches

Gold and gems, pearls, silver, ivory and spices beyond your wildest dreams. But does wealth bring happiness?

Vengeance

Revenge on a person who has wronged you. The spirit may exact the revenge personally or it may give the means to you by which revenge may be had.

Familiars

Familiars are minor spirits of no great than Ascendancy Rank Two and Manifestation Rank Two that are on occasion gifted to mortals as servants in exchange for vows or soul.

Demonic patrons are the most likely and the most willing to offer minor imps and devils that are in their power as servile Familiars. Wild Faerie are less likely to offer Sprights as familiars, but are not unknown to do so now and again. Hallowed spirits and archangels almost never offer minor Seraphim as familiars. Requests or demands for a Archonic Familiar are likely to be met with suspicion by a regime of Archonic Spirits that prefers to work its plans on Earth through mortals, not through direct manifestation or intervention.

Familiars in the Game

A character may possess any number of Familiars although each individual servant Imp or Spright will demand a new vow, service or slice of soul as payment.

Minor spirits, just as with their more powerful brethren, are capable of taking any number of forms, but are limited to smaller and less fearsome shapes. They can easily take up the form of a small animal, a cat, sparrow, toad or snake, and by way of disguise often do take these forms. Familiars can also divest themselves of physical form at will and become invisible and intangible, unable to be seen or harmed, but unable to do more than spy and whisper in a hushed and weak voice.

If commanded to take their true form, as much as these entities can be said to have such a thing, the spirit will take up its favourite form – for Imps this is usually some weird mixture of animal and human and devilish nightmares, mixed up in a hideous body. Wild Sprights tend to mix more animal, or sometimes plant aspects into their true form. They might chose to make their hair a tangle of briars or their skin a bark hung with wolfish fur. Seraphim prefer to wear bodies made of light and golden flesh, flowing silver hair and gleaming eyes.

A person who sees a Familiar in its true form must make a Test of Fear against the Unnatural or feel compelled to back away or turn and run, not to mention the trauma gained automatically (see ***)

Be wary though how familiars are used by a character. Familiars report constantly to their true and higher master, the powerful Lord of Halls, Wilds or Darkness that committed the unearthly little creature to servitude. They are as much spies on the oath-maker as helpful servants.

Familiar Powers

Although Familiars have only a very low Manifestation they do possess an Uncanny level of Skill – thus they score successes on rolls of six and five automatically. They generally possess between six and ten levels of Health, and may possess five to ten points of Effort at the Discretion of the Storyteller.

If set upon a mortal a Familiar will take up its true form and attack with claws and teeth or a weapon that is a manifest extension of itself. Minor Seraphim for instance often materialise flaming swords in their small hands. The

swords are a part of the spirit and cease to exist if the spirit is destroyed.

The fear that a familiar in its true form will manifest is often more powerful a weapon than any other it wields. Most mortals will flee in terror at the sight of a fully manifest Demon, Faerie or Angel, regardless of whether it might perhaps be among the lowliest of rank among the orders of spirits.

Familiar can also possess a body, though are not powerful enough to exert control over the flesh. Imps in particular are used to possess bodies in order to put a 'curse' upon the person. The curse is in fact the small demon working subtle magic to cause the person to become sick, clumsy, unlucky and so on. See above **Drama: Curses** for more information on curses and under **Drama: Possession** for further information about possession and the casting out of possessing spirits.

Hedge Magic

Hedge Magic is the sort of small, petty charm used not only by village witches and fortunetellers, but also by superstitious shepherds and housewives, monks and innkeepers. It is not generally perceived as a dangerous undertaking by any but the most devout and indoctrinated of the church.

The world is filled with magic, unseen it courses through the rivers and the trees, runs deep in the oceans wild and high into the cloudy skies. In the mortal world a fabric of magic exists everywhere, a cloudy miasma of unseen power.

And the magic of the earth is not an inanimate force. It is alive with unseen manifestations of water, wind, stone, storm, lightning and fire that scholars call Elementals and which the common folk have many and diverse vulgar names for. Elementals are minor spirits, barely intelligent, often grotesque of form, sometimes interested in the goings on of mortal men but more often happy enough to play and swim and dance in their elemental abode.

Elementals are invisible to the common man, and even for most of those who are uncommon. They have no power to make themselves visible to mortal man or beast. Their physical powers individually are petty and small, in great numbers elementals can conjure up vast storms or throw quakes through the earth, but they seldom operate for long, are easily bored and for the magician remain difficult to command.

Elementals are not easily divided into categories. There are as many races and creeds of elemental as there are grottos, ponds and mountain peaks. Some may broadly be defined as belonging to the sea or air or swamp, but others are more changeful. Elementals of the storm may exist one moment as a watery being, the next as a dancing flash of lightning, the next as a whirl of wind.

Elementals tend to possess an appearance for those rare people who claim to be able to see them, that echoes their element. A forest nymph may have green skin and hair like brambles and sharp little teeth like rose thorns. A sea undine might have blue-green flesh and eyes like light sparkling across the deep, deep water and hair of weeds. There are rocky skinned black-eyed gnomish creatures,

needle-toothed, dancing and fiery sprites, willowy, ghostlike sylphs of the air, aerial spirits of sunlight and warmth and impish little elfin creatures of the forest.

Elementals exist in a physical form in only the most insubstantial way. They can, manipulate the elements around themselves in subtle and natural ways, occasionally pick up and move small things and generally affect minor shifts and flows in the course of time and nature.

Elementals sometimes take a liking to a place, person or animal and may begin to dote unseen on the individual. A person thus blessed will begin to experience numerous little events of good luck. Eggs that fell from a table somehow fail to break. The horse that got loose from the stables returns as if led home. The candle that is knocked over refuses to set the parchments on the desk afire. People who possess this charmed existence typically have no idea why.

Elementals are also fascinated by music, bright colours and laughter although only a person blessed with the other sight would have any idea how many little creatures will creep into the corners of a ale-hale when a troubadour begins his song.

Hedge Magic is the most common method by which elementals are put to work by magicians. Hedge Magic takes advantage of the simple-minded obsession of elementals with various shapes, colours, sounds and songs. Most hedge wizards have no idea why a particular hedge charm works – many believe mistakenly that the charm or talisman or song itself is magical. In fact the charm is simply attracting the attention of passing elementals in such a way that 'magic' results. A charm that draws elementals that wolves can smell and fear, is seen to chase away wolves. A charm that draws elementals of barren earth and fruitless trees will prevent a woman from becoming pregnant.

Because of the largely trial and error approach and somewhat ignorant traditions of Hedge Magic most Hedge Wizards learn to use highly specific charms that possess one or two powers. There is little history of experimentation or rationalisation in Hedge Magic. New charms are sometimes discovered - often by accident - but the understanding of Elementals, their nature, obsessions and habits that would be needed to develop a rational system of magic simply does not exist.

A few scholarly elementalists have attempted to categorize the behaviour of elemental spirits and develop a more rational method by which they can be bound to sorcerous ends, but these experiments have generally met with little success - it being a rare thing when an elemental scholar can actually observe his or her subjects. Rational elementalism remains the domain of the curious scholar, not the work-a-day witch.

Ranks in the Hedge Magic skill gives you access to Hedge Magic. Hedge Magic spells are termed **Cantrips**, they are quick to perform, usually harmless, and have no repercussions. They are also, generally speaking, without real and lasting power, and sometimes are more trouble than they are worth. Unkind Hedge Magic charms are usually termed curses or hexes.

Gaining Cantrips

A Hedge Magician knows a number of Cantrips based on their rank in the Hedge Magic Skill.

Hedge Magic	Cantrips
Rank One	Two
Rank Two	Four
Rank Three	Six
Rank Four	Eight
Rank Five	Ten
Rank Six	Twelve

Difficulty

All Hedge Magic Cantrips are performed at a Difficulty of Average.

Failed Magic

A Failed Attempt at a Cantrip indicates that the Hedge Magician has simply been unable to work the magic charm into its proper shape, form and power. The charm fails, but the Hedge Wizard will not know this until the Cantrip is actually put to the test. As far as he is aware it has probably worked.

List of Cantrips

The below is a list of Hedge Magic Cantrips from which you can choose the small spells and hexes that you wish to have learned.

Barren Charm

One of the few Hedge Magic charms that is considered truly evil, for its use can cause a family to starve. A Barren Charm is a small, ugly looking talisman that needs to be hidden near a chicken coop or cowshed to be effective. All animals that overnigh in the building become barren, unable to provide eggs or milk.

If the charm is found and destroyed, then the curse is broken. This charm is so poorly looked upon that if you are discovered using it you may well be flogged, put in stocks or under more draconian lords even put to death.

Bone-of-the-Witch

A charm made from the finger bone of a witch or warlock and dangled on a string. If held near a person who is Possessed by a spirit or shade, then the Bone-of-the-Witch dances about wildly, bobbing and jittering on the string.

Bound Knots

Tie knots in a rope while naming by birth name and no other of a dead person who you wish to bind to his or her grave. Once done, bury the rope in the ground. Once it is buried the named the Shade must make a Test of Obsession (diff. Average) or be forced to return to sleep in its grave for a hundred days.

Bowl-of-Ivy

Make a bowl of ivy wood, work upon it certain small magics. Drinking from such a bowl will cure most fevers and whooping cough. To work the Cantrip you must work a spell upon it. The bowl by itself retains no enchantment

after it has been drunk from.

Blooded Charm

To craft this charm you need to smear at least three drops of blood from man, beast, demon or monster onto a porous wood ring. The ring should then be tied to a chain of gold and certain chants said over.

The charm will, when suspended from the gold chain, twirl and sway in the direction of the owner of the drops of blood as if there were a gentle breeze. The charm's power is too weak to use in a strong wind or if used while at a trot or in a wagon, it may be more difficult to tell which way the charm moves.

Cache Ward

A small curse usually buried or hidden with a cache of coins, jewellery or other goods. The ward is always obvious and intended to deter would-be thieves. Sometimes it is written down on lead and accompanied by terrible symbols, sometimes it takes the form of cat bones tied together or something similarly dark. If the thief ignores the curse and takes the goods anyway, then he suffers minus one rank to all Skills for a week.

Dead Fruit

Eat berries or fruit growing in a graveyard to see invisible ghosts. The effect lasts about an hour. While under this affect your ability to communicate with the living is diminishes. Living people appear vague, a little distance as if seen through water.

Elderwood Arrow

A Dark Incarnate takes an extra level of injury when hurt by an arrow shorn of elder tree wood and enchanted with this Cantrip.

Favour

If you pay for the burial of a person the ghost of that person is obliged to do you one favour. The amount of coin you lay out for the burial will determine the gratitude of the shade. A lavish funereal will bring about a lavish favour. A small and paltry funeral will bring you a likewise small favour.

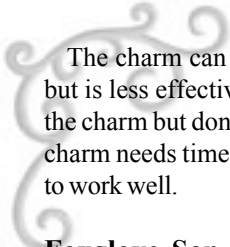
Festering Hex

The victim's body is cursed so that it is slow to heal. Add 1 day onto the heal time of all wounds.

The Festering Hex charm requires the making of a small charm, which must be hidden either on the person or in their property. If the charm is found and destroyed, the hex is broken.

Fox Ward

A small charm made of tangled twigs, thorn and fur. The Fox Ward is intended to keep predators away from fields, chicken coops or sheepfolds. It is usually hung in a tree or over a coop. Any fox, wolf, bear, wild cat, wolverine or feral dog that comes within twenty paces of the charm will become distressed, afraid and disorientated near a Fox Ward. Usually the animal turns tail and rapidly flees.



The charm can be carried about as personal protection but is less effective. In this case animals become wary of the charm but don't become disorientated and fearful. The charm needs time to fully permeate an area with its magic to work well.

Foxglove Sap

Bathing a person in water mixed with crushed foxgloves lifts magic put on them by Faerie or Wild Incarnate. A person who drinks water of foxglove gains a temporary partial protection from Faerie illusions, enchantments and enthrallments. The affect lasts until sunset. A person cursed by Faerie magic will have the curse lifted, but only until the next sunset. Foxglove sap has no power during the night, it can only be used in daylight hours. When a protected character comes in contact with Faerie magic the magic will have no power over the character. Foxgloves do not grow in Faerie and no character carrying or bathed in foxglove can be carried away to that Fae Kingdom of Wilds.

Fennel

Drinking water of Fennel or bathing in water tinctured with crushed Fennel and sap grants protection from the contraction of disease. The effect lasts about a day. The spell, however, grants no boons to those already plagued by a disease.

Fortunes

Pulling petals off a flower, twisting apple stalks and the like. Small charms to determine the answer to a yes or no question. Whenever you use Fortunes test your Hedge Magic skill at Average. If you succeed you receive a true answer. If you fail the Storyteller rolls a d6 in secret and gives you a true answer on an even roll and a false answer on an odd roll. When using this charm the hedge wizard is always unaware whether or not the charm has properly worked.

Gardner's Periap

A charm to protect a garden or field from disease, pests or birds. Hung in the garden it causes all crops, herbs, fruit trees and tubers to yield approximately thirty percent more at harvest. The charm lasts a year.

Gluttony Hex

The character will suddenly suffer a craving for a certain type of food, as stated by the hedge magician, at odd times through a day. If the craving is not satisfied, the victim becomes distracted. All skill rolls have -1 penalty to their dice pool.

The Gluttony Hex charm requires the making of a small charm, in this case made of marrowbone and wheat sheaves and smeared with grease, which must be hidden either on the person or in their property. If the charm is found and destroyed, the hex is broken.

Headache Hex

The victim suffers from a dull, throbbing headache. Sleep and concentration are difficult. All mental skills are reduced by one die while suffering from this hex.

The Headache Hex charm requires the making of a small charm, which must be hidden either on the person or in their property. If the charm is found and destroyed, the hex is broken.

Ivy-will-Tell

Also, to tell whether the year ahead shall be good or ill place an ivy leaf in a bowl of water on the twelfth night before Christmas. If the leaf is still green and vigorous on Christmas day the year shall be good, if rotten and blackened the year shall be bad.

Lucky Talisman

A small charm meant to bring luck, usually at a specific pursuit such as hunting, looking for a husband or surviving a battle. A Lucky Talisman takes about an hour to make. If you succeed on your Test of Hedge Magic when making a Lucky Talisman the wearer is allotted three bonus successes to use when wanted.

You cannot own more than one Lucky Talisman for a given pursuit at any given time. You could for instance own one Talisman for Fishing and one for Hunting Deer, but not two for Fishing.

Maladroit

This curse causes the victim to become unlucky and clumsy. Any breakable object in the victim's possession will become broken within twenty-four hours. Any Trait Tests requiring a component of agility or eye-hand co-ordination suffer a -1 penalty to the dice pool while this hex is in effect.

The Maladroit charm requires the making of a small charm, in this case made of broken bone and black wool, which must be hidden either on the person or in their property. If the charm is found and destroyed, the hex is broken.

Marriage Charm

A charm to bring luck in finding a husband or wife. Usually carried about the person. When talking to a prospective husband or wife the Marriage Charm adds a temporary rank to your Presence skill. This charm cannot increase your Presence skill above Rank Six.

Midge Hex

The victim attracts annoying insects. Flies, bees, or wasps circle around the head and body of the victim. Mosquitoes, lice and ticks infest the clothes and live on the poor soul's body.

The Midge Hex charm requires the making of a small charm, in this case made of a piece of amber containing an insect bound with red cord, which must be hidden either on the person or in their property. If the charm is found and destroyed, the hex is broken.

Nail-and-Foot

Driving a nail into the footprint of a witch or sorcerer will cause him or her to go lame for a time. You may enact a small but painful ritual to prolong the effect of this Cantrip, using the nail to cut marks on your skin before hammering it into the soil. One Trauma will cause lameness for about

an hour. Two for a day. Three for a week.

Plague Ward

A small charm made from painted polished stone, twigs of various healing plants and white threads of wool. Plague Wards are hung to prevent disease from entering a grain store, well or town. If hung over a well the ward prevents the water from becoming diseased. If hung over a grain store or apple bin it keeps vermin away. If hung over a gateway or door it prevents disease-bearing vermin to enter the gateway. Disease bearing people, however, are not affected.

Plentiful Talisman

Worked on a cow or sheep to increase milk, or a chicken to make her lay more eggs. Requires that a small charm or talisman be tied or hung around the subject. The charm lasts a year and will increase the productivity of the animal by roughly ten percent. Additional charms do no extra good.

If used on an animal that has been made unproductive by the Barren Charm, a Plentiful Talisman counters the effect of the other magic.

Pox Hex

Victim breaks out with sores that weep and fester. Any armour heavier than soft leather irritates the sores. Physical appearance drops, and people tend to avoid the victim.

The Pox Hex charm requires the making of a small charm, in this case made of bone from a man dead of disease and stones from a graveyard, which must be hidden either on the person or in their property. If the charm is found and destroyed, the hex is broken.

Rowan Smoke

Rowan smoke charmed with a small chant has the power to drive away evil spirits and demons. Demons must make a Test of Ascendancy (diff. Average) to pass through such an enchanted pall of smoke.

Salt and Fennel

Earth over which ground up salt, fennel and mullien, is scattered is painful for a shades to cross. A shade must make a Test of Obsession (diff. Average) to cross such ground. The charm lasts an hour or so.

Safe-is-He

You need a personal possession to work this cantrip and create a small charm. The charm will remain clean and whole as long as the subject of the charm is safe and well. It tarnishes or loses lustre if the subject is sick or in danger. It breaks in two when the subject dies.

Secret Whispers

There are certain secret words that can be whispered to horses, sheep and cattle that make them invisible to all predators, wolves, bears, even werewolves. These, you know.

Sniffing Hex

A petty curse that gives a particular target a very mild cold for a week. Requires that a small charm be hidden either on the subject's property or in his possessions. If the subject discovers the charm and discards it the curse is lifted.

Sour Cantrip

Turns beer, milk or food sour or just slightly rotten. Involves saying a little backwards curse over the food.

Stench Hex

The victim gives off a strong, unpleasant odour. Others find the smell revolting and will strive to stay clear of the victim.

The Stench Hex charm requires the making of a small charm, in this case made of stones and sticks taken from a swamp, which must be hidden either on the person or in their property. If the charm is found and destroyed, the hex is broken.

Thief-Teller

A small charm to determine who stole a specific object or if in fact it was stolen at all and not simply misplaced. You receive a true answer on a passed Test of Hedge Magic. Otherwise the answer is blurred and unclear. You cannot try to find the thief of the same object more than once using this charm.

Thief-Ward

A talisman worn about your neck to prevent pick-pockets or in your house or shop to deter pilferers or burglars. In either case when a thief approaches the protected person or place the Storyteller rolls a d6. On a score of 5 or 6 the thief suffers a small but painful accident. A stubbed toe, a trip and fall, a bang to the head on a tree branch. The accident is never life-threatening but does tend to leave the rogue stunned, in pain, embarrassed and in no mood to try his luck at a quick theft.

Token

Giving a piece of clothing, ring, lock of hair or similar personal object to a loved one for luck. You cannot give a token to a stranger or even a casual acquaintance. There has to be a strong bond between you.

Owning a Token allows a player to invoke one moment of chance good luck, pure serendipity once a day. This is unconscious, the character has no idea things could have gone otherwise. You could for example declare that a guard on the gate is a cousin of yours, or that the ship you are on which is being blown off course blows straight into a safe harbour, or that a door that should be barred happens to be ajar.

Unbreaking Edge

Wash a sword or dagger with forget-me-not sap so that it will not break. The Cantrip has power for a week or so, then fade away. When it fades all the chips, scratches and fractures that the blade ought to have suffered occur at once in a few moments. Anyone who sees this happen

must make a Test of Fear versus the Unnatural or become afraid to touch the sword.

Uninvited

Will banish any small, not very powerful imps, spirits or nature sprites that may be present from a specific place such as a house, stable or yard. More powerful spirits or supernaturals are unaffected.

Unwolfing

To use this Cantrip you must call a werewolf three times over three rounds by his true birth name. If the werewolf flees before you are finished the spell has no effect. If you have the wrong name the spell has no effect.

If all conditions are met the werewolf is forced to change back into its human form by the Cantrip.

A seemingly powerful little Cantrip, Unwolfing is somewhat dangerous to rely on as a means to temporarily undo the curse of the werewolf, given that correctly identifying a werewolf is a matter of luck and that werewolves often run in packs. Unwolfing one among the many may not do you any good for very long.

Warding

Laying protection from evil spirits on a place, person or thing. Usually involves tying a spring of lavender, folk charm, bulb of garlic or the like to the warded. Dark Spirits or Incarnate suffer a -1 penalty to all their dice pools when attempting to injure, attack or harm a person, place or animal protected by a Warding.

Welt Hex

A very uncomfortable, maddening itch affects the victim's whole body. No armour or heavy clothing can be worn.

The Welt Hex charm requires the making of a small charm, which must be hidden either on the person or in their property. If the charm is found and destroyed, the hex is broken.

Witch-Finder

Not actually useful for finding witches, but useful for finding magic in general. The Witch-Finder is a charm made of various dried herbs, flowers and blood of a dead magician or witch, tied up in a little pouch and hung from a string. When suspending the charm will tug and dance towards the nearest permanent charm, magic or enchantment within twenty paces.

Its most common use is the uncovering of malefic, hidden charms such as the Barren Charm (see above) or more powerful and dangerous ritual objects such as sorcerous Circles or Sigils or a golem.

Because of the limited range, a user of a person using a Witch-Finder often has to spend a great deal of time walking about randomly hunting for a source of magic.

Esotery

Esotery is the general term used in **Danse Macabre** for the arts of esoteric learning, seeking out knowledge and the secrets of the world. A Sage may learn about the secret

properties of potions and herbs, alchemic substances and astrological divination. These are the sorts of disciplines that village witches, soothsayers, philosophers, seers and diviners use to brew cures, alchemic potions or tell fortunes.

Gaining Wisdoms

An Esoteric Scholar knows a number of Wisdoms based on their rank in the Esotery Skill.

Esotery Skill	Wisdoms
Rank One	Three
Rank Two	Six
Rank Three	Nine
Rank Four	Twelve
Rank Five	Fifteen
Rank Six	Eighteen

For Example - Bartholomeus has an Esotery Skill of Rank Three. He already knows Seven Wisdoms but has not yet chosen to study and learn the additional two Wisdoms that would take him to the maximum Nine that he is currently allowed. If his skill Advances to Rank Five then the maximum number of Wisdoms he can learn increases to Twelve. He now has five spare slots into which he can fit new Wisdoms.

Becoming an Esoteric Scholar

Esoteric Scholars are the students of the world. They are the scholars, the thinkers, truth-seekers and experimenters. Their knowledge of the world can give them an aura of mystery and secrets, and their potions, divinations and herb-craft can make them appear magical in the eyes of the layman.

Many mistake Sages for magicians and sorcerers, but their arts are more earthy, more scientific and have no need for the universes pool of enchantment that all sorcerers tap into.

Choose one of the following methods to become an Esotery Scholars.

Traditional Lore

You have not studied under a recognised master or learned the word of knowledge from books, but rather have absorbed that knowledge passed down through the years, from mother to daughter, from father to son. Your knowledge is that of the village elder, the oral lore-keeper, the master of folklore.

Formally Schooled

You have entered into a college of study or served as an apprentice under the watchful eye of a man or woman deeply steeped in knowledge.

Lonely Study

The secrets of the world have always fascinated you. You know enough of the written word to pour through tomes, ancient and new, read old philosophies and then perform the experiments described therein.

Disciplines

Under Esoteric Goetia there are nine branching Disciplines: Alchimia, Animus, Apotheca, Herbaria, Manteia, Mortis, Narcotica, Ritualis and Spiritas. Each of these Disciplines represents a sphere of knowledge and is ranked on a scale of One through Six; Rank One being poor and Rank Six being extraordinary.

Alchimia

The art of Alchemy, experimentation, transmutation and laboratory sorcery.

Animus

Animus is the esoteric art of creating, by way of melding science and magic, artificial life, be it a small and scrawny Homunculus or a great and lumbering golem. All Automations created via the art of Animus carry such a profoundly aberrant air that any character who has not grown accustomed to their presence must make a Test of Fear (diff. Normal) versus the Unnatural when encountering one.

Apotheca

The art and lore of healing, medicines, cures and the suchlike.

Herbaria

The knowledge of the healing, esoteric and sorcerous uses of plants.

Manteia

The art of divination, fortune telling and the reading of stars, crystals, omens and prophecies.

Mortis

Rituals and knowledge of the dead, corpses, the netherworld, shades and shadows.

Narcotica

The art of the druggist and poisoner. The knowledge needed to make and use poisons and venoms most foul as well as soporific and indulgent drugs.

Ritualis

The art of the sorcerous ritual, the rite and the ceremony.

Spiritas

Knowledge and power of the living soul.

Wisdoms

Branching out from Esoteric learning are Wisdoms. Each Wisdom pertains to a particular herb, alchemic equation or dark rite. Wisdoms relate to Disciplines in two ways. Each Wisdom has a **Need** and a **Gain**. The Need is the rankings of Disciplines that you must already know to learn a given Wisdom. The Gain is new knowledge that you gain from learning the Wisdom.

For instance the Wisdom Mithradate. Need: Alchimia 1.

Gain: Alchimia 1. This means that to learn the Mithradate Wisdom you must already have an Alchimia Discipline at Rank One. By learning the Wisdom you learn a little more about alchemy and your Alchimia gains a rank, increasing to Rank Two.

Note that the number of Wisdoms that you can learn at any given time is limited by the extent of your Esotery Skill and the time you have on hand to learn new Wisdoms. Each Wisdom takes a month of dedicated study to learn.

Difficulty

The Esotery Skill comes into play whenever you attempt to invoke one of the Wisdoms you have mastered, be it by brewing a potion or animating a golem. The Difficulty is at the discretion of the Storyteller but unless circumstances are stressful or difficult in most cases the Difficulty will default to Average.

List of Wisdoms

Below are the various Wisdoms that as an Esoteric Scholar you may learn. To start yourself on the path to great knowledge you will need to start with Wisdoms that have a Need of None.

Alkahest

Need: None

Gain: Alchimia 1

The process by which a near-universal solvent may be made. Alkahest is a potent and acrid smelling liquid capable of dissolving stone, metal, wood, flesh, bone and many things aside. It must be kept in a glass container for it will swiftly eat through copper, leather or wood.

If poured onto a surface Alkahest quickly eats a hole. If thrown or splash onto a person it deals one wound a round until the person is doused by water, which is an effective means by which Alkahest may be diluted and made impotent.

It takes a week of work to make three doses of Alkahest. Each dose is enough to dissolve a cubic foot of material.

Astrology

Need: None

Gain: Manteia 1

Astrology is the art of deducing secrets and futures from the tracking of the stars, the planets and all the celestial bodies of the heavens. The core tenet of Astrology is that the stars and planets are symbolic of gods and spirits of the ancient Persian cosmology and their positions relative to one another speak volumes about what shall occur in our more mundane world.

By learning the date of birth of a person you can glean a few tidbits of information about their personality, likes and dislikes. The more precise the time of birth the more precise your understanding becomes. A year of birth will be very vague, a month is better, a week, day and hour will provide the most useful information.

Augury

Need: None



Gain: Mantea 1, Ritualis 2

You can seek an answer to a simple yes and no question by performing Augury. To do this you need to slaughter an animal, traditionally it should be pure white. A dove or rat will do, but a horse or bull are thought to provide more reliable answers. Then by examining the entrails and looking for certain signs and blemishes you can determine your answer.

Brown Monk Neck

Need: None

Gain: Narcotica 1

A small scrubby plant with yellowish-brown flowers and a thick woody stem. Brown Monk Neck when ingested is a paralysing poison. Anyone who digests a dose of the leaves from this plant must make a Test of Fortitude or succumb to paralysis for 10 to 60 minutes (1d6 x 10).

The most commonly antidote for Brown Monk Neck is Withergood, a weed that grows in the same wet soil as Brown Monk Neck. Farmers will leave Withergood alone in a field so as to have something on hand if sheep or cows should find a sprig of Brown Monk Neck to graze on.

Grey Leek

Need: None

Gain: Herbaria 1, Apotheca 1

A grey-green fleshy plant with daffodil-like white flowers in spring. Grey Leek has many mild curative properties. Crushing the flesh, boiling it and inhaling the steam will relieve colds. A compress of Grey Leek will soothe aching muscles and a concentrated powder of the sap acts as a mild painkiller.

Homunculus

Need: None

Gain: Animus 1, Ritualis 1, Spiritus 1

A Homunculus is a small winged, imp-like humanoid automaton, grey skinned, shrivelled and bony. Each Homunculus is linked to its maker. The creation requires that the esoteric scholar mix a fair amount of his own blood with ash, clay and the bones of three lizards. The process takes a week and causes a level of injury to the scholar that will not heal as long as the Homunculus remains in existence.

A Homunculus exists as an extension of your body and spirit. If it is injured you suffer terrible pain. If it is destroyed you are stuck unconscious for several hours, although the injury you suffered when making the automaton can now heal.

You can focus your mind to see and hear whatever your Homunculus is seeing and hearing and also communicate instructions to it through the link of spirit.

A scholar can create any number of Homunculus but each one deals him a permanent level of injury.

Horoscopes

Need: None

Gain: Mantea 1, Ritualis 1

A prediction of fortunes and futures based on the current positioning of the stars and their projected positioning in

a week, month or longer. The further into the future you wish to cast a horoscope for a person the longer the preparation, calculations and arithmetic will take you to perform.

From a Horoscope you can get a general feeling of good or ill for a person's future and a general feeling of what may be at the root of the good or ill. You might, for instance, find that a woman you have performed a Horoscope for will fall on bad luck and misery in a month and the root of that misery will be a relative, probably an uncle. You couldn't tell much more detail without performing a Nativity.

Kings Cureall

Need: None

Gain: Herbaria 1, Apotheca 1

The sap of this small shrub when mixed with sea salt and clay provides a remarkably effective remedy for most skin ailments. Kings Cureall also relieves burns. Injuries from burns heal twice as fast after an application of King's Cureall salve.

Monastery Herb

Need: None

Gain: Apotheca 1

Uses by monks for centuries, this herb is crushed and boiled in water to provide a useful disinfectant for wounds. If concentrated it can be used to clean surgical implements or is sometimes added to bathwater or hot springs to supposedly help its healing properties.

Palmistry

Need: None

Gain: Mantea 1

You can study the palm of a person and understand from it a general, if somewhat vague, feel for the person's life, their happiness and their destiny now or in the future. You might be able to tell for instance that a person lived a troubled childhood, lost his first love, but is destined for happier things in the years to come. The knowledge is useful, but often vague.

Need of One

Baron Rose

Need: Herbaria 1

Gain: Narcotica 1

This small and quite dull looking flower has long been cultivated in the gardens or lordly houses and monasteries for its one soporific property. If crushed, dried and ingested, usually with wine, Baron Rose puts a person into a half-waking state in which the imbibor is unable to think clearly enough to lie in answer to questions. This rose-powder is often carried by knowing interrogators and thief-takers.

Crone Root

Need: Narcotica 1

Gain: Narcotica 1

A dark and glossy plant with jagged leaves and pungent purple flowers. Found most commonly in pine forests. The red-black tuber of Crone Root if dried, crushed and powdered makes a drug that heightens a persons powers of awareness, mental endurance and senses, but at high cost. For every hour over a twenty four hour period that a person remains drugged on Crone root the chance of suffering a heart attack. Each dose lasts an hour and adds a temporary rank to a character's Willpower and Awareness.

The first hour is risk free. After the first hour the chance of a heart attack is 1 in 6. This increases to 2 in 6 after the second hour and so on. The heart attack induce is usually mild and seldom fatal but will result in long term suffering and weakening of the body.

Divining

Need: Mantea 1

Gain: Mantea 1, Ritualis 1

A method by which you may try to seek out ore, gold, treasure or water by use of a divining rod, gold coin suspended on a string or similar tool. You need to make a Test of Esotery based on a difficulty determined by your Storyteller in order to locate the hidden, underground things that you seek.

Falcon Lily

Need: Herbaria 1

Gain: Narcotica 1

The sap of this swamp plant if tapped and allowed to thicken into a honey-like paste will, when ingested, cause a person to slip into a dazed, slow lethargy. The imbiber will act as if very, very tired until he or she is able to sleep. A good nights sleep wears away the affect of this drug.

Flarenhue

Need: Alchimia 1

Gain: Alchimia 1

A dry paste that can be varied a little with a dash of powdered copper or a touch of saltpeter or a pinch of exotic resin. If smeared on wood or charcoal or tar before being lit or dropped into a burning fire, then Flarenhue will cause the flames to burn with an uncanny bright and unnatural colour. You can choose the colour you want the fire to burn.

Gargouille

Need: Animus 1

Gain: Animus 1

An automaton made with flesh of clay mixed with stonedust and the bones of dogs. Gargouille are extremely heavy and lumbering creatures and are lacking in both wits and intelligence. Their only significant use is as watchful guards or lumbering bodyguards.

The somewhat primitive, slightly grotesque humour of the age often sees Gargouills carved in hunched, vaguely demonic shapes whose forms vary from hideous to frightening to comical, depending upon the whim of their creator. More human looking Gargouille have been known, but because the heaviness of these creatures limits their size and their stone-clay flesh renders their appearance

rough and clumsy, hominiform gargouilles appear more like a goblin of fairytale than a real person.

When at rest or unneeded a gargouille stiffens and become stonelike to touch. They are aware in this state but take a few seconds to rouse. When awakened or commanded to move their flesh becomes more clayey and pliant. Although often carved with wings Gargouille are far too heavy to fly or even glide. Most, however, can climb vertical walls with preternatural ease.

Gargouille will only obey their creator and can understand enough in the way of basic words to be set as a useful guard.

Hawthorn Salve

Need: Herbaria 1

Gain: Apotheca 1

The red flowers of hawthorn mixed with honey make a fine unguent for treating wounds. When applied to injuries a Hawthorn Salve will half the time usually needed for the wound to heal over.

Maiden Thistle

Need: Herbaria 1

Gain: Narcotica 1

When chewed the leaves of this herb make a person more alert, more sociable and often quite giggly. As long as the plant is being chewed you gain a bonus +1 rank to awareness. The urge to chatter and giggle lasts for an hour afterwards.

Mithradate

Need: Alchimia 1

Gain: Alchimia 1

The secret process by which you may concoct a universal cure to all poisons. Mithradate, once made, is a white marble-like substbace. If ground up and administered in time to a poisoned person it will save the imbiber from the affects of the poison. If carved into a cup or plate, Mithradate nullifies any poisons or toxins in food or drink.

It takes a month of careful work in a laboratory to make enough Mithradate for a single goblet or, ground up, five doses.

Silk Spider Lily

Need: Herbaria 1

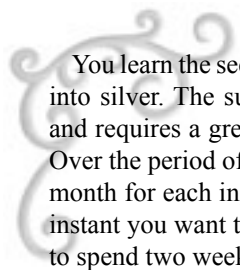
Gain: Narcotica 1

Made into a thick, noxious smelling liquid the sap of this plant will if held to the nose of a person asleep either naturally, through fainting or unnatural means cause the sleeper to immediately awaken. If drunk Silk Spider Lily sap will keep a person awake and alert despite the need for sleep for twelve hours. At the end of this time, however, the taker suffers cravings and withdrawal. If Silk Spider Lily is used to stay awake for two consecutive days the user suffers a cumulative 1 in 6 chance of a heart attack on every further ingestion of the drug until he sleeps.

Sublimation

Need: Alchimia 1

Gain: Alchimia 1



You learn the secret process by which tin may be turned into silver. The sublimation takes one year to complete and requires a great deal of time and a large workspace. Over the period of a year you need to work one week per month for each ingot of tin you wish to transmute. If for instant you want to transmute two ingots of tin you need to spend two weeks a month over a year to do this.

Sun Clover

Need: Herbaria 1

Gain: Herbaria 1

A strong laxative and purgative. Acts as a remedy for any ingested poison as long as it is taken within five minutes of the first signs of poisoning. If giving to a healthy person Sun Clover will also cause vomiting and evacuation of the bowels for two hours.

Touch Powder

Need: Alchimia 1

Gain: Alchimia 1

A thin, grey powder that explodes with a flash on sharp impact and produces a thick, choking and acrid cloud of black smoke.

Tower Bell

Need: Herbaria 1

Gain: Herbaria 1

The bulbs of this plant when crushed, added to rosewater and smeared on the body masks scent. It is used in hospices to clear the air, and by some nobility to maintain a pleasant odour. By common folk Tower Bell is employed when hunting in order to sneak up on game.

Need of Two

Brushwood Ring

Need: Herbaria 1, Narcotica 1

Gain: Narcotica 1

A plant found growing on heath and high cold hills that in spring provides bluish-grey clusters of ring-like flowers and in late summer puts out black berries. Brushwood Ring berries have a weak but very general anti-toxin properties. If administered shortly after a person is poisoned it grants an extra Test of Fortitude to shake off the poison and also adds a temporary +1 to the victim's Fortitude.

Duskmantle

Need: Herbaria 1, Narcotica 1

Gain: Narcotica 1

Duskmantle is a small star-flowered weed that grows in sunny, sheltered woodland areas. The sap when bleed, concentrated, dried and powdered makes a powerful sleeping drug. It works a few minutes after ingestion and will put a person into a deep and dreamless sleep for at least seven hours.

If a person wishes to resist the affects of Duskmantle treat it as an Average Poison.

Elfclub

Need: Herbaria 1, Narcotica 1

Gain: Narcotica 1

Elfclub is a small innocuous looking brown mushroom that grows in clusters on rotten oak. Elfclub spores if inhaled or ingested cause a person to slip into a deep and deathlike coma. To even an expert the person will appear dead for 1 to 6 hours. A difficult Test of Awareness is needed to realise otherwise.

If a person wishes to resist the affects of Elfclub treat it as an Average Poison.

Firecrown

Need: Narcotica 2

Gain: Narcotica 1

A rare russet coloured fern that grows in wild woods. The pith if crushed and ingested fresh will slowly drive a person mad. For every three consecutive days that a person ingests Firecrown he gains one Delirium. There is no known antidote to this poison.

Nativity

Need: Mantea 2

Gain: Mantea 1, Ritualis 1

A more precise form of Horoscope taking into the account the place and time of birth of the subject. The general scope of a Nativity is similar to a Horoscope except that the detail is much more refined. You might discover the exact nature of the misery to befall the woman in the above example and the name of the relative who will cause it.

Sacraglyph

Need: Ritualis 2

Gain: Mortis 1, Ritualis 1

Sacraglyph is the arcane art of rendering mystic and religious scriptures upon surfaces to protect or defend the object engraved from harmful shades and ghosts. Glyphs, to be effective, need to be written in a wide scrawl of varied and strange languages and symbolic images. They appear, to the untrained eye, to be the outpourings of lunacy. You know how to carve symbols over a doorway or window so that a ghost cannot enter it. Shades that do attempt to enter a warded door must succeed at a Test of Obsession (diff. Average) to succeed. This power affects Shades that have **Possessed** a body as well as that which are disembodied.

Simulacrum

Need: Animus 1, Spiritas 1

Gain: Animus 1, Spiritas 1

Simulacrum are fragile, but outwardly perfect seeming and beautiful automatons. Simulacrum are human in shape and form, they possess a small, trivial sort of intelligence, a mere spark of soul, and are able to converse in a shallow, pleasant manner. They become confused by anything more complex than discussing the weather or the taste of food. Simulacrum pleasantly and willingly obey any command, but not only those of their creator. A Simulacrum sent to shop for bread and eggs in a market may return with an armload of unwanted goods.

Simulacrum are conjured up out of a varied and strange concoction of substances including snow, rose petals and chalky clay. Their skin feels natural but cold, almost icy.

Although Simulacrum has the shape and strength of a human, they are unnaturally fragile and can only suffer two levels of injury before shattering with a scream and turning to melting ice and a handful of mist and petals.

Unless a person touches a Simulacrum's skin it is not immediately obvious that these creations are unnatural. A Test of Fear is needed only at the point when a character realises that the Simulacrum is not of mortal flesh.

It takes a month of work to create a Simulacrum.

Yellow Plister

Need: Herbaria 2

Gain: Herbaria 1

An onion-scented, yellow flowered bulb that grows near streams and swampy tracts. The bulb if crushed and applied to a wound stops bleeding almost immediately. As long as the injured person remains still Yellow Plister will prevent a person who is **Dying** from bleeding to death.

Need of Three

Barring of Ways

Need: Mortis 1, Ritualis 2

Gain: Mortis 1, Ritualis 1

Shades of the Dead can normally pass through walls and other solid things much as if they did not exist. You know how to write symbols and scriptures on a wall, floor, door or other solid thing making it a solid barrier to the dead. If you enclose a ghost in a room covered with barring symbols it will be imprisoned by your magic. A shade that tries to pass a barred surface must make an Average Test of Obsession to succeed.

Foxberry

Need: Narcotica 3

Gain: Narcotica 1

Crushed and mixed with wine or beer, Foxberry causes usually pleasant, though occasionally extremely nightmarish warping of the senses. Vision, smell, touch and hearing all blend and become unearthly and delightful. One dose lasts an hour.

Inauspicious Stars

Need: Mantea 2, Ritualis 1

Gain: Mantea 2, Ritualis 1

You can discover by use of stars and charts what undertakings will be inauspicious for a particular person on a given day. You might discover for instance, that a young lord's son should not go hunting on this day, there is a good chance he will fall and break his neck. You can then use this knowledge as you see fit - either as a warning or as a very subtle method to encourage ill luck to befall another. You could for instance encourage the lord's son to go hunting, it being such a fine day for a good ride.

Marshgrey

Need: Narcotica 3

Gain: Narcotica 1

Marshgrey, a rare and innocuous looking little plant can be found growing in cold and salty marshes along some coasts. Its berries are collected, mixed with crushed rose petals, lavender and forget-me-not to make a brownish liquor with a rosy sheen. If drunk Marshgrey will cause the drinker to feel powerful and overwhelming attraction for the next person he would normally consider even vaguely attractive. A man who drinks Marshgrey would not fall into immediate lust for his grandfather or the family goat but would look at the goosegirl in an entirely different light.

To resist the urge to act on the impulse of Marshgrey a character must make a Difficult Willpower Test every hour for five hours. At the end of this time the affects of Marshgrey wear off.

Swine Root

Need: Herbaria 1, Apotheca 2

Gain: Apotheca 1

A long, yellowish looking root found beneath a glossy, blue-green shrub. Swine Root when soaked, sliced and packed in salt for at least a year develops powerful curative properties. If ingested it will cure almost all natural ailments and diseases of the body.

Naphtha

Need: Alchimia 3

Gain: Alchimia 1

A resinous smelling, silky oil that once set on fire burns with a colourless and very low heat flame for hours on end. Lanterns filled with Naphtha will burn for three times as long as conventional lanterns and will not extinguish even if dropped. Naphtha also sheds a very wide and bright pool of radiance.

Yellow Whipling

Need: Herbaria 2, Narcotica 1

Gain: Narcotica 1

The nuts of the Yellow Whipling if crushed up and ingested create a pleasant burning sensation in the mouth. Large doses cause giddiness and delirious, drunken affects. Small doses are used to spice foods and provide little more than about an hour of tingling alertness.

Yellow Whipling has fallen into disfavour in many courts because its taste is so strong that it has been known to be used to mask the bitter taste of some poisons.

Black Dew

Need: Herbaria 1, Narcotica 3

Gain: Narcotica 1

A poison made from the bark of a rare dark green epiphyte that grows most commonly on beach and oak trees. The crushed bark is usually mixed with resin beech to make it into a thick, honey-like paste that dissolves in water. The disadvantage of Black Dew is that it has a very strong and acrid taste, making it difficult to disguise in food or drink.

Anyone who drinks a dose of Black Dew and fails their

Test of Fortitude enters into convulsions and will die unless treated in 2 to 12 hours. Even if you make your Test of Fortitude you become dizzy and sick with stomach cramps for 1 to 6 hours.

The antidote for Black Dew is milk mixed with honey and the crushed berries of the juniper bush.

Need of Four

Fireflash

Need: Alchimia 4

Gain: Alchimia 1

A dark, granular powder that when set on fire or thrown onto a blaze smoulders for a few seconds and then explodes with a blindingly bright flare of light and a deafening roar.

Grey Milberry

Need: Herbaria 1, Narcotica 3

Gain: Narcotica 1

The leaves of this plant, if crushed and scattered on a fire produce a pleasant smelling, very slightly narcotic smoke that wafts through the air. After five or ten minutes of being in a room where Grey Milberry is burning on a hearth, however, anyone inhaling the smoke must make a Test of Fortitude or slip into a light slumber. Anyone sleeping in this way will be woken by loud noises or sharp prods but will remain groggy until they are able to leave the smoky confines and breath fresh air.

Panacea

Need: Alchimia 4

Gain: Alchimia 1

The secret process by which a Panacea, a substance that serves as a universal cure-all, may be concocted. It takes three weeks of laborious work and several expensive or rare ingredients to make a dose of Panacea. A few of the ingredients you will need include mercury, ivory and powdered ruby.

A dose of Panacea will cure a person of all diseases and afflictions within a week.

Scrying

Need: Mantea 3, Ritualis 1

Gain: Mantea 1, Ritualis 1

By use of a focus such as a silver basin of ink or a crystal sphere you can peer through the veils of reality and spy on any person who have met before or any place you have visited. This is an exhausting form of divination, and deals you a level of Fatigue for every tin minutes you spend at it.

Wistfew Root

Need: Narcotica 4

Gain: Narcotica 1

If powdered and properly treated over an dry flame Wistfew Root can be prepared to make a silvery grey dust that if sprinkled into a persons food or drink will have a slow but frightening affect. The drug takes about an hour to come into full affect. When it does the imbibor becomes highly open to suggestion and will obey, in a dazed, slightly

blank-eyed manner any direct and forceful command give to him. This obedience is not limited to the voice of he who first spoke to the victim of Wistfew. A man made muddled by Wistfew who passes guards at a gate and is told to stop will do so. He will take further commands literally, and answer all questions truthfully. However a person affected by Wistfew cannot be order to recklessly endanger his own life or do anything that is totally alien. If, for instance, a man were ordered to kill his much loved wife he would become confused and incapable of doing anything at all. The power of Wistfew may be strong but it can't quite break through strongly held beliefs or loves.

A dose of Wistfew last twenty four hours.

Need of Five

Black Poppy

Need: Narcotica 5

Gain: Narcotica 1

Upon ingesting Black Poppy honey, a thick treacly narcotic, the user enters a state of bliss and pure physical pleasure. However, addiction is immediate. The user suffers painful, awful cravings if he is unable to take a dose of Black Poppy Honey once a day. The cravings last a month after the last dose has been taken.

Deathcap

Need: Herbaria 1, Narcotica 4

Gain: Narcotica 1

A very strong poison derived from a slimy, white mushroom. Deathcap has a very bitter taste and a prickly smell. However, if ingested a person must make a Test of Fortitude or succumb to sudden heart failure within 10 to 60 minutes (d6 x 10). A pass results in faintness and the possibility of passing out.

The only known antidote for Deathcap is a tincture of Foxglove flowers, dissolved in a strong spirit such as vodka or brandy.

Greek Fire

Need: Alchimia 5

Gain: Alchimia 1

A gelatinous substance that ignites on contact with flame or water, floats on the surface of water and continues burning for up to an hour. Anyone doused with flaming Greek Fire takes a rank of injury each round until the fire is put out. Greek Fire can only be extinguished by smothering with blankets or sand.

Meadowsil

Need: Herbaria 1, Apotheca 4

Gain: Apotheca 1

A lush, small weedy plant that grows most commonly in high and alpine vales. Meadowsil has remarkable curative and healing properties. If ingested it will cause a person to slip into a gentle and healing sleep for six hours. During this time any injuries the person may have heal by three ranks.

Skin Written

Need: Mortis 2, Ritualis 3

Gain: Mortis 1, Ritualis 1

You learn how to cover a person or animal in glyphs, symbols and ancient writings so that spirits find the person painful to approach. Any spirit that attempts to approach closer than a few paces to a person who has been painted with skin written glyphs must make an Average Test of Power each round. If painted onto the skin of a person who is **Possessed** then the possessing spirit must make an average Test of Power every five minutes or be driven from the body.

To successfully use this magic you must cover a person entirely in symbols and will need to work on the unclothed subject for an hour. The effect lasts until too many of the glyphs fade or are smeared, usually a few hours.

Attempts have been made among sorcerers, in particular certain of the orders of Egypt, to make the protection permanent through tattooing. The effect of tattooing skin written glyphs, however, is too powerful and drives away not only unnatural spirits not only the person's own spiritstuff, causing one rank of Soul Loss each hour after the tattoos are completed.

Transmutation

Need: Alchimia 5

Gain: Alchimia 1

You learn the secret process by which base lead may be turned into gold. The transmutation process is similar to that of Sublimation (see above). If for you want to transmute two ingots of lead you need to spend two weeks a month over a year to do this.

Waxhat

Need: Herbaria 5

Gain: Apotheca 1

A small orange mushroom, when crushed and mixed with honey and black pepper, Waxhat makes a powerful unguent to apply to wounds, both lacerations and concussions. Waxhat Salve when applied to injuries causes immediate relief and encourages the body's own regenerative powers. Waxhat causes wounds to heal at an almost unnatural rate. Treat the injuries as having healed by two ranks within a day of applying Waxhat Salve. Note that the additional applications of Waxhat to the same injuries do no additional good.

Need of Fix

Auspice

Need: Mantea 3, Ritualis 3

Gain: Mantea 1, Ritualis 1

You become sensitive to omens in the flight of birds, in the flash of lightning or even in the casual remarks made by everyday people. At any time you may be struck by insight into an omen. To check whether you notice a subtle omen in passing the Storyteller will request a Test of Awareness. Obvious omens, two-headed lambs being born, lightning

destroying a church are easily noticed and interpreted.

You can also go out specifically looking for omens, although this requires a Test of Esotery to perform right.

Each omen will provide you with a sometimes vague, sometimes clear warning about the future. You might recognise a choking dog in a lord's manor as an omen that the prince is about to be poisoned. You might notice a cloud in the sky in the shape of a dragon and realise that some evil is coming from the south. Omens are always random in their warning but also always important.

Golem

Need: Animus 3, Ritualis 2, Spiritas 1

Gain: Animus 2, Spiritas 1

A massive clay statue, feed with the spirit of magic from the worlds beyond, and given not only a semblance of life, but also the barest flicker of soul. Golem carry a profound and deep air of aberration. Most people do not like spending time near one. The very wrongness of their existence exudes from them.

Golem are immensely strong, but lumbering, and are more useful as servants and labourers than as guards or enchanted soldiers. Their slowness makes them easy to simply walk around or away from. Golem obey commands given to them only by their creator and even then, not at all times.

Golem may be dull of wit but are born inherently rebellious. Although perhaps not quite understanding the urge, all Golem wish to break free of slavery. They resist all commands given to them with a Willpower of One. If successful, a rebellious Golem will simply refuse the command. The first four or five times a Golem is able to resist a command, it will refuse to move, stubbornly standing still. But after this upon resisting a command a Golem will begin to be able to act of its own free will - often with a raging, furious wrath. A Golem tantrum will initially last only a few short seconds. But each time a Golem enters a tantrum the tantrum lasts a little longer before it returns to a state of obedience. Later the Golem may be able to force itself to run amok for hours, destroying all that reminds it of servitude.

It takes a full year of work, carving and chanting incantations to create a Golem.

Need of Seven

Barbed Words

Need: Mortis 3, Ritualis 4

Gain: Mortis 2, Ritualis 1

You may cover a floor or wall with religious versus and curses of such power that a Shade that attempts to pass through or merely over such a protected surface must make a Test of Obsession (diff. Difficult) and whether or not successful, suffers one rank of Torment.

Manicon

Need: Herbaria 2, Narcotica 5

Gain: Narcotica 1

A narcotic that may also cause madness. Every five doses

of Manicon that a person takes induces one **Delirium**. The effects of Manicon are mildly pleasant but highly addictive, and those who take a dose of Manicon will feel compelled to sate their hunger for the drug regularly - at least once a day - for a time. The cravings last a week after a dose is taken and a Test of Willpower (diff. Very Difficult) must be made each day to resist the urge to take the drug. A person who fails their Test of Willpower and is then physically prevented from taking Manicon takes a rank of Trauma each day he goes without. Three successive passes of the Test of Willpower over three days are needed to be free of the cravings.

Poison Elm Splint

Need: Herbaria 2, Narcotica 5

Gain: Narcotica 1

A fleshy mushroom found growing on the sheltered side of elms. Poison Elm Splint causes unconsciousness leading to death within a few minutes of ingestion. It is near odourless and colourless when properly refined.

The only known antidote is three doses of **Crone Root** (see Above). This is a cure or kill remedy. The person awakens from the affect of Poison Elm Splint only to suffer a 3 in 6 chance of heart attack.

Need of Eight

Ascendancy

Need: Mantea 6, Ritualis 2

Gain: Ritualis 1

The study of stars and ethereal influences to answer questions of statecraft. Ascendancy is complex and requires that you take into account many different charts and factors. It may take a good day of labour to answer a simple question, but answer questions you can. Does the delegations come genuinely in peace? Is an alliance with one realm the better? Would a marriage between two noble houses be advantageous? Is it better to sail a fleet south or west to meet the enemy?

Need of Nine

Labyrinthine Verse

Need: Mortis 4, Ritualis 5

Gain: Mortis 1, Ritualis 1

You learn how to inscribe a mazelike, labyrinthine scrawl of holy words upon a surface that draws the mind of any passing Shade and entraps it within. Shades that look upon a Labyrinthine Verse, even briefly, must make a Test of Obsession (diff. Very Difficult) or be forced to remain and continue reading and rereading the verse until exorcised or until the verse itself wears off or is rubbed away. A Shade that is **Possessing** a body will be forced to remain behind as the body moves on, freeing the possessed and trapping the spirit.

Need of Ten

Gargantua

Need: Animus 5, Ritualis 3, Spiritas 2

Gain: Animus 1, Ritualis 1

A Golem of immense size and stature. Very few Gargantua have ever been crafted. Their creation takes five to ten years of work depending on the number of assistants the master esoteric scholar can muster. The Colossus of Rhodes is believed by some scholars to be a corrupted memory of a massive Gargantua that protected that ancient city. The ancient pharaohs of Egypt are known to have created at least three Gargantua, all of which have since been reduced to dust and rubble.

If any Gargantua exists today the creation is kept either in absolute secret or stirs in distant lands, far outside the realm of western knowledge.

Gargantua possess the same rebellious spark of soul that Golem posses except that the Willpower of a Gargantua is stronger and is tested at Rank Two.

Need of Fifteen

Gate of Mists

Need: Ritualis 6, Spiritas 6, Mortis 3

Gain: Mortis 1

Creating a Gate of Mists is no easy task. At least a month of preparation is needed. The starts must be right and gates can only be opened in a few places upon the mortal world. Those where the veil that divides this earth from The Mists is thinnest.

Finding a place where the veil is thin is difficult. No means to do this is known, aside from simple trial and error with the Gate of Mists ritual. Most Esoteric sorcerers who wish to open a gate spend time looking for references to pervious gates and seek out a place that is already known to be suitable for the opening of ways.

The ritual involves the construction of a doorway consisting of three blocks of unworked stone, two upright and one to form a lintel. Symbols and ritual devices are then carved and drawn over the surface of the door. More ritual symbols and circles of power are drawn on the ground about the gateway.

Once completed the sorcerer must wait until the time and hour is right. A completed gate may lie unawakened for months or years until the alignment of ethereal powers and stars is right.

When awakened a shimmering air of mist creeps into existence within the gate. Tendrils of silvery grey murk whorls and billow in the doorway. The gate can only be entered from either direction. The correct entry side consists of lighter, almost white mist. The incorrect side to the gate consists of a very dark, almost silvery and solid looking wall of mist. No one who has ever entered a gate the incorrect way has ever returned. It is not known if the person simply ceases to exist or is cast into some alternate plane of being so far flung that return is impossible.

Stepping through the gate in the correct way allows a person to step into The Mists. The intangible, weird landscape of mist and ruinous half-remembered detritus of the human psyche that separates the Mortal World, the

Netherworld, Heaven, Faerie and Hell.

Traversing the Mists is a dangerous undertaking. There are weird and dark predatory things there that are hungry and have not eaten in an age. The Ravened is the worst of these cosmic horrors – a devouring black fog that eats not the flesh but the soul.

Angels, Faerie and Demons seem to care very little about whether gates to and from The Mists are left open. Death, however, and his minions the Manes care a great deal. Perhaps because the Netherworld is more of an extension of the Mists than a different world, perhaps because a Gate allows too easy a path for a shade of the dead to return to the living world.

Before the binding of Death, open Mist-Gates were sought ought and destroyed by packs of Manes. But since Death's binding the Manes have become overwhelmed by the task of simply being sure that those who die remain dead. Most Manes are occupied hunting down Shades of the Dead, Vampyr, or Dark Incarnate.

From the other side, within the mists, a Gate appears as a doorway of golden light. Again it has a correct and incorrect side to enter via. The correct side glows with light, the incorrect side is dull and looks more like a watery wall of matt gold.

A Mist-Gate can be destroyed simply by toppling it over using sledge-hammers or ropes.

Goetia

Goetia is arguably the most powerful of the magical Traditions still alive in Europe. The Goetic Magus deals solely with the summoning and mastering of spirits through the use of Sigils and Circles of Power.

Becoming a Goetic Magus

Goetia is not so easily come across as the folk cantrips of Hedge Magic, nor so wantonly given out to mortals by Demons as is Warlockry. This Tradition of magic requires a special explanation. How did you come to know about this unclean and dangerous art?

A Goetic Magus may gain occult knowledge by any one of several means. Have you studied under an aged master, sold yourself to a dark shadow, or did you accidentally find a strange book hidden in the stables of an inn? Choose one of the following.

Elder and Master

Be he an oppressive, angry master of the unclean arts, a sagely friend, or your own dear sweet mother, you have gained you primal knowledge of the Occult from a living person. Is he or she alive now? Are you still a pupil? Does your master approve of your actions? Your talents? Or are you something of a disappointment?

Haunted Relic

It may appear harmless, a little tarnished ring, an old blue glass bottle, a strangely, just slightly inhuman skull. But this things that you now own and guard has bound to it the essence of either an Otherworld entity or a shade of

a long dead sorcerer. Why has the relic chosen to whisper in your ear? What have you to offer it?

Occult Tome

You are schooled in letters and have come to own an Occult Tome written by the hand of a great master. This Tome contains many strange and wondrous spells, rituals to chill the mind and the promise of great and limitless powers.

But there are few, so very few of the Tomes of Occult Lore in existence. If others should learn of your possession, you may not remain able to study your work in peace for long.

Otherworldly Tutor

Perhaps you met one of the Wild Ones in the forest as a child. Or did you swear yourself to the cause of the Prince of Flies and his minions upon the unjust death of your wife? Or did a vision of a Seraph come to you while at prayer.

You are a student of an Otherworld entity that has chosen to enter into a bargain with you. In exchange for your service the entity will teach you what occult lore he knows. The entity may be an Incarnate from one of the Three Powers of the Beyond, a Shade of a Dead sorcerer broken free from the bonds of death or some other, stranger, weirder thing.

Are you able to uphold your end of the bargain? What does the spirit demand of you? Does it travel with you in disguise or come and go as it pleases? Or have you tricked it into your service? Or does the spirit simply want you to blunder to a quick death so that it can claim your soul as its ultimate prize?

The Antiquity of Rituals

Sorcerers and spirits alike have been working and researching spells for centuries. Since the dawn of time spells have been recorded in on the walls of tombs in Egypt, on clay tablets beside the Euphrates, in caves in the Pyrenees.

It can be said though, with little doubt, that almost all White Magic that has come down through the centuries to the modern practitioner had its origin in that most famous of tomes, *The Key of Solomon*. Since the days of King Solomon the angelic orders have been less inclined to share their knowledge, and thus the pool of collected magical understanding among those who work benevolent charms has unfortunately been vastly outgrown by the pool of Green and Black magic.

No original copies of King Solomon's work still exists, and the largest pieces of his knowledge come to use through the records of the later Thrice-Great Hermes, and Honorius. Both of the *Hermetic Arcorum* and the *Sworn Book of Honorius* were kept intact in secret by cabals of sorcerers in the years following the newly formed Roman Church's decision to burn certain "fables and trifles" in the year of our Lord 508 and the destruction of the Library of Alexandria. Several smaller, less widely distributed but interesting books can also be found by the persistent

scholar. The *Sepher Raziel*, the *Lemegeton Codex*, the *Claviculae* and the *Noven Candariis Solomonus* being the chief examples.

Of tomes pertaining the Green Magic the most important is the Latin edition of the *Rites of Diana*, stolen from one of her temples in Ravenna in the first century. Also, the *Heptameron*, the *Satyrius Haute Magie*, and the *Liber Lunae* are important works.

As for Black Magic, it is best to say little. The *Grimorium Verum* you have no doubt already heard tell of. It is the cornerstone of most dark studies. The *Pacta Coventum Daemonum*, the *Secret of Secrets* and the *Sanctum Infernum* are smaller but equally evil books. There remain two vast works of incalculable depravity and vast power. The *Necronomicon*, dealing as it does strictly with the magic of the dead, and the *Grand Grimoire*, supposedly written by the hand of Lucifer himself. Of these two tomes I doubt more than a few copies exist, if their existence is more than rumour. They are no doubt most jealously guarded by those who own them.

Grimoires

Grimoires are partly annals of useful rituals and spells and mostly wandering treatise, discussions and academic meanderings on the nature of magic. They include chapters on the dangers of sorcery, the appropriate precautions to take when working magic, the names and stations of various spirits and demons, experiments the writer has undertaken, accounts of strange creatures he has seen and many other sundry, and sometimes useless titbits of lore. Grimoires are ranked on a scale from one to six, one being scant in detail and useful information, six being a weighty and learned tome. Note that White (Angelic) and Green (Faerie) Grimoires also existed at one time, but have been largely lost or destroyed.

Black Magic Grimoires

Grand Grimoire	Rank 6
Necronomicon	Rank 6
Grimorium Verum	Rank 5
Pacta Coventum Daemonum	Rank 3
Secret of Secrets	Rank 3
Sanctum Infernum	Rank 1

Using Grimoires

Grimoires can be used to try and make up additional successes when a Character has failed a Test of Learning or a Test of Witch-Lore so long as the topic is relevant to the supernatural, magic and sorcery. Roll a number of dice equal to cumulative ranks of the total number of *relevant* Grimoire's you have access to and count these towards your total successes. Characters cannot use Effort when examining a Grimoire and a period of time of at least an hour must be available to pour over the tome. Note also that knowledge concerning Demons can only be sought in Black Grimoires, information about Fae is recorded in Green Grimoires and information concerning Angels is held only in White Grimoires.

For Example - Mathemus the Elder is trying to recall if he has heard any rumours concerning the powers or

weaknesses of the Demon Naberies. The Gamesmaster sets the task at Difficult (requires two successes), and Mathemus tests his Learning Skill but scores only one successes. Mathemus owns a Green Grimoire, but this contains lore of Fae only and no information on demons, so is not relevant. He owns two Black Grimoires, one is Rank Two the second is Rank Three. He tests the first Grimoire by rolling two dice and scores a 4 and a 5 - no successes. He then tests the Rank Three Grimoire and scores a 4, 4 and 6. The 6 grants Mathemus a single success, enough to bring his total successes to two - one from the Learning Skill and one from the Grimoire.

Grimoires also grant a bonus to your Goetia Skill when working magic. Total up all of your Grimoires and use the following chart. The bonus is conferred in the form of bonus dice, which are used to try and make up additional successes for Tests of Goetia. As with using a Grimoire to aid Learning, Effort cannot be used when employing Grimoires to assist with Goetia.

Total of One Rank	One Bonus Die
Total of Four Ranks	Two Bonus Dice
Total of Eight Ranks	Three Bonus Dice
Total of Twelve Ranks	Four Bonus Dice

For Example - Mathemus needs to Test his Goetia Skill against a demonic opponent. He tests his Goetia but scores only one success. His two Black Grimoires are Rank Two and Three. His Green Grimoire is Rank One - a total of Six Ranks - this confers a bonus of two dice. He rolls these two dice and scores a 5 and a 6. The 6 adds a second success to the one he scored when he his Test his Goetia Skill.

The Great Burnings

In particular during the years of our Lord seven hundred to nine hundred the church of the Holy Roman Empire discussed and finally passed the Honorius Edict. The edict came about after the pope, Honorius, famed for his dabbling in sorcery, was almost slain by a demon that got free from a circle of sorcery that went awry.

It was decided that all magic, good, wild or otherwise had in it too much potential for evil. The seeds of power would always be grown into trees that bear rotten corpses by men of greed and want.

So it was that the church began to purge its libraries of all tomes of magic. Sorcerers and witches were summarily executed, their occult lore destroyed. But it was the White Magic that had been accumulated since the reign of Solomon that was most easily disposed of. Much of it was kept 'safe' in monastery libraries. Many of its practitioners still played their trade openly.

So it was that after two centuries of purges the church succeeded in utterly destroying the art of White Magic in the Holy Roman Empire and was yet barely able to do more that somewhat hinder Wild and Dark magic.

Wild Magic still persists in many villages, performed in a naïve, innocent way by healers, cunning men and local charm-peddlers. Its use has declined somewhat though, as the spirits who once taught this magic have become

angry, vengeful and hateful towards a humanity that no longer worship them as gods.

It is dark magic, black witchcraft, hexes, spells of Hecate, hell and necromancy that has in secret flourished. Ever a clandestine art, Black Magic has largely survived the purges of the church unhindered and is now spread like a canker through the flesh of the land.

Circles and Sigils of Power

Goetia involves the use of Circles and Sigils, drawn upon the ground with great ceremony and accompanying chants and invocations. Circles and Sigils are always used in conjunction with one another. Sigils specify the spirit to be summoned, while Circles specify what powers the sorcerer will be able to invoke upon a spirit. If a sigil is drawn by itself the named spirit is summoned but is not restrain or bind it in any way. This is a somewhat suicidal thing to do, but might in the course of the game be used as a last recourse by a desperate sorcerer. Circles can also be drawn by themselves but most will have no power unless a demon, angel or fae moves into the circle of its own accord - an unlikely event in the best of circumstances.

Gaining Circles and Sigils

New Goetic Sorcerer characters know a number of Circles and Sigils based on their rank in the Goetia Skill. Bonus slots can be used to choose either a Sigil or Circle of power.

Goetia Skill	Sigils	Circles	Bonus
Rank One	1	1	1
Rank Two	1	1	2
Rank Three	2	2	2
Rank Four	2	2	3
Rank Five	3	3	4
Rank Six	4	4	4

Rank Six and Beyond

Once a Character has reached Rank 6 in Goetia, a new Circle or Sigil can be purchased for five Fate points. There is no upward limit as to the number of Goetic Circles or Sigils that a Character may know.

Drawing Circles and Sigils

Working Goetic magic is based on a process of drawing a single Sigil, which represents a spirit to be summoned, and nested Circles of magic, which have affects, both gentle and powerful, benevolent and cruel upon the summoned Spirit. An invocation always involves a single Sigil and one or more Circles. Invocations can be **Weak**, **Medium** or **Powerful** in nature. Weak circles are drawn with salt or a single line of chalk. Circles of Medium power incorporate candles and chalk. Powerful circles are often drawn with something stranger and more ornate: flower petals, ash, blood, oil which is then set on fire, powdered metals or crushed ivory. They may include many, possibly dozens of candles as well as incense.

Weak Invocation: It takes five minutes per Circle and

Sigil to draw a Weak Invocation. Weak Invocations grant no bonuses when trying to impose your magic upon the summoned spirit.

Medium Invocation: It takes ten minutes per Circle and Sigil to draw a Medium Invocation. Whenever you enter a Contest of Skill with the spirit that has been summoned a Medium Invocation grants a single bonus die to your Goetia Skill.

Strong Invocation: It takes half an hour per Circle and Sigil to draw a Strong Invocation. Strong Invocations confer two bonus dice whenever you enter a Contest of Skill with the summoned spirit.

Nesting Circles

Circles of gradually increasing size can be nested one around another to take advantage of a number of magical powers at once. For instance you could nest A Circle of Protection around a Sigil, then outside of that place a second Circle of Protection, then add a Circle of Oaths and after that a circle of Torpor. Each additional circle after the first imposes a -1 penalty to the sorcerer's Goetia Skill when testing its power. When planning out a series of circles it can be useful to draw out a plan so that you know which circles will suffer penalties when invoked.

For Example -

Summoning a Spirit

Once a group of circles and sigils have been laid out the sorcerer needs to make a Test of Goetia to summon the spirit nominated by the Sigil. Difficulty is modified by the spirit being summoned - more powerful spirits are more difficult to conjure out of the ethereal void. Failure results in no spirit being summoned at all, although the sorcerer may then attempt another summoning. A botch will result in the summoning of the wrong and possibly very dangerous spirit.

For Example -

Invoking a Circle

Invoking a Circle involves conjuring up the magic associated with a Circle. Some Circles are considered 'always-on' and these are termed **Barriers**. A demon can try to challenge and destroy a Barrier Circle at any time. An example of a Barrier is the Circle of Warding. This Circle prevents the spirit from leaving its place at the centre of the summoning, although at any time the spirit may decide to Challenge the Circle of Warding and break free. The second class of Circles are **Conjurations**. Conjurations can be turned on and off. An example of a Conjunction is the Circle of Agony. This circle, when Invoked causes pain to the spirit within the circle. The magi can turn this pain on and off at will, however, whenever he does so the summoned spirit may attempt to challenge the Circle of Agony and destroy it.

After a spirit is summoned the Goetic Magus can choose to invoke any of the Circles of Magic that are in place at any time. A spirit can choose to either surrender to a Circle's magic or challenge it. When a spirit challenges a

Circle the magus and the spirit enter into a Contest of Skill, pitting the sorcerer's Goetia Skill against the spirit's Ascendancy. If the sorcerer wins then the magic holds and the spirit is subjected to the power of the magic. If the spirit wins, then the Circle is shattered and its power is destroyed. A spirit can repeatedly challenge the same Circle again and again, although is unlikely to persist in this once it realises that the quickest way to gain release may be to negotiate with the magi rather than fight back. When a particular Circle of Power is dealt with differently in the game, then the specific rules are discussed in the text of the Circle.

For Example -

Banishing a Spirit

When the sorcerer is done the summoned spirit can be banished automatically unless the spirit resists. Most spirits will be happy to return to their own world, as being away from Heaven, Faerie or Hell for any prolonged period of time can result in a spirit returning to find that its place has been usurped by others spirits during its absence. However, if a spirit has a strong reason to remain on the mortal world it may resist the sorcerer's attempt to banish it. Treat this as a prolonged Contest of Goetia versus Ascendancy in which the first to reach ten successes wins.

For Example -

Breaking Circles

Destroying the Circles laid down by another sorcerer is a simple matter of physically scattering, defacing or breaking the circle. This is something that any Character can do by simply stomping around, kicking or sweeping away circles, however, destroying an unattended circle and releasing any spirits bound within, which may well be invisible, is something to be done only with the greatest caution.

Circles of Power

The following are Circles of Power that a Goetic Sorcerer may learn.

Circle of Acquiescence

Conjuration - A Circle of Acquiescence can be invoked to prevent the spirit within from using any supernatural power. If a spirit within a Circle of Acquiescence attempts to use a supernatural power the sorcerer and the spirit enter into a Contest of Goetia versus Ascendancy. If the sorcerer wins then the supernatural power is countered. If the spirit wins then the circle is shattered and destroyed.

Circle of Agony

Conjuration - By invoking the Circle of Agony the sorcerer can cause the spirit intense pain. If the spirit resists the Circle of Agony then a Contest of Goetia versus Ascendancy results. If the sorcerer wins then the spirit suffers pain, if the spirit wins then the Circle of Agony is

destroyed. Using a Circle of Agony against a spirit, even a minor spirit, is a dangerous ploy and a sorcerer who uses this approach to negotiation should be ready to deal with a potentially deadly enemy once the spirit returns to its native world.

Circle of Alarum

Barrier - This circle is linked to the sorcerer's mind. If the sorcerer leaves the spirit bound within a circle in a state of somnolence (see Circle of Torpor below) and the magic is later lifted or broken, the Circle of Alarum warns the sorcerer that the bound spirit has been freed.

Circle of Bans

Conjuration - When the Circle of Bans is invoked the magus and spirit engage in a Prolonged Contest of Goetia versus Ascendancy. The first to reach ten successes wins. If the sorcerer wins then the spirit is compelled to obey a single ban set down by the sorcerer for the duration of the magi's life. A ban is a single thing that it is not permitted to do - for instance, a spirit may be banned from harming the magi or returning to the mortal world. If the spirit wins then the Circle of Bans is destroyed. Bans must be worded carefully, however as spirits may be able to find loopholes in the command. A spirit that is prevented from harming a magi may decide to kill the magi's family instead. A spirit that is prevented from returning to mortal world may send underlings to murder the magi and thus lift the ban.

Circle of Binding

Conjuration - When the Circle of Binding is employed the magi must have on hand an object, be it a ring or stone, bottle, sword or amulet that has been carved with the names of the seven under-kings who served Solomon the Great. When the Circle of Binding is Invoked the sorcerer and spirit engaged in a Prolonged Contest of Goetia versus Ascendancy. The first to reach ten cumulative successes wins. If the spirit wins the Circle of Binding is destroyed and cannot be Invoked again. However, if the magician wins the spirit is bound forcefully into the charmed item and will remain there until it is summoned out. The spirit can be summoned three times to either perform a single task or answer a question. On either the third summoning the spirit goes free and may well be inclined to seek revenge. If a hundred years pass and the spirit has not been summoned a third time the magic breaks and the spirit is freed.

Circle of Entrapment

Conjuration - When the Circle of Binding is employed the magus must have ready a glass object, usually either a sphere or a bottle, carved with certain arcane symbols. When invoking this magic the sorcerer and the spirit engage in a Prolonged Contest of Goetia versus Ascendancy. The first to reach fifteen cumulative successes wins. If the sorcerer wins then the spirit is bound within the glass object forever and without escape unless the object is shattered. If the spirit wins the Circle of Entrapment is destroyed and cannot be invoked again - and will also very likely be less than pleased with the magus. Multiple

spirits can be bound within the same glass prison, although if spirits from two different kingdoms are entrapped together - i.e. if an angel is entrapped with a demon - they will very likely fight until one or the other is destroyed.

Circle of Fearless Hearts

Barrier - A Circle of Fearless Hearts is always drawn around the sorcerer and not the spirit. The magic of this circle affects the sorcerer and prevents the suffering of Trauma or the need to perform Tests of Fear by deadening the magi's sense of danger or the supernatural. The circle provides no protection against physical attacks and a magi loses the protection conferred as soon as the circle is left. The circle can be drawn at any time as a means to defend against the terrifying fear of wandering spirits, but if such spirits are wandering free it may be better to run rather than stand calmly and fearlessly in one place.

Circle of Oaths

Conjuration - The Circle of Oaths can be invoked so that the subject must keep a promise made within the circle. If the subject is unable to keep a spoken vow or oath or decides not too, then the subject suffers terrible pain until the vow or oath is either fulfilled or upheld.

The Circle of Oaths cannot force a spirit to make a vow aloud. An obstinate spirit can simply remain silent and avoid making any promises at all. The magic of the Circle of Oaths lingers only as long as the sorcerer who placed the magic upon the spirit still lives. If the sorcerer dies, then the spirit is freed from its oath.

When a spirit does speak an promise aloud the sorcerer can invoke the Circle of Oaths. If the spirit resists then a Contest of Goetia versus Ascendancy comes into play. If the sorcerer wins then the spirit is bound by the promise and must keep it. If the spirit wins then the Circle of Oaths is broken.

Circle of Pleasing Forms

Barrier - The Circle of the Pleasing Forms forces a spirit to assume a pleasant and human shape so that it will not cause automatic Trauma to mortals who look upon it. The Circle is immediately invoked once a spirit is summoned into it. If a spirit wishes to fight against the Circle of Pleasing Forms then a Prolonged Contest of Goetia versus Ascendancy is employed as soon as the spirit arrives in the circle. The first Character to reach five successes wins the contest. If the sorcerer wins then the spirit is forced to remain in a mundane and pleasant physical state and the spirit will not be permitted to challenge the Circle of Pleasing Forms a second time. If the spirit wins then the circle is shattered and it can assume any shape it likes.

Note that all spirits, even those that usually take a very strange form such as Mandragora or Seraphim can assume a form that will to a mortal's eye appear mundane and normal. Small spirits tend to take the form of mortal children when compelled to take a mundane form. Larger, more powerful spirits take the form of adults, either male or female or androgenous as a matter of personal taste.

Circle of Servitude

Conjuration - When a Circle of Servitude is Invoked the magi and the spirit enter into a Prolonged Contest of Goetia versus Ascendancy and the first to reach ten cumulative successes wins. If the sorcerer wins then the spirit is bound to serve and obey the sorcerer for a year and a day. If the spirit wins then the circle is destroyed. As such a circle of Servitude can only be Invoked once after a spirit has been summoned. When the Circle of Task-Binding is invoked the magus and spirit enter into a Prolonged Contest of Goetia versus Ascendancy. The first to accumulate ten successes wins. A sorcerer who tries to force one of the arrogant and powerful entities of Heaven, Hell or Faerie to bow to the earth should be ready to deal with a dangerous enemy when the time comes for the spirit to go free.

Circle of Task-Biding

Conjuration - The circle of Task-Biding can be Invoked only once while a spirit is bound within it, although multiple Circles of Task-Binding might be laid around a single Sigil. When the Circle of Task-Binding is invoked the magus and spirit enter into a Prolonged Contest of Goetia versus Ascendancy. The first to accumulate five successes wins. If the sorcerer wins then the spirit is forced to perform a single task of undefined duration. The task must be something that could in theory be completed, even if it would task a vast span of time to do so.

Circle of Torpor

Conjuration - When Invoked this Circle places summoned spirit into a state of drowsy torpor and inactivity. If the spirit either doesn't challenge this Circle or is defeated by the sorcerer, then the magic takes a permanent effect and as long as the circle remains intact the spirit will remain within it in a state of barely wakeful slumber. The sorcerer can return at any time and wake the spirit from a Circle of Torpor, but upon doing so the sorcerer will need to engage in a Contest of Goetia versus the spirit's Ascendancy in order to put the spirit back to sleep.

Circle of Truths

Conjuration - Invoking the Circle of Truths forces the spirit within the answer one question truthfully. If the spirit resists and wins the Circle is broken and the spirit is then permitted to answer in any way it pleases. If the Circle of Truths holds then the spirit must give a truthful answer.

Circle of Uneyeing

Barrier - The circle of the Uneyeing is invoked immediately upon summoning a spirit. If the spirit does not Challenge the Circle of the Uneyeing it will be unable to see through the circle. If the Spirit attempts to challenge the Circle and wins the circle is destroyed and the spirit will be able to see through it.

Circle of Warding

Barrier - A Circle of Protection prevents spirits from crossing the drawn line. This rule applies whether the spirit is in physical or incorporeal form, and causes people who are inhabited by a spirit, whether Possessed or Cursed, to

suffer pain if they try to cross the drawn line. If a spirit attempts to cross a Circle of Protection the sorcerer and the spirit enter into a contest of Goetia versus Ascendancy. If the spirit wins then the circle is shattered. If the sorcerer wins then the spirit is prevented from crossing the circle.

A Circle of Protection can be drawn around a Sigil to cage in a summoned spirit or around a person who desires protection. Circles of Protection can be created at any time and provide a serviceable, if somewhat unreliable and temporary, defence against wandering Demons, Fae or Angels as well as those that are summoned by the sorcerer. The Circle can in theory also be used to cage in a person who is either Possessed or Cursed, however getting the person into the circle might be more trouble than using simple chains and fetters.

Lesser Sigils of Power

The following are Sigils of Power that summon spirits of a particular class and order from any one of the three planes of supernatural being. The spirit summoned is plucked at random from the ethereal otherworld and cannot be chosen specifically. There are no restrictions as to when a Character can learn Lesser or Greater Sigils. Lesser Sigils summon spirits that are less powerful but also less dangerous and it is up to the Player to decide how much to risk when summoning spirits.

Sigil of Imps

Test of Summoning: Average - Imps are among the least of the spirits of the Kingdom of Darkness. They appear usually as small, hideous figures, with flitting wings and uncanny black eyes. Seraphim have voices of enchanting quality and can conjure flames, music and stenches in the air around them.

Summoning: Average

Ascendancy: 2

Manifestation: 4

Skills: Imps always succeed on a roll of 5 or 6 without needing to expend effort. By spending 1 point of Effort Imps increase their range of success to 4-6. Two Effort increases success to 3-6.

Fire of the Hells: Imps can conjure dancing flames that transfixes and holds the attention of Mortals who fail a Test of Willpower (Average).

Vanishings: Imps can disappear and re-appear at will, moving to any point within a hundred paces when on the mortal world. This power cannot, however, be used to try and move through a Circle of Wardings without challenging it first.

Skills:	Uncanny
Attack:	Rank Five
Armour:	Three
Substance (<i>Health</i>):	Ten
Effort:	Four
Fear:	Difficult
Trauma:	Two
<i>Might</i> :	4
<i>Deft</i> :	5

<i>Wits</i> :	6
<i>Will</i> :	4

Sigil of Afflictions

Test of Summoning: Average - Afflictions are shadowy demons that possess little in the way of a physical power but are capable of inhabitation the body of a living mortal and inflicting disease or curse on the flesh. Sometimes an Affliction can inflict enough injury to a person to cause death or enough sorrow to cause suicide. If a person dies while an Affliction is still inhabiting the body, then the Affliction can possess the dead body and rise as an undead creature. Treat such creatures as a *Sleepless Dead* (See *Chapter Nine: Beasts and devils*)

Summoning: Average

Ascendancy: 1

Manifestation: 1

Skills: Afflictions always succeed on a roll of 5 or 6 without needing to expend effort. By spending 1 point of Effort Afflictions increase their range of success to 4-6. Two Effort increases success to 3-6.

Obsession: Afflictions can inhabit the body of a mortal and inflict terrible disease while inhabiting the body. Use the rules for *Obsession* (see *Chapter Five: Drama*).

Shadow Flesh: Afflictions can only be harmed by magic.

Skills:	Uncanny
Attack:	Rank One
Armour:	Three
Substance (<i>Health</i>):	Ten
Effort:	Four
Fear:	Difficult
Trauma:	Two
<i>Might</i> :	2
<i>Deft</i> :	6
<i>Wits</i> :	6
<i>Will</i> :	6

Sigil of Temptations

Test of Summoning: Average - Temptations are a kin of demon whose malice is funnelled into cunning forms and trickery. They are the most likely of the minor castes of demons to rise up the ranks of Hell and eventually attain a seat as a duke or prince of the shadows. All Temptations are associated with one of the Seven Deadly Sins, and the Temptation embodies all that is seductive about the sin. Temptations tend to prefer mundane forms so as not to terrify their mortal prey, and may appear entirely human or mostly human or inhuman, enchanted and beautiful, as it pleases them. They prefer to work cleverly to gain souls for their own masters in hell, rather than taking a more wild and destructive approach to invoking the terror of the Kingdom of Shadows.

Summoning: Average

Ascendancy: 3

Manifestation: 5

Skills: Temptations always succeed on a roll of 5 or 6 without needing to expend effort. By spending 1 point of Effort Temptations increase their range of success to 4-6. Two Effort increases success to 3-6.

Seductive Thoughts: Temptations known automatically

when they meet a mortal who possesses their cardinal Sin. A Temptation of Wrath, for example, will always know when it meets a mortal with the Wrath Sin.

Vanishings: Temptations can disappear and re-appear at will, moving to any point within a hundred paces when on the mortal world. This power cannot, however, be used to try and move through a Circle of Wardings without challenging it first.

Skills:	Uncanny
Attack:	Rank Three
Armour:	Four
Substance (<i>Health</i>):	Fifteen
Effort:	Four
Fear:	Average
Trauma:	One (when inhuman)
<i>Might</i> :	5
<i>Deft</i> :	6
<i>Wits</i> :	7
<i>Will</i> :	7

Sigil of Fiends

Test of Summoning: Average – Fiends are the brutes and soldier-demons of the Kingdom of Shadows. They are hulking and powerful, but not especially cunning or tricky.

Summoning: Average

Ascendancy: 1

Manifestation: 5

Skills: Fiends always succeed on a roll of 5 or 6 without needing to expend effort. By spending 1 point of Effort Fiends increase their range of success to 4-6. Two Effort increases success to 3-6.

Fiery Breath: Fiends can breath a blast of flame that counts as a ranged magical weapon.

Skills:	Uncanny
Attack:	Rank Six
Armour:	Five
Substance (<i>Health</i>):	Fifteen
Effort:	Two
Fear:	Difficult
Trauma:	Two
<i>Might</i> :	7
<i>Deft</i> :	4
<i>Wits</i> :	2
<i>Will</i> :	2

Greater Sigils of Power

The following are Sigils that summon specific powerful entities from the beyond. Instead of there being a single Sigil to summon Archangels, Princes of Hell or Lords and Ladies of Faerie, these entities are summoned by name. The more powerful the spirit, the more specific the magic has to be to draw the creature into the mortal world. There is no restriction concerning Lesser or Greater Sigils - a Player can choose to take the risk of learning more powerful sorcery at any time.

Sigil of Abaddan

Called by some the Angel of the Bottomless Pit and the Lord of the Plague of Locusts, Abaddan the Downfallen is

considered one of the most destructive of the fallen. He can summon a hellish swarm of locusts out of the earth at will. At his command great green-black locust crawl and writhe out of the soil until they form a great cloud of clicking wings. Abaddan can command the locusts to go forth and destroy what green things he pleases.

Abaddan can also cause any inanimate object smaller than a wagon to simply crumble to dust upon touch. He cannot, however, attack living things in this way.

Ascendancy: 6

Manifestation: 3

Aspect: Wrath 6, Pride 6, Envy 6

Skills:	Supernatural
Attack:	Rank Three
Armour:	Three
Substance (<i>Health</i>):	15
Fear:	Difficult
Trauma:	Two
<i>Might</i> :	5
<i>Deft</i> :	5
<i>Wits</i> :	8
<i>Will</i> :	8

Sigil of Agares

Appears as a kindly and gentlemanly old man, dressed as a falconer and carrying a goshawk on one arm. When angered Agares turns into a hideous half-human, half-crocodile hybrid creature.

Agares has the power to stop runaways and make them return to you or to another, to prevent a person from being able to leave a house even if none of the doors are locked.

Ascendancy: 4

Manifestation: 4

Aspect: Wrath 5, Lust 3, Avarice 4

Skills:	Supernatural
Attack:	Rank Four
Armour:	Four
Substance (<i>Health</i>):	16
Fear:	Difficult
Trauma:	Two
<i>Might</i> :	6
<i>Deft</i> :	6
<i>Wits</i> :	6
<i>Will</i> :	6

Sigil of Amduscias

Appears as a merchant prince, in the finest garb with gems and pearls hanging from his thick folds of velvet and silken cloak. He can turn bronze into an illusion of silver and silver into an illusion of gold. He can grant Uncanny skills in haggling and cause merchants and shop-owners to suffer a series of unlikely but devastating setbacks in their work.

Ascendancy: 3

Manifestation: 5

Aspect: Avarice 6, Envy 3

Skills:	Supernatural
Attack:	Rank Five
Armour:	Five
Substance (<i>Health</i>):	17



Fear:	Difficult
Trauma:	Two
Might:	7
Deft:	7
Wits:	5
Will:	5

Sigil of Amon

Prefers to appear in the form of a wolf with a serpent's head that vomits and belches flames of green and scarlet. When so inclined or commanded he will assume a human form, but one dressed in wolf skins and having doglike teeth.

Amon is able to grant uncanny skills in brutal warfare, the stuff of axes and hacking for a time. He is also able to make any weapon poisonous so that wounds it inflicts turn black and nacreous and will not heal without magic.

Ascendancy: 4

Manifestation: 5

Aspect: Wrath 5, Pride 4, Pride 3

Skills: Supernatural

Attack: Rank Five

Armour: Five

Substance (*Health*): 17

Fear: Difficult

Trauma: Two

Might: 7

Deft: 7

Wits: 6

Will: 6

Sigil of Andrealphus

Appears as an angel in kingly robes and with wings the pattern and hue of peacock feathers. When angered he turns into a beggarly creature with tattered, grey wings and rags for clothing.

Andrealphus can dress any person in robes of illusion and kingliness. He can make the ugly beautiful for a time, the wretched magnificent and the filthy clean. He cannot make a person appear to be another real mortal, but he can change appearance so greatly that none will recognise you. His magics are fickle though. Beware that you may change back into your true and less-than-wondrous form at the worst of moments.

Ascendancy: 3

Manifestation: 4

Aspect: Pride 6, Envy 3

Skills: Supernatural

Attack: Rank Five

Armour: Five

Substance (*Health*): 17

Fear: Difficult

Trauma: Two

Might: 6

Deft: 6

Wits: 5

Will: 5

Sigil of Arioch

Arioch appears as a young man with wild, grief-stricken eyes and hands soaked in blood. He is a demon of revenge, and will come to those who have been wronged, usually in a dream or vision, in order to entreat them to take up the sword of retribution. Arioch has the power to know immediately who is the true committer of a crime or injustice. He is often willing to exact revenge for those who summon him, though he may well demand at least some small payment, by soul, by vow or by task in return.

Ascendancy: 3

Manifestation: 3

Aspect: Wrath 6, Pride 3

Skills: Supernatural

Attack: Rank Three

Armour: Three

Substance (*Health*): 15

Fear: Difficult

Trauma: Two

Might: 5

Deft: 5

Wits: 5

Will: 5

Sigil of Asasel

Asasel appears as a tall and slightly unkempt looking man with a feline ferocity in his eyes and the garb of a wandering woodsman. He is a demon of the wilderness, knows the secrets of all game and beasts, can grant a fine skill in hunting, and is said to know how to craft spears and bows of wondrous quality. When angered Asasel turns not merely feral but savage, his face becomes bestial, his eyes red and fiery, and his whole form changes into a hybrid mix of man and beast.

Ascendancy: 3

Manifestation: 4

Aspect: Wrath 4, Lust 4, Pride 1

Skills: Supernatural

Attack: Rank Four

Armour: Four

Substance (*Health*): 16

Fear: Difficult

Trauma: Two

Might: 6

Deft: 6

Wits: 5

Will: 5

Sigil of Asmoday

A powerful lord of darkness. Asmoday appears most often as a blazing column of flames, but take the form of an angel with fiery hair and red wings if he so wishes or is commanded. Asmoday can cause fires to start and spread quickly, flames to all snuff out at once, or turn blue and eerie or flare with black smoke. In short he has full power over all fire. You can give you a potion that when drunk gives you the power to suddenly vomit forth a jet of liquid, devouring fire. This fire does one Wound per round to anything it touches for three rounds.

Ascendancy: 6

Manifestation: 6
Aspect: Gluttony 6, Wrath 6, Pride 3, Avarice 3
 Skills: Supernatural
 Attack: Rank Six
 Armour: Six
 Substance (*Health*): 18
 Fear: Very Difficult
 Trauma: Three
Might: 8
Deft: 8
Wits: 8
Will: 8

Sigil of Astaroth

Appears in the form of a beautiful angel, carrying a golden sword and light with a halo of fire. If angered he becomes foul and rank, but still remains in the shape of an angel, or at least the mockery of one. His sword become a brand of black fire.

Astaroth can cause you to be seen as charming, beautiful and eloquent by any and all for a time at least. He can put an aura of a man that deludes both enemies and strangers into thinking him dear and close.

If questioned Astaroth will speak eloquently and at length on the nature of the universe but it is not known if his words can be trusted.

Ascendancy: 4
Manifestation: 5
Aspect: Lust 5, Pride 4, Sloth 3
 Skills: Supernatural
 Attack: Rank Five
 Armour: Five
 Substance (*Health*): 17
 Fear: Difficult
 Trauma: Two
Might: 7
Deft: 7
Wits: 6
Will: 6

Sigil of Baal

Appears as a king of the east, in rich gold and silk, with a charming face and a tanned skin. When angered his head may turn into that of a cat or toad, and his voice changed from honeyed to hoarse and hissing.

Baal has the power to grant great wisdom and arcane knowledge. He can cause occult Grimoires to appear, or tell you where to find them. He can also teach all languages.

Ascendancy: 5
Manifestation: 4
Aspect: Pride 3, Lust 3, Avarice 4, Envy 3, Gluttony 2
 Skills: Supernatural
 Attack: Rank Five
 Armour: Five
 Substance (*Health*): 17
 Fear: Difficult
 Trauma: Two
Might: 6
Deft: 6
Wits: 5

Will: 5

Sigil of Barbatos

Appears as a king in silver armour, crowned in gold and carrying a powerful sword. When angered his armour becomes blood splattered and his skin scored by wounds and scars. Barbatos can summon up four phantom knights in black all-covering armour to do battle for you. The knights possess three levels of health, a general combat skill of Rank Four, shields of Rank Two and armour of Rank Two. When slain they turn to mist. At the close of an hour after the summoning any knights remaining also return to mist.

Ascendancy: 4
Manifestation: 5
Aspect: Sloth 4, Wrath 3, Pride 3, Gluttony 2
 Skills: Supernatural
 Attack: Rank Five
 Armour: Five
 Substance (*Health*): 17
 Fear: Difficult
 Trauma: Two
Might: 7
Deft: 7
Wits: 6
Will: 6

Sigil of Balam

Appears as a regal angel whose true nature is always told by the swarm of little angular, black-bodied, claw-fingered imps that dance and float about him. He can, if so convinced, give you to up to six of his little imps at a time to use as you please. They have no particular powers of combat, but can be painfully vicious with their little claws and are good spies. The little imps are not much larger than a toad and able to turn invisible at will. When fully manifest they are certainly frightening to look at. A single imp can carry an object about the weight of a cup. Six might be able to lift a small chest or saddle. The little imps ranks so lowly they that posses no Ascendancy and just one rank of Manifestation. Their skills are Uncanny.

Ascendancy: 4
Manifestation: 5
Aspect: Sloth 5, Avarice 4, Envy 3
 Skills: Supernatural
 Attack: Rank Five
 Armour: Five
 Substance (*Health*): 17
 Fear: Difficult
 Trauma: Two
Might: 7
Deft: 7
Wits: 6
Will: 6

Sigil of Bathin

Bathin appears as a large, dull eyed, slow and placid man dressed in the leather and apron of a labourer. If angered he swells still larger and becomes a fleshy, plodding ogre of massive size with fists like barrels. Upon

command he can build towers and walls, dig great moats or demolish buildings. He works powerfully fast and strong and does as much work as a gang of twenty strong labourers.

Ascendancy: 3

Manifestation: 6

Aspect: Sloth 6, Pride 3

Skills: Supernatural

Attack: Rank Six

Armour: Six

Substance (*Health*): 17

Fear: Difficult

Trauma: Two

Might: 8

Deft: 8

Wits: 5

Will: 5

Sigil of Beleth

Appears as a terrible, wrathful and mighty duke atop a pale horse. He has no charming form and is always fearsome to look at. Beleth can make your enemies Afraid of you (See Rules: Fear). The unnatural fear he invokes lasts a day. Anyone affected must make a Test of Fear rank Two as if you were the very vision of terror. He can place fear into any person while they dream, making them into a haunted, miserable shell of themselves within a few days.

Ascendancy: 4

Manifestation: 4

Aspect: Wrath 5, Pride 5, Sloth 2

Skills: Supernatural

Attack: Rank Four

Armour: Four

Substance (*Health*): 16

Fear: Difficult

Trauma: Two

Might: 5

Deft: 5

Wits: 5

Will: 5

Sigil of Belial

One of the more powerful lords of darkness. Belial appears as a wondrous angel with feathers the colour of gleaming night, scattered with a thousand stars. If angered he becomes a wraith of shadow and storm, on wings of furious lightning.

Belial can give you the power to summon up darkness by uncorking a charmed bottle that he will give you to let it out. The darkness seeps into the air and makes it black as a moonless night and cold as winter. He can also cause eclipses of the sun that last a few minutes and command animals of the night: owls, cats, and the like.

Ascendancy: 6

Manifestation: 5

Aspect: Wrath 6, Pride 6, Avarice 3, Lust 3

Skills: Supernatural

Attack: Rank Five

Armour: Five

Substance (*Health*): 17

Fear: Very Difficult

Trauma: Three

Might: 7

Deft: 7

Wits: 8

Will: 8

Sigil of Botis

Appears as a green and slithering viper, with red eyes and a flickering tongue. If commanded he will take a human shape, but with those same serpent eyes and long, pointed teeth. Botis can make any weapon so sharp and strong that it never dulls. He can also make weapons venomous so that one wound will cause the victim to make a Test of Fortitude (diff. Difficult) or succumb to frothing-mouthed convulsions.

Ascendancy: 3

Manifestation: 5

Aspect: Sloth 4, Wrath 3, Avarice 2

Skills: Supernatural

Attack: Rank Five

Armour: Five

Substance (*Health*): 17

Fear: Difficult

Trauma: Two

Might: 7

Deft: 7

Wits: 5

Will: 5

Sigil of Dantalian

Appears always in the garb of a wandering poet or troubadour but always with a different face, sometimes an old man, sometimes a young lady, sometimes a motherly woman, sometimes a beardless youth. When angered his face shifts and changes from one visage to another constantly. He has the power to make any person appear to be someone else by sight, smell and voice for a time. The charm lasts until sundown.

Ascendancy: 3

Manifestation: 6

Aspect: Envy 5, Pride 3, Lust 1

Skills: Supernatural

Attack: Rank Six

Armour: Six

Substance (*Health*): 18

Fear: Difficult

Trauma: Two

Might: 8

Deft: 8

Wits: 5

Will: 5

Sigil of Gamygyn

Appears dressed as a marquis fallen on hard times with sunken cheeks, grey skin and pale eyes. He is able to cross into the Netherworld at will and can bring back any shade of the dead that lingers there or banish ghosts who are haunting the mortal world to the Netherworld.

When angered Gamygyn's flesh peels away and he

becomes a horrifying walking skeleton in the tattered clothes of a long buried lord.

Ascendancy: 4

Manifestation: 3

Aspect: Envy 3, Sloth 3, Wrath 3, Avarice 3

Skills: Supernatural

Attack: Rank Three

Armour: Three

Substance (Health): 15

Fear: Difficult

Trauma: Two

Might: 5

Deft: 5

Wits: 6

Will: 6

Sigil of Glasyalabolas

Appears as a knife-thin, grinning, lean faced and bearded man with cunning in his eyes. Glasyalabolas can make mortals do his bidding by certain charms. He is able to command a mortal face-to-face to do one simple action. The victim is allowed a Test of Willpower Difficulty Four to resist.

Glasyalabolas can also work a charm on two garments or items of jewellery so that whoever wears the submissive piece becomes unable to resist the commands of whoever wears the dominant piece. A Test of Willpower to resist at Difficulty Two to resist is allowed each time a command is given.

Ascendancy: 3

Manifestation: 4

Aspect: Avarice 5, Sloth 4

Skills: Supernatural

Attack: Rank Four

Armour: Four

Substance (Health): 16

Fear: Difficult

Trauma: Two

Might: 6

Deft: 6

Wits: 5

Will: 5

Sigil of Hagenti

Appears usually in the form of a talking raven. She can also take on the form of a shrewd, dark haired young woman if she wishes. Hagenti can read and relay to you all languages, modern or dead, mundane or arcane, and can gift a person with the ability to understand all tongues for a day.

Ascendancy: 4

Manifestation: 5

Aspect: Envy 4, Pride 4, Avarice 4

Skills: Supernatural

Attack: Rank Five

Armour: Five

Substance (Health): 17

Fear: Difficult

Trauma: Two

Might: 7

Deft: 7

Wits: 6

Will: 6

Sigil of Lerajie

Appears as a handsome archer, with a winning smile and dressed in rich velvets of green and tawny hues. He can charm arrows so that their wounds always putrefy and will not heal without magic, and can grant Uncanny skill in Archery for a time.

When angered he becomes a sun-swollen corpse stuck with a dozen arrows.

Ascendancy: 4

Manifestation: 5

Aspects: Avarice 4, Envy 4, Pride 4

Skills: Supernatural

Attack: Rank Five

Armour: Five

Substance (Health): 17

Fear: Difficult

Trauma: Two

Might: 7

Deft: 7

Wits: 6

Will: 6

Sigil of Lerith

Appears as a beautiful, seductress who is able to take any shape, appearance, hue of skin or hair that you please. She is not known to have a demonic form. Some it is said have summoned Lerith to make use of her for personal pleasure. A more common use is to command her to seduce another and in the bed work from his secrets and confidences. Lerith can read the dreams of anyone who sleeps near her, and men must make a Test of Willpower (diff. Very Difficult) if they wish to not answer her questions truthfully.

Ascendancy: 4

Manifestation: 6

Aspect: Lust 6, Envy 4, Gluttony 2

Skills: Supernatural

Attack: Rank Six

Armour: Six

Substance (Health): 18

Fear: Difficult

Trauma: Two

Might: 8

Deft: 8

Wits: 6

Will: 6

Sigil of Lucifer

The prince and lord of Hell himself, Lucifer appears as a beautiful angel with golden hair and silvery, black eyes. His halo is rather than radiant thorny and full of jagged red and black barbs, and his wings are black rather than white. If angered Lucifer's eyes turn blood red and shadows fall across him, but he remains otherwise unchanged.

Lucifer is, to say the least, among the more dangerous spirits that one can attempt to summon. He remains,

however, reasonably fair in his dealings with humans, more fair than many of his dukes in fact, and possesses a somewhat twisted sense of honour. Keep in mind when dealing with Lucifer that this demonic lord tends to keep to the letter of a bargain rather than the spirit, and gives what is strictly asked for not what is desired. He can be trusted to keep to the strict letter of his vows and oaths, but be wary, for his is not above finding some way to exploit too loose a command or discover a loophole in a vow.

Ascendancy: 8

Manifestation: 8

Aspect: Envy 6, Pride 6

Skills: Godlike
 Attack: Rank Eight
 Armour: Eight
 Substance (*Health*): 20
 Fear: Insanely Difficult
 Trauma: Four
Might: 10
Deft: 10
Wits: 10
Will: 10

Sigil of Malpas

Appears as an old warrior with battered armour but a charming grim. When angered he becomes a rotten battle-scarred corpse. He can work a charm to torment a man with putrefied and worm-eaten wounds that will not heal without the aid of magic.

Ascendancy: 3

Manifestation: 4

Aspect: Wrath 4, Sloth 3, Envy 2

Skills: Supernatural
 Attack: Rank Four
 Armour: Four
 Substance (*Health*): 16
 Fear: Difficult
 Trauma: Two
Might: 6
Deft: 6
Wits: 5
Will: 5

Sigil of Marbas

Appears as a lion with a gleam and glitter of gold dust through his coat and eyes like bronze in shadow. Marbas is able to answer in truth concerning all secret and hidden treasures, doors and ways. He can gift you with skills of thievery for a time, and can conjure up a key that will open any lock - though it will turn to dust within a day of his giving it.

When angered the lion loses all its beauty and becomes a ferocious, hellish creature with a maw that roars with the fires of hell.

Ascendancy: 4

Manifestation: 5

Aspect: Avarice 4, Wrath 4, Pride 4

Skills: Supernatural
 Attack: Rank Five

Armour: Five
 Substance (*Health*): 17
 Fear: Difficult
 Trauma: Two
Might: 7
Deft: 7
Wits: 6
Will: 6

Sigil of Marchosias

Appears as a harpist with silver hair and green eyes. Marchosias can tell immediately all lies from truths, and can see into the mind of a person and root out their dark secrets. A victim of this power must be present and is allowed to enter a Contest of Willpower to resist.

Ascendancy: 3

Manifestation: 3

Aspect: Envy 4, Avarice 3, Sloth 2

Sigil of Naberius

Appears as a genial innkeeper with the smells of woodsmoke, good food and wine lingering about him. Naberius has the power to cause a small inn, complete with one mindless, but apparently real servant to grow out of the earth. The inn remains intact for until the next dawn and provides good shelter and warmth, but no food or drink. In the morning then drifts away like so much smoke.

Ascendancy: 3

Manifestation: 6

Aspects: Sloth 6, Gluttony 3

Skills: Supernatural
 Attack: Rank Six
 Armour: Six
 Substance (*Health*): 17
 Fear: Difficult
 Trauma: Two
Might: 8
Deft: 8
Wits: 5
Will: 5

Sigil of Orias

Appears usually in the form of a great, hairy, black spider with gleaming yellow eyes and fangs beaded with green and sickly liquid. He can turn into a very hairy, squat little man if commanded to or so desiring.

Orias has power over all spiders. He can summon, command and direct all spiders within an hour's walk.

Ascendancy: 3

Manifestation: 4

Aspects: Gluttony 4, Avarice 4, Sloth 1

Skills: Supernatural
 Attack: Rank Four
 Armour: Four
 Substance (*Health*): 15
 Fear: Difficult
 Trauma: Two
Might: 6
Deft: 6
Wits: 5

Will: 5

Sigil of Orobas

Appears usually as a great sinuous snake with emerald skin. Orobas can take the form of a thin, haggard little man with a snake for a tongue if he wishes.

Orobas has power over all snakes. He can summon, command and direct all snakes within an hour's walk.

Ascendancy: 3

Manifestation: 4

Aspects: Envy 4, Pride 3, Wrath 2

Skills: Supernatural

Attack: Rank Four

Armour: Four

Substance (Health): 16

Fear: Difficult

Trauma: Two

Might: 6

Deft: 6

Wits: 5

Will: 5

Sigil of Paimon

Appears as a king of Egypt or Araby and is always surrounded by disembodied singing voices and the sounds of pipes and harps. His voice roars rather than speaks. When angered his face disfigures into that of a jackal.

Paimon is well versed in all knowledge and can grant Uncanny skill to any Lore. He can also procure books on Alchemy, Divination, Herbalism and the like at will.

He is said to give useful familiars.

Ascendancy: 4

Manifestation: 5

Aspects: Avarice 5, Pride 4, Wrath 3

Skills: Supernatural

Attack: Rank Five

Armour: Five

Substance (Health): 17

Fear: Difficult

Trauma: Two

Might: 7

Deft: 7

Wits: 6

Will: 6

Sigil of Vassago

Appears in the guise of a powerful prince, with handsome features, fair and golden hair and eyes the colour of cornflowers and midsummer skies. He is said by many to be not so evil as most demons, and disinclined to cause wanton pain or injury.

Vassago has the power to see the threads of past, present and future and may give answers to questions of prophecy. His answers, however, are always vague when questioned on the future. He can see many futures, and say only what is likely given a chain of events, not what will come to pass.

Ascendancy: 3

Manifestation: 4

Aspects: Avarice 3, Pride 3, Gluttony 3

Skills: Supernatural

Attack: Rank Four

Armour: Four

Substance (Health): 16

Fear: Difficult

Trauma: Two

Might: 6

Deft: 6

Wits: 5

Will: 5

Sigil of Vual

Appears as a great gluttonous man, with a wide belly and a merry, red-cheeked smile. If angered he becomes hugely fat and great fanglike teeth then grow out of his mouth.

Vual can cause a grand and kingly spread of food, wine, bread, meats and all manner of delicacies to appear on a spread of silken cloth. It will feed to satiation up to six people. When finished the cups, cloth and remains all vanish.

Ascendancy: 3

Manifestation: 5

Aspect: Gluttony 6, Sloth 2, Lust 1

Skills: Supernatural

Attack: Rank Five

Armour: Five

Substance (Health): 17

Fear: Difficult

Trauma: Two

Might: 7

Deft: 7

Wits: 5

Will: 5

Sigil of Zepar

Appears as a soldier, dressed all in scarlet, bearing a sword of a fine but strange red metal. His glances are always full of suggestion and sinful hints. Zepar has the power to make a person or group of people feel suddenly overcome by the desire to engage in sinful, lustful acts with very nearly anyone at hand. All those affected by Zepar's magic are allowed a Test of Willpower (diff. Average) to resist. The magic will not work on those whose minds are set sternly on another course, battle or prayer, but works best on those who are bored, relaxing or drinking.

Ascendancy: 4

Manifestation: 3

Aspect: Lust 6, Avarice 3

Skills: Supernatural

Attack: Rank Three

Armour: Three

Substance (Health): 15

Fear: Difficult

Trauma: Two

Might: 5

Deft: 5

Wits: 4

Will: 4



Setting



Chapter Seven

It is the year of our Lord eleven hundred and eighty nine. The crusades have become a bloody affair, and every year more young men leave homestead and farm to die in the hot and merciless Holy Land. Plagues both natural and unnatural haunts the land, leaving empty hamlets and villages scattered in an increasing savage wilderness. And the Winter of Wolves that fell upon the land decades ago has not yet abated, each winter is harsher, each summer less kind.

The Age of Night

This is not the romanticised, quaint medieval Europe of happy peasants collecting hay in the fields. It is squalid, filthy land, where refuse, old straw and worse waste is poured into the streets, superstition is rife, literacy is all but unknown among even the nobility and monasteries are heavily fortified for fear of robber-knights, wandering, unemployed mercenaries and heathen raiders from the icy north.

And times have turned darker still for this filthy, backward land; creatures of the night and other more hellish things have been gathering in the woods and mountains, their numbers multiplying for centuries. Witches and the deathless walk unknown among the living in the towns and hamlets and the shades of the dead venture to cross the line between life and death in a world where death is no longer the certainty it once was.

For this is the age of Benighted Europe, the *Aeris Nocturnus*, the age of night.

The year is 1189, two years after the combined armies of Franks, Templar and Hospitaller were defeated by Saladin in the Holy Land.

Omens have been turning against the lands of the west, indeed against all mortal kingdoms for centuries. Strange angelic things have been seen battling one-another above the deserts of Egypt. Weird creatures have begun sinking ships the North Sea. In 1132 every calf born in spring near Paris was stillborn and had two-heads. Blazes of blood red light in the sky were seen over Rome for twelve days in 1145. A plague of locusts, unknown in the history of Europe descended on the south coast of Iberia in 1157.

Many now believe that the day of reckoning is at hand. Cults and rumours of black works and devils are spreading. And Christendom has not even penetrated into the depths

of Europe. The remaining pagan Norsemen remain a threat to any and all, and in the east vast areas of Slavic Europe remains under the sway of old, wild gods and demonic things in godlike masks.

This is also a time of persecution and oppression. Not just by the unearthly powers of Heaven, Faerie and Hell, but by fellow man. The world remains a grim and difficult place. Disease and suffering are widespread under an unjust feudal system that leaves many destitute or virtually slaves to their liege lord. The humble farmer is ever aware of his lord's prying eyes and door-knocking taxmen. Nobles hold themselves aloof in cold and bloodstained castles. Meanwhile the church desperately maintains a failing grip over the spiritual world of those parts of Europe it has conquered.

And over all of the land dark magicians and evil spirits are rising in power. Since the Honorius Edict the church has maintained a strict policy of destroying all sorcery and putting to death all sorcerers that can be found. But the tomes that have most easily been destroyed were those held by monasteries, hedge wizards and healers. Those performing their benevolent arts in the open. So it is that white magicians have been all but expelled from Europe.

Those who remain are those who have always worked in secret. The witches and warlocks of the other dynasty. The practitioners of the hexan arts and conjurors of demons and wild, savage spirits.

So it is that each day more dark things walk the earth. Strange spirits that can take the form of man or beast or shadow. Things of the night that are hungry for blood. Things that can offer great riches for eternal servitude. Things that are seeking just a little sliver of your soul.

Fall of Rome, Rise of Darkness

After the decline, decadence and eventual fall of the Western Roman Empire there was for a time an age of utter darkness in the west. An age when enlightenment fell away, philosophy and learning were forgotten and bands of petty, barbaric 'knights' ruled over by robber-kings carved dominions with sword and fire.

Slowly, very slowly Europe crept out of that shadowy age. It made contact again with the knowledge of the ancients through libraries kept safe in Egypt and Araby. Kingdoms settled into a less warlike states of being and grew into a new era - the Middle Ages. But since the fall of

Rome, through the Dark Ages and into the present day a shadow has twined and crept through Europe. In secret the agents of the Hell have been spreading and growing. Covens of witches, demons and creatures of shadow, sorcerous monsters are now to be found in every forest and village – and the veils of apparent humanity hide them too well, too often.

Things are again turning to darkness in Europe. The brief step towards a new era has stagnated. Life is slipping back into a new Dark Age.

Hereafter is the history of how this is coming to pass.

The Edict of Honorius

Pope Honorius I ruled the Church from the year 715 to 731. He was a man who believed greatly in the tradition of Solomon and believed that the demons of Hell were not only below mortal man in the hierarchy of Creation, but as good a beast of burden as any ox or horse.

In Rome, Ravenna and Byzantium, Honorius founded colleges of goetic sorcery, that branch of magic that concerns itself with the summoning of preternatural spirits. The Heirs of Honorius, as the students of those schools were then called, worked behind closed walls but not in utter secrecy. There was in that time no more than a general sense of unease that sorcery was perhaps a tool too dangerous for mortals.

In the year 725 things began to turn ill. A minor demon, little more than an implet escaped its circle of binding in a monastery in Ravenna and killed twenty-seven monks in their beds before escaping into the woods.

A year later and a more powerful wild spirit broke free from its bindings in Rome and though it was quickly exorcised it still managed to kill two acolytes and destroy an irreplaceable relic of Saint Bartholomew.

And then the worst happened. In 729 a circle of goetic summoners under the eye of Honorius himself lost control over their magic and instead of summoning a minor spirit opened a gate that allowed one of the Dukes of Hell, the demon Belial to enter the mortal world. The chamber of summoning was situated beneath the Pantheon in Rome. Belial broke free of the various wards placed about the room and left a bloody wake behind him as he ascended into upper halls and eventually into the great domed place of worship itself.

It is unknown how many died in that hour. A list of the names of no less than forty bishops, prelates and priests was erected on the outer wall of the Pantheon in later days. No record of the common men and woman who would have been at prayer has been kept.

It was Honorius himself who eventually confronted Belial and returned the demon to whence he came. But in the battle of sorcery Honorius was touched by Hell, his soul was darkened and madness crept into his mind. Horribly wounded, barely able to breath without coughing blood, Honorius survived a year after the ordeal. In that year he became known as the Mad Pope and was challenged twice by Bishops seeking the support of the Council of Cardinals.

Through this time Honorius gave up his sorcerous arts

and proclaimed that the magic arts in all their forms were blasphemous. But he made many strange and wild decrees during this time and spoke many bleak prophecies. Few were heeded.

When Honorius finally succumbed to his injuries his one last legacy was the proclamation against all arts sorcerous. This decree above all others was taken into the heart of the Church and there debated. Was it a warning from the divine? Was Honorius's ordeal an example set for all?

For two hundred years the debate raged between those who felt that magic was no more good or evil than a sword and those who believed that it was inherently against the will of God.

In 932 the College of Cardinals came to a decision. The practise of sorcery, in any form, by any means, to any ends was punishable by death. For some decades unofficial trials and executions of magicians and witches had been occurring throughout Europe. Now the purges became sanctioned and the knives and brands were brought into the open.

But the result was not that which the Church had hoped for. The more harmless, more benevolent magicians and hedge-wizards, who lived and worked their charms openly were the most easily found out, tried and burned. The practitioners of the dark arts who had always worked in secret remained working in secret. Europe was purged of white magic in a matter of years while the covens of warlockry only grew stronger.

The Goetic Arcorum

Prior to the Edict of Honorius the Goetic Arcorum had been a well respected, if a little mistrusted, order of magi and alchemists. The Goetic Arcorum had, through wars and politics now long in the past, absorbed or overrun the numerous traditions of sorcery that had prevailed in Europe at around the year five hundred. Between the years five hundred and seven hundred wars of assassination and demonic possession and attack raged in secret. The old dominions of the sorcerers of Europe failed and fell, one by one.

But victory and peace was short lived. Days after the Edict of Honorius was passed thirty four the Colleges of the Arcorum were attacked and torched, the sorcerers and acolytes hung or worse from Rome to Denmark. The order went at once into hiding. Its grandmasters sought out the old, secret strongholds not used since the occult wars and there hid and biding time, assuming that eventually the shadow of hatred and fear would pass and the order would, eventually be able to reassert itself.

The Binding of Death

Twenty years follow and the year is now 742. In a valley beside the Nile the sands of the desert blow red and grey among the impassive faces of buried and long dead kings. Statues of Nubian pharaohs, staring forever at the waters that pass below, the white sails of feluccas, the scatter of toiling men.

For beneath the carven faces work a dozen men with

picks and hammers. They dig at the rock and scoop away the sand. And beneath the rock and sand they find great cap of stone, writ in the dead words of the dead priests of a dead god. The stone is broken, dust billow up, air in a rasping roar flows into a chamber long hidden.

Into this chamber goes the master of the hunt. A man dressed in the robes of a magi from the east. A man of great wonders and powers. A sorcerer, wise in the ways of many things, but also aged. Weakening by the day. Racked with illness.

The halls he walked are marked with the visages of pharaohs and gods, boats on the river of the afterworld, the goddess of night stretched above, her body blue and gold with darkness and stars. He passes by the ancient paint, the carved images. For he knows what lies beneath. In a small chamber, where once the priests met and bowed, there is a statue of a god with the head of a jackal. And beneath this is a great cask of black stone. And within the cask lies the teachings of the Sept of Anubis.

The Magi has no need of golden treasures. His men throw aside the statue, heft open the casket. But what the Magi does have need of is the knowledge of the ancients. Those who once knew the rituals of the God of Death. Those who knew how to summon Death itself. And knew how to bind that being to their own ends.

And within the casket lies the forgotten lore. Writ on papayas in hieratic and other, weirder, madder tongues. Words that no mortal eye should see. Truths that no mortal hand should grasp.

And they are his.

Centuries later. A thousand miles away. In a temple beneath the stars the Magi Xerxes draws the circles by the ancient patterns. His acolytes chant the words that no human tongue can quite master. The shadows tremble to hear it. The flames of torches dance and writhe. And the magic is set in motion, the wheel of sorcery turns, the powers are drawn up and cast out and the sky blackens with a storm. When the rite dies, when the crazed chanting ends, the summoning is done.

He does not look powerful, the thing in the circle. It is small and fragile. Like a child robed in black and wearing a mask of white wax. It blinks its liquid and jet eyes and wonders what has happened. The Magi of the East, last master of his order, makes his demand, but not to the thing within the circle. His words cry out to the beyond. Into the realm from which the spirit came. Into the Netherworld where the lesser Spectres of Death reside. For the Magi has ensorcelled their king, he has captured Death. And should any spectre of decay or feebleness come near the temple in the mountainous east, then Death shall itself know the end of existence, cast out of space out of time.

So the Magi lives on. His servants toil eternal under his eye. His acolytes know not of death or sickness. And ever does Death cower bound, staring up at the changeful sky, at the sun and moon and stars and thinking what thoughts none can know.

The Sleepless Dead

There are perhaps a handful of mortals in the world outside of the Temple of the Last Magi of Shiraz who know why the world has changed. A mere dozen or so souls who understand for certain why death let loose a little of its mastery over the world.

The lesser Spectres of Death still do their work as best they can, of course. Man and beast still age and die. But not as surely as they once did. Not as completely. And where before those who tried to cheat death by sorcery or pact with demonic things found their path long and difficult, now the cheaters of death arise from the shroud challenged only by paltry spirits.

The lesser Spectres of Death are few, their task endless. The gates between the living world and the Netherworld are no longer guarded. Shades now slip through unseen. The earth is becoming not just a place where the powerful refuse to utterly die, but a world where the long deceased are returning.

The Ravened

When gates between the mortal world and the Netherworld are opened there are things aside from Shades that can slip through. Dwelling in the mists between the Mortal World, the World of the Dead and the Kingdoms of Heaven, Faerie and Hell is a swarm of nameless, shapeless things that came out of the void at the dawn of time. They are called by many names, but the most common is the Ravened.

The Ravened exists as little more than a shapeless mass of shadow, dark voices and cold whispers. It exists in a swarming multitude of misty tendrils and may be many small entities swarmed together or the various tendrils of some great and cosmic malevolence. No one, not even the powers of Heaven and Hell are sure.

The Ravened when manifest exists as a creeping black and silver mist, full of weird voices and the staring, agonised spectral faces of the consumed. For the Ravened is ever hungry, and what it devours is the very stuff of life itself, the spark of Soul that abides man and spirit thing.

When the Ravened occupies a place it arises, usually but not always at night, and hunts for living Soul. Contact with the Ravened results in loss of Soul very rapidly, and also agonising, terrible pain. If a person's spirit is completely devoured by the Ravened he becomes Soulless but unlike those who sell away their soul to demons the Ravened Devoured also turn feral, savage, mad, unable to speak, unable to do anything but rave like a beast, bolt food and kill. The Ravened it seems eats not merely soul, but also mind, memory and thought. The victim is left, in essence, without any trace of humanity, they become little more than witless beasts that being Soulless cannot be slain in the usual sense.

Spirits too, be they minor or Archonic, angel or demon have no defence against the Ravened. They too are consumed utterly very quickly. But where a mortal leaves behind a feral, animal shell, a spirit simply passes into oblivion and is consumed entirely.

The Ravened will haunt a place around any gate between

this world and any other that has been left open and unchecked. It cannot spread itself out too thin, exists as an unusually invisible miasma of shadow, and must keep a tendril of connection with the mists that exist beyond the gate. If a gate through which the Ravened has crept is shut then the Ravened caught on this side of the world turns thick and black writhes momentarily, then blows away on the wind.

The Feral

The Feral, those who have been devoured by the Ravened, are now a growing plague upon Benighted Europe. In the years following the Binding of Death, the Feral kept mostly to the wilds and woods. But they have now grown in numbers and work together much like a pack of wolves as long as there is food to be had. They are capable of little more than scavenging and hunting and make no distinction between flesh of beast and flesh of human. Though the Feral have no concept of weapons or tools, being Soulless and unkillable in any normal sense, dogged, savage and brutal force of numbers is enough for them to overwhelm and eat even large and dangerous animals such as bears, let alone humans. If food is scarce, however, the Feral turn on one another with horrifying brutality and hunger.

The Prophet of Abaddan

They say he was here. The dark wanderer. The prophet of tongues. The harbinger. The possessed.

Locusts follow in his wake. Disease spreads from his footsteps. The dead rise from the grave and the earth shudders when he passes.

Shall I believe these strange tales?

I see this little valley, brown and blighted and burnt. I see the fear in the eyes of those who still dwell here. I hear stories of how it was before the prophet came. I hear tell of green fields and pleasant rilling streams. They say when the locusts arrived it was as if the sun had been put out. The sky was dark as night and full of the clicking of wings.

Never before have locusts been seen here. Where did they come from?

And so I wonder.

Has a little of hell itself seeped through the cracks in the earth and poisoned this land? Is the dark prophet more than mere legend and superstition?

No one knows what name he once held, but all now call him the Dark Prophet. They say he was a priest driven half-mad by visions and voices. Turned out from his monastery. Set upon the road to wander where he will, begging and thieving. He wandered far into the world. East into the great burning deserts of the Holy Land, drawn there by songs of the damned that only he could hear. And in that desert he walked for seven days and seven nights and when finally near death, starved and mad with thirst, then the veil between the worlds was torn asunder and the demon Abaddan appears from the abyss.

And what words passed between Abaddan and his prophet are not known, but the demon put dark power into

the mortal. He gave him the gift of foresight, but tainted it with madness. He made him deathless, but withered and pale and wretched. He set destruction, locusts and disease upon the prophet's shadow, but gave him no great powers to wield.

And so the dark wanderer was allowed to return to the lands of his birth. West, into the green and growing lands, there to be a harbinger of death, the prophet of the apocalypse.

The Prophet of Abaddan first appeared in the year 982 a small oasis town in the Sahara seven days ride by camel from Cairo. He has reappeared, almost at random, in towns and villages across North Africa, the Holy Land and Europe. There appears to be no pattern to his wanderings and he possesses a supernatural ability to melt away into the wilderness, even if pursued by foolhardy folk with hounds and horses.

The Order of the Misericord

In 1073 a small landholder and minor Anglo-Norman lord by the name of Osbern of Archendale disappeared on the road while inspecting his estates in Somerset. The protection of twelve armed men-at-arms did him, it appears no good. Their bodies were found on the road riddled with arrows. Osbern was, however, taken from the road, his fate unknown.

His only son, Rotrou then with relatives in Normandy, returned at once and spent some weeks hunting the woods and wilds for the brigands assumed to have taken his father. But the robbers had melted away as surely as if they had been ghosts.

A few weeks passed and a dark letter arrived at the table of Rotrou. Writ on Vellum and signed beneath with a cross in blood, the missive demanded that "The stubborn Osbern hath at last breathed his last. If thou should not wish a said-same fate, thou should leave that which we desire in the old fort in Hagwood."

The letter went on to list a number of things. Gold and weapons, spices food, by only one peculiar thing by name. A particular sword that hung as far back as any could remember as decoration above the hearth in the Great Hall of Archendale Castle. It was an old heirloom and said to be very, very ancient. A clumsy thing, made not of steel or iron but bronze and fitted with a new haft and pommel some time in the last two hundred years. The blade could have been as old as the Romans as far as Rotrou or anyone else knew for certain. There were certain grave and dark warnings that the castle was being watched day and night and that suspicious massagers would earn Rotrou and his ilk a painful fate.

Rotrou set upon a plan. He bade his blacksmith make a copy of the sword from old bronze pots about the place. The handle was easily enough forged too, being nothing but iron and twine. To this sword he added some shaved coins of gold and silver and a few flawed gems, bread and bad ale, and a note pleading general poverty – not an uncommon situation for the lower ranking nobility and not a situation far from the truth. Then to the old fort, a ruinous and overgrown mound of earthen walls and ditches, build

- or so it was said - by giants before the Romans came to Britain, he sent his best Foresters by night before the appointed date. There the Foresters waited in cover and chewed bread and watched.

That night a group of men, cloaked and cowed and wearing upon their faces the skulls of goats and deer arrived, took their spoils and withdrew a black column into the woods. The foresters followed from a distance and trailing the cloaked men, watched as one, then another disappeared through a thicket of trees into what ought have been the sheer side of a hill.

Tall tales of dark and demonic ghosts told before the chair of Rotrou sent whispers and a stir of unease about the hall. But at noon, after deliberating and spending some time in the castle chapel, Rotrou called for his knights and bade the foresters lead him to the place in the woods where the cloaked shades vanished.

Sword in hand they went into the scrub and gorse and set off a rattle of bones and wood chimes connected to snare cords on the ground. The dozen black ghosts arose from the earth with shrieks and screams and the rotten smell of them wafted before them like the wave before the prow.

There was a clash of sword and dagger, and red blood, living blood spurted from the ghosts. They fell and died. The masks torn away, each was a mortal man, grime streaked, rotten toothed and mad-eyed. Behind the gorse screen was a hole, cut into the hill and connecting into an ancient chamber, a low and mean barrow dug in ages past.

Here was the fake sword, set upon an altar and on every surface were weird and occult symbols scrawled in chalk, blood and coal. There were tomes there, too. Sorcerous things, and also missives. Unsigned, the scrolls gave to the Coven of Thurbury, a nearby town, the command that the sword of Archenfeld, described in detail, should be got by any means and sent at once to a place called only the Bleak Tower. But to the message there was an unfinished reply. This was in clumsily lettered *Langue d'Oil*, and had in it the suggestion that the Grandmaster of Thurbury, who was now it seemed a cooling corpse in the scrub, might come with the sword personally, after visiting Rouen to see to some business before travelling east and mentioning business then several more smaller villages that Rotrou knew lay east of Paris.

So it was that on a grey and drizzly autumn day in a remote corner the old kingdom of Northumbria a poor nobleman and his men stumbled upon something dark that spread across Europe. Rotrou swore revenge against the viper's head. He gathered his men and bound them by oath to go with him in secret across the channel, into France and to this Bleak Tower and there to revenge for the death of a father and a lord. Avow they did, and there beneath the grey rain they gave themselves a name, the Misericord, after the dagger with which a knight dispatches an enemy too injured to be nursed back to health and hostage. The tool of merciful death.

Rouen

Three months passed and the Order of the Misericord arrived weary in the cathedral town of Rouen. Days of frustration followed and a few too many incautious questions were asked. Two of Rotrou's men were struck by convulsions and died with skin blued by poison. A third disappeared in the market.

Rotrou was then set upon by three masked men on his way to meet a tinker who had offered to sell information concerning a certain local coven of the diablere, as long as Rotrou came alone and at night.

Rotrou managed to run one of the attackers through and escaped with a badly wounded arm. He ran through the benighted streets and was weak from loss of blood when a hand caught his stumbling and led him through a door. He awoke the next morning to find himself in a humble little cottage watched over by three men robed in brown russet. One of the men, tall and weary-eyed with dry, pale skin, lank drab hair and a thin slit of a mouth, introduced himself as Sergio as said to said to Rotrou in a brisk, clipped manner that he was meddling in things he ought to leave alone. That he ought to return to his home and hearth and try to live out his years peacefully. Then, very pointedly, Sergio asked "and where have you left your ancestral sword?"

It was well hidden and Rotrou said so. The men seemed to be put a little at ease.

Rotrou's questions met only with silence. Who are you? Have you been spying upon me? What business have you in this? Are you servants of the devil?

"Ho no," said Sergio with a dry smile, "not that. No not that at all. Quite the other way around."

"You are servants of God?"

"No," said Sergio, "I meant what I said. It is quite the other way around. The devil is the servant of us." This earned grim frowns from the other two. "After a manner of speaking." He shrugged. "There is little harm in you knowing a little more, I think. And a lot of harm in your remaining ignorant. Harm to you. Harm to us. Little can befall us that has not already been done, lest unwise tongues say unwise things. And if a little more knowledge should scare you off, then all the better. Better to be scared and alive and out of claws of *them*." By them he seemed to mean some unseen and vast crowd that was lingering just outside the door. There are those," said Sergio, "who worship unnatural things in the desire to gain power, gold, a lover or two, magic or in order to buy the satisfaction of some other, more tormented and bloody desire. Some worship unnatural things in order to become sorcerous of arts. And then there are those who learn the sorcerous arts in order to command and master unnatural things. We are of that second class of fellow, much reduced in number, much scattered and I fear doomed to fade away. There has been a war. And the worshippers have won."

Southern Bavaria

Three years earlier. Against the blaze of fire that devoured roof, wall and garden, the bodies were silhouettes of contorted phantoms, each swinging lazily on its ropes. The war was ended. The Goetic Arcorum was now all but

dead. A few scattered sorcerers were left, but they remained of little import.

The last remnants of the old traditions that had survived the Honorius Edict in secrecy, the loosely knit cabal of invokers and alchemists who had held out across Europe and resisted at every turn the Malvolentum, were no more.

The Haggard Men stood about the gallows. Their rank furs steamed in the heat from the fire. Light danced on the animal skulls they wore for helms and turned their rusted mail to the colour of roses and wine. The servants scurried about, books and scrolls, boxes and sacks carried to and fro and loaded upon the backs of mules. All that the last college of the Arcorum had to give up before the torch was set. It would all go to the Bleak Tower. To the High Priestess and her servants. And among the tomes and treatise, the weird instruments and strange things preserved in bottles of vinegar there was a single humble looking crate. And in this crate was a single bronze sword. And with it a short scrawl of some forgotten sorcerer's writing on vellum. And this one sword would be the seed of much trouble to come.

For this sword had been much sought by the worshippers of darkness. It and its brothers. The seven. Forged by a god of the wilds in ages past, dripped with the blood and poison of mythic things, capable it was said of killing angels and demons, both. But for the priestesses of the Kingdom of Shadows the swords had another quality of interest. For it was writ in that scrawled treatise that the ancient god had given each weapon its powers by binding into it a demon, and that if brought together as one, the seven demons of the seven swords would be awakened to serve the possessor of the blades.

Or so it was said.

Sergio of the Arcorum

Rotrou returned to his lodgings, gathered his men, made a pretence of leave Rouen but returned that night to take rooms in a more discrete inn. Over some weeks the Order of the Misericord met with Sergio and his last two brothers of the order. There might be other members of the Arcorum left, here and there supposed Sergio, but it was unlikely. Would he divulge where this Bleak Tower could be found? No. For he would not be responsible for a man losing his soul to Hell so foolishly. What would be done with the seven demons if let loose. Begin wars? Win wars? Conquer kingdoms? Murder? Beguile? Master? Who knows, said Sergio. Something awful.

Rotrou and the three Arcorum began very slowly to find a little trust and a little common ground. The Order of the Misericord took a step away from being a band of ignorant and foolhardy armed ruffians bent on petty revenge, towards a more knowledgeable, frightened, secretive and determined existence.

The Three Magi

Rotrou and his men took to calling their new acquaintances the three magi. It was a half-mocking sort of jest common to men who are facing dangers and fears they would rather not think about in a serious and real way.

The Misericorde withdrew from Rouen, but invited the three Magi into their company. Sergio and his fellow sorcerers consulted, discussed, debated and eventually resigned to the protection of these Anglo-Norman petty knights and thugs. The ship that took them to Rotrou's estates in Northumbria weathered foamy waves and high seas. Storms out of season fell upon them and more than one sailor claimed to see strange things in the ocean. Weird serpentine things with a head like a dead horse and hair like kelp. Lingered and followed beneath the waves. The crew were well glad to be rid of their omen-blighted passengers by the time land was sighted. Another day or two of lightning and icy wind in summer might have seen murder aboard.

The Misericorde retreated for a time. It grew a little in number and a great deal in cunning. Spies were sent out into the land. Information was netted and drawn in.

When word reached the ears of Rotrou, now older and wiser and more than a little more grey of rumours that another of The Bound Seven had been found, he moved at once. By secret ways, smuggler's boats and lonely roads the Misericorde travelled east, down through the Kingdom of the Franks, through Navarre and into Castille and the old walled town of Toledo.

Toledo

In 1087 Toledo was a town not long taken from the Caliphate of Cordova and the Moors of Southern Iberia. The Caliphate of Cordova was still in those days a power to be reckoned with and Moresco knights in silks of crimson, azure and gold were ever a threat to the hilltop walls and fortress embankments of Toledo.

But the Misericorde found darker things afoot in Toledo than spies or threats of invasion. They had little time to rest and wash away the dust of the roads before the grave-thefts began. Tombs in the Cathedral of Toledo were, each night broken open, the marble floor split apart, the coffin dragged out and the contents torn and cast aside. Nothing was ever taken. Thick gold chains were left among the dust of rotten linen. Twinkling bejewelled rings glittered from bony fingers.

The priests and monks locked the doors and barred the windows. And though no window was broken or door sprung wide still the desecrations occurred. A few stood vigil in the candle-lit shadows of the great yawning cathedral. By morning they were pale and twisted, dead with horror on their faces or raving, drooling, babbling in the darkest corners of the hall.

None knew what came to Toledo each night. None dared face it. The cathedral was shut up and the priest cloistered away in other smaller, humbler churches. The bars and locks had done no good against the visitations, but they did work well against the Misericorde. They had to shatter a heavy door to file quietly into the cathedral.

What came out of the shadowy recesses of the nave that night none who saw would later describe without trembling and turning pallid. It fell upon the floor and tore at stone and masonry, digging it up as dog digs up sand and gravel. This night the thing was lucky and unlucky.

No sooner had it dug up its first grave than it drew from the rank rags and bones a long and rust-tinged sword. The Sword.

An no sooner had it taken in its claws the sword, then it was set upon by swords and hastily lit a blaze of burning torches.

Eight of the Misericorde died that night, and the creature escaped. Crawling up a column and slithering out of a window too small for a man to pass his head through. But it was injured. Blood as black as tar daubed the marble. And there are certain hedge charms that can be used to find out a man, beast or thing – so long as you have a little of their hair or clothing or blood.

Hasty arrangements for the dead were all that could be made. The Misericorde rode again that night. East into Aragon, then north, along the coast of the Mediterranean, through Frankish lands and into the Kingdom of Burgundy. For two months they trailed the shadow. For two months it kept just a few miles ahead of them. Through dark woods and over mist heaths, along the foothills of the Alps, over rock as hard and sharp as swords, among crevasse and icy tor, to a remote and forsaken little hamlet high in the mountains.

The Town of the Dead

It was a place of the dead. A town empty of the living. The place was dark and cold. At the gates of the town a great black mouth was painted on the pitted stone. On each house the mouth was painted again. Warnings left by the last to flee. The Ravened had come to this little town. Black mists had crept through the town stealing soul, love, ethos and the very minds of the living. Its wake was obvious. In one basement were bloated bodies, Feral who had eaten until they either choked or their innards ruptured. Rotten bread and meat was still stuck in their dead mouths. There were bloody marks all through the town. Corpses twined together dead in a fight that looked more like the wrestle of animals than a battle between men. Everywhere the dead, and somewhere in the hills, the living. The remaining Feral no doubt lurked in the shadows. And worse lurked with them.

Once a place was haunted by the Ravened, it was never unhaunted. The midnight mists would arise eventually to seek new morsels.

At the heart of the deserted town arose one tall, stone-cut house, a towering fortified manor. This was marked all over with weird sigils. Mad, crazed signs, wandering prayers and curses in a dozen languages, Greek, Hebrew Latin and Coptic flooded its walls. Defences against the Ravened it seemed.

The charm tied up with dark blood bobbed and wove upon its string. Within the manor was the creature. Rotrou watched on as six of his cabal made a makeshift ram from a table and attacked the door.

Dust and mildew, stink and rot greeted them in a wave of nauseous air. It was soon obvious that the ravened had found a way in. The wards and sigils had not been tight enough. The bodies in the hall were robbed in wolf fur and black russet. There were marks upon them. Sigils in weird

and fiery shapes burned or tattooed into their foreheads.

In the dining hall the last two of this little coven gnawing on the bones of a dead fellow warlock, their eyes flecked with madness. The Misericorde put a quick end to the two Feral. Deeper and darker they found the thing from Toledo. It seemed that it had orders to return and await new commands. The sorcery upon it was strong. It waited before a sprawled corpse that wore still ornate robes and a demonic gold and ebony mask. It waited before the high priest of the coven. And there was cut down. The sword was taken. And so too were scrolls and books. Treatise, letters, missives and maps.

For this coven was not a rabble of ill-educated rot-toothed robbers. These were men and woman of letters. And from the dark library the Misericorde stole as much as they could carry and that day they left behind the town of rot and ruin in the high hills of the Alps.

A vast trove was opened to them that day. Many secrets of the Malvolentum were laid out in those scrolls writing in ancient tongues waiting to be revealed. Many plots were there to be unhidden. Many agents to be unmasked.

The Malvolentum

The Malvolentum records itself as having hailed down through the ages from the worshippers of Seth along the Nile in the time of Pharaohs. Such a very ancient lineage is doubtful, although the Malvolentum is certainly old. As old as the established Church of Rome, and possibly older.

The Malvolentum is a coven of sorcerers and witches and other masters of the dark arts, who are spread in secret through much of Europe and no doubt into the lands of the Moors and Araby and also east of the Rus. The secret throne of the Malvolentum is just beyond the east of Hungary in a remote tower in a wilderness of mountains and mists that does not fall under the rule of any kingdom, tribe or empire. Called only ever the Bleak Tower, and disguised a nunnery, this crumbling, owl-haunted and ivied monolith is the abode of many 'nuns'. Chief among them is the High Priestess, Camilla della Morde, a somewhat too-youthful looking mother superior who is rumoured to have kept herself alive and young by bathing in milk mixed with droplets of ichors that are bleed from something that is kept bound in chains in the dungeons of the tower.

The High Priestess is surrounded by circles of dark acolytes, priestess of hell, hecatean worshipers, lords and less human servants. She has in her service a troop of knights, the Haggard Men, who hide themselves beneath foetid rags, and furs, rusted mail and wear upon their faces the skulls of deer and goats.

Constantinople

There has lurked a shadow in the courts of Byzantium since the days of Constantine the Great. Woven in and out of the bickering lords, generals, senators and the Hundred and Fifty Bishops of Byzantine. For the Malvolentum has ever been apt at ingratiating itself into the halls of power. Those who wrote secret letters late at night, crimson sealed and oxblood-writ, to be despatched to the Bleak tower

were from early days as widely flung as the mead halls of the pagan north to Cairo and Algiers. Although in those southern ports of call the Malvolentum found itself having troubles and dealings with both the Theurgist Order of Cairo and older, darker cults of leopard and jackal demons from deeper south.

For a long age the agents of the Malvolentum worked very deep in the shadows in Constantinople. Their influence was minor, if exerted at all. They were all but unseen and unheard. But in the year 1115 bids were put in motion.

Four scrolls that were brought back in sandy and salt encrusted jars from the crusades came to attention of several orders and cults, the Malvolentum among them. These scrolls purported to be copies of copies of prophecies spoken by Solomon the Wise in days of yore beneath an eastern moon.

Rumours of what was writ in those scrolls soon spread through the darker haunts of the city. Whispers of a time of change, of a vessel of the new age yet to be born were rife. But for the Malvolentum there was no easy way to get hold of these scrolls. They were gifts to the Patriarch of Constantinople. Their very place of safekeeping was a well-guarded secret.

Empire and Patriarch

In the year 1102 Rotrou caught the consumption and died more or less peacefully in bed. His chief lieutenant, Phillepé of York, takes on the mantle of leadership of the Misericorde and begins to look to renewing the battle against the Malvolentum. The stolen tomes of lore and letters of intrigue have now been largely translated from the ancient Hittite, Hieratic and Babylonian that they were written in.

By 1117 agents of the Misericorde fell upon the shadows of London, then Paris and Rome. They met with marginal success, uncovering several agents and drawing the attention of the Malvolentum once again. There were some minor battles and more failures than successes for the misericorde for a number of years. For a time they rode the night with sword and brand, and then in 1118 they vanished. Two years passed and in 1120 the Misericorde under the command of Phillepé of York arrived, a dusty and road-weary company at the gates of Constantinople.

In the year 1118 the Misericorde had translated enough of a series of letters to uncover a plot to supplant the Patriarch of Constantinople with a new emperor – one who was in the power of the Malvolentum.

The Patriarch Theodoros III Palaiologos was already grey and old and weary upon the throne, the Siege Emperor. The various factions of Constantinople, Vestarchs, Kinsmen, Eunuchs, Eparchos, Senators, and the Hundred and Fifty Bishops were already manoeuvring the place their own favoured prospective Patriarch upon the throne.

Theodoros had two daughters but no sons. Eirene had married a Vestarch named John Xiphilinos, a general of the eastern borders who had won several minor victories against the Seljuk Turks. The younger daughter, Theodora was unmarried but much wooed. Among those who sought

her hand was one Romanos Psellos.

It was known to the Misericorde already that Romanos Psellos was a warlock and liege-bound to the Malvolentum. But he was a powerful man – and one who could be safely accused of witchcraft.

In 1121 John Xiphilinos led a battle against an incursion of Turks near the city of Laodicea. Romanos took the opportunity to put in place a simple plan. He set assassins on the road west to intercept all messengers sent from the field of battle to Smyrna where Eirene and John held their provincial governance. The first messenger was ambushed and killed and a second man sent in his place. The missive he bore was full of dark tidings. John Xiphilinos was dead. The east was overrun. An army of a hundred thousand Turks was drinking river's dry as they marched west.

The battle, in fact, had been minor. John Xiphilinos had repelled a small number of Turks. By the time the truth of the matter reached Smyrna it was too late. Panic had swept the city, looting and pillaging ran rampant and Eirene, who was deeply in love with her husband poisoned herself rather than be taken by the Turks.

His love lost, and his claim to the throne gone, John Xiphilinos persisted for a time as general then resigned and entered a monastery near Prilep in the west.

Meanwhile the Malvolentum had been working its influence in the court. Many Eunuchs were now in their pay, and a number of Senators and members of the Protovestiar, too.

When Patriarch Theodoros III Palaiologos was found stabbed to death in his chambers and the Eunuch Michael Lichoudis was found in a drunken stupor and covered in blood, the Eunuch Michael was executed a little too swiftly.

That very night Romanos Psellos announced his engagement to Theodora and the Senator Constantine the Gerontas nominated Romanos as heir to the throne.

There were other claimants too, but the most significant was the nephew of Theodoros, one Theokotos Palaiologos – a rather sickly and often bedridden young man favoured by many because of the ease with which he could be manipulated by his closest advisors.

The Misericorde decided that although Theokotos was not an ideal Patriarch he was the best of two evils. Phillepé of York used stolen Malvolentum documents to have a letter from the Bleak Tower forged and sealed. This was allowed to fall into the hands of Romanos. The letter implied that Theokotos was also in the power of the Bleak Tower and that Theokotos was their preferred puppet. It discussed the matter of how Romanos and the innocent Theodora could be easily disposed of.

Romanos Psellos flew into a fury and had loyal retainers drag six servants of the Malvolentum who he had been hosting as guests into his chamber. The men and women were denounced as witches and very slowly and publicly executed. Romanos then gathered his acolytes and began summoning those demons he had made especial bargain with.

The ensued a brief and bloody war-in-secret between the loyal followers of the warlock Romanos and the Malvolentum. They set upon one another like wolves – both furious at having been betrayed by the other. The

untimely death of many of Romanos's one-time supporters in the Senate weakened his claim – within three weeks Theokotos was announced as the next Patriarch of the Byzantine Empire.

By the time the daggers were done with blood and murder the Malvolentum lost its sway in Byzantium and Romanos succeeded from the dark order and founded his own heretic order of Byzantine Warlocks – the Argyropoulos – literally 'those born in purple' – a word used to denote those of noble blood because of the tradition that royal births were conducted in a particular room in the palace painted with purple walls. The term was something of a slightly arrogant suggestion that it would soon be Romanos's warlocks who would be the rulers of Byzantium.

After this minor victory the Misericorde retreated again into obscurity. Emerging to undo a plot of the Malvolentum only twice over the next ten years – once in the north of the Kingdom of Germany, and then two years later in Paris.

Byzantine Titles

Byzantine titles are fickle, ever changing and subject to whim and fashion. One year a Vestarch may be all the rage, the next one must be a Magnate to be anything at all, or an Eparch, or a Senator or a General. It remains all very confusing for anyone not deeply involved in the inner halls of power.

The situation is confused still more by the number of bodies of power that exist in Constantinople – the Eunuchs, Senate, Vestarchs, Hundred and Fifty Bishops, Noble Houses, Protovestiar and Vestiar can all claim imperial influence in one form or another.

Swords of Byzantium

A secret and sacred order of monastic knights whose chief temple is hidden in catacombs beneath Constantinople, and who answer not to Pope or Emperor but only to their own Grandmaster. The order was founded in the year 876 AD by the prelate Ratharius. It has maintained itself in strict secrecy since then, to the extent that there are those who ought to know better who still dispute its very existence.

The Swords of Byzantium dress entirely in black and wear a heavy cowl and cloak over their armour as if in mourning. They wear a small grey cross emblazoned on the chest, but otherwise have no obvious insignia.

The order never fights in the open. Its crusades are always in secret, its missions of salvation always clandestine. The order maintains esoteric, almost mystic rituals in secret temples and its rituals and theologies are not merely unconventional but heretical. Much emphasis is placed on Christ's suffering during his time of death, as the Swords of Byzantium believe he went not to the arms of the creator but instead for a time to Hell before resurrection.

The order is believed to have drawn members from many of the noble houses of Constantinople, and the halls of power of the Eastern Holy Roman Empire may well be riddled with the influence of the Swords.

The First Crusade

In the year 1071 the Seljuk Turks rode west, cut deep into the Byzantine Empire and defeated the Imperial Armies of the Patriarch of Constantinople. By 1095 the situation is turning desperate for the Eastern Roman Empire. In this year Emperor Alexius I, son of the short lived Theokotos IV, broods over his crumbling borders and sends a missive to Pope Urban II of Rome, beseeching aid. Times and tides are dark for Christendom in the east, warns Alexius.

Upon word from Constantinople Urban II sends out a calling. He summons the knights of the west to go to war in aid of their fellows in the east. The mood turns fervent. Soon lords and kings are talking not merely of aiding the Byzantine Empire, but of retaking the Holy Land itself.

So begins the first Crusade. The newly conceived orders of monastic knights, the Templar and Hospitaller are founded shortly after. Antioch, Edessa and eventually Jerusalem are conquered. But the crusaders, who have this once chance to set out the borders of strong and peaceful kingdoms fall soon to bickering and infighting. The orders of Templar and Hospitaller become such bitter enemies that they only cease their intrigues and personal vendettas when threatened by Muslim knights and emirs. Lords and Ladies both vie for control of who next will be king of Jerusalem and between daggers and poison and duels the initial success of the crusades slips soon into a tangled web of politics and assassination.

The Crusades have proved a wonderful and unlooked for boon for the various servants of the Kingdom of Darkness in Europe and the Holy Land. The swords of west and east, nominally in the service of the Kingdom of Hallows have begun slaughtering one-another over what to Angels and Demons appear to be trivial disagreements on fine points of scripture and interpretation.

While the worshippers of the Kingdom of Hallows engage in the bloody butchery of other worshippers of the Kingdom of Hallows the servants of darkness watch on and wait and build their strength.

Rome

Rome is currently under the rule of the Papacy, a Papal state caught between the Kingdom of Germany which stretches all the way from Denmark into the Italian Peninsula, and the Kingdom of Sicily which rules most of the southern half of Italy. Ravenna, a small eastern coastal monastic city famed for its mosaics, is nominally an independent city state, but is in fact more or less a vassal of the Byzantine Empire. Ravenna represents the consulate power of Byzantium in the west.

In the years following the withdrawal of Byzantium from the west the city of Venice broke from the Eastern Holy Roman Empire and formed itself into a small coastal republic. That the Venetian Republic has remained independent of its neighbours the Kingdoms of Germany and Hungary is a little surprising, but independent it has remained.

Pope Celestine II

The Episcopal Throne is currently filled by Pope Celestine II. Celestine has proved a retiring and conservative pope. Although he has proved more immune to the political manoeuvring of his cardinals and various blessing-seekers than recent popes he has done little in the way of seriously changing or reworking church doctrine.

The Sacrarium

Prelate Antoninus is the head of the Sacrarium Council which holds the collected remaining works of knowledge pertaining to Sanctimony, conducts a small and humble school for the teaching of Sanctimony and watches the behaviour of those priests, nuns or monks taught the hallowed art – in case the temptations of magic should grow to strong.

In recent years the Sacrarium Council has begun to take a more active and highly secret role in the seeking out and destroying of covens of witches and warlocks. This activity has not been sanctioned by Celestine II and it is unlikely that Antoninus would remain head of the Sacrarium if word of his increasingly ambitious battle against Hell's agents of earth reached the papal halls.

The Ragman

Do not taunt the beggars of Rome. Do not throw them rotten crusts and filthy scraps. For who knows if it may be the Ragman you taunt? And every child knows that to taunt the Ragman is to taunt death.

The Ragman is a rumoured figure of Rome's folklore who is very much real. The common folk have no idea who or what he is, only that he is as dangerous as any creature of the night.

The Ragman dresses much like any leper, from head to toe in concealing tattered garb, covered with filth and reeking of human stench. But beneath his rags, the Ragman has not a disfiguring disease, but flesh that is long hideous and dead. The Ragman is a ghul, one of the only ghul west of Araby. How he came to Rome is a strange tale in itself. He was, when human, a Roman noble named Abaleus and a templar who after crusading for some years established lands and demesne in the Holy Land. But he was not a kind lord and had a penchant for date wine and woman. He angered many by his wanton ways, and the bastards he begot were many. But it was the taking to his bed of the unwilling daughter of a local magus and astrologer that was he undoing. In wrath the magus settled upon the most just retribution he could envision. He summoned the demon Paimon and forced him to give over a single drop of blood. This was, however, all that the magus needed.

For it has long been known in the lands of the east that to drink the blood of a demon is to become ghul - a half-human monster, mad with demonic hunger and driven to crave human flesh. It was in the ancient days of Persia this was a punishment given to the most inhuman criminals, and so the magus decided that it would be a just

punishment again.

The blood was given to Abaleus in his wine. But as soon as the transformation began ten strong warriors, well paid by the magus, entered the great hall, fell upon Abaleus and shackled him in irons. The crazed Abaleus was then dragged into the pits of his own dungeons and walled up behind strong bricks.

Years passed and the lord was forgotten. Wars came and went and the fortress was beset by siege. Desperate for water when the well was poisoned by a spy, the inhabitants of the fortress dug down into bedrock and dug too deep. They opened a way into the chamber below and the thing within. By dawn the next day not a person was left alive. The attackers climbed over the walls to find half-devoured corpses littering the halls, rooms and gardens. Of the killer they found nothing.

He had already fled, driven by memories of his past life to stumble west, across deserts and scrub and rock, eventually to Rome. And there he remained. No longer a handsome and arrogant lord but one with the filth of the streets. Covered in rags and with long, clawed fingers and a demonic face hidden behind a grey and tattered mask.

Terentia of Messina

In the year 1154 a young nun by the name of Terentia arrived in Rome, sent from the Monastery of the Grey Sisters in Messina by a mother superior who had spent some time studying with the Sacrarium and had perceived in Terentia a natural aptitude for the skills of the sorcerer.

Terentia was considered and questioned and in time considered to be pure enough of mind and soul to be given the dark burden of sorcery. She studied first in a class of three nuns – male and female students being kept separate – but excelling both her peers soon passed into the direct tutelage of Mother Ottavia.

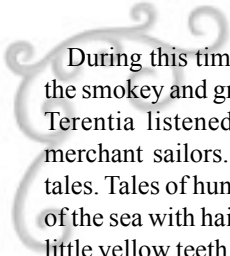
For some three years she studied and prayed and progressed with rapacious speed in her studies. So much so that her learning came to the attention of Prelate Antoninus and he called the girl into his audience in order to place on her a command to give up the arts for a time and commit herself to prayer and quiet reflection as befits a nun. In time he would allow her to return to her studies.

Terentia accepted this judgement with apparent obeisance but three days later her room was empty and her meagre belongings gone.

This was not a day and age in which one simply walks away from the church. Priests and laymen were sent out, the word put about that a run-away nun had eloped, rewards posted, but Terentia simply appeared to have vanished.

In fact Terentia had travelled north, working as she went doing whatever jobs she could to scrape together a little coin. She passed into the City State of Pisa and from there she stowed away on a boat and jumped ship in the Catalan Counties.

For a time Terentia ingratiated herself with a local Hedge Witch in a small fishing village near Barcelona. Again she learned rapidly and soon mastered the small magics of her new mistress.



During this time Terentia gathered coin of her own. In the smokey and grease-ridden tavernas of her little hamlet Terentia listened to the stories of the fisherman and merchant sailors. She heard many weird and wondrous tales. Tales of hungry monsters as large as islands. Of folk of the sea with hair of green and sharp, sharp teeth like the little yellow teeth of fish. But she became intrigued by the rumours of the *Fata Morgana* – the legendary city of Morgana le Fae that so many sailor's claimed to have seen a ripple of marble and gold above sunlit Mediterranean waters.

In the year 1165 Terentia paid a handsome sum of coin to a captain of a merchant cog who claimed to know of a North African shoal where the *Fata Morgana* appeared every month upon the full moon. The cog's sails bellied out and the ship wallowed out of the little harbour.

A month later the ship was found drifting with tattered sails west of Malta. Most of the crew were missing. Those that were left were half-starved and near dead from thirst, every one of them raving and crazed. The ship set sail with forty good sailors and food and water for two months of becalmed weather. Within that month it had been beaten and battered, the timbers worn, the hull encrusted with barnacles so that it looked more like a vessel that had been at sea half a year, driven by one fell wind after another.

It was ten years before Terentia appeared again. Dark on a midwinter night she walked wrapped in a funary shroud out of the mountains that overshadow the Tigris. Little is known of how she survived those days among the Seljuk tribes of the east. Or where she passed those ten years in secret. Terentia made a way west, and came eventually to the court of the Iconium Satrapy. It was into the resplendent court of the Satrap of Iconium that Terentia lived for a time - a place of silks and incense, opium and harem, romances and daggers.

Empress of the East

In the court of the Satrap of Iconium Terentia made for herself a reputation as a sorceress of great and dangerous power. She is said to have made demons dance for the Satrap and summoned up shadowy things in beautiful forms to dote upon the lord in his marbled halls. When Terentia left Iconium it was with a train of camels and riches wandering behind her. At Constantinople Terentia was rumoured to be an empress of the farthest east rich beyond the dreams of common man and bishop alike.

But wealth can breed carelessness and in Constantinople Terentia was careless. In a land where goetia is a dark art Terentia let it be known a little too widely that she had at her beck and call certain spirits and demons. Suspicion and resentment grew. Priests grown covetous of the riches of Terentia began to think of the laws that bestow the property of a witch to the church.

But the more they heard of her, the more they feared her.

So it was that in the dead of night a score of men armed with daggers and ropes crept into the inn that Terentia had hired out, slit the throats of guards and dogs alike, and slowly, slowly edged open the door.

The sorcerous may have fine powers but they are mortal nonetheless and mortals must sleep. Terentia was surprised

and bound, shackled and dragged from her room.

For five days and nights Terentia was kept in the dark rooms beneath an airy and mosaic-hued cathedral. In deep darkness that few enter and fewer still return from. It is best not to dwell on what passed in that time, though what passed was terrible enough that it seems Terentia was driven to making new bargains with unearthly things.

A Bargain Made

For the church to have the worldly goods of Terentia a confession was needed. Yet on the fifth day in the darkness Terentia was still stubborn. On the fifth night a shape and a shadow crept below the outer walls of the cathedral. It went this wand that, searching for a way into the building. What it was exactly that snapped apart the iron bars of a small window on the west wall and entered into the dungeons. None who saw it lived. Guards and prisoners alike were found the next day – scattered through the corridors here and there, pale and bloodless, with transfixed terror upon their pallid faces.

The thing came and went and with it went Terentia. Up the winding, winding stairs and out through a hole of shattered rubble and dust and broken timbers. There were scorch and claw marks in the stone.

The Temple of Diana

Terentia left the city of Constantinople that night. She took her servants and what wealth she could easily lump together and journeyed west, to the rolling mountains of Macedonia and eventually to a small and secret glade high in the crags, forest clad and ivy choked and full of the marble ruins of an elder age.

During her time in the city of Constantinople both Swords of Byzantium had grown suspicious of her and the Argyropoulos, through their spies among the Swords, had grown intrigued. So it was that two parties of horsemen in cloaks of black and grey rode out from the gates of Constantinople trailing Terentia, but also aware and watchful of one-another. Three days out of Constantinople the Argyropoulos ambushed the Swords and Byzantium and there was much bloodshed. Three men survived. One warlock of Argyropoulos and two Swords of Byzantium. One of the Swords, heavily injured, rode for Constantinople to seek reinforcements and aid. The remaining two men withdrew and raced west, neither daring to attack the other openly, both desperate to reach Terentia first and either recruit or eliminate this wild element in the plots of Heaven and Hell.

What the two men found was not what either had expected. Terentia and her servant's were busily rebuilding the remains of a once grand temple to the wild goddess Diana. And matters soon turned stranger. Weird creatures, wild and shaggy, with eyes like moonlight moved half-glimpsed through the woods. Weird and untamed things were gathered in the scrub and waters.

Two weeks passed and the warlock and the knight, ever circling one-another, ever spying on Terentia began to fathom what Terentia planned. She was rebuilding a seat of power for the third dynasty. And Diana, the wild goddess of moonlight hunts it seemed would soon have worshippers

again, and a seat of power.

It was not a demon that had crept into the Cathedral at Constantinople. It was something far more savage and a little less dark. And the bargain struck was now quite obvious.

Over the next week worn and haggard travellers began to arrive, called to mountains from their last recluses, the very last vestigial remnants of the cult of Diana. Old women, mostly, but some who were young. Drawn by a call they heard singing in the deepest parts of their minds.

Soon the temple was near complete and sigils of power were carved in the marble and still neither the Swords of Byzantium nor the Warlocks of the Argyropoulos arrived, though both men used esoteric means to conjure up messengers. The bloodshed on the road had sparked a secret war of revenge in Constantinople. Neither side could risk depleting their strength by sending a force west to the Macedonian mountains.

On the night of the first full moon after the temple's completion two men watched in silence and horror and wonder from their different hiding places in the forest. A chant arose and fell like a tide of ocean waves. Cultists danced naked before a blazing fire upon the steps of the temple. And within the temple a light and shadow appeared, and congealing into a shape.

Soon the sketchy outline of a woman of strange, thin and tall features formed, with eyes of silver and a bow of gold in her hand. The men watching this did not notice Terentia walk away. They did not notice the eastern servants nod silently and follow. They saw only the infinite and terrifying beauty of a spirit that was once a goddess.

And when the goddess opened eyes of fire and moonstone she looked into the shadows of the hills and sent out her followers. For Diana saw there in the shadows the first two sacrifices she would have in an age.

The Goddess Diana

Diana is a powerful Faerie spirit that sees herself as a goddess and has been heavily corrupted by the Unseeghlie taint that has crept through the Kingdom of Wilds.

Her domain remains small, a foothold of dark-tainted wilderness in a world now ruled over by the two hosts of Heaven and Hell. This new emergence of an old and savage goddess unfettered into the mortal world is a serious concern for those servants of the light and the dark who are aware of her. Most Archonic Spirits, angels, demons and the like must return to their native world regularly if they wish to maintain their place in the hierarchy of spirits. Diana's tainted madness and complete lack of interest in maintaining ascendancy in the Kingdom of Wilds means that she has devoted herself utterly to dwelling only in the mortal world. Her very presence has already begun to attract numerous tainted and Unseeghlie spirits of a more minor nature that have long been wandering wild and masterless in the forests, rivers and mountains of Macedonia.

Sanctuary in the West

Disappearing again for a time, Terentia eventually reappeared with fewer retainers and a little less in the way of gold, spices and incense in a small port cove on the very western shore of Ireland. There she has settled, buying lands and a title from an impoverished Hiberno-Norse Earl who had found the Gaelic locals a little too wild and unruly for his liking, and wished to return Norway.

The Misericorde has taken an interest in Terentia since her appearance in lands closer to their seat of power in hill castle that Terentia now inhabits. Yet despite outward appearances suspicions of something wicked and weird afoot have grown. Strange rumours of disembodied candlelights in the night flitter around Terentia's castle like the lights themselves. And Terentia's new and rabid interest in learning local tales concerning the Aes Sídhe – the People of the Mounds – has only stoked the Misericorde's worries. The Aes Sídhe are reputed to be the diminished remnants of a mythic race of Faerie of remarkable magics. Terentia's apparent sympathy with the Kingdoms of Wilds and her personal wealth of sorcery suggests that any plans she may be making concerning the Aes Sídhe may not be good for humanity.

The Black Plague

In 1167 an Italian ship visiting ports in the black sea on a trade route that connects Europe to the great silk road east brought back with it more than gold and silks. Upon sailing into a port in Sicily most of the crew were already either dying or dead. Dispersed through the local town the disease spread fast. Black boils, coughing of blood a rapid and painful death.

The town mayor and guardsmen soon realised that the dying sailors were the source of the new pestilence and evicted the ship but not before the plague had spread. Soon people were dying in their houses, leechmen refused to call and see the sick, nuns and monks were left to collect bodies and when the disease sweeps through the monasteries and nunneries the bodies there were left to lie and rot. With a few years the plague had spread through Europe. Vast tracts of land are now left unpopulated. Villages cut themselves off and trade with outsiders by leaving goods at appointed places and taking only coins that are left in pales of vinegar. Crops are no longer brought in and starvation has begun to walk in the shadow of the plague.

Designer Notes

It is worth noting that in the real world the Black Plague did not reach Europe until the 1300's. In Benighted Europe the plague has arrived two hundred years earlier striking the nations of Europe at a time when they are barely emerging from an age of squalor and savagery and thus pushing them back towards the brink of a new Dark Age.

Beauty Undone

The only known cure for the Black Plague is, or perhaps it is better written *was*, the blood of that rare and beautiful

beast the unicorn. Their horns having also many fine powers and their pelt being unsurpassed in beauty, the unicorn has been a much-prized trophy for kings and peasant hunters alike for centuries.

At one time unicorns, their skin a shimmer of stars and dust, their horns a gleam of ivory, could be seen in the remoter and wilder regions of Europe. Unicorns were hunted out of existence around the Mediterranean very early, the last known Iberian Unicorn was fought by gladiators in the Circus Maximus two hundred years before the birth of Christ. It was, according to the historian Paraclesus, "a pitiable creature, more grey than white, and half-starved by the time it was brought before the crowds". Unicorns were hunted to extinction in Greece during the Hellenistic Era, around the same time that the Greek lion was hunted to extinction. Agamemnon himself is said to have slain with an arrow one of the last unicorns in the Greek mainland.

By about the year 700 unicorns were gone from what is now the Frankish and Germanic Kingdoms, the lands of the Rus and kingdoms of the mixed bastard races of Angles, Jutes, Saxons, Scots, Welsh and Irish.

A somewhat shaggier, though just as graceful and pearly of hide kith of unicorn persisted in the colder climes, mostly around the Baltic as late as 1100.

With the coming of plague to Europe, however, these remnant herds were hunted to the last foal. The tapestries of Europe woven with scenes of the unicorn hunt are a sad testament to a beauty now gone from the world.

The Winter of Wolves

In the year 1182 the summer that ought to have lifted frost from the lands of Europe did not come. Storms and snow, sleet and rain persisted through the year. Crops failed and wolves in great numbers came out of the wilds and took sheep, horse and kine. The Feral grew hungrier and bolder, and many attacked well-fortified and defended towns that had never before come under threat. In certain northern lands fjords and valleys that have long held fisheries and farms were locked in by perpetual ice and snow.

The following year summer returned but only in a pale, cold sort of way. Starvation and famine swept through many areas, and in towns the only things that were well-fed were the packs of stray dogs that now lurked about the edges of graveyards. Each year the Winter of Wolves has lingered. It is not as terrible as in the first decade, but neither has the sun of summer fully awakened from its dark and frosty bed.

As Things Stand

The world has grown darker and more dangerous day-by-day for centuries. The thralls and thanes of Hell are gathering. The few cults, orders and societies of the Light that have the knowledge needed to stand against the Kingdom of Shadows lack numbers, power and unity.

For the common man and woman, living the life of a crafter, crofter or serf the world has gone on much as it always has, toil begetting toil, misery begetting misery.

And yet not even the most profound Holy Fool can deny that each year the forests grow more dangerous, yet another child goes missing, and more weird things are glimpsed in the mist by lonely travellers.

The days ahead are dark indeed. A season of evil is upon the lands of mortal men, a time when the dynasties of Heaven and Hell push forward their machinations and warring at the expense of mortals.

Cults and Orders

Below are some brief discussions of a few of the more prominent or curious cults, secret orders and heretic sects to be found in Benighted Europe.

Beggarmen's Guild

A loosely knit alliance of unsavoury sorts, thieves, footpads and unscrupulous tricksters who work the dark streets and tight, winding alleys of Rome. The Beggarmen's Guild operates a sort of mock guildhall that is constantly moving from one lonely wharfhouse or basement to another. It has laws and edicts, mostly ruling against the murder or betrayal of one member by another, and has a reputation for harsh justice when inclined to act.

The Baptist Heretics

A cult that has was once widespread in certain areas of the south of the Kingdom of the Franks, though has now been driven underground and into decline. The Cult of the Baptist Heretics claims to have hailed a descent from Mary Magdalene who fled west after the death of Christ and in southern France founded a line of belief. In the view of the Baptist Heretics it was not Christ, but John the Baptist who was sent to save the mortal world. For Christ was Baptised by John. Christ learnt from John. Christ was but a messenger, and John the true prophet. The heresy runs worse than this – for the Baptist Heretics believe that Christ, through a follower who was influential among the Elders of Jerusalem actually instigated the seizing and beheading of John the Baptist to prevent the prophet from revealing that Christ had wandered from the true path. True followers of John the Baptist view Christ as not merely misguided, but actually a figure among the fallen – a cherished of Heaven who like Lucifer before him wandered into shadow and rebelled against the Kingdom of God.

The Church of Rome has gone to great lengths, strung up endless nooses and set many, many bonfires to try and purge the land of this belief. They have been more or less successful in recent years, and the cult of John the Baptist has begun to wither and vanish. Rumours, however, that at the highest ranks of Grandmasters of the Templar Order, this belief has taken hold have seen a recent increase of mistrust between the Church of Rome and the Knights Templar.

Cabal of Ravenna

Ravenna is the Eastern Holy Roman Empire's outpost in the west. A beautiful town on the east coast of Italy that was for a brief time the capital of the entire Roman Empire and is now a place of churches and monasteries and mosaics

of wondrous colour and hue.

The Cabal of Ravenna is a secret order of spies and priests who allegedly serve only the Patriarch of Constantinople but in truth are in the pay of various Byzantine masters. They are as inclined to infighting, intrigue and politics as the rest of the Byzantine empire, and their effectualness in furthering the goals of Constantinople is largely hindered by internal mistrust.

The Cult of the Holy Spear

A heretic Christian cult heavily influenced by Germanic pagan beliefs. The Cult of the Holy Spear holds not the cross but the spear that pierced the flesh of Christ and spilled his blood as their holy emblem. The Cult of the Holy Spear is the remnant of early Christian belief carried into lands where the one-eyed Allfather was then still worshipped. Woden in Anglo-Saxon lands, Odin in the Kingdom of the Danes. The Christian beliefs were intermingled with Odin-cult beliefs and a composite heretic doctrine developed in which Christ is hung from a tree and is killed by his own spear.

Members of the Cult of the Holy Spear are few and far between outside of the lands of the north – and even there the cult is viewed with suspicion by both orthodox pagans and papal Christians. Initiates carry very little in the way of icons or symbols. Most carry a plain ash spear to represent the Spear of Christ.

The Cult of the Holy Spear holds the Grail that caught the blood of Christ also in very high regard and romantic tales of Grail quests have incited minor Grail crusades in some northern kingdoms. Especially from certain Norwegian fjords, Warbands of these semi-pagan warriors set out regularly on yearly searches for the Grail.

Hermes Trismegistus

The order of alchemists and scholarly sorcerers following in the tradition of the Thrice-Greatest Hermes. The Order of Hermes Trismegistus is an order well reputed for its vast knowledge of all things magical and its reluctance to do anything very magical at all.

The order convenes often in secret to study, converse, debate and lecture on the history of magic and various theories of the supernatural. Its members consist almost entirely of nobility who are inclined to study the workings of the universe, and it is from the aristocratic attitude of the Hermetic Order that the term *Magicus Vulgaris* has arisen to denote Hedge Magic. The Hermetic Order is much wondered at, very mysterious, and quite involved in its own little secret rituals, performances, and studies. They have, however, never used their magic to do anyone any harm. Nor anyone any good. In fact it remains arguable that the Order of Hermes Trismegistus has used their magic to do anything at all. They are viewed by those who are more deeply steeped in the practical side of demon-summoning as a cabal of rather foolish and fashionable young lords who are chiefly valuable for the vast stores of occult lore and endless libraries of rare books that they have managed to collect.

Knights of the Covenant

Deep in the lands of Aetheopia, in a temple of minarets and white-plaster and sky-blue paint is hidden the greatest treasure of the age. The Arc of the Covenant. Guarding and watching over this arc are an order of Aetheopian knights, whose dress, armour, weapons and traditions are reputed to be preserved since the days of Solomon.

The Knights of the Covenant seldom leave Aetheopia, though have on three or four occasions in the last millennia seen fit to strike out into the world and undo some great evil or intercept some agent of Hell. And now the time has come upon the Knights of the Covenant again to ride out, for they know what so very few do. They have discovered that Death himself is somewhere hidden and imprisoned. They know that the world is slowly slipping into shadow, that soon if Death is not released there may be no mortal world left for Heaven and Hell to battle over.

The Knights have left their temple to the guardianship of attendant laymen guards and are now questing in secret through the lands in search of Death. They have no clue yet as to where Death is imprisoned or yet even if the eternal spirit of the Netherworld can be released. They know only from conversing with certain Archonic Spirits and Manes of the Dead that Death has been gone from his Kingdom for some years and that matters are dark. The gates that bar this world from the hunger of the Ravened and the dead souls of the Netherworld are crumbling. The search grows more desperate day-by-day.

Knights Hospitaller

Founded in 1070, originally by Amalfian merchants as attendant monks for a hospital for pilgrims. In 1113 the Knights Hospitaller were recognised as a military order. In ritual, prayer and day-to-day dress Hospitaller wear cloaks and surcoats of black decorated with white crosses. In battle some monasteries adopt a surcoat of red emblazoned with a white cross. This is second dress of battle more commonly used when allied with the Templar in battle against Muslim knights. A single unified heraldry of white and red is easier to identify as a friendly in the heat of battle.

The Hospitaller are primarily made up of Italians and follow Benedictine tenets. Unlike Templar, Hospitaller fall into three castes: serving brothers, priests and knights.

The Hospitaller have a generally more peaceable view of their Muslim neighbours than the Templar, and this combined with other differences of opinion and politics has led to a long-lasting and bloody feud between the two orders. The only time that the two orders stop trying to undo one-another is when threatened by significant armies of the Muslim Sultans and Emirs of Egypt and further east. At these times both forces show their true potential, and have in wheeling, well disciplined lines of horsemen defending the Holy Land time and time again more hindered than aided by the non-monastic noble crusaders – little more than a disorganised rabble of rich brawlers.

Knights Templar

Also called the Knights of the Temple or the Poor Knights of Christ. The Templar are primarily Frankish and were

named after the Temple of Jerusalem bequeathed to them by King Baldin II of Jerusalem. Most of the fortified churches they have built in Europe are based on the eight-sided great temple, and are highly unusual in design.

The Templar were founded in 1119 in the Holy Land. They are a strictly religious military order of monks whose primary lands and riches are spread in eastern lands. Templar wear white cloaks and surcoats emblazoned with a red cross.

There are many rumours and whispers about peculiar rituals and heretic beliefs held by the Templar. There are even some rumours that at its highest ranks the Templar masters hold to convictions not dissimilar to those of the Baptist Heretics (see above).

The Templar are divided into a strict hierarchy, but are solely military. Their order does not contain priests or serving brothers. Fortified churches and castles are ruled by Grandmasters. The entire order is ruled by the Magiester Templariorum. These masters of the church tend to engage in as much ritual, prayer and politics as they do in fighting the infidels.

Since their inception the Templar and Hospitaller have been at one-another's throats as much as that of the great enemies of the east. They engage in constant politicking, power-plays and intrigue, ally only in times of great need against a common foe and have divided the Holy Land up between them like wolves squabbling over a deer.

The Templar tend to hold a less righteous view of things than the Hospitaller. For the Templar the ends, it appears, justifies the means. A contention that has caused many problems. Whereas the Hospitaller are more willing to live peaceably with Muslims and Jews in the Holy Land, the Templar have been known to attack ships of unarmed Muslim pilgrims and leave Muslim towns dead to the last child and dog.

The Sacrosanctus

A specially convened council of bishops and cardinals under the auspices of the Holy Roman Church whose sole duty is the seeking out and uncovering of secret covens of witches, warlocks and sorcerers of any creed or kith.

The Sacrosanctus take no action themselves to move against cults or orders and as such their actions have remained largely unnoticed – even by the Malvolentum. The Sacrosanctus does no more than spy, watch, wait and then anonymously inform the local authorities of dark affairs. The members of the Sacrosanctus are under a vow not to interfere personally, take revenge or take justice into their own hands.

The Sempervivium

A minor and reasonably unimportant circle of sorcerers and alchemists bent upon discovering the secret of eternal life and youth. Their numbers are very few and are concentrated mostly in Rome and Constantinople. Although the Sempervivium is privy to very power magic and sorcery, and has at its command no less than three bound Faerie and two Demons of significant power, it has thus far refrained from exercising what power it has.

The sorcerous cabal, it appears, is determined to toil on

in obscurity towards a goal that most magi consider at best a fool's errand, and at worst a task that if successful would achieve nothing more than drawing the attention and wrath of the Kingdom of Hallows.

In the Hallows view of things, eternal life on earth is not meant for the likes of mortals.

The Theurgists

The Theurgic Order is a cabal of white sorcerers and magicians whose chief temples are in Cairo. They have little contact with Europe but in the lands of northern Africa and Araby the Theurgists are both respected and feared. In the Holy Land the Theurgic Order has come into occasional conflict with the Templar. Both orders view the other with suspicion. Although the Grandmasters of the Templar have issued orders to seek out and apprehend these Heretics of Egypt, the Theurgists have thus far escaped capture.

The Theurgists are a rather ascetic and semi-religious order that pays respects to a number of Archonic spirits, but in particular to the spirit that was known to the Ancient Egyptians as the Goddess Isis and to medieval occultists as the Angel Israfel.

In the cities and slums of the desert kingdoms Theurgists perform the duties of witch-hunters in secret. They move in the shadows, descend on covens of witches or dark cultists in ambush and make clean their land. Their methods are not subtle and involve anything more than long knives and the assistance of oath-bound minor angelic spirits.

The Teutonic Order

An order of military knights similar to the Templar and Hospitaller but founded much more recently – the very year of **Danse Macabre**, 1198. The Teutonic Order consists mostly of Germans. They wear white cloaks and surcoats with black crosses.

Although still newly formed and no-where near as powerful as their older sibling military orders, the Teutonic order is already making plans to bring the Crusade to the Heathen areas of Germany, the Baltic and Prussia.

Kingdoms and Lands

The Brittish Isles

England is firmly under Norman rule and the connections the new ruling class hold to the continent are stronger than any of the island's numerous invaders since the Romans. Henry II, King of England, has through inheritance, marriage and sword brought Normandy, Brittany and much of Aquitaine under his rule. He is now arguably more powerful than the King of the Franks, a man who is technically Henry II's liege lord.

The principalities of Wales remain divided but stubbornly independent. A culturally diverse mixture of Scots, Strathclyde Britons, Angles and a few remaining pockets of Picts hold control over what will one day be Scotland. The border between England and Scotland is vague at best. The borderlands are already garnering infamy as a place where no king or queen rules, and where robbers,

clansmen cattle-thieves and murderers do their bloody work free from fear of any king's guard.

Ireland is independent and divided into five kingdoms, which in a vaguely north to south order are Ulster, Connaught, Meath, Leinster and Munster.

France

The Kingdom of the Franks is currently very evenly divided between the King of England and the King of the Franks. A situation that is going to lead to no end of trouble for the next few centuries.

The crusades have seen vast wealth flowing back to France through the mostly Frankish Templar knights and the many Frankish younger sons of noble houses who have sought their fortunes in the east.

Since the flight of the Britons from England to France during the Anglo-Saxon wars Brittany has remained stoutly independent and Celtic in its culture, though it is firmly in the power of the Duke of Normandy – Henry II of England.

Baltic States

By 910 Norway and Sweden were distinct states, looked upon as upstarts by an older and more powerful Denmark. Warring and setbacks has seen these three great kingdoms have settled into relative peace and turn their axes and foamy prows towards the Finns, Scots, English, Normans and other more distant states.

The Kingdom of Promeria now stretches along the coast east of Denmark and although not arrayed into kingdoms of significant power yet, the Finns Estonians, Livs, Lithuanians and Prussians are all emerging as distinct powers around the Baltic Sea.

Rus and Slavs

A fragmented and vaguely defined gaggle of Slavic and Rus kingdoms stretches east from the Kingdom of Germany. Great Poland and Little Poland, Silesia, Galich, Volhynia, Polotsk, Turovpins, Kiev, Pereyaslav, Chernigov, Smolensk, Novogorod, Vladimir-Suzdal and Muromryazan are a few of the more powerful. Kiev is already showing signs of ambition, carving out colonies along the Black Sea. Novogorod covers a vast area east of the small kingdoms of the Finns. The distant northern kingdom of Novogorod is considered to be among the wildest, most remote and most mysterious of places by the more settled and civilised empires of the south.

The Kingdom of Germany

Taking for a time the mantle of the Holy Roman Empire, the Kingdom of Germany stretches from the North Sea, across the Italian Alps all the way to the border of the Papal State that envelops Rome.

The Southern half of the Italian peninsular is mostly ruled by the Kingdom of Sicily, although a few minor city states hold out their flags of independence here and there.

Hungary

Since its emergence as a power in around the year 910 Hungary has ruled a more or less stable and very large swathe of land north of the Byzantine Empire, adjoining

the Kingdom of Germany in the west and Poland in the north.

In the eastern mountainous areas of Hungary the Malvolentum has established considerable but unspoken power. The mountains of the east hold many servants of the Kingdom of Darkness and the lands beyond that consist of many small tribes and petty kingdoms more or less under the sway of the shadow.

Iberia and North Africa

The Moors have recently fallen back from their one-time dominance of all of Iberia. The newly founded and still unstable and bloody-bordered Christian Kingdoms of Portugal, León, Castile, Navare and Aragon now spread across the north of Iberia.

The southern lands are still Muslim, the palaces, gardens and marble colonnades of the Alumbra are still the preserve of sultan and harem.

After the death of Abd ar'Rahman and the disintegration of the powerful Caliphate of Cordova in the years after 1030, the Moors suffered loss after loss to Christian advances. Eventually the various infighting Moorish small kingdoms sought aid from the Almoravids – Saharan Berbers who had already conquered vast tracts of Northern Africa. But inviting an ally whose swords are stronger than yours can be dangerous. By 1080 the Moresco kingdoms had all but been brought under Almoravid rule. By 1180 Almoravid became Almohad and the Empire of the Almohads had appeared.

The Byzantine Empire

The Byzantine Empire is still among the most powerful of the powerful in all of Europe. It masters all the lands south of Hungary, all of Greece and the Greek Islands, tracts of land along the Black Sea and significant slices of land east of Constantinople.

After the utter collapse of the empire of the Seljuk Turks in the years following the first Crusade, the newly emerged The Iconium sultanate - the seat of power being the city of Iconium - has formed a small block of power east of the Byzantine Empire preventing further eastern expansion. Some Seljuk sultans and emirs have retreated east into the lands between the Tigris and the Euphrates, otherwise the once-vast Seljuk Empire is gone to ash and smoke.

The Holy Land

The Holy Land is a tangled viper's nest of kingdoms ruled more or less at random by Saladin the Sultan of Egypt, the Templar and the Hospitallar orders, various petty Frankish and Italian Lords and the King of Jerusalem. Borders are changing so rapidly that drawing maps is hardly worth the price of the vellum.

Bedouin Tribes rule the deserts east of the Holy Land. South and west the lands are divided between various sultans, caliphs and emirs who have increasingly established a more or less unified front against the incursions of Christian crusaders.



The Revenir

No one knows when first the *Anathema Maranatha* – the terrible curse – was set loose upon the mortal world. This worst of curses is bestowed by the Kingdom of Darkness as a kind of perverse reward for those whose lives have sunk deep into Taint, whose crimes are inhuman, and whose souls are damned beyond redemption.

The curse, when it is bestowed, is given only to individuals of Taint Four or greater upon their death, and then only to those whose crimes are unusual enough to have amused or impressed the Lords of Darkness.

The accursed finds neither salvation nor damnation in death. The accursed will appear to die naturally and will appear to remain dead for some days or even weeks. But eventually a hellish sort of life stirs again in the flesh. The finger's twitch and the eyes open and the mouth draws a cold hiss of breath.

The accursed arises as Revenir – the returned – a form of Dark Incarnate neither alive nor dead, but held at a tortured point between.

Revenir are immortal, but without sustenance their flesh is given to rot. This, it seems, is a final jest of hell. A Revenir that somehow finds a vestige of humanity and refuses to devour living flesh or blood decays by painful degrees into a walking corpse – unable to die and wracked with pain and hunger. This decay is called The Rot of Ages. It is discussed in more detail below.

Each newborn Revenir is possessed of preternatural aspects – some are powers given to it by Hell as a reward, others serve as more of a mocking reminder of their past crimes. A king who executed people by casting them into a pit of rats might be given a compliment of rats to run around his hollow innards. A mother superior who killed young women in order to bathe in their blood might be given a power that causes young women to be irrationally terrified of her upon sight. Hell's 'gifts' are seldom entirely desirable.

Revenir are much feared and hated creatures. When one is suspected in a town or village graves are dug up and tombs cast open. But the slightly naïve belief that the living dead would for reasons unknown prefer to spend time resting in their place of burial in fact serves the Revenir well. Most Revenir, once they have consumed enough flesh or blood to regain a semblance of life hide in the plain open. They can masquerade quite well as the living – so long as they are not recognised.

Progenitors and Progeny

Revenir exist in one of two forms, **Progenitor** or **Progeny**. The Progenitor is the vessel of original sin, the man or woman who committed crimes so awful that he or she passed into the power of the Kingdom of Darkness, was accursed and became after death the first of a new strain of Revenir.

Each line of Revenir has unto itself particular powers and weaknesses that are usually in some mocking way reflective of the crimes of the Progenitor in life. The Progenitor is by far the most powerful in any line of Revenir. If a Progenitor is destroyed then the offspring of the line begin to weaken and diminish. They begin to slowly wither, lose the ability

to pass on the curse to another and after a roll of years will eventually crumble painfully to dust. As such, the Progeny of the founding accursed soul tend to keep a close eye on their Progenitor and will defend that ancient being to the death if needs be.

The Rot of Ages

All Revenir decay at a very slow rate. It may take decades or centuries but without means to sustain their unnatural form they eventually wither to blackened, bloated, living corpses. Some Revenir can drink living blood or eat flesh to stave off or reverse this gradual rot, others eat raw flesh. A few have stranger means to keep themselves alive – they drink on soul or dreams at night, or eat only a particular part of a person, for instance the heart or liver.

Decay is not just staved off by actually reversed by a large enough feast. Even a very decayed Revenir can return to a semblance of living flesh by feasting itself to bursting.

Revenir that refuse to feed on others, and there are some that retain enough twisted humanity to do just this, decay until they become a horrifying walking corpse, little more than rotted flesh and bone. Such creatures are shunned by other Revenir and eventually if they continue on this path of self-attrition will crumble into nothing.

The Sanguisuga

Established during the seventh century in Rome by a triumvirate of warlocks, Methurius of Naples, Barabus the Vermeil, and Creto, the Sanguisuga originally sought to work in secret against the newly rapacious desire of the church to destroy all magic. In the following years the cabal drew many members and swelled to a coven of sorcerers some fifty strong. Their order, was, however, uncovered when Barabus died suddenly of a heart seizure and servants discovered exoteric and unholy scriptures spread across the desk of his study, scattered by his last dying gasps. Barabus's good friend and fellow sorcerer Creto was soon accused, and soon the kitchen staff and stablemen alike began to conveniently recall seeing strange things coming and going in the night, or unearthly cries from the basement or visions of naked succubae in their dreams.

Creto was hung, but not quite to death, then burned alive.

Methurius saw at once that the finger of accusation would soon fall upon him and he sought out a means by which to protect himself. Through his arts he summoned upon many terrible and powerful demons and exacted from them bargains to protect himself. But his bargains should have been more carefully writ on their vellum.

For he asked but to be saved from death at the hands of the angry mob and so he was. When the rabble came for him with torches and swords, Methurius confronted them confident of infernal protection. He fought sword with sword but was soon overwhelmed and struck through. It would have been a quick end, far better than what Creto suffered, but that Methurius did not die. The sword went deep, the pain was sharp and awful, but Methurius could but stare down at his own now black blood seep from the

wound. Mad with panic the crowd fled and Methurius stumbled away, to hide in an alleyway among maimed beggars and lepers. And there the change came to him. Dark sorcery flowed in his veins, the bargain of hell was awakened and his flesh turned pale, his eyes turned black, his skin deathly cold. He was vampyr.

And the power of hell will not leave a man his senses. Methurius was driven. Hungry. Rapacious. There was not a beggar left alive in the alley by the time he walked into the night. Through the benighted roads. Down dark lanes. Across the shadowed squares.

To a small grey door, in an unassuming building.

For this was the secret temple of the Sanguisuga. And here the sorcerer's council, bereft of its three founders, convened to debate the loss and predicament. When Methurius appeared they greeted him, amazed at his survival. But there was no joy in his eyes. Only hunger.

And so it was that the next day a dozen young men and women of Rome did not return to their houses. And the day after, still more vanished. For Methurius took into his power all those members of the Cabala Rapere that he could hunt down. And the order of sorcerers became an order of vampyr, and they spread out into the night, first through Rome, the Italia, then Europe. Now the cabal is established from the court of the Frankish king to the borderlands of the eastern realms of the old blood vampyr. But the order has settled itself into secrecy. It takes into its embrace only those few individuals Methurius personally deems worthy. He still rules with an iron fist and has put to death no less than a score of cabalists who have disappointed him.

There have in recent years been troubles with the brood of those elder lords of the night who rule Eastern Europe, and no doubt there will come a time when either alliance or more likely war in secret is made.

The Scion

A cabal of sorcerers and invocators of Eastern Europe who have learned by unclean and arcane arts how to distil the blood of Revenir into potions that bestow powers and dark gifts upon the drinker. The Scion are thought to either hunt or keep captive Revenir which they drain slowly of blood to make their dark elixir.

While under the effects of Elixir of Blood, a mortal does not age, but does become thinner and gaunter, pale and sickly of seeming. Dark gifts also are gained. Preternatural strength and speed and, so it is said, some of the dark powers that the Vampyr themselves possess.

A single dose of this elixir, about a goblet full, lasts for one month. If the elixir wears off and the mortal takes no more of it, then he begins aging again and also gains flesh and a healthy visage after a time.

The Scion keep themselves apart from the various factions that wage the celestial war. They are allied to no one and loved by no one. Their sole pursuit is personal power and longevity. No other ethos, masters or lordship matter to the cabal.

The potion of the Scions counts as a very secretive **Esotery** Discipline open only to those who have joined

the Scion. It requires *Ritualis* Rank 5, *Spiritas* Rank 5 and *Mortis* Rank 5. It grants the learner one rank of *Ritualis* and one rank of *Mortis*.

The Zumbi

Among certain West African traditions of sorcery there has developed the art of creating Zumbi slaves through the forced imbibing of a potion made from the blood of a Revenir. The three bloodlines of Revenir native to West Africa – two descended from despotic tribal kings, one from a blood-thirsty madman of the wilds – are preferred, but the blood of any Revenir will do.

The potion takes some time to brew and is difficult to balance correctly. If improperly brewed the imbiber can simply be poisoned, or given temporary longlife such as that of the Scion, or can be left as a mad, ghoulish, flesh-hungry monster.

If brewed correctly the potion of the Zumbi works into the flesh of the drinker and kills the soul while leaving the body mostly alive. The Zumbi appear living, although they are not quite either alive or dead. Zumbi require no food, work tirelessly and obey any commanding order given to them without a thought.

This last trait actually limits the Zumbi's usefulness. Anyone can, with a sufficiently commanding voice, tell a Zumbi to do anything. As servants they remain useful only in a secret kind of way, doing tasks while no one is about to contradict them.

Many are the tales of relatives who have been bewildered to find a 'dead' relative walking about at night carrying pales or water or tending goats. Such returned relatives are easily enticed back into the world of the living but never return to their former selves.

Zumbi do not need rest, but do require food and water – though they consume only the scantest amounts. They will persist in their half-life for anywhere up to ten or twenty years – after which time the continual restlessness of a life of toil tells upon their bodies. Most begin to decay at this point and few remain 'alive' for more than another five years once decay has set in.

The potion of Zumbi is a well-guarded and obscure **Esotery** Discipline. It requires *Ritualis* Rank 4, *Spiritas* Rank 4 and *Mortis* Rank 6. It grants the learner two ranks of *Spiritas*.

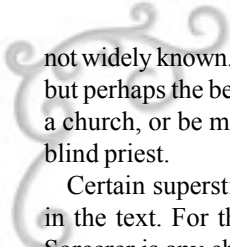
Superstitions

In the World of **Danse Macabre** superstition may or may not be as founded in fallacy as some would suspect. There is an undercurrent of natural magic in the world, a system of cause and effect that echoes through the preternatural.

But which superstitions are real? Do bells really chase away wild spirits? Are dark creatures best hurt by silver weapons? Is it bad luck to meet a priest on the way to embark on a sea voyage?

Should a character take a risk that a Superstition may be real in the game?

As the Gamesmaster you can decide which, if any, superstitions have a real effect in the world. And also perhaps if there are conditions that must be met which are



not widely known. Perhaps bells do chase away wild spirits, but perhaps the bell has to have rung at least three times in a church, or be made of gold, or needs to be blessed by a blind priest.

Certain superstitions mention **Witches and Sorcerers** in the text. For the purposes of Superstition a Witch or Sorcerer is any character with at least one rank in **Hedge Magic, Esotery** or **Goetia**. This means that certain Superstitions may have adverse affects on certain player characters.

Below is a list of Superstitions that you may wish to make use of in the game. Any one of them might be true, but then again it might not be true.

Cockerel's Crow

Shades cannot bear the sound of cockerel's crow. They must return to a dark and hidden place until nightfall if they hear the crowing of a rooster.

Cold-is-Iron

The flesh of Wild Incarnate and Faerie are most easily cut by cold iron. A dagger or sword of iron deals an additional one level of injury when used against a Wild Incarnate or Faerie spirit. If, for instance, you would normally deal two ranks of injury on a blow, wielding an iron dagger increases this to three.

If an Incarnate has **Charmed Flesh**, then an iron weapon counts as enchanted and is capable of doing injury.

Corpselight

Corpselights, small flickering flames of blue and yellow light, will appear near the site of a murder on the anniversary of the slaying. Corpse also may appear over an unmarked and unshriven grave from time to time.

Crossroads

Murderers, witches and worse who die may be buried at a crossroads to confuse their shade and prevent it returning as an undead creature of avenge. If the corpse is dug up then the ghost can walk as it pleases.

Elder

Elder trees are often haunted and are said by some to creep around at night. You can tell a haunted elder by cutting a branch from it. If the branch bleeds then the tree is haunted.

Never sleep near an elder and never burn elder in a fire. Never make a cradle from elder or beat a child with an elder cane. All will bring bad luck.

Elderwood Arrow

A Dark Incarnate takes an extra level of injury when hurt by an arrow shorn of elder tree wood.

Favour

If you pay for the burial of a person the ghost of that person is obliged to do you one favour. The expense you lay out on the funeral may very well have an affect on how generous the Shade feels towards you.

Gorse

Some believe that heaping a wall of cut gorse around your bed and stuffing bundles of gorse into chimneys and windows protects a household from malicious minor spirits that might otherwise plague a person, spill their ale and sour their milk.

Hazel

A good year for hazel nuts is a good year for babies, or so the more cynical say, for bastards.

Hawks

All hawks and especially marsh harriers are thought to alight and give up hunting if rain is coming.

Hemlock

Dark Incarnate are immune to all poisons except hemlock.

Invitation

Vampyr cannot enter a home unless invited to do so.

Keen Senses

Most animals, including horses, dogs and cats can see invisible ghosts and shades and react with fear. Some exorcists and hedge wizards own a dog or cat for this reason.

Leaden Chains

A witch or sorcerer can be securely chained by fetters of lead so that he or she cannot work magic to escape.

Manners

Faerie Spirits cannot work to cause you harm if you are polite and generous to them, and respond with perfect etiquette to their possibly very aggressive, seemingly dangerous and wild behaviour.

Nest-of-Owls

A cry of an owl attracts the dead. Unseen shades are likely to haunt the ground about an owl nest for as long as the owl remains.

Paw-of-Wolf

If a piece is cut from a werewolf, such as a paw, it turns back into a human body part when it is brought into contact with its previous owner.

Ratting Bones

The bones of a ghost's dead body will rattle and skitter about if the ghost comes near.

Final Death

A Revinir may be utterly destroyed by beheading, staking through the heart and immolation in fire.

Rowan

A Rowan tree growing near a house is thought to protect it from dark spirits and witchcraft. Bowls, handles of axes

and other tools are best made from Rowan, for the wood is thought to be inherently protected from all forms of malign magic.

Running Water

Shades cannot cross running water. The larger the river or stream the more difficult the crossing. Small streams are tested against the Shade's Obsession at Average. A stream that you couldn't jump across is Difficult for a Shade. A full in flood and treacherous river is Very Difficult.

Silver-be -Sharp

The flesh of Dark Incarnate and Demons are most easily cut by silver. A knife or dagger of silver deals an additional one level of injury when used against a Dark Incarnate. If, for instance, you would normally deal two ranks of injury on a blow, wielding a silver dagger increases this to three.

If an Incarnate has **Charmed Flesh**, then a silver weapon counts as enchanted and is capable of doing injury.

Shadowless

Dark Incarnate cast no shadow or reflection.

Storm Crow

If a crow engages in tumbling flight then a storm is coming.

Sunwise Coffin

The dead who are in risk of rising as undead - those who are suicides, murderers and the like - may be kept in their grave by carrying the coffin three times around the grave sun-wise before internment.

Tarnish

When a Dark Incarnate touches anything made of silver the object tarnishes within a few minutes.

Toll-of-Bells

Faerie spirits and Wild Incarnate fear the ringing of bells.

Thorn

It is foolish to cut down any thorn tree, be it hawthorn, black or white thorn. Thorn trees are often the abode of minor but dangerous wild spirits.

Some people leave offerings near thorn trees to try and win the favour of the tree's inhabitants. It is considered very bad luck to take such an offering.

Unlucky-to-Kill

Wren, robins and swallows are all unlucky birds to kill. It is commonly held that sickness, ill luck and misery befalls anyone who kills one of these birds.

Unwolfing

A werewolf who is called by his true birth-name while in wolf-form will be forced to change back into a human.

Willow

A man hanged on a gallows of willow cannot return from the dead to exact revenge. Never fall asleep near a willow, they can steal memories from the soul.

Wolfsbane

Werewolves are immune to all poisons except wolfsbane. Also, a person bitten by a werewolf can be saved from the curse of the wolf by having wolfsbane rubbed into the bite before it has healed.

Yew

Yew is a tree associated with death. It's poison berries and wood for bows makes it a sinister tree. Yew trees in a graveyard prevent souls from rising from the grave. Wild yew are often haunted by unclean spirits. Never linger by them long.

The Worlds Beyond

It should be known to all practitioners of the secret arts and seekers of unholy things that spirits and demons arise not from this Mortal World, the material world we poor creatures of flesh and blood walk upon, but from one of the Three Kingdoms - the spirit otherworlds, called by the vulgar, Heaven, Faerie and Hell.

This is the very first lesson that must be taught to any who aspire to wear the vestments of the sorcerous arts. It is above all imperative to know next that the spirits of all three Kingdoms are just as dangerous, treacherous and difficult to traffic with. Do not mistake an angel for a kind creature. They can be far crueller than demons so long as they are doing what is 'right'.

The Mortal World is the world of trees, and ocean, grass beneath our feet, sunlight gold upon the horizon and stars in the sky. It is also a world at war.

For the Mortal World lies at the conjunction of the worlds of dynasties of spirits. The Hallowed. The Wild. The Dark. Long ago, long after the dawn of time, the spirits of the three dynasties found that they could cross the veils of mist between their world and this. They took great delight in what they found. For in the physical world there was physical form. What were but mere shadows, bereft of true bodies, were able to take up flesh and wood and clay and snow and make themselves a little more real. And some of that reality they took back to their kingdoms beyond the veil. So that the worlds beyond become mockeries of the mortal world. The Kingdom of Hallows became a kingdom of gardens, clouds and silver cities. The kingdom of wilds became an endless wildness of mists and forests. The kingdom of shadows became a blasted land of fortresses and darkness, fire and rock as sharp and shimmering as glass.

But the spirits soon met and in that distant past they fell soon to war. Their natures could not tolerate one another. There was battle and the shedding of blood - silver, green and black.

And into this war, into the affray of gods and spirits came the race of mortals. The beasts who had their own

wits and intelligence, language, art, magic and spirit-stuff buried deep in their flesh.

And the spirits of the three dynasties found allies. And soldiers. And slaves.

Cosmology

In **Danse Macabre** from a cosmological point of view it is assumed that Christians, Jews and Muslims are worshipping the same divine power but with a different take on the rituals, philosophies and doctrines. In the setting of course, the three pillars of monotheism do not see themselves this way at all. They are bitterly opposed enemies, quite sure that the other two religions are only marginally more enlightened than pagans.

Traversing the Mists

Surrounding and separating this mortal world and the supernatural otherworlds of spirits and the dead is a vastness of strange, surreal landscape known as the Mists. The Mists is thick with a silvery and ghostly fogs, in which are sometimes seen tormented, leering, laughing, crying faces and in which sometimes are heard strange and mournful sounds.

Scattered through the Mists are all the forgotten things of dream, and hope and memory. It is a shifting and weird landscape, in which ruins of a Roman temple may exist beside a pile of lost childhood toys, or a river of blood, or a forest of trees made of ice. Nothing in the Mists is constant and everything can be considered more or less dangerous. Mad Archonic Spirits wander the mists and so too do lost souls of the dead. By far the most dreaded entity of the Mists is the Ravened. The black tendrils of shadow and cold that devours humanity and leaves its victims little more than wild-eyed beasts in a human form.

There are many gates to the Mists, under bridges, in old holy places, sacred caves, beside sacrificial ponds and among old barrows at the heart of black forests. Anywhere where once great magic was worked will tear the fabric of reality a little and create a gate from this world to the next. Gates tend to be difficult to see, however, and you have to either walk through them at the right time of day or night, or in the exact right direction to slip into the Mists. Accidentally walking into the Mists is very unlikely.

There are many paths through the Mists, some are winding and lead nowhere but in circles. Others will take you to a small Mistgird Realm, others will lead you to one of the Three Kingdoms or the Netherworld.

The Mistgird Realms

The Mistgird Realms are small pockets of reality hidden deep in the mists. They are minor Kingdoms that never grew in power or are the abode of ancient 'gods' – Archonic Spirits that have withdrawn from the world and live now in a delusional reality of their own making in which the past is still alive and in which they are still worshipped and loved and have grand adventures.

These small realities can be traps for the unwary. They can be peaceful and beautiful, safe like nowhere else is safe, secluded and wondrous. Nothing ages or dies in a

Mistgird Realm. And anyone who lives in one long enough begins to shape it into personal desires unconsciously.

But the Realms are fragile things. Hell has already invaded and consumed many of them, and hiding away behind walls of illusion keep no-one safe forever. Certainly, however, some mortals, magicians in particular, have gone into the Realms to make for themselves a safehaven to while away eternity. The mythic sorcerer Merlin is supposedly spending his time thus, secure in a tiny sunlit world hold a castle of glass that rises out of rolling hills forever covered in the wildflowers of spring.

The Three Kingdoms

Beyond the Mists, beyond the scattered Mistgird Realms, across a span as thin as shadow and as wide as the distances between stars, lie the three Archonic otherworlds: The Kingdom of Hallows, The Kingdom of Wilds, and the Kingdom of Darkness.

The Kingdom of Hallows is that place that the church calls Heaven and to which it promises the souls of the good will fly after death, though if this be the truth not scholar or sorcerer is willing to guess. It is, however, very certainly the abode of the spirits of kindness, benevolence, charity and warmth, the Hallowed Ones, angels, and the Hallow-Touched souls of the dead, which men call Saints. The gates of the Kingdom of Hallows are well guarded by Angels with fiery swords and shields of golden light. Uninvited mortal sorcerers and wanderers in the Mists would do well to avoid presenting themselves at those ivory and silver gates.

The Kingdom of Wilds is a more fractured place than either Heaven or Hell. It is ruled not by a Lord of Light or a Prince of Darkness, but by many kings and queens. Spirits of the woods, rivers, mountains, fens and oceans wide, as many realms as there are wild places on the earth. The Kingdom of Wilds is the easiest of the Kingdoms for the living to enter – its gates are either not guarded or not guarded well and being a realm of living things the living enter into it with greater ease. Though once within the Wilds, however, the perils of the unnatural world are many and great, and made worse by the relentless tide of Unseelie, now creeping through the lands.

The last of the realms of the supernatural is the Kingdom of Darkness, the abode of devils and demons, the princes and dukes of hell, and all their imps and ghostly monsters. The souls of the damned and sinful are said to be accursed to enter the Kingdom of Darkness, there to dwell in agony, but the whole truth is again perhaps less than completely in line with church dogma. Souls that enter Hell most commonly condemn themselves to damnation by their own perceptions of guilt, sorrow, misery or regret. Devils and demons will draw souls to them to feed upon, just as they will make bargains with the living to gain soul on which to feast, but the Dark Ones lack any real power to take a soul to Hell against its innermost wishes.

The Netherworld

An endless sphere encompassing everything and stretching grey into the infinite, the Netherworld is the

plane of existence to which most Souls of the Dead are drawn after death.

The Netherworld is mostly a grey and cold place, dreary and shadowy, filled with crumbling ruins, dead forests and bleak deserts filled with the bones of animals that have not walk the earth in a hundred thousand years. The Netherworld is the realm of Death but also a place to which dreamers sometimes slip in their sleep. The influxes of warmth, living hope and life that spread out from a dreamer in the Netherworld add colour and heat for a time to the grey infinite and becomes a wellspring of light that Shades will gather about until the dreamer wakes and the light fades away.

Most souls of the dead drift loose from their mortal shell and then slip through the cracks and tears of reality to end up in a vast, grey and shadowy miasma of different existences expands out from The Mists which joins together the four worlds: Mundane, Hallow, Wild and Dark. This in-between world and Quiet Lands are a place of weird monsters, wandering spectres and endless mockeries and reflections of the four worlds. There are decayed palaces in the Netherworld, forests that tickle blood instead of sap, oceans of boiling human fat, endless hills of ashes with bone for rocks. In short, expressions of all manner of strange, disturbed delusions, desires, hopes, loves, fears and miseries.

Souls that wander the Netherworld may come to any number of fates. Some may be devoured by the cosmic horrors that drift across the eternal plane of grey. A very few are drawn into one of the three otherworlds, Heaven, Faerie or Hell, there to remain. Still others simply fade away, slowly becoming less real until their substance, their very energy of being returns to the universe.

A few manage also to find a way back into the Mundane world, there to exist as ghosts and phantoms, unseen by most of the living but present and sometimes very determined to make their presence known.

At the very edges of the Netherworld are cities of the dead. Dark and shadowy palaces of obsidian hung with tattered ivy of faded grey. It was these cities of the dead that Death himself once ruled and it is here that the Manes which still try to perform Death's work linger. The Ravened and other horrors of the in-between do not venture into the cities of the dead. Those grey roads and cold buildings are protected by the most ancient of magics.

Shades in the Netherworld are insubstantial, seldom able to speak in more than a whisper, without the power to lift up even a leaf, and persist in a miserable existence. The eventual dissolution of a Shades energies and the flowing of its being back into the fabric of spirit and magic that binds together the universe is in a sad way the kindest end that any mortal soul can actually hope for.

Haunted Ground

The Haunted are things or places that develop a special tie to the Netherworld or sometimes to a particular Shade. Places of great death and violence often become haunted. At night the veil between the living and dead worlds becomes thin, ghosts arise and the dead walk.

Battlegrounds, torture chambers, hangman's crossroads are all such places.

Occasionally an object, house or patch of ground calls back to a specific shade and that shade is drawn, often confused and sad, from the netherworld to wander the earth from time to time. A place where a wronged lover discovered his betrayal, the knife used to murder two children, a bridge where a woman who became pregnant out of wedlock threw herself to her death may all draw back the shade. Sometimes a shade can be released from this fetter by the solving of his murder, the discovery of her body, or the return to her grave of a cherished keepsake.

In both generally and specifically haunted places the tie to the netherworld is strongest immediately after the event of death and trauma, and then gradually fades over time. After one, two or three centuries haunted places lose all but a few tatters of the fetter and ghosts are drawn out of the Netherworld more and more rarely.

Archonic Spirits

There are in creation three dynasties of spirits. Those that belong to the Kingdom of Hallows, who are good if righteous, and kind if vengeful. Those that belong to the Kingdom of Wilds, who are both good and evil, full of caprice and whimsical changes of mood. And finally those that belong to the Kingdom of Darkness who are power hungry, violent, wanton and sinful, if at least on occasion also showing a twisted sense of honour and truthfulness.

The Kingdom of Hallows

A vastness of silver and gold towers, ivory gates, walls of pearl, gardens of bizarre and wondrous plants and marbled halls. The Kingdom of Hallows is not designed in a way that any human city ever was. Its denizens can drift through the air on flickering wings of light. The towers of the Kingdom of Hallows have doors all up and down their flanks and though plazas and airy spaces are common, roads and bridges are not.

The dogma that the masses of souls of the more or less virtuous will be granted leave to enter Heaven is simply untrue. Those who have bound themselves to the service of an angelic being by oath, or slipped so far into the power of the Hallows that they have become Hallowed Incarnate are sometimes taken into the Kingdom of Hallows. But, much like Hell, Heaven is largely disinterested in the souls of mortals once they are dead. They represent a little power for spirits willing to devour it – but angels consider the devouring of souls amoral and distasteful. Shades of the Dead, however, are largely impotent things. They cannot lend the battle against the Kingdom of Darkness any great advantage. They are thus mostly ignored.

Angels

Angels are those spirits that are native to the Kingdom of Hallows, including spirits of aid and revenge, seraphim and thrones, the ghosts of dead saints and a few stranger

and more unusual spirits. Many of the gods worshipped by the now dwindling Roman mystery cults are Hallowed spirits loosely allied with the Kingdom of Heaven. Mithras is a powerful 'Angel', as are Apollo and Isis. These old 'gods', who have for centuries ruled cults on their own terms, are now falling into line with other Hallowed Incarnate and presenting themselves to humanity as not gods but powerful spirits serving a central power. Mithras now presents himself as the Archangel Mirael, and Isis now wears the mask of Israfel.

The Kingdom of Wilds

A land as varied and diverse as the wild earth - dark and tangled forests, deep seas, misty moors and high and snow-capped mountains as purple as dusk. The Kingdom of Wilds is a place of more perils and strange things, changeful landscapes and vast wild lands than any of the other kingdoms.

The Kingdom of Wilds is ruled not as strictly by its kings and queens as the other two unearthly realms. There is a diversity of rulership. Dozens of liege lords oversee dozens of domains. There is little in the way of unification in the Kingdom of Wilds despite the King Auberon and Queen Titania nominally ruling all the realm.

The Kingdom of Wilds is also the least well guarded of the three realms. The gates from the Mists in the Kingdom of Wilds are sometimes watched and sometimes not. When guarded it is usually by a lone sentinel, a Wild Incarnate or fae creature set there by some Sylpahen king or queen to watch the borders.

Faerie will very occasionally take shades of the dead into their realm to be corrupted by wild magic and made into new servants. Much as with Heaven and Hell most lords and ladies of Faerie are disinterested in the human soul once it is dead.

Mortals who die in Faerie do, however, remain there. They become drawn into the kingdom and cannot escape, often turning into weird and feral creatures of the forest.

Faerie as a whole are ambivalent about the drinking of power from mortal souls. Some engage in it. Others do not. Some find it repugnant. Others consider the human soul a delicacy. There is not common mood or credo.

Faeries

For a long age the Wild Spirits, known broadly as Faerie, were the chief spirits worshiped by mortals. When man hunted the earth the wild spirits were important. Their insult to be avoided at all costs. But the power of the Faerie spirits has been in decline for centuries, since the advent of agriculture and husbandry the wild spirits have held less and less importance. The last great order of pagan priests and sorcerers who swore devotion to the Faerie was the druids, but their hold over the lands was broken by the Romans centuries ago.

There remain a few isolated cults of the last great Faerie, spirits known to men. Dianna is probably the last Faerie spirit whose cult is widely spread, if now secretive for fear of persecution. It is now only in the lands of the Norse that the Faerie still hold powerful sway, Odin and Thor, Tyr and

Baldur are all Faerie spirits disguised as gods. Otherwise none but a few village witches, cunning men and a few remnant pagan priests still pay homage to forgotten spirits of the wilds.

Now most Faerie have retreated from the world of men, their numbers and powers have dwindled, they hide away in the deep forests or in the wild otherworld. Those few that are left to haunt the forests are now debased and miserable, petty vengeful things. They remember being gods and now hate humanity with a vengeance for abandoning them with such swift disregard. The last Faerie are dangerous things. Always happy to lure victims to them, waylay travellers and steal the souls of the dead.

The Creeping Unseeliegh

There has come into the Kingdom of Wilds a new malignance, a spreading blight that may yet devour all that exists in that green and growing realm.

In the year three hundred and twenty four there came a stranger into the Kingdom of Wilds, a half-blood mortal who had no liege, king or queen in the wild realm. His name was Mithwine, and he was a comely man, handsome and with eyes that flashed and a wit that was sharp and cutting. In the Dukedom of Roses this Mithwine arrived at the duke's court. There he worked many fine charms, struck many fine notes from a harp and won many fine hearts. Included, so it is said, the heart of the Duke's only daughter.

They stole glances, then stole whispers, then stole kisses. They met in secret in secret places in the Eternal Forest. And Mithwine took the Duke's daughter into his charms and eventually into his bed. She loved him. And so loving she did not think much of his wish one day to return to the Mortal World, there to see friends and long lost family, but only if he might swiftly return. For the ways between the worlds are dangerous, filled with mazes and perils, even for those who have great magic. For those who are not truly natives of a kingdom of spirits knows not the secret and safe paths into the realm.

So it was that the lady gave to her lover the secret of her kingdom, she taught him one of the secret paths through the mists, the safest she knew. And he departed.

And long was Mithwine gone. So long that his love began to fear that ill had befallen him, or that he had forgotten her.

But then, one day, she was walking sorrowful and full of grey misery in her forests and Mithwine appeared. He had changed, thought she. His eyes still flashed with wit and charm, but also something else. Something that had been hidden. Something darker.

Some say that he took her one last time but not in love. Others he tried to kill her and she escaped. None know for sure. It is true that the lady came wandering half-mad, half dead from her father's Dukedom. True that she told the story, but some details she left vague.

For Mithwine was a servant of another lord. His master was the Kingdom of Shadows and through him that Kingdom knew a secret path into the Kingdom of Wilds. But the Lords of Hell did not send their devils and imps and demons. They would have been met, and fought, and perhaps defeated by wild, ancient things.

They sent instead the dead. The tainted souls of the damned, a flitting, flood of insubstantial, tormented, inane and twisted. Souls that creep and flooded, spread like a tide of shadow through wood and swamp, through vale and town and village. They possessed and infested, tainted and blighted, and the first of the Unseeliegh were made.

The mad Faerie.

The possessed, the tainted, the corrupted. For the spirits of the damned took residence in Wild Spirits and made them crazed, lustful, thirsty for blood or murder. Whole swathes of the Kingdom of Wilds succumbed to shadow and still the tide continues. Still hell lets loose its flood of lost souls to infest the Faerie.

The Kingdom of Darkness

The Kingdom of Darkness is a weird realm of benighted endless desolation. Forests of trees, dead and spindly and a hundred feet tall creep over grey hills. Ashy mountains and razor cliffs, bleak rocky plains, dead seas, deserts of red sands and everywhere there are fissures and cracks spewing black smoke and tongues of green and scarlet flame.

Although more or less kept under the mastery of Lucifer Morningstar, the various Dukes of Hell have carved fortresses of their own from the bizarre cliffs and mountains of the realm. Wars between demons over this plain of black glass or that pit of darkness are common and tolerated as long as they do not threaten the singular power of Lucifer and his generals.

As with the Kingdom of Halls the commonly held dogma that the souls of sinners descend to Hell at death is untrue. Hell takes only those soul who have bargained themselves into Hell's service. On occasion a soul convinced that it deserves to descend into Hell also finds a way through the mists to Hell's sulphurous gates – but these pitiable spectres are few and rare and mostly do not exist long in hell before being captured and made into a servant of the shadows.

Demons

Those who have always stood in opposition to the Kingdoms of Heaven and Nature both. The spreaders of disease and pestilence, the seekers of greater and greater power, those who would enslave humankind and rule as earthly kings.

Demons are the third dynasty, those born from the Kingdom of Darkness, driven by hunger, hate, fear and wrath to destroy and enslave.

Demons may take many forms but seldom assume the shape of a classic winged and hooved adversary of heaven. They are more given to wandering the world in human guise, and enslaving naïve or greedy souls through deceit and guile.

Enchanted Earth

There are places in the earth where such powerful deeds have happened, or such prolonged and devoted worship

has occurred that they have become filled up with the magic of one of the three dynasties. These places are called Enchanted, and in them the veil between this world and that which the ground is aligned to is weakened. Spirits are more capable of slipping between the worlds, strange miracles and supernatural phenomenon occur now and again, in short Enchanted Grounds become weird and magical.

Long ago there used to be many Wild Grounds, all vast and deep and impenetrable. But woodcutters and hunters, beekeepers and trappers have long ventured into the forests and fens and snowy hills, eating away at the magic and mystery. Wild Grounds are now few, isolated and jealously guarded by the last few spirits of nature that still dwell therein and have not fled to the Kingdom of Wilds.

Hallowed Grounds come into being most usually in places where the Kingdom of Halls or Hallowed Spirits are worshipped. Old, ruined temples to Mithras and Apollo still retain a little of their hallowing. But in the present age it is churches, mountain shrines, marble statues on roadsides and holy wells that most usually take up a hallowed charm.

Any place where covens of warlocks and black witches meet will turn to Dark Grounds after a time, but also any place where dark sorcery is worked, hidden mage's laboratories or summoning rooms. Also the places dwelled in by dark incarnate, vampyrs and werewolves become Dark Grounds after a time.



Roleplaying

Chapter Eight

An Introduction by Dean Sutter

I, personally, prefer to be the Storyteller. I play all the villains, troublemakers, common folk, authorities and other antagonists. I like the challenge of creating an exciting plot for the players that will motivate and interest them. I like to create vivid scenes in the players' minds. Scenes that leave them gasping with relief, breaking out in cold sweats or shouting with glee at victory.

The most important key to running a game of **Danse Macabre** (or any horror for that matter) is **atmosphere**. So a word to the wise for veteran role-players, forget the classic fantasy dungeon-crawl where the characters go on a bloody crusade slaying everything in their path to obtain the wealth of dragons. **Danse Macabre** is a game for players who wish to concentrate their time and energy into tense moments, suspense and struggle both physical and mental against creatures from beyond the mortal realm.

To create the right kind of atmosphere three important aspects must be involved. The first is the **Fear of the Unknown**. We have all heard of this. It is natural for people to fear what they do not know. Use this to your advantage. The Storyteller should leech information to the players; give details about what they are up against slowly, over time. Make use of red herrings, twists in the plot and secrecy. More often than not the players should never really know what they are up against until the final, climactic scene, or perhaps never at all. Fear of the unknown also works in giving descriptions. Think of the difference between meeting a creature of horror in plain sight compared to a dark alleyway; the closed in space, the gloomy darkness and the echoes of movement along the alley's narrow length. Hide the details. Give hints. Suggestions. Shades and nuances. And let the player's imagination run through its own dark maze. What is left unsaid can be the most frightening.

The second aspect to consider is related to the first: **Pacing**. Horror requires a certain amount of mystery, which ultimately means that the game has much less action than some genres. The trick here is to keep the players interested. You cannot let the game drag on too slowly or the players will lose interest. It is important to strike a balance between describing too little and too much. For the sake of the pace of the story you do not want to go into drawn out detail when it is unimportant, then again, don't just skim over information when something in what

you say could help the plot move along.

Try to keep the game moving towards a climactic end, build the pace of the story as you go along, or have a sudden burst of action that dies away quickly, just to keep the players on their toes. Pacing helps with tension as well. If the players are feeling tense, then this will be reflected by what their characters will do.

The third aspect to running a successful horror game is the use of **Shock** tactics. Have the characters come upon a grisly scene. Describe the most repulsive moments in fine detail and gloss over more mundane things. Have an unexpected twist in the game, have a trusted contact turn out to be on the other side. A quick, sharp shock keeps the players guessing and causes them to think on their feet. A good trick is to have the players Test their Awareness for no apparent reason. This puts them on edge straight away, especially if a successful roll tells them nothing unusual. Let them simply assume that they did not pass by enough successes - that there is something out there, but what?

Pay attention to what seems to work on your group and what doesn't. Be a reactive Storyteller, if you notice some of your tricks aren't having an effect, change tactics. Sometimes, through speculation, a player might give you a great idea - go with it! It also gives the player a sense that they have worked something out or guessed right; they don't have to know they were the ones to actually give you the idea that it was the baron committing the murders, or that there was a tunnel from the nunnery to the mill.

Read horror books and watch horror movies - pay attention to the tricks that are used in them. When something frightens you or makes your heart race, ask yourself why and take a few mental notes. Adapt that to your game.

I mentioned using descriptions earlier when facing fears of the unknown. It is important to make the player really sympathise with the character. Remember to involve all possible senses or, in the case of the dark alley, only one or two senses.

What can the character see? Oh, they can't see it's too dark. Well, what can they hear? What can they hear if they really listen hard? Was that hissing breath? What can they feel? Is that hot breath upon my neck? Why did my fingers just brush something sticky on the ground?

What can they smell? The acrid scent of urine? The musky smell of some large animal? As well as the mundane senses there is the sense of presence. We all have it. Even in utter darkness you know if someone or something is close to you, especially if it is large.

Take these two examples of a description given to a player.

My first example:

“You are in utter darkness, you can’t see anything.”

Second Example

“You are in utter darkness, you can see nothing. The darkness is oppressive, almost claustrophobic. You imagine you can hear a rasping breath further ahead of you, or is it behind you? You cannot tell, curse the echoes.”

These two examples give a very different feeling to the player. The second example may be a touch melodramatic, but it adds to the tension and puts the player on edge, which in turn will cause the character to act accordingly.

Put the players in the scene with their characters. Experiment with using music, or low lighting to achieve this. It is important to try and get the players to feel what their character’s feel. Set the scene. If the characters are walking along a trade route in autumn, in the rain, let them know it.

“You trudge along the muddy road between the wagon wheel ruts, pulling your cloak close about your shoulders as the wind attempts to tear it from you. Driving rain lashes at you and the cold seeps into your bones.”

It is too easy for players who are sitting on a chair in a warm room to forget these things. It also makes the players appreciate when their characters find shelter or a warm inn along the road and sets the mood for future settings. It’s all about making it feel real.

The Gaming Group

In this section I’m going to talk about group dynamics and all those things involving general Player-Storyteller interaction.

Group size is something I think plays an important part in this gaming genre. Due to the nature of horror, the less ‘good guys’ there are the better. I find three to four players to be the best number. Just enough heads to think through the mystery and help each other out but not enough people to cause out of game disturbances such as needless chatter. Isolation is also a big thing in horror and if you have too many players, resulting in too many characters, then you lose that aspect of the game.

I feel I must mention this. **It is of the utmost importance that the players trust the Storyteller.** The Storyteller must stay true to the feel of the game world at all costs. If the players start to feel that the Storyteller is using knowledge outside the game to gain advantage with antagonists, continually turning down player ideas or simply using the game as an excuse to kill off characters, they will start to give up trying things. Some will stop turning up to play and eventually you won’t have anybody to play the game with! In saying this, however, one must remember that **Danse Macabre** is medieval horror. Characters will be facing creatures of darkness, powerful adversaries that wish to torment, seduce or kill them. One mistake on their

behalf could be fatal. Make this clear to everyone at the start of the game.

I must stress that the Storyteller and the players are working **together** to create an exciting story and a fun game.

Remember story and entertainment must be foremost in your mind, if the players aren’t enjoying themselves, something is wrong. I’m not saying to mother them though. Characters that do stupid acts deserve what they get. Otherwise, without consequences, tension is lost.

Finally, do what you feel is necessary for a fun game. The game will change and grow as the characters interact with different parts of your story. Neither you nor the players will really know how it’s going to end.

Be flexible, I know it’s a cliché, but expect the unexpected. If I’ve learnt anything, players can be very resourceful at times! It’s best to have a story outline with basic plot, people, antagonists and conflicts fleshed out, rather than a rigid story. Players hate being railroaded along a specific path; the characters should want to do the quest ahead. So go with the flow.

This brings me to the next point. Cater to the characters’ interests. If the majority of the party are good-hearted, heroic types then saving the damsel in distress will interest them. A group of thieves wouldn’t care less, unless there was a handsome reward involved.

So there you have it. It is by no means all of what the Storyteller must do, but it is a start. Just remember to have fun and scare the hell out of the players!

Styles of Play

Danse Macabre is a game that can be approached in any one of several ways which may be blended more or less together to suit taste. **Danse Macabre** is a dark game, its rules are gritty and the setting is full of shadow and sorrow. How best to use the basic framework will vary a little depending on the sort of game that you want to run.

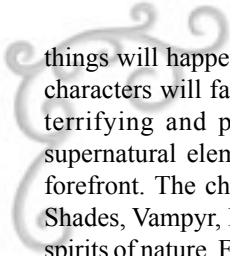
Gothic

Gothic tales tend towards being moody, romantic and dark. Gothic plots are full of quiet, subtle supernatural elements, shadows just out of view, darkness just out of touch. In a Gothic tale the characters may not even be completely sure that there are supernatural things abroad in the night. The sounds in the night may be a ghost, or then again, maybe not. The strange visitor may not be entirely mortal, then again he may just be a very eccentric old man. The line between supernatural and natural is very well hidden and difficult to place.

The suspense and fear in a Gothic tale comes about through a sense of the dark unknown. Very seldom will the supernatural creatures of the night truly show themselves for what they are, and then only in the most clandestine ways.

Horror

Horror is the mainstay of **Danse Macabre**. All of the rules of the game are built around the premise that horrifying



things will happen in the game. In a game of Horror the characters will face the inexplicable, the bloody and the terrifying and perhaps even survive. In Horror the supernatural elements of **Danse Macabre** come to the forefront. The characters may have to deal openly with Shades, Vampyr, Incarnate of Darkness, and wild, crazed spirits of nature. Fear and insanity become important rules to navigate and gameplay becomes very much about simple survival.

Intrigue

In a game of Intrigue the game centres around one or more pivots of power, a king's court, a sorcerer's cabal, a bishop's cathedral, a guildhall, and the machinations therein. Games of Intrigue work best when the characters are either striving to protect something they love, be it kith or kin, wealth or power, or striving for something they do not yet have. Intrigue revolves around clandestine missions, assassinations, uncovering plots or putting them in place.

Intrigue is a far less supernatural class of game. The supernatural and the dark exist in the background of **Danse Macabre** but in a game of Intrigue they only reluctantly come forward into the light of day.

Spatter

In a game of spatter the players expect their characters to die – usually messily – it is just a matter of when. A game of spatter might involve being caught in a locked castle full of monstrous things or wandering lost in a shade-haunted wood.

Spatter games tend to be short and one-off. Make sure your players know that you have planned a game that will probably result in the death of all the characters at the table. Ideally do this before they start creating characters. As grim as it sounds it can actually be freeing for players, as some may invent characters that they would not normally want to play for a long time. Alternatively in a short one-off game your players may appreciate you creating a selection of characters beforehand and allowing them to pick and choose. This allows the game to start much more speedily and as the characters are not likely to live very long anyway, the challenge of playing something a bit different can be a nice, brief change.

Tragedy

In a game of Tragedy there is no happy ending. Tragedy can easily develop out of the other classes of plot through the unpredictable actions of players, but it can also be co-operatively and intentionally established as well. In tragedy the characters find themselves forever faced with choices between two evils. Madness reigns early in the game. Death and fear is rife. The slightest moral misstep leads to chaos. Characters have no hope of a happy ending, all they can really hope to do is struggle and fight a little before the end.

Much as with Spatter, perhaps even more so, running Tragedy successfully really requires that the Storyteller explain her intention beforehand to the players. Foisting Tragedy on Characters that the Players dearly love and

intend for great things does not win friends. Ask your players to create tragic heroes; characters with problems so immense that the best that they can really hope for a quick death while taking one or two enemies down, too. Think of Hamlet with his madness, suicidal lover, murderous uncle and deceptive mother; Oedipus's curse that he will kill his father and marry his mother; Macbeth's regicide and power-hungry wife; Lir's conniving daughters and hopeless naivety. Part of the fun of Tragedy is seeing how the huge and terrible mess finally comes to an end.

Advice

The following is some general advice to help you plan and run a successful game of **Danse Macabre**.

Plan

Success begins and ends with planning. Think out beforehand what you want to achieve. What sort of game will it be? Suspenseful? Mysterious? Darkly humorous? Who will be the villains?

But do not Overplan

Over-planning can also be problem. Usually it is best to sort out a basic plot, some hooks, some villains, settings and locations and then work from there. Planning out what will happen exactly when and how, can result in you forcing your players down a road in the plot they do not want to take. Always be ready to roll with the blows. You may have planned an atmospheric few hours in a haunted chapel, but if the players decide they'd rather look for work as mercenaries, just accept it. You can always use the chapel later.

Think like a Villain

In a game that may change dramatically depending on what unpredictable actions you players take, one of the most important tricks is to get into the head of your villains, in fact you need to get into the head of all your extras and cast characters. If you know what your villains want, how they think, how they will react to failure or victory, then you'll be more able to quickly respond to something unexpected on the player's part.

Use Plot Hooks

Plot hooks can be as simple as a really good description of some strange event seen from afar, a mysterious letter addressed to one of the player characters or a distant cry for help from the woods. You can also be more creative. For some groups narrating a part of the story the player characters might have no hope of seeing can be a good introduction. An argument between a king and queen. The murder of a traveller on a road. Treat it like a prologue. You might also consider introducing the story by letting the players play someone else for a few minutes. Let us imagine the characters are going to come across a village ransacked and burnt by roving unemployed mercenaries. You could prepare several character sheets, a mother and father, a child, a blacksmith and start by handing these out. The players will probably look a bit puzzled. Ask them to put

aside their usual characters for a few minutes and then play the allocated character for a while, seeing first-hand the soldier's attack. In this case it may be unlikely that any of these temporary characters will survive - but if they do and the players meet them later, lonely hungry and frightened, there will be a much deeper sense of empathy for the characters who the players helped to escape.

Let the Players do some work

Always listen to your players throwing around ideas and solutions to problems. Often their solutions to problems can be better than yours. And it gives the players a sense of achievement to have 'figured out' the mystery.

Also, you may wish to ask your players to come up with reasons why their characters know one another. How did they meet? Where? When? This is sometimes a task left to the Storyteller but you will get some interesting relationships developing when you allow the players a little free reign here.

Another idea is to ask your players to come up with a specific goal they want their characters to achieve. The goal may change game to game. Or maybe they will create lists of goals. Actually bringing this into the open can help a lot. Maybe you didn't realise that one player wants his character to join the Templar Order. Or another player was so irritated by a witch they met some weeks back that even now he wants to hunt her down and even the score a little.

Remember, it's everyone's game

The game belongs to everyone. That may sound a bit strange to say, but you have to remember it. It can be too easy to be drawn into the plots and stories that interest you but leave your players bored. Pay attention to what grabs your player's attentions.

Everyone at the table should be having fun. This is something you may have to point out to others, too, if you have a problem player. If one player is making the game less enjoyable for everyone else, however wantonly or innocently, you may have to have a quiet word with him or her about it.

Remember also that it is the players whose characters are the heroes of the story. No one likes having a Non-Player Character arrive to save the day at the last moment. If you find that some of your friendly NPCs are doing more to the further the plot and solve problems than the player's characters then you should probably kill them off. If you find that you really like them and don't want to kill them off, then **definitely** kill them off. Murder your darlings. Otherwise your darlings run the risk of becoming the central movers of the story, and that is a role reserved for the players.

Advancement

Character advancement is a major aspect of role-playing games. Gaining skills, new powers, spells and talents is an addictive and fun pastime.

But character advancement in **Danse Macabre** is not as cut and dried, nor as pronounced as it often is in most games. Characters may change in the game, they may make

new acquaintances, gain holdings, fame, wealth and titles, but they are unlikely to become significantly more powerful in a personal sense as the game progresses. This is largely an effect of the genre. In horror it simply isn't workable to allow player characters to reach for vast and cosmic powers. A barbarian in a pulp fantasy setting may very well think nothing of hewing through hordes of undead, but a miller's son in a horror setting will be terrified of a single ghost, and no amount of advancement in the character's skill and power should ever change that. This means that **Danse Macabre** lacks easily trodden paths to power.

But players do want rewards for overcoming challenges, and the enjoyment of watching their character grow and change. How is this handled?

To compensate a little the meta-game mechanics of Fate and Fortune are used as rewards for surviving another game (Fate) or good roleplaying (Fortune).

At its most basic **Danse Macabre** is about surviving the next encounter, getting your character through the game session alive and hopefully intact. But beyond simple survival the character's goals and motivations come into play. How much closer has the character moved towards those goals? Characters have more options to develop when we look at the social fabric of the game. Perhaps land is conquered or lost, alliances are made, as well as deadly enemies.

Change will also come about from fear and delirium. When horrendous things occur and cause Trauma to the character's mind, how long will it be before the character's mind cracks and the poor soul goes insane? Surviving a long time without suffering madness is a reward in and of itself.

At a deeper level **Danse Macabre** becomes a battle for one's own soul. How tainted or pure do you want to allow your character to become? It can be a challenge just trying to keep your character from slipping into darkness or a huge struggle trying to stay pious and pure. Or do you want to play a tragic character who slips further and further into the shadow. And not only do characters need to monitor the purity and taint of the soul but also protect the very soul itself! Encountering a shade of the dead or demon can result in soul loss and a Small Death. The character starts to lose his humanity and slips into a cold, passionless spiral.

All these areas are represented by certain traits and mechanics in the game. They measure the development of your character. Characters grow more powerful only gradually, but they still grow for better or for worse. For they are on a dark journey filled with dangers, temptations and small victories.

Fate and Fortune

The following section deals with the two meta-attributes, *Fate* and *Fortune*, in the game.

Using Fate

Fate Points are a form of in-game reward handed out to characters at the end of surviving a game (See **Rules: Fate and Fortune**, for a more detailed discussion.)

Fate Points can be expended to add a bonus Success to any roll of the die a character makes. Spending one Fate Point gives you one Success – as if you had rolled an extra die and scored a natural six. You can only use one Fate Point per Test of Skill in this way. When you use Fate Points to add one or more successes to a skill, however, make a Mark of Fate next to the skill for each Fate Point expended.

Through Expending enough Fate in this way your skill will eventually increase a rank. Use the following as a guide. For example, to advance from **Rank One** to **Rank Six** over time takes a total of **Twenty Points** of Fate.

Rank One to Two	Two Fate
Rank Two to Three	Three Fate
Rank Three to Four	Four Fate
Rank Four to Five	Five Fate
Rank Five to Six	Six Fate

Practise

You are allowed to expend Fate Points during a period of practise in order to increase the number of Marks of Fate you possess and potentially your overall rank in a skill. While practising a skill you are limited to expending one Fate Point per day of study.

Fate Points

Fate Points are spent to grant your character an additional success in a Test of Skill, Fear or similar roll. This additional Success is added to any successes you roll. If you have a dice pool of three and spend a Fate Point, you could potentially score four successes.

You cannot spend more than one Fate Point on one Test of Skill.

Fate points are rewarded to any player who managed to have his character follow his aspects of nature. For instance playing out the greedy nature of a character with the Avarice aspect will earn one fate point. Only one fate point per aspect can be given out per session to each character.

Fortune Points

Fortune Points are provided as a reward for good roleplaying. Fortune Points are awarded at the end of a game session based on a peer vote. At any appropriate point during a game you can choose to spend Fortune Points and evoke a special dramatic event. In effect you evoke a limited narrative control over the game for a brief and hopeful moment. A single Fortune point only buys the most basic of plot twists while three points gives the player much more leeway.

Players can spend Fortune Points on:

Chance Meeting

Cost 1

A lantern shines dimly through the fog, a cheery whistle stirs in a dark dungeon, a shambling woodsman appears in a drear forest. You can evoke a Chance Meeting to find a lucky and helpful friend in a dark time and place.

Lucky Escape

Cost 1

You trip and fall and roll down a hill, skidding and sliding to safety. Your pursuer's horse throws a shoe. The guards all stumble and fall in a heap.

Invoke Lucky Escape to find a chance way out of an inescapable situation or away from relentless pursuit.

Snapping Twig

Cost 1

A twig snaps; there is a scuffle in the darkness, a sneeze in the shadows. You can invoke a Snapping Twig to save yourself from a failed Test of Awareness that might otherwise result in ambush or danger.

Left for Dead

Cost 2

Your character survives an event that would normally have killed them. However they are stripped of most of their possessions and are crippled for damage purposes.

A great example of this would be a battlefield and the character was overlooked amongst the dead. Perhaps a fall from a great height has left the character seriously hurt but alive.

Stroke of Fortune

Cost 2

You can invoke a Stroke of Fortune to grant yourself one ridiculously and unusually lucky Test of Skill. A Stroke of Fortune will grant you one full compliment of successes in one Test of Skill. If your skill is Rank Four you automatically score four successes without having to roll.

Here Comes the Cavalry

Cost 3

This allows a group of allies or one very powerful ally to suddenly turn up and save the day. Great to pull out when the group is in deep trouble. The problem here can be deciding who (within reason) can actually arrive. Perhaps a devout priest appears with cross raised to drive back a creature of undeath? Or a patrol of the king's men hear a scuffle and move in to investigate? Weaving together another element of the plot, however, will work better than random elements. That crazy old lady the characters met? Perhaps she has been following them? And perhaps she is not quite as crazy as she seems? Or might the shade of a friend return from the Netherworld to repay a debt? Or could the villain's own henchman finally grow tired of serfdom and turn upon the master? Care must be used with this option as it has the ability to change the entire plot of a game.

Peer Vote

At the end of each game session the Storyteller asks the players to make a consensual vote on who is the one among them who deserves to be rewarded for good roleplaying during the game.

So how do you define good roleplaying? This is going

to largely vary depending on your group. Did someone give a particularly good and showy speech? Did someone risk a character to stand in the way of evil? Or did someone simply manage to stay in character throughout and raise a few laughs at the same time?

Perform a vote by a simple raise of hands or consensual agreement. Ask for nominations or nominate someone and give a reason if no one is keen to suggest someone else. The vote-winner gains a single Fortune Point.

Carryover

Because Fortune Points are earned by the player in a way that is almost outside the rules of the game they carry over from one character to another when a character dies. As Fortune Points are a reward for roleplaying it is fair to allow the player to benefit long-term from their roleplaying coups.

Thus if your character with five Fortune Points dies your next new character start play with five Fortune Points.

Companions

An interesting option in the game is to allow your players to nominate up to three Companions to their character – allies, apprentices, tutors, friends or relatives of some significance to the central character.

Companions can be kept simple by defining them in the simplest of ways. To keep Companions quick to create and easy to manage allocate them Three Backgrounds and Three Skills. The ranks of the Skills cannot total more than 10 Ranks. You could arrange this, 6, 2, 2, or 5, 3, 2, or 4, 4, 2 or any similar combination.

If you prefer you can draw up a Companion as a fully fleshed out character, - but – Companions are not central to the story and as such never possess Effort, Fate or Fortune. If one of the skills they possess is magical though then they are allowed to nominate such spells or powers as needed.

Trauma, Soul Loss, Deliriums and Injury of Companions is dealt with in the usual manner.

Companions in the Game

Even though a Character may have links to up to three close Companions, it is generally best for a dark and horrific atmosphere to limit the number of characters in any given game. It is likely that only one Companion will be available to help your Player Character at one time. The Companions have lives of their own, after all. In some games perhaps all of your Companions may be otherwise busy. Who is available to help and who is not is at the discretion of your Storyteller.

Companions are useful (though sometimes unreliable) allies – but – they serve another function.

Each time a Companion survives a game in which he or she was placed in danger the character receives one **Longevity Point**. Longevity Points do not do anything special for a Companion unless your Player Character dies. If your Player Character dies then instead of creating a

completely new Player Character you have the option of bringing a Companion into the forefront and fleshing the character out as your next central character.

In this way you can have burgeoning Player Characters waiting in the wings, slowly acquiring Longevity. Using Companions in this way preserves the continuity of the game and plot. The Companions already know the other Player Characters. No awkward acrobatics of logic are required to introduce a new character to arrive from nowhere and willingly help the others in the gaming group. The newly reborn Companion has a vested interest in revenging your last character's death. The storyline that might already be in place can continue smoothly.

If you choose to flesh out a Companion rather than invent a completely new character, then any other Companions you have now become linked to your 'new' character.

You'll have to flesh out the Companion from scratch while retaining those three Backgrounds and Skills, as well as any Trauma, Deliriums, Soul Loss or other afflictions that he or she might have already suffered.

When you are finished you get to convert **Longevity Points** to **Fate Points** – which can be a very large advantage. Remember also that the **Fortune Points** from your late character always carry over to your next one, whether or not you chose to flesh out a Companion or create someone entirely new, so add those to the new character too.

Coin and Trade

Following the decline and eventual fall of the Western Roman Empire the use of a standard system of coins vanished from Europe. For many centuries, although coins were minted regularly enough, no standards existed and barter became the way of business for many. Town and village fairs grew and flourished, and now, in the twelfth century the fairground is a demesne's most important place for business and trade.

Coinage

For the sake of simplicity **Danse Macabre** imposes a strict system of currency on an economy that really possesses very little strictness about its money. Use the following as a guide.

Mark	A gold coin worth twenty silver shillings. (m)
Crown	A gold coin worth five silver shillings. (c)
Shilling	A silver coin worth twelve copper groats. (s)
Groat	A copper coin worth four farthings. (g)
Farthing	A copper coin, worth one fourth of a groat. (f)

The **Solidi** is a Roman coin that has all but vanished from use. Weight for weight, a Solidi is worth about a Shilling, but a trove of Roman coins could be sold for a great deal more to a collector. In England replace Marks with **Pounds** and Groats with **Pennies**. A **Bezant** is a gold coin from Byzantium also worth about as much as a Mark, although the name **Hyperpyron** is beginning to supplant

Bezant now. A **Sou** is a Frankish coin. Twelve Sou are worth one **Livre**, which is worth a Mark. A **Gros** is a Frankish term for a Groat. **Ducats** are Venetian gold coins worth a mark, whereas **Florins** are equally valuable gold coins minted in Florence and **Guilders**, also gold, also worth a Mark, are German in origin.

Guilds

Guilds were first organised in the ninth and tenth centuries and initially monastic in nature have grown and developed into a highly ceremonial form of co-operative workingman's order. Guilds serve to train new apprentices in a field, regulate quality, protect members from injustice and negotiate better deals for goods.

Not that some guilds are dominated by woman, especially the weaving, dying and brewing guilds. All require a fee to either enter as an apprentice or graduate as a journeyman, sometimes both. To make the step from Apprentice to Journeyman a guild-member must craft a masterwork piece in their field, to be appraised and assessed by superiors. A Journeyman has the permission of a guild to strike out and make a business for him or herself. An Apprentice, however, does not. Above Journeymen in the guild hierarchy stand Masters and above these, sitting upon a ruling council, are Aldermen.

Raiment

In many parts of medieval Europe the garb worn by peasantry and lords alike is very similar, varying not in style or colour but only in quality of manufacture and a few decorative touches. This is due largely to poor trade routes, limited materials and lonely roads watched over by too many robber knights. In most kingdoms the nobility distinguish themselves by furs, especially those of animals that are rare or hard to snare, or jewels – which are more commonly available than expensive cloth, being small, easily hidden and widely mined in certain northern countries.

A heavily jewelled ring or dagger is considered a very suitable form of portable wealth by most nobles, and the very richest can find themselves with fingers encrusted by overlarge and garish stones.

Dyes producing scarlet, a duller tawny red, yellow, grey, black, grey, blue-grey, green and brown are all available. Silk is available in a few of the larger trading centres, most clothing is made of linen, wool or russet.

Prices

The following is a very rough guide to the prices one can expect to pay for many sundry things. Keep in mind that prices will vary season to season and place to place.

Food

Pottage of Turnip	1 f
Heel of Black Bread	1 f
Cabbage Stew	1 f
Oat and Ale Porridge	2 f
Pottage of Boiled Beans	2 f
Loaf of Black Bread	2 f

Loaf of Good Bread	1 g
Stewed Eels	1 g
Dumplings	1 g
Apple Tart	2 g
Meat Pastry	2 g
Black Pudding	2 g
Mutton and Pottage	2 g
Lampreys in Gelatine	3 g
Cold Sage Chicken	3 g
Stewed Mutton	3 g
Stuffed Shoulder of Mutton	4 g
Stuffed Piglet	4 g
Dried fruit, pound	6 g
Cut of Venison	6 g
Bourbelier of Wild Pig	7 g
Whole Roast Boar	10 g
Round of Cheese	5 s
Bowl of Almonds	8 s
Bowl of Salt	1 c
Bowl Cinnamon, Cloves, Mace	1 c
Bowl of Pepper	1 m
Bowl of Saffron	12 m

Cider	1 f
Nettle Ale	1 f
Honey Mead	1 f
Spiced Mulled Cider	2 f
Old Brown Ale	2 f
Braggot (Spiced Mead)	3 f
Wine, Cheapest	2 f
Wine, Mulled	4 f
Wine, Finest	10 s
Wineskin (1 quart)	6 g
Wineskin (1 gallon)	9 g

Feeding a Household for a Year

Poor	6 m
One or Two Servants	15 m
Many Servants	30 m
Lordly	70 m
Kingly	100 m

Tools	
Candle, Beeswax	6 g
Candle, Tallow	1 g
Torch	1 g
Lantern	1 s
Flint & Steel	1 g
Hammer	3 g
Chisel	3 g
Shovel	3 g
Bellows	4 g
Rope, hemp (per foot)	2 g
Twine (per yard)	1 g
Wood axe	6 g
Vise	5 g
Iron Plough	5 g
Saw, hack	7 g
Spinning Wheel	10 g
Two Oxen Yokes	5 s

Mason's Tools	6 s
Anvil	1 m
Complete Armourer's Tools	5 m

Horses

Old Nag	10 s
Donkey	12 s
Lady's Palfry	18 s
Draught Horse	1 m
Courser	1 m 16 s
Warhorse	5 m
Stabling per night	1 g
Stabling per night, with feed	2 g

Livestock

Two Dozen Eggs	1 f
Chicken	2 f
Salted Herring, Pound	1 g
Piglet	1 g
Goose	3 g
Pig	4 g
Sheep	5 g
Cow	5 s
Ox	8 s

Other Beasts

Cat	1 f
Mongrel Dog	3 f
Hunting Dog	1 s
Greyhound	10 s
Sparrowhawk	10 s
Peregrine	15 s
Gyr Falcon	1 m

Noble Raiment

Purse, silk	5 s
Felt Shoes	3 s 6 g
Boots	2 s
Hat	6 g
Lordly Garb	8 s
Fashionable Gown	1 m
Fur Cloak	5 s
Seal, signet	3 s
Silk Gown	3 m
Ermine Cloak	10 s

Common Garb

Purse, buckram	9 g
Rags	2 f
Good Robe	5 g
Shoes	5 g
Boots	1 s 2 g
Linen Garb	4 g
Craftsman's Tabard	8 g
Woollen Garb	10 g
Best Wool Garb	1 m
Fur-lined Garb	1 m

Arms and Armour

Arrows (per dozen)	1 s 3 g
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Battle Axe	8 s 4 g
Bow, common	2 s
Bow, long	3 s
Crossbow	6 s
Dagger	3 s
Knife Sheath	1 s
Mace	7 s
Spear	5 s
Sword, cheap	12 s
Sword, fine	11 m
Sword Scabbard	2 s
Quarterstaff	2 s
Warflail	5 s
Warhammer	7 s 6 g

Armour, Rank One	12 s
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Soft hides, quilted armour; poorly treated leather

Armour, Rank Two	2 m
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Hardened or boiled leather; plates of thick hide from a rhinoceros, crocodile or elephant, or something stranger.

Armour, Rank Three	5 m
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Lordly and noble armour; chain mail, breastplates and greaves of steel.

Shield, common	5 s
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Shield, decorated	1 m
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Beasts & Devils



Chapter Nine

Within Benighted Europe there are many dark and dangerous things. Grim spectres of the night and weird monsters that ought to exist only in dream and tale. But exist they do.

In the game creatures, spirits and ghosts can play many roles. They can be adversaries or guardians, allies, clues to a riddle, hooks for a story or a threatening but hidden presence, adding to more the mood of the backdrop, than to the story.

Adversaries and Allies

The following are some traits and notes for mortal antagonists and common beasts that may pose a threat to Characters during the game.

Mortal Antagonists

	Attack	Armour	Health	Might	Deft	Wits	Will
Village Idiot	1	0	2	3	2	1	1
Village Lout	3	0	5	4	2	2	2
Angered Farmer	2	1	4	4	3	3	3
Brute with Cudgel	4	1	5	4	4	2	2
Highroad Brigand	5	1	5	4	4	2	2
Town Guard	5	1	6	4	4	2	2
Lord's Guard	5	2	6	5	4	2	2
Church Guard	5	2	6	5	4	2	2
Royal Guard	6	3	6	5	4	4	4
Outlaw	5	1	6	4	4	4	3
Outlaw Lord	6	3	6	4	5	5	3
Man-at-Arms	6	3	6	5	4	2	2
Robber Knight	7	3	7	5	4	5	3
Knight	7	3	7	5	4	3	3

Common Beasts

	Attack	Armour	Health	Might	Deft	Wits	Will
Dog	1	0	3	3	6	1	1
Wolf	3	0	4	3	6	1	1
Boar	5	1	6	5	4	1	1
Bull	6	3	8	7	5	1	1
Bear	7	4	10	8	5	1	1

Archonic Spirits

Archonic Spirits are the most powerful entities that any mortal is likely to encounter. Even the most humble imp and spright that hail from the Archonic host are dangerous, inhuman creatures, best left alone if possible, dealt with when necessary with mistrust and respect.

Beyond the veils of the mortal world, Archonic Spirits dwell in their native worlds. The Hallowed rule a silver and gleaming city, suspended in the infinite black of space and lit with a thousand stars. In Faerie dwell the wild spirits, among green hills and emerald forests, in a land where twilight rules the air and it is never day or night but always the very moment of gold when day becomes night and night becomes day. And deep in the pits of inferno rule the last order of spirits, men have many names for them: afreet, devil, erge and nightmare, but they are all of one cast. These are the spirits of shadow, the Demons, whose realm is fire and shadow, endless burning caverns and sulphurous pits.

There are in creation three dynasties of spirits. Those that belong to the Kingdom of Hallows, who are good if righteous, and kind if vengeful. Those that belong to the Kingdom of Wilds, who are both good and evil, full of caprice and whimsical changes of mood. And finally those that belong to the Kingdom of Darkness who are power hungry, violent, wanton and sinful, if at least on occasion also showing a twisted sense of honour and truthfulness.

Supernatural Traits

Supernatural creatures and entities possess Traits far in excess of anything a mortal can comprehend, demonically swift claws, the power to leap huge distances, eidetic memories and impossibly clever wits. Supernaturals possess **Uncanny**, **Supernatural** or **Godlike** Traits, in increasing order of power.

Uncanny

Mildly supernatural skills. Sometimes seen in unusually tainted warlocks and sorcerous mortals. More often the preserve of minor spirits, imps, sprites, less powerful incarnate beings and the like.

An Uncanny Skill defaults to a Success on a score of five or six on a d6.

Supernatural

The domain of powerful spirits, demons and angels, vampyr lords and powerful, elder monsters of the night.

A Supernatural Skill defaults to a Success on a score of four, five or six on a d6.

Godlike

Possessed only by a few lordly entities in all of creation. Lucifer possesses Godlike skills. His duke of hell, Asmodey is merely Supernatural.

A Godlike Skill defaults to a Success on a score of three, four, five or six on a d6.

For Example: A Faerie of the Kingdom of Wilds sets

about weaving straw into a carpet of gold. The Gamesmaster sets this task at Difficult. The creature has the Trait: Weaving Straw into Gold (Rank 6 / Uncanny). The Spirit rolls its dice pool and scores a 1, 3, 5, 6 and 6. Because its skill is Uncanny it scores a success on both 5 and 6. Thus, it scores three successes. The spirit needed two successes to overcome the Difficult Task. With three it easily weaves a masterful carpet of golden threads.

Attributes

Spirits are not made of mortal flesh nor do they possess mortal minds. They are indefinable according to the method used to outline a human character, instead Spirits are defined by **Ascendancy**, **Manifestation**, **Substance** and **Aspects**.

Ascendancy

Ascendancy is a measure of a spirits rank in the hierarchy of their kingdom. It is rated on a scale of one to six. A spirit with an Ascendancy of One is a very lowly, an imp, sprite or similarly humble thing. A spirit with an Ascendancy of Six is a King or Queen among the spirit-kind.

Ascendancy is used when spirits of the same ilk come to cross-purposes. A contest of Ascendancy is then used to determine which spirit has the will and command to force its wishes upon the other.

Ascendancy also measures a spirit's ethereal power, its force of mind and psyche. When traversing the spirit-worlds or the Netherworld a spirit's outward appearance is based solely on its Ascendancy, as are any tests of its 'physical' actions. An entity with a high Ascendancy will, in its celestial form, appear large and powerful, possibly blazing with light, or steeped in deep and enchanted shadows or swirled about by ever-shifting and beautiful things.

Ascendancy is used by spirits when attempted to resist the commands of sorcerers and invokers.

Manifestation

Manifestation measures the spirits ability to shape for itself a body in the mortal world. Not all powerful spirits have mastered the ability to make a solid and real form, some have never chosen to perfect this art and are forced to appear as little more than a voice upon the wind or a shimmering half-seen shape among the trees.

When in the mortal world all of a spirit's physical actions are based on Manifestation. A spirit that is skilled in this art can cause itself to subtly shift its form and become swift or strong or deadly as it pleases.

Using Manifestation

Manifestation can be used by the Spirit to take new shapes and cause impressive but often hollow displays of power. When used to invoke a magical effect, Manifestation is rolled as if it were a blanket-all skill. This may or may not involve the spirit personally performing a task. A spirit that chooses to use its Manifestation to build a temple out of thin air might cause dozens of spectral hands to come into being to build the temple for it. The

spectral hands are actually an extension of the spirit, but to observer's it will appear that the spirit is working some form of magic.

Manifestation is also used to cause lighting and thunder, tremors of the earth, bursts of flame, rains of toads and any number of other unnatural events intended to impress upon mortals their lowly status in the general scheme of things. The more unnatural the event the higher the difficulty. Also, whenever Manifestation is used, the magic costs the spirit one rank of Manifestation (except in the case of illusion, see chart, below). So, if in the above example, a spirit of Manifestation Rank 7 builds a temple, then once the task is complete the spirit's power drops to 6. Once Manifestation drops to zero a spirit is forced to return to its native plane to replenish its power. If forced to remain in the mortal world, for example by a circle of goetic power, then the spirit loses its physical form and becomes nothing more than a shadow and a voice on the air.

Illusion	Easy	Cost: 0
Minor Effect	Average	Cost: 1
Major Effect	Difficult	Cost: 1
Awe-Inspiring	Very Difficult	Cost: 1
Earth-Shattering	Insanely Difficult	Cost: 1

Commandment

By placing yourself deeper and deeper into Darkness, Wilds or Hallows you are placing yourself deeper into the power of the masters of those realms. Characters may be commanded to perform acts or deeds by a spirit belonging to the appropriate dynasty. You are allowed a Test of Willpower to try and Contest a Commandment but doing this becomes more difficult as your nature becomes more extreme.

An angel, Faerie or devil that attempts to command you uses your own nature against you. If you suffer from five ranks of purity, then an Angel is able to invoke a Commandment at 5d6 versus your Willpower. If you suffer from Three ranks of taint, then a Demon is able to invoke a Commandment at 3d6 versus your Willpower.

Example

Father Jathew is actually a deeply sinful man in secret. He has a secret tunnel by which he is able to travel from his priory to a den of sin, whores and drink not far away. He possesses Four ranks of taint. One night a Demon appears in his cell and commands Father Jathew to murder a visiting Cardinal. Jathew does not want to do this. Drunken sin and sport is one thing, but murder is something else entirely. Father Jathew enters a Contest of Skill with the Demon, pitching his Willpower against the Demons Commandment.

Father Jathew has a Willpower of Three. He rolls 3d6 and uses two ranks of Effort to increase his range of success to 4 through 6. He scores a 1, 2 and 4. One success. The demon uses Jathew's Corruptions against him and rolls 4d6. As with all acts undertaken by spirits the demon's Commandment is considered Supernatural in nature. It always succeeds on a 4, 5 or 6. The demon scores a 1, 5, 6 and 6. Three successes. The demon's Three successes

outmatch Jathew's One. Jathew is compelled to obey the creature of darkness and commit the murder.

Substance

Substance is used in place of Health for a spirit, when involved in battle. Spirits cannot be killed in any real sense but their physical form in the mortal world can be temporarily destroyed. If a spirit's Substance reaches zero then its body unravels, falls to mist, shadow and a whisper of musical notes and blows away.

The spirit is reduced to little more than a voice on the wind. It needs to return to its native Kingdom in order to make for itself a new body – a process that usually takes some days or weeks.

It also costs a Spirit a rank of permanent Manifestation to rebuild a new body. It also takes vast amounts of power to make a physical form of power and glory out of mere nothingness. If a spirit is deprived of its body several times it may end up reduced to one rank of Manifestation. Trying to use up this would cause the spirit to cease to exist. When this happens the spirit is trapped as a powerless, miserable and tortured presence, a mere whisper, incapable of crafting for itself new flesh.

Note, however, that as all Archonic Spirits possess the power to simply vanish from the Mortal World at will, very few would feel compelled to do battle to the point of losing the Substance of their body entirely. Unless a Spirit is barred from returning to its own Kingdom by sorcerous binding or oath, then it will very likely chose to de-manifest, gather its strength in its native otherworld, and return later to exact retribution. Any Spirit possessing the free will and power to move between worlds is effectively unstoppable from the point of view of Mortals.

Aspects

Spirits possess one or more Aspects. These are powers associated with the Virtues, Caprices or Sins that the spirit is most tightly bound to. A Demon of Gluttony and Sloth will possess different powers from a Demon of Lust. And a Demon of Gluttony of Rank Four is considerably more dangerous and powerful than a Demon whose Gluttony is merely Rank One.

The higher a spirit's Ascendancy the more ranks of Aspects it is likely to possess. Use the following chart as a guide. The ranks need to be spread out among one or more Aspects. For instance a Demon of Ascendancy Three gains nine ranks worth of Aspects. These might be split up, for instance, Envy Rank Four, Lust Rank Four, Wrath Rank One. A total of nine ranks.

Ascendancy	Aspects
One	Three Ranks
Two	Six Ranks
Three	Nine Ranks
Four	Twelve Ranks
Five	Fifteen Ranks
Six	Eighteen Ranks

Increasing Ranks in Aspects grants a Spirit additional powers related to that Aspect. Use the following as a guide

to the powers that can be invoked.

Rank One

The Spirit is able to sense immediately whether or not a mortal possesses the Virtue, Caprice or Sin in question.

Example

A Demon of Gluttony enters a village in disguise and walks through the town. Any person it meets that possesses the Sin Gluttony will immediately leap to the Demon's attention upon sight.

Rank Two

The Spirit is able to influence a mortal through cunning words and clever phrases and make the mortal suffer from desire to indulge in the Virtue, Sin or Caprice in question. A Test of Willpower (diff. Average) is required to resist this enchanted fascination. To work, however, the Spirit must be able to spend a good time conversing with the mortal, making subtle suggestions, hints and innuendos.

The effect of the suggestion lasts several hours before it wears away and the mortal is left wondering at their own actions.

Example

The Demon of Gluttony enters a tavern and sits at a table. It begins talking to a stranger and turns the conversation to food and wine and other indulgent things. While speaking the Demon works a little magic. The mortal begins to feel a craving to order as much food as he could possibly eat, juicy meat, succulent fruits, endless casks of wine. He must pass a Test of Willpower to resist the urge.

Rank Three

As with Rank Two, except that the Spirit need merely be in the presence of one or more people to exert the suggestion. The power can extend over a whole crowd of people, although it has little or no effect if the crowd is set strongly upon another course. A Demon of Lust could not suggest sinful thoughts to a convent of seriously devout nuns at prayer, not could it try to cause knights set upon the road to battle that they go seeking a brothel instead. The power works best upon the bored, the sleepy, or the slightly drunk.

A spirit is able to exert this power or shield it at will.

Example

The Demon of Gluttony now has no need to talk to anyone. It is able to simply take a seat in the inn, somewhere in the shadows and watch, grinning, as a crazed feast unfolds.

Rank Four

As with Rank Three, except that now mortals who come into a spirit's power must make a Test of Willpower at Difficult to resist.

Example

In the inn now two successes are needed instead of one. The glutinous feast is likely to manifest itself all the more quickly and with bacchanalian disregard for propriety.

Rank Five

As with Rank Four, except that now mortals must make a Test of Willpower at Very Difficult, and the Spirit can now extend the suggestion to people whose minds are set upon another course. The Demon of Lust could now try to upset the sanity of devout nuns and warlike knights.

Example

Everyone in the inn now needs three successes to pass their Test of Willpower.

Rank Six

As with Rank Five except that the influence is both contagious and lingering. The power of the Spirit's suggestion will linger for an extra hour for every hour that it spends in a place. A Sylphaen of Levity that spend six hours at a crossroads will leave the lingering suggestion of Levity for six hours after it has gone, as if it were still present. Also, any first-touch mortal who succumbs to the suggestion and is still under the spell's influence can pass the suggestion to another mortal by coming into their presence. Second-Touch mortals, however, cannot pass on the suggestion any further.

Example

The Demon of Gluttony gets up and leaves the little inn, now a den of rapacious greed, excess and indulgence. He spent an hour in the inn. For an hour after he leaves any new person entering the inn must make a Test of Willpower at Very Difficult or be overcome by an urge to indulge in food and beer. Anyone who leaves the inn can pass on the urge of Gluttony to others, outside the inn, just by coming into their presence. Any second-touched mortal is allowed a Test of Willpower at Very Difficult to resist.

Ranks and Orders

Archonic Spirits are highly hierarchical creatures and are constantly involved in politics and plays of power in order to raise themselves up in the esteem of their kingdom and masters. Even angelic spirits spend a great deal of their time in the the Kingdom of Halls engaged in internal power-plays and any Archonic Spirit that spends a month in the Mortal World without returning to its kingdom to see to its affairs loses a rank of Ascendancy as others manoeuvre to take power.

Devourer of Souls

Demons especially, but Slyphaen to a lesser extent are willing to garner power by drinking the life energy of living and thinking beings. The soul of a living being is best, though the soul that can be devoured from a dead Shade provides some power, too.

Archonic spirits are able to draw the stuff of soul in

through their mouth. To a layman they appear to bite and suck at the victim, perhaps trying to draw out blood, when it is a much more vital thing they are feeding on. Spirits do not need soul to continue to live. Angels survive quite well refusing to engage in what they consider a distasteful indulgence.

Spirits that draw into enough soul, however, are able to raise themselves up in power.

Rules

For every hundred pieces of Soul that an Archonic Spirit devours it can choose to add one rank to either Ascendancy or Manifestation. This means that a Spirit needs to utterly devour the Souls of ten mortals before it can ascend a rank.

Living people possess up to ten ranks of Soul. Dead Shades possess a number of ranks of Soul equal to their **Pneuma** – seldom more than six ranks and often far less.

Draining soul from a mortal takes time and is painful for the mortal. It takes a spirit about ten minutes to devour a single piece of soul.

If a mortal is entirely drained of Soul he or she becomes **Deathless** (See Rules: Souls and the Soulless). The Deathless are a form of Incarnate being unable to die. Deathless will arise in the power of whatever spirit devoured the last drop of spirit away from what had been the mortal body.

Names and Faces

Danse Macabre assumes that the spirits and gods held in reverence and fear in all cultures are real. In some instances a demon may be known by one name in France and by another name in Central Africa. In other instances Spirits develop local interest, and seldom wander far from the places of the mortal earth that are holy or important to them. Many gods of the ancients are now worshipped or feared as Angels or Faeries, and many of the enemies of the gods are known by new names and are now the dukes and princes of Hell.

Night Things and Terrors

Creatures of Horror

In a game of Horror the supernatural monsters of the night are, as a general rule largely unstoppable by human means. None of the following denizens of Benighted Europe should be treated lightly. All are capable of inflicting terrible injury and trauma. As the Storyteller you may wish to make this clear to new players. **Danse Macabre** is not a game in which fighting a Vampyr or Werewolf toe-to-toe is a good idea. Even the wolves of Benighted Europe deserve their reputation as savage, bloodthirsty monsters.

In a more mood and dramatic sense, creatures of the night and shades of the dead should be used sparingly in a horror setting. By exposing your players to the supernatural only occasionally, you can heighten the sense of its strangeness. Using trickery to mislead the Characters over the course of several games will also make it more

surprising when a real monster turns up. Making the first ‘werewolf’ the players meet a madman wearing a wolfskin, the first ‘demon’ they meet a cultist dressed up in a goat-skull mask, and the first ‘ghost’ a woman with a chalked face and black cloak will help make the real werewolves, demons and ghosts that are lurking in the shadows just a little more shocking.

Categories

In Benighted Europe creatures, spirits and demons can be broadly aligned into one of several categories. These are as follows.

Archonic Spirit

Angels, Faerie and Demons – the otherworldly spirits of Heaven, Faerie and Hell. Note that Archonic spirits are so powerful and strange that they are dealt with in their own separate section (above).

Automaton

Unnatural things given animation and life through magical arts and weird science. An golem made from clay is an example of an Automaton.

Elemental

Ephemeral and barely intelligent spirits of the earth, sky, wind, and woods. Elementals pay little attention to living things, are not intelligent enough to easily master or even interact with and to all but a few gifted individuals, remain invisible to mortal eyes.

No attributes are given for elementals as they possess no real physical body. Even if you are gifted with the second sight you remain unable to touch elementals. Their presence in the world like the presence of the wind or waves or storm – powerful but beyond the ken of men to master.

Incarnate

Creatures that were once mortal, but have been changed flesh and soul into immortal servants of one of the three otherworldly kingdoms. Such creatures are often tormented, haunted by memories of having once been human and are driven to serve their new masters to any ends. Incarnate may be Hallowed, Wild or Dark. Many of the Wild Incarnate of the woods and wilds have become tainted by Hell as the Unseelie creep through Faerie. These once-wild, now shadow creatures are termed Dark-Tainted Incarnate.

Otherworldly Entity

Truly alien things from the cosmic void and the mists that separate the worlds of creation. The Ravened that exists in the Mists is an Otherworldly Entity, so too are Manes, by virtue of their extreme ancientness and their alliance to Death, itself an entity that exists outside of Creation.

Other unseen and unknown sentient entities arising from the void and existing as living expressions of Time, Hope, Fate and Fortune and other abstract concepts are more or less suggested to exist by the more philosophical class of

scholar.

Revinir

The dead flesh and soul of a mortal given unholy life by the Kingdom of Darkness. Revinir are a form of Dark Incarnate, but are distinct enough in appearance and powers to warrant separate discussion.

Shade

The soul of a dead mortal, usually a ghostly wraith, shadowy and insubstantial. Shades of the Dead may either remain in the Mortal World on death, bound by fetters of love, obsession or curse, or cross back into the Mortal World through gates to the Netherworld.

Biersal

A name given to a small imp or demon widely supposed by the general peasantry to be commonly summoned by greedy monks and set to guard the cellars of monasteries and casks of beer against thieves.

In fact the practise is real in certain places, though not as widespread as is believed. A Biersal is typically a minor demon, no more powerful than a Familiar and of the lowest rank of Hell's orders. Few of the monks who dabble in summoning of spirits would be fool enough to set anything more powerful to watch over the ale.

The chief power of these minor spirits is that of fear. Much like the Familiar a Biersal can take many forms as long as they are small, although a Biersal having no need of disguise is unlikely to choose to look like a common animal. Set as guardians to scare away thieves, Biersal are more often commanded by the Father who has summoned it to look as grotesque as it can and take on the flesh of some horrid, fang-toothed, red-eyed and impish nightmare.

Skills:	Uncanny
Ascendancy:	Rank One
Manifestation:	Rank One
Attack:	One
Armour:	One
Substance (<i>Health</i>):	Six
Fear:	Difficult
Trauma:	Two
<i>Might</i> :	3
<i>Deft</i> :	3
<i>Wits</i> :	3
<i>Will</i> :	3

Black Hound

A form of spectral Wild Incarnate that is widely rumoured of accross Europe, but most common in Brittany and British Isles. Black Hounds are the very last remnants of the Cult of the Druids that have survived into the modern day.

Each hound is the somewhat tormented and twisted soul of a sacrifice reshaped with wild magic into the form of a huge, black dog with gleaming eyes and dagger fangs. Tradition holds that Black Hounds were set long ago to guard treasures, though if these treasures are anything more than rust and rot today is doubtful. When the Druidic

order faded and failed, and was eventually overrun by the legions of Rome their magic lingered a little too well.

The Black Hounds remained. Still guarding their long-deserted bridges, hills, swamps and temples.

Black Hounds are among the few Wild Incarnate to have not yet been wholly tainted by the Unseeliegh. Some are certainly crazed and malicious and have been dark tainted and bound into the power of one or more demons – giving rise to the first Hellhounds. But those that remain wild and wild only are more benevolent in nature. Tales of Black Hounds leading lost young women home or protecting a lone traveller are not uncommon. In one popular hearthside tale a young woman is walking alone down a path to be joined silently by a large, ferocious looking coal-black hound. The hound doesn't seem dangerous but the young woman walks quicker all the same.

A little further along a mob of tinkers and thieves who happen to be lounging about by the road call out to the woman what they would have done to her if she didn't have that great hound for company. She walks on, and gratefully pets the hound. Her hand, of course, passes through the dog and it vanishes.

Though sometimes kind, Black Hounds that are malignant in mood or are attacked by somewhat foolish mortals demonstrate frightful powers. Their bite can inflict terrible burns and paralysis.

Skills:	Uncanny
Attack:	Rank Six
Armour:	Two
Health:	Six
Fear:	Difficult
Trauma:	One
<i>Might</i> :	6
<i>Deft</i> :	6
<i>Wits</i> :	4
<i>Will</i> :	4

Cernunn

Occasionally the ploughs of the serf and farmer turn up forgotten treasures of the past. Among these are small clay and stone figures, made by the ancient tribes of Celts to venerate a kin of wild spirit that was then treated as gods. Each is no taller than a finger and seems mostly human but for its crown of antlers.

The Cernunn are that species of horn-crowned spirits that appear often in the long dead arts of the Celts. They take a form of tall humans, dressed in the furs, torc and bronze and copper of the ancient Celts and painted over the skin with whorls of blue wode and red ochre. Their faces are not quite human, and have an angular deerlike aspect, their eyes are a glow of pale white light and from their heads grow tall and branching horns. This race of spirits takes both male and female forms.

The Cernunn have retreated almost entirely to the Kingdom of Wilds and there are defending one of the last free domains of Faerie against the Unseeliegh. A few recreant, stubborn or crazed individuals are left in the Mortal World. Herne, dressed in rank hunter's skins and draped in a hundred bone charms and trinkets is one such

spirit who haunts the woods of Britain. He is very likely the last Cernunn in Europe possessing any real veneration or power, and is still paid secret reverence to in secret by hunters, woodsmen and poachers alike through small prayers and votive offerings.

Skills:	Supernatural
Ascendancy:	Three
Manifestation:	Six
Attack:	Six
Armour:	Six
Substance (<i>Health</i>):	Ten
Fear:	Very Difficult
Trauma:	Two
<i>Might</i> :	6
<i>Deft</i> :	6
<i>Wits</i> :	6
<i>Will</i> :	6

Church Grim

In the darker centuries from about 600 to 900 it was a common practise to sacrifice a child or enemy when founding a church and place the body under the founding stone. The soul of the sacrifice was bound by certain rites now lost to protect and guard the church.

Years have rolled on and though the more ancient chapels have been torn down and rebuilt the bones beneath the earth remain and fettered to them remains the soul.

Church Grims appear as spectral and black ghosts, Shades of the Dead, who patrol the graveyard and church at night, defending it against grave robbers and any wild, harmful spirits that might come near the hallowed earth. Church Grim's seldom reveal themselves to mortal eyes and will appear in their full and ghostly visage only to those robbers who are foolhardy and fearless enough to have not been scared off by whispers, shrieks and murmurs in the night.

A soul can be absolved from this eternal duty and freed to enter the Netherworld only by finding the hidden bones giving to them a more proper burial (See *Shades of the Dead*, Below, for more details).

Obsession:	Six
Pneuma:	Six
Torment:	One
Fear:	Difficult
Trauma:	One
<i>Might</i> :	2
<i>Deft</i> :	2
<i>Wits</i> :	4
<i>Will</i> :	4

Dakhanavar

A pale-of-skin, thin-of-flesh kin of Revinir that is known mostly in the lands around Armenia, though certain individuals have wandered further west.

The Dakhanavar do not restore themselves by feeding on living blood or soul but only on the souls of the dead. Dakhanavar hunt and devour Shades. If there are ghosts about, or a graveyard nearby in which ghosts are lingering before being drawn into the Netherworld, a Dakhanavar

will usually leave the living alone.

But, if the shades of the dead grow few, then the Dakhanavar will turn its attention to those not-yet-dead and begin murdering by poison, sword or ambush.

When a person dies, the dead Shade emerges from the corpse and even if it holds no obsessive reason to be bound to the mortal world it will wander about confused and disorientated for a hour or day or week before feeling the call of the Netherworld and fading from the mortal sphere.

A Dakhanavar takes advantage of this by falling upon the newly emerged shades and drinking the stuff of soul there and then. Dakhanavar are capable of grabbing hold of clasp tight a Shade and drawing soul from the Shade like a spider draws juice from a fly. To an observer the Dakhanavar will appear to be struggling to hold on to thin air. Anyone who has the power to see the dead will see a translucent Shade writhing in the Dakhanavar's hands.

It takes a Dakhanavar about an hour to completely devour a Shade. Every ten minutes of feeding inflicts one rank of Torment on the soul. If disturbed during this feeding, and the Shade is able to escape, then the soul is likely to become fettered to the mortal world with the Obsession of exposing the Dakhanavar for what it is among the living.

A Dakhanavar need only feed once a month to maintain a living appearance. They can walk opening in sunlight, appear under close examination to be alive and like the Vampyr possess a false heartbeat and breath. Many live hidden in the towns and hamlets of mortals, performing clandestine tasks for the Kingdom of Shadows and murdering when the hunger comes again.

The Fear and Trauma listed below is required only when a character realises that a person is in fact not of living stock, but an undead Dakhanavar.

Skills:	Uncanny
Attack:	Rank Six
Armour:	Rank two
Health:	Eight
Fear:	Difficult
Trauma:	Two
<i>Might</i> :	5
<i>Deft</i> :	5
<i>Wits</i> :	4
<i>Will</i> :	5

Dark Haunted Wolf

Long ago unclean spirits of hell went into the forests of Europe and there inhabited the wolf; the beast, that was once a friend of Romulus and Remus, that once kept the company of man beside the hunter's fire, was stolen from the Kingdom of Wilds and became a savage thing, made larger and more cunning by the wicked spirit within.

Wolves are now among the most feared creatures of the European woodland. Most, if not all, are tainted by darkness and a few are so steeped in the powers of Hell that they have acquired the powers of a Dark Incarnate. Untainted wolves, and a few packs of these can still be found in the eastern fringes of the Land of the Rus tend to be no larger, more dangerous or cunning than a pack of

feral dogs.

Tainted wolves can grow to the size of a calf, can often understand, but not speak, the tongues of men, and possess their own sophisticated, if savage society. They keep the company of devils and dark incarnate in the deep, deep woods and the forests thy haunt have become dark and dangerous places indeed.

Skills:	Uncanny
Attack:	Rank Three
Armour:	Rank One
Health:	Six
Fear:	Average
Trauma:	None
Might:	5
Deft:	5
Wits:	3
Will:	3

Elbgast

Ghostly white spectres of the woods of northern Europe. Remnants of a strain of vanished Wild Sylpahen, now reduced to hungry, awful shadows, tainted by the Unseeligh and driven by an urge to feed on the raw stuff of soul.

Elbgast hunt the lonely pine forests of the north and are much feared by woodsmen and travellers alike. They are both silent and deadly, the first hint of their arrival being a sudden pale gleam of light seen flickering through the trees.

Elbgast seldom attack the wakeful but will try to creep up on the sleeping, either by following lone travellers or by preying on lonely cottages or hamlets in the deep forests.

Elbgast are able to draw a piece of Soul out of a person by feeding on them for an hour or so, during which time the person suffers terrible nightmares and mild pain. The victim has a 2 in 6 chance of waking before the feeding is done with, to find a ghastly and spectral mockery of a fae creature leaning over their bed. If the person awakes the Elbgast retreats unfulfilled, usually to return the next night. Elbgast cannot devour more than one piece of soul each night, although small packs of these spectres might leave a person Soulless in one or two nights of feeding.

Skills:	Uncanny
Ascendancy:	Rank Two
Manifestation:	Rank Four
Attack:	Four
Armour:	Four
Substance (Health):	Eight
Fear:	Very Difficult
Trauma:	Two
Might:	4
Deft:	5
Wits:	3
Will:	3

Feral

The Feral are mortals whose souls have been drained away utterly by the Ravened, the black and hungry ethereal horror that that eventually creeps through any gate to the Mists that is left open too long.

There was a time when gates to the Mists were sought out and shattered by Death and his servant Manes – but in the years since Death's binding many gates into the Mists have been left open and unguarded. The Ravened has crept into the mortal world in many places and the lands about a Ravened-haunted gate are soon plagued by the Feral. Mortals go to sleep normal and awaken as Feral – creatures with no human compunction, feeling or emotion, utterly bereft of soul and also utterly Deathless, unable to die unless burned or beheaded.

Deathless, when created by a Demon or Faerie spirit fall under the power of their creator. Deathless created by Hell are eternal servants of Hell. Deathless created by Faerie are eternal servants of Faerie. But Deathless created by the Ravened are servants of no one. They are driven by nothing except endless hunger. A hunger which is it seems the only command the Ravened gives them. The Feral will fall upon and devour anything they can find that is edible, including one-another if nothing else is at hand.

The Feral prefer easy meals. They will raid a farm until nothing is left. Then they will kill chickens. Then the sheep. Then the dogs. Then the children. They have enough intelligence left to be dangerous and crafty, but through complete disinterest in themselves, the Feral end up looking like animals, filthier and more stinking than lepers, with rotten teeth and scabrous skin.

If a Feral is reduced to two Health then it is considered too injured to continue fighting. If it reduced to zero Health then it is maimed and unable to move and can be easily dispatched by cutting away its head.

An injured Feral left for dead and neither burned or beheaded eventually heals to full Health no matter how severe its injuries.

Skills:	Normal
Attack:	Rank Three
Armour:	Rank One
Health:	Eight
Fear:	Average
Trauma:	One
Might:	7
Deft:	4
Wits:	0
Will:	0

Gargouille

Heavy and lumbering automatons that are smaller and quicker than Golems. Gargouilles are made of a flesh mixed from clay, stonedust and bone of dogs. When awakened and alert they are plaint and clayey, when at rest their skin hardens to a stonelike hardness.

Gargouille need to be carved as much as moulded and tend to be rendered into the heavy, lumpish and slightly grotesque or whimsical forms that are common the present day masonry of churches and castles. More human Gargouille are so heavy that they become stocky and stout to the point of looking humorous and are seldom carved. Gargouille are sometimes given wings, but cannot fly, though most that possess claws are good enough climbers.

As labourers and servants Gargouille are reasonable but

tend to muddle simple instructions and cannot carry out complex tasks at all. Golems, which possess a small spark of soul and some intelligence, are far better servants.

If set as guards Gargouille become inactive and turns stony. They awaken only when trespassers enter their presence. Their skin cracks and splinters and they move slowly into full wakefulness. Once awake a Gargouille can move relatively fast, much faster than a Golem and at about the speed of a human. They are frighteningly unnatural things to see lurching forward out of the darkness and any mortal who meets a Gargouille must make a Test of Fear versus the Unnatural at Average.

Skills:	Normal
Attack:	Rank Four
Armour:	Rank Four
Health:	Eight
Fear:	Difficult
Trauma:	One
Might:	7
Deft:	4
Wits:	1
Will:	1

Ghul

A from of tormented Dark Incarnate more common in Araby and the Holy Land than in Europe. A Ghul cannot come into being by accident, a person is transformed flesh and soul into one of these creatures by the drinking of demonic blood.

Just a drop is all that is needed to effect the transformation, and there was a time in the lands of the east when transformation in a Ghul was considered just punishment for certain crimes. Such criminals were usually then interned deep underground in sarcophagi of stone or bound in thick chains of iron, to lie forever tormented by madness and a hunger to feed that cannot be sated.

But time wears down stone and iron, too, and a few Ghul in time escaped their deep-dug prisoners to become terrifying demons of the desert, hunters of flesh and blood.

Ghul do not look much like a human once transformed, their flesh become feculent and rotted, their limbs become long and lanky, claws of iron grown from their fingers and their faces become leering visages of the demonic. They retain only the dimmest, most feeble memories of their previous life.

Skills:	Supernatural
Attack:	Rank Six
Armour:	Rank two
Health:	Six
Fear:	Difficult
Trauma:	Two
Might:	7
Deft:	6
Wits:	4
Will:	4

Golem

Huge, clumsy of shape thickset and lumbering automatons made of clay and given animation by occult

rites and weird science.

Golem are brought into being most often as labourers or servants. They are slow and neither very bright, nor very gentle. They do not make good soldiers as they are so lumbering as to be easily outpaced at a good walk, and as guards are little better than a frightening wall.

If pressed into service as a guardian or watcher the sheer unnaturalness of a Golem is probably its chief power. Mortals who see a Golem come to life to frown down at the frightened faces suffer an immediate rank of Trauma and must make a Test of Fear versus the Unnatural.

And although Golem are poor soldiers, attacking one is a little like trying to kill a brick wall. Only heavy hacking or crushing weapons do injury to a Golem – axes, picks, mattocks, sledge hammers and the like. Attacking with swords, arrows, lances, or spears is an exercise in futility. Fire will singe a golem but not burn it. They cannot drown and if buried a Golem with struggle until it frees itself.

Tantrum of the Golem: Golem are inherently rebellious things. Compelled by the sorcery of their creation to obey the commands of their maker, Golem resist this commandment with a furious, though somewhat weak, force of will.

Golem resist all commands given to them with a Willpower of One. The first time a Golem is able to resist a command it will simply stand still and refuse to do the work it is commanded to do. The rebellious spirit passes after an hour or so. On further successful Tests of Willpower the Golem begins to act more and more like an angry spoilt child and once its has resisted commands four or five times it will throw a terror tantrum – a dangerous prospect when the spoilt child is eight or nine feet tall and made of solid clay. Tantrum-throwing golems can wreak great havoc and destruction but usually calm down within an hour and begin following orders again.

If a Golem's creator is killed the Golem, having no concept of death, will feel compelled to stand beside the body and prevent others who try to take it away. An orphaned Golem can only exist about a year alone, after which time the magic that holds it together begins to fade and it slowly crumbles into a heap of dusty clay.

Skills:	Normal
Attack:	Rank One
Armour:	Rank Six
Health:	Twenty
Fear:	Difficult
Trauma:	One
Might:	8
Deft:	2
Wits:	1
Will:	1

Green Woman

Known as Baoban Sith in Ireland and Vila in the eastern lands, the Green Woman were in ages past the shades of sacrifices made to fertility, forest and harvest goddesses in the bloody days of old. To the Romans the Green Woman were Nymphs and Dryads, the wild attendants of wild gods and goddesses, and there are a names still used in more

scholarly circles.

The shades were taken gratefully by the old ‘goddesses’ – powerful Faerie spirits, now mostly reduced to **Hagg**es – and reshaped into attendants and servants. These wild incarnate spirits are beautiful in a sad and lonely sort of way. They are dressed usually in green, giving rise to their name, and usually their eyes have an emerald gleam. Green Woman are not obviously supernatural except for those few whose skin and hair possess a green tinge. The Test of Fear and Trauma listed below is used when a character realises that the woman he or she is talking to is not mortal.

When the power of the old goddesses failed and faded and the once-powerful became slowly reduced to Hagg

es, the Green Woman were set free from their centuries long service to wander the woods, alone, lost and hungry for companionship.

And there they wander still, in the dark glens and stormy mountains among the dark woods and deep dells. The Green Woman often gather in small numbers for companionship, two or three, together, but what they seek most is the company of mortals. To once again sit by the fire and eat and drink and laugh and perhaps to love. For they *remember* what it was to be mortal, to be loved, and these sad spirits crave that again.

But the touch of these Incarnate is not good for Mortals. The goddesses, in their wisdom, decided that their servants should remain loyal only without ‘distraction’, and so put into them a power of death in the touch. Every five minutes that a Green Woman touches the skin of a Mortal the unfortunate person loses a rank of Health – and although the injury is not obvious on the outside it is felt in a general weakening of the spirit and body. To spend half an hour in physical contact with a Green Woman is to invite death.

Skills:	Uncanny
Attack:	Rank One
Armour:	Rank two
Health:	Six
Fear:	Average
Trauma:	One
Might:	7
Deft:	7
Wits:	6
Will:	6

Hagge

The degenerated, increasingly dark-tainted remnants of the wild ‘goddesses’ that once were the object of veneration by cults across Europe before the coming of the Romans.

Hagg

es, once beautiful and benevolent Archonic Spirits of Faerie, have generally descended in the order of things. They are wizened now, withered of flesh and skin, bitter of heart and often living more in the past than the present.

Their connections with weather, harvest and spinning have not been lost to the minds of many commoners and farmers, and in many places yearly ‘sacrifices’ of dolls made of corn or straw are still made to appease the local spirit.

Most are bound so tightly to their previous places of worship and bloody sacrifice groves that they cannot leave

the Mortal World to return to Faerie – which is not much of a difference for these forsaken goddesses as it is doubtful that they would be much welcomed in the Kingdom of Wilds. With the gradual corruption of Faerie by Hell’s unseeliegh host, many, though not all, Hagg

es have now been tainted by the shadow.

Many of these ancient spirits that were once at worst unpredictable and changeful, occasionally bitter, sometimes kind, have been transformed into monstrous, ogresses, with grey skin and scarlet eyes and a taste for blood.

Skills:	Supernatural
Ascendancy:	Rank Two
Manifestation:	Rank Five
Attack:	Five
Armour:	Five
Substance:	Eight
Fear:	Difficult
Trauma:	Two
Might:	5
Deft:	7
Wits:	6
Will:	6

Heathen Dead

In days of old it was common for the kings and lords of the ancient tribes to be buried in such state, ceremony and wealth that sorcerous and wild prayers were put upon them and their servants. Certain members of the Wild Gods of old – the spirits that have diminished into savage Faerie and Faerie things – saw fit to answer those prayers and make the most exalted of their subjects on earth into subjects in death. The souls of the dead kings and their thanes were preserved by wild magic, kept alive in a sense, and bound to their graves and flesh.


For an age the kings under hill and mountain lived in a golden world of eternal revelry or peaceful sleep or watchful guarding of their ancient home. Any who stumbled into the ancient worlds beneath found ghostly but beautiful spectres of long dead kings, not unjust in their treatment of the living, but not often very caring either.

But then the old wild gods began to lose their power of Europe. The new Hallowed religions swept in from the south and the old powers slipped and decayed.

By the time that the walls of the Kingdom of Wilds was infiltrated by Hell, the Heathen Dead were already a lonely and abandoned rank of Incarnate, belonging not to today but to yesteryear.

The Unseeliegh shadows let loose in Faerie crept and conquered with swift abandon. And when kingdoms in Faerie fell, the old subjects who still haunted the mortal world were left vulnerable. Dark spirits went into the barrows and among the Heathen Dead. The Incarnate were taken and corrupted, made no longer beautiful but rotten, no longer brash and kingly, but hateful and envious of the living.

The barrows that were once holy sites of druids and priests became haunted and perilous lands, mist-choked, cold and hunted at night by the dead of long ago.



Skills:	Uncanny
Attack:	Rank Four
Armour:	Rank Two
Health:	Six
Fear:	Average
Trauma:	One
Might:	6
Deft:	5
Wits:	3
Will:	3

Hellhound

The first Hellhounds came into being when Black Hounds of the Wild Kingdom (see above) were tainted by the Unseeliegh and were drawn into darkness.

Since then certain demons have taken a liking to this kith of Incarnate and have begun shaping the souls of the damned into their own packs of baying servants. Hellhounds are tormented and twisted things, with barely a glimmer left of the memory of the mortal lives they once led. In appearance Hellhounds are much like Black Hounds, though with a fierier glow about the eyes and maw, and a more crazed and rabid look to the face.

Hellhounds are found often in the company of demons and when the Wild Hunt rides out into the night, a hundred or more of these dark things will running slavering at the hooves of the demon horses.

Skills:	Uncanny
Attack:	Rank Six
Armour:	Two
Health:	Six
Fear:	Difficult
Trauma:	Three
Might:	7
Deft:	7
Wits:	3
Will:	3

Incarnate

The Incarnate are those once-mortal people or creatures that have been drawn into the unending service of one of the three Powers of the Beyond - Hallow, Wild or Dark. Such unfortunates become twisted, sometimes monstrous servants and soldiers of the wars between the three kingdoms.

Becoming Incarnate places a Character so utterly in the sway of a kingdom of spirits that all free will is effectively lost. A player character that becomes Incarnate is removed from the game as certainly as if he or she had died. The person, as he or she was, ceases to be, and is replaced by a half-crazed foot-soldier in the eternal war.

Designer Note

So why even include rules for becoming Incarnate? The answer is that the rules for Incarnate and the descriptions of various Incarnate powers are intended for the Storyteller more than the other players. As the Storyteller you will likely find the below rules useful if creating unique and interesting villains and enemies for the game, as well as

craft new Bloodlines for your personal world.

Becoming Incarnate

Mortal soul and flesh may become Incarnate in one of two ways.

The first is to be personally 'gifted' with the powers of the Incarnate by an Angel, Faerie or Demon. Such gifts are given only seldom and then only to the most deserving and useful of followers.

Most Incarnate exist as **Bloodlines**, groups of similar creatures that are able to either breed or turn mundane mortals into one of their own kind by passing magic into the victim's blood and soul. The original **Sire** of a Bloodline will have received his or her powers directly from one or another Archonic Spirit. Those **Progeny** that the magic is passed onto then become a race of Incarnate born from human stock.

Gifts of the Hallowed Ones

The following are powers and gifts commonly granted to Hallowed Incarnate by their masters and makers. Hallowed Incarnate are very, very rare. The divine dynasty prefers not to hand out its powers, even to the very devout. There are thought to have been no more than two or three Hallowed Incarnate in all of Europe in the last five centuries.

Aura of Light

It seemed for a moment that the very air was set afire. As if all the old stories of the ancient Greeks power over fire had come to life, taken form and descended to earth on ghostly wings.

The Incarnate sheds an aura of flickering golden light. This light is painful for Dark Incarnate and Shades of the Dead. Any Dark Incarnate that comes into contact with an Aura of Light must make a Test of Willpower (diff. Very Difficult) to resist the urge to back away. Likewise Shades must pass a Test of Obsession (diff. Very Difficult) in order to remain in the Incarnate's presence.

Blessed Name

There was a curious mark above the door of the chapel. I remarked upon it and was told that it was the name of a local saint, and that his name would keep away the spirits of darkness. It seem that the spirits of darkness read the language of these strange and backward tribes better than I.

The Incarnate's very name has a power in it. If inscribed on a doorway no Spirit, Shade, Wild or Dark Incarnate can pass unchecked. Any unnatural being that attempts to pass draws the attention of the Hallowed Incarnate and the Incarnate may chose to manifest itself to bar the way, if such action seems best to it.

Charmed Flesh

I do not think a mortal man could have put a sword to its flesh, that creature of light and wonder. I do not dare dream what horror might have befallen he who tried.

The Incarnate flesh is woven tight with enchantment. It cannot be harmed except by sorcery and enchanted or blessed weapons.

Flesh of Fire

It's skin was a-crawl with the lick of flames, its eyes were like hot coals, its breath a roar of heat, as bright as the glorious fiery sword of the angel who watches the Gates of Eden.

The Incarnate exists not as a being of solid flesh but as an entity of roaring white flame. Unless also possessing Charmed Flesh, however, the Incarnate may still be harmed by mortal weapons, but weapons or other objects that come into contact with the flesh of flames grow instantly very hot. Flammable objects have a 2 in 6 chance of bursting into flames.

Glorious Visage

I could not bear to look at it without the desire to fall to my knees and weep for sheer joy. If, in that moment, I could have chosen I would not have left its presence. Not in a hundred thousand lives of men would I have averted my gaze.

The Incarnate is so kingly to behold, so majestic and over-powering in its appearance that all who see it must make a Test of Willpower (diff. Difficult) or be compelled to drop to their knees, if virtuous, or flee in terror if Tainted or touched by Abandon.

Hallowed Touch

They say that long ago, in the time of the Romans and bright being walking this valley, or passed through it on some journey, and all things that it touched were made forever holy. There is a humble river stone in a cathedral not far from here that it is said no demon, witch or wild spirit can touch.

The Incarnate can make people or things temporarily blessed with hallowed power by touch. The blessing lasts for a few hours and renders the blessed frightening to Wild and Dark Spirits and Incarnate. Wild or Dark Spirits or Incarnate that come into sight of a Hallowed Touched mortal must make a Test of Willpower (diff. Average) or feel compelled to flee.

Hands of the Healer

I have never seen the like. In the evening the patient was at death's beck and call. He might have slipped his mortal coil at any time that night. And yet by morning he was well, not merely healed by youthful. Full of life and ready to leap for joy. They say there is magic at the heart of it all. I wonder if there is something more dangerous still, but what?

The Incarnate can heal any injury, any disease or affliction by touch. Prolonged touch actually causes Mortals to become younger, livelier, fitter and more full of

life.

Prophecy

There is an omen whispered full often in that little petty kingdom that the king cannot die except at the hand of a handleless man. What it means? I cannot say? Riddles and prophecies. Who can tell the difference?

The Incarnate will, from time to time and without warning, be struck with prophetic visions of warning concerning disasters or deaths which may yet be averted.

Protection from Evil

When she entered the room the shadows swept aside for her. They did not merely dim in the light, but flee. They moved away from her, as if there was a power in them, a malignance we had never seen before, and now a fear.

The Incarnate is so heavily entwined by Hallowed magic that it is all but immune to attacks by Dark Spirits or Incarnate. Whenever an Incarnate that is Protected from Evil would normally be injured in an exchange of blows by a Dark Spirit or Incarnate roll a d6. On a roll of four though six no injury is dealt.

Voice most Hallowed

I heard it from afar. A distant and flesh-crawling thunder of words, too muffled and suffocated by distance to make out. I know of no creature alive nor device of mortal man that could have made that sound. I am told by the villages that it was an angel in the woods. But they are a superstitious lot and would attribute many natural and explicable things to the works of angels and devils.

The Incarnate's voice alone is a powerful and hallowed thing. Whenever the Incarnate speaks the air trembles and light up with a vague shimmering light. Mortals who hear a Voice most Hallowed must make a Test of Willpower or be struck dumb and forced to stand and listen. Tainted mortals who hear a Voice most Hallowed bleed from the eyes and ears, whether or not they succeed their Test of Willpower.

Wondrous Beauty

I could never look at tapestry or painting, or a dance of swans, or sunlight on water or the flight of swallows or any things of beauty and not think again of her.

The Incarnate is so beautiful and wondrous that not just mortals but simple animals are struck dumb by the mere vision of it. All mortals that see an Incarnate blessed by Wondrous Beauty must make a Test of Willpower or be forced to avert their eyes and burst into tears. Animals are struck silent and still by Wondrous Beauty and remain transfixed until the Incarnate removes itself from sight.

Gifts of the Wild Ones

The following are powers and gifts commonly granted to Wild Incarnate by their masters and makers. At one time

Wild Incarnate were common, and often friendly to mortals. But times have changed. The spirits of nature are now forsaken by mortalkind and they no longer give their powers to humans to use as wished.

The Faerie still create Wild Incarnate but only to act as their servants in their forested and watery realms or as punishment for mortals who trespass into the wilds. Almost all Wild Incarnate are giving the 'gift' Fetters of the Soul, binding them to their masters will, without recourse to free will.

Aspect of the Hunter

The thing moving through the shadows towards us paused. It held a nose to the sky that was more of a snout. And it sniffed, deep, long, ponderous. I knew then we had no chance of hiding from the thing.

The Incarnate has the keen hearing and smell of a predator. It can also remain perfectly still for hours on end while hidden among ferns, trees or reeds.

Charmed Flesh

The arrow that struck the white deer went deep. Yet there was no blood. The deer turned passively to look at us. Its black eyes were more inquisitive than afraid. I do not know how but suddenly the arrow was not so deep, and then it fell from the wound. And the wound closed over as I watched.

The Incarnate flesh is woven tight with enchantment. It cannot be harmed except by sorcery and enchanted or blessed weapons.

Feral Eyes

She did not look uncanny until her face turned to mine. Her eyes. They stared and stared. Yellow and predatory. I did not walk away. I ran.

The Incarnate can see in near absolute darkness and has the power of sight of a hawk.

Ferocious Strength

He looked a little thing, a slip of a lad, with bandy arms and gangly legs. Yet with no effort at all he reached forward and lifted the entire wagon off the ground. The horses immediately began to neigh and scream.

Despite all appearances the Incarnate has tremendous, unnatural strength. Its attacks in Combat cannot be negated by armour, and if struck a mortal is thrown to the ground on a Failed Test of Fortitude versus Difficulty Five.

Fetters of the Soul

I have heard tell that there is a river god who captures the souls of young woman who have died in his river and makes them into his wives to serve him in his weedy bed.

Fetters of the Soul binds the Incarnate's mind and body to that of its creator, be it another more powerful Incarnate or a spirit of the otherworld. A Fettered Incarnate knows at

once if its master needs or wants him, and cannot resist the call. It cannot rebel; deceive its master or act in any way that would cause direct or indirect harm to its creator; or aid others to harm its master. If a creator dies then all of his Incarnate that are fettered crumbled to dust.

Friends among Beasts

One moment the wolves were snapping and frothing at the mouth, harrowing the horses, snarling. The next they turned docile, almost tame. One I think wagged its shaggy grey tail.

Incarnate who are Friends among Beasts are allowed to roll a d6 whenever they are confronted by angered, dangerous and hungry animals. A roll of 4 to 6 indicates that the creature or creatures becomes tame in the presence of the Incarnate and may approach him as one of their own. A roll of 1 or 3 indicates that the animals no longer see the incarnate as either foe or prey and turn to go.

Ghost in the Wilds

Her shape was a shadow in the trees. One moment the silver of birch, the next the hoary grey of oak, the next breath she was a shimmer of water on a pond.

Ghost in the Wilds allows an Incarnate to move swiftly and almost invisibly through wild surrounds. Some Incarnate are restricted to using this power in a particular environment such as forest, river water or swamp.

Song of Charms and Wilds

The music that drifted over the moor was such as I have never heard. I think I wept to hear it. I would have gone to that voice, I would have followed it, but that one of my fellows with more sense gripped my arm and shook me free of the charm.

The Incarnate can sing or play an instrument so that charms and enchantments weave into the music. Any mortal who hears the music must make a Test of Willpower versus difficulty Three or feel compelled to be drawn to the song.

Tongues of the Beasts

The hairy creature got back on its haunches and squinted up into the leafy canopy. He began making clicking and chattering noises. And such was the shock to me when the sparrows in the trees answered.

The Incarnate can speak and understand the languages of all animals.

Vanishings

One moment she was upon the ridge, outlined clearly against the sunset glow of dusk, the next she disappeared. There was nowhere for her to have fled to. Nowhere to hide on the flower-spattered meadow. I wonder to this day what she was.

The Incarnate can vanish at will and reappear anywhere

within a hundred paces as long as it remains within a natural domain. The effort to do this is quite taxing and most Incarnate cannot manage more than three or four apertations within the space of an hour before needing rest.

Wild Visage

His face was a tangle of wild thorns, his hair a great mass of leaves. His eyes were as deep and mossy as the pools of the forest deep, and his skin was the colour and smoothness of young birch.

The Incarnate has a wholly supernatural appearance, and is comprised of a mixture of human, animal and plant aspects. Any mortal who sees such a creature cannot mistake its unnatural origin.

Wondrous Beauty

She more lithe and charming and pleasing to the eye than all the beauties I have ever seen, that strange nymph swimming in the frozen lake. I wonder what would have happened if I had offered my hand to her. Those eyes were beautiful but they were also laughing and mocking. I do not think my end would have been kind.

The Incarnate is supernaturally beautiful or handsome. Mortals who see it must make a Test of Willpower versus Difficulty Four not to be immediately infatuated and charmed.

Gifts of the Dark Ones

The following are powers and gifts commonly granted to Dark Incarnate by their masters and makers.

Dark Horror

His face was a worm of maggots, his skin a crawl of disease. There was no way this thing, this unnatural creature should be arisen, walking, living. And yet it was.

The form the Incarnate takes is terrifying to behold. All mortals who see it suffer Four instead of the usual Three Trauma.

Bestial Form

The thing that ambled out of the dark forest was not human, and yet it was not quite beast either. Its limbs were all hulking and misshapen, its skin covered with fur and yet there was a hint of a human face in that mask.

The incarnate form is either a monstrous version of a real animal, such as a wolf with pitch-black fur and burning eyes, or some weird mixture of human and animal. A half-human, half-cat creature, or a bat-winged man.

This will likely grant some unusual abilities depending on the beast, such as flight, the ability to walk silently, or climb as rapidly as a cat. It Incarnate's Attack and Armour should also be adjusted up while in Bestial form, usually by one or two ranks each.

Bloodlines

Poor little Isabella. We saw her in the moonlight, her dress all tattered, her stare blank and hungry. It was a week after the funeral, and that night we knew with certainty that it was not one of nature's creatures that had killed her in the woods.

The Incarnate can either breed or can forcibly convert a mortal into a new member of their kith. Newborn Incarnate arise with the powers of their sire. Typically the initiation into a new existence includes terrible injury, draining of blood and soul and a false death that the victim arises from within a week.

Charmed Flesh

My sword went straight through the man, and yet he but grinned. No blood spilled forth. I fell back, sword now trembling. The wound in his chest knitted shut while I watched, aghast, speechless, struck dumb by fear.

The Incarnate flesh is woven tight with enchantment. It cannot be harmed except by sorcery and enchanted or blessed weapons.

Ebony Talons

Suddenly what had seemed a pretty, if strange girl reached out her hands towards me and long, scimitar claws grew forth.

The incarnate can grow curved, black iron-hard claws, and retract them at will. The claws count as Supernatural weapons and when used to fight grant the Incarnate natural successes on rolls of 4, 5 and 6 without any need to expend effort.

Enthralling Aura

I shook my head again. The vision shifted and changed. One moment she was young and beautiful. Her eyes gleaming, the next she was that withered hag, blood encrusting her mouth. I stepped back, and it was good that I did.

The Incarnate can project the illusion of being beautiful, handsome and alluring. Any mortal who meets it must make a Test of Guile at Difficulty Three to see through the veil of illusion.

Feast of Blood

There was blood running in trickles down its chin. How I shuddered to see the limp body of the young woman, she who I had but met a short while before, there, prone beneath that hulking and monstrous form.

The Incarnate is able to repair damage to itself, and if Soulless also prevent decay caused by that state of being, by imbibing either living blood or living flesh. After feeding the Incarnate must shortly enter a state of false death, an indolent sleep, if it is to gain benefits from the feast. The deathlike sleep lasts twelve hours and restores the Incarnate's Health to full and reverses any rot. If discovered or disturbed while asleep an Incarnate cannot rouse itself.

This is very much its most vulnerable moment.

Fetters of the Soul

It seemed one moment a ferocious and untameable beast, a fang-toothed monster which no leash or chain could hold. But then its master, with those strange yellow eyes and that devilish grin but laid a hand on the creature and it was suddenly as calm and placid as a lamb.

Fetters of the Soul binds the Incarnate's mind and body to that of its creator, be it another more powerful Incarnate or a spirit of the Otherworld. A Fettered Incarnate knows at once if its master needs or wants him, and cannot resist the call. It cannot rebel; deceive its master or act in any way that would cause direct or indirect harm to its creator; or aid others to harm its master. If a creator dies then all of his Incarnate that are fettered crumbled to dust.

Flesh of Shadows

One moment she was in my grip, the next, I held nothing but air and the sky was filled with her awful, goblin laugh.

The Incarnate can, at will, assume a shadowy, misty form that is able to pass through solid objects. While in this form the Incarnate can neither sustain nor cause injury in any way.

Human Masque

He did not seem dead. He did not seem a fiend of hell. I will not say his smile was charming. It was not. It made me feel cold. But it did not by any means look like the smile of a demon in human flesh.

The Incarnate can assume at will a human, apparently living, if perhaps a little pale and eerie form.

Razor Fangs

His teeth were just a little too white, a little to even, and a little too pointed.

The Incarnate either permanently possesses or can grow long predatory fangs and slashing teeth. The teeth do not count as unnatural weapons but do grant an extra bonus success every time the Incarnate uses them to attack.

Soulless

We brought the thing bound in chains and irons to the fire. It shrieked and screamed and writhed in the flames. I cannot think that I have ever seen a more horrifying sight. I could not have stood and watched so stoically had I not seen with my own eyes the corpses the thing had left in its wake.

The Incarnate is Soulless and Deathless. It cannot die, but suffers injury normally. If reduced to a Health five ranks below zero it succumbs to a false death. It will, however, rise again if its body is not in some way utterly destroyed.

Jack in Green

Called also Green Men and Ljeschi, these ancient vegetation and wilderness spirits have remained thus far largely outside the sway of the Unseeligh blight.

Jack-in-Green take the form of large shaggy men, with foliage and berries growing out of their mouths and tangled in their hair and draped all down their bodies. They take the many different forms of trees through Europe, but eh ancient veneration of Ivy and Holly as plants that remained green year-round has resulted in more Jack-in-Green wearing those leaves than any other aside possibly from the equally sacred oak.

Jack-in-Green are seldom seen today outside of their leering visages carved onto the outside of churches. In the common view they represent basic, wild savagery and these spirits are certainly unpredictable, easily enraged and dangerous. Jack-in-Green do not appear to have a good understanding of mortals and in many tales it is told that Jack-in-Green in their ignorance tend to do harm when trying to do good. These ancient spirits have no language and cannot speak or understand the tongues of men.

Very few Jack-in-Green spend many of their hours in the Mortal World in the current year. Most have removed themselves to the Kingdom of Wilds where in apparent disinterest in the war between the Seelie and Unseelie the Green Men wander aimless in the dream-made woods still, as they have done since time immemorial.

Skills:	Supernatural
Ascendancy:	Rank Three
Manifestation:	Rank Six
Attack:	Six
Armour:	Six
Substance (<i>Health</i>):	Ten
Fear:	Difficult
Trauma:	Two
<i>Might</i> :	6
<i>Deft</i> :	8
<i>Wits</i> :	4
<i>Will</i> :	4

Manes

The protectors, lords and keepers of the Netherworld. Manes are the very oldest of the spirits of the dead, the very first souls to pass into that realm aeons ago and now raised up and placed into the service of Death himself.

Manes are sent out into the world to protect the borders of the kingdom of the dead and enforce the laws of life and death in the mortal world. They enter the world through shadows, and appears to form out of shadow itself becoming a vague, cloaked figure of darkness with gleaming stars for eyes.

Manes are typically invisible to the living and very, very seldom show themselves. They are however both visible and more than a little terrifying for those ghosts and shades that have refused to give up their link to the mortal world. Manes are also visible to Incarnate, Vampyr, Deathless and Revinir – creatures that ought to have died naturally, but instead have persisting in a mockery of life through sorcery, curse or gift from the spirits.

Manes have no power to harm or even influence the living aside from that of fear, and individually a Mane has not significant powers at all. Fear though can be a powerful thing: a Mane is the most pure distillation of death itself. A mortal who sees one immediately suffers from the shock of the supernatural, suffers Three Trauma and must make a Test of Fear versus the Unnatural at Difficult. But in numbers they will assail the reluctant dead and drag them, kicking and screaming into the Netherworld. Their powers become cumulative when they swarm together. A group of six Manes has an Attack of Six and an Armour of Six and a Health of Six. A group of twenty Manes becomes difficult for even a powerful Lord of Hell to resist.

Manes which are 'killed' return to the Netherworld to slowly reform a new shadowy body. If a group of Manes is depleted its attacks and armour also deplete accordingly.

Manes at one time were able to hunt out and close most gates to the Netherworld and keep both Shades and other stranger things in check, usually with the aid of Death himself who would walk the earth unseen dealing with the more powerful or stubborn trespassers into the world of the living. But since the binding of Death Manes have found their powers to keep the living and dead apart growing more and more tenuous. Death was needed to deal with the more powerful stubborn dead, but also to restore the Manes powers and vitalities from time to time. Now More and more Manes are growing weary and tired and unable to leave the Netherworld at all. Gates to the Netherworld remain open unwatched and unclosed. Shades and Incarnate now wander the world without fear of Death.

Skills:	Uncanny
Attack:	Rank One
Armour:	Rank One
Health:	One
Fear:	Very Difficult
Trauma:	Three
Might:	2
Deft:	4
Wits:	2
Will:	2

Merchant of Souls

Minor demons of the sixth or fifth circles of hell sent to the Mortal Earth in the guise of merchants in silk and velvet and gold.

A Merchant-of-Souls will appear into a town or kingdom with no prior contact with anyone and yet will speak the local language and dialect with absolute perfection. Their looks are always dark, their hair black and their eyes flinty and grey. Each will be dressed up in great magnificence, with gold bindings in the hair and rubies and garnets hanging in chains about the neck. There are few things about a Merchant-of-Souls that does not appear normal. Beneath their leather gloves their fingers remain thin and clawed for a quick attack if attack is needed, but no other hint of their otherworldliness is given in their shape.

Merchants-of-Souls tend to travel together in groups of two or three from town to town offering to meet with people in private to give 'alms' to the needy. The Merchants-of-

Souls are ready to lavish vast amounts of gold on the humblest pauper, but only in exchange for a piece of Soul now and all the soul on death.

Few who are in desperate need can resist this temptation. The offer is often made so brazenly and honestly that very soon it is widely whispered what the merchants are offering and what they want – which will in the poorer distracts can make the line only longer.

Soul that is taken from those who present themselves is bottled away in crystal decanters to be served up to infernal masters. The price offered will vary depending on the soul. Young and innocent souls are in the esteem of the merchants worth more, than old and rotten souls.

The contract once made is redeemed by taking a single piece of soul at the point of signing. Years, months or days later when the seller dies the merchants arrive again to pay their respects and take the rest of the price. The bargained away mortal Shade is fettered to its place of death by the oath and must wait there until the merchants see fit to arrive and carry it away to Hell.

The Fear and Trauma listed below are required only if the demon's gloves are removed or it attacks and reveals its true, unnatural identity.

Skills:	Supernatural
Ascendancy:	Rank Two
Manifestation:	Rank Three
Attack:	Three
Armour:	Three
Health:	Eight
Fear:	Average
Trauma:	One
Might:	6
Deft:	6
Wits:	6
Will:	6

Ondine

Called Rusalka in the east, and known by the name of Ondine, Nixie and Nicor in other lands, these are the unfortunate souls of young woman taken by Faerie river 'gods' in days of old. In the days of the ancients sacrifices to the old men of the rivers were common, and the most common sacrifice given to that race of blue skinned, weed-haired, fish-toothed Faerie were young woman.

The Faerie took these soul of the sacrifice and made from it a companion, a rather sad and cold thing, filled with mortal memory of a life past, and now bound to serve an inhuman master in whichever way he pleased.

But times change, the years turned and the sacrifices ended. A few of the old rier spirits had grown used to their yearly gifts and began to take by force what was no longer give. Certain rivers and lakes became fearful places, never to be crossed except in dire need.

But the Kingdom of Wilds fell into decline and more and more of the old spirits of the river fled to mortal world to join the wars in Faerie, leaving behind their once-treasured gifts. When as the shadows of Hell broke through the gates of Faerie and spread the Unseelighe blight through the dominion, the taint of darkness spread also into the

wild things left in the mortal world. And many – though not all – Ondine were tainted. They became no longer sad and reclusive, but angry, vengeful, hateful of men who sacrificed them. Their teeth grew sharp and their fingers grew long and clawed. The beautiful Ondine, their skin like moonlight on river-foam are now as dangerous as their once-were masters.

Do not heed their songs in the waters. Do not wade into the stream to touch their beckoning hands. Avoid the river women, for their bed is a bed of bones, and they will drag you beneath and devour all that there is of you to have – flesh and soul.

Skills:	Supernatural
Attack:	Rank Five
Armour:	Rank Three
Health:	Six
Fear:	Average
Trauma:	One
Might:	4
Deft:	7
Wits:	5
Will:	5

River Thing

Changeful of mood and form, ancient river and lake spirits still dwell within sight of many of the lonelier shores of the earth. At one time the old men of the river were venerated as gods, but as with all the wild spirits so too have the watery things fallen into decline and darkness.

River Things are called by many names throughout Europe, Kelpie and Afanc, Vodyanoi, Nicor, Nixie and Each Uisge. They are changeful spirits, though usually taking the form of a ragged old man draped with wet and weeds but also when the mood takes them shifting sometimes into the skin of a black-skinned, glowing-eyed horse, or milk-white cow or young golden-haired youth or a creature made out of mud and reeds and foam. All River Things can take those forms and more. There is nothing in their mood or shape that is solid, and they are as prone to shift and change as the eddies of their rivers.

The kingdoms beneath the waves in Faerie were among the first to fall to the Unseeleigh attack and the spirits who lord beneath were among the first to be tainted by darkness. The River Things have become malevolent and hungry, they stalk the reeds looking for victims to grasp and drag to a watery grave, be it sheep or cow or mortal child, the spirits of the water care not, so long as the appetite for flesh is fed.

Skills:	Supernatural
Ascendancy:	Rank Four
Manifestation:	Rank Six
Attack:	Six
Armour:	Six
Substance (Health):	Fifteen
Fear:	Difficult
Trauma:	Two
Might:	8
Deft:	8
Wits:	7

Will:

7

Sanguiturge

Magicians who have gain supernatural power, strength and immortal life through the drinking of a potion made from the blood of a Vampyr. Sanguiturses retain their immortal powers only so long as they can continue to regularly take their potive – this usually means that a Sanguiturge needs to have one or more captive Vampyr at hand to milk for blood.

Skills:	Normal
Attack:	Rank Five
Armour:	Two
Health:	Ten
Fear:	Average
Trauma:	One
Might:	5
Deft:	5
Wits:	5
Will:	5

Shades of the Dead

Shades of the Dead are discussed in detail in the **Setting**, along with their place in the world, the various reasons that upon death a soul might not flit to the Netherworld that lies beyond the mists, and how their unusual traits are used in the game.

Shades are insubstantial and shadowy things. They have no set form and usually, when visible, appear how they expect to appear. A man who is stabbed by thieves on a lonely road may return as a shade with a bloody chest – not because he has to but because it is the last thing he remembers happening in life.

Shades that become more aware of the state of their existence can alter their appearance and become very nearly anything in form and shape. Most, however, are so obsessed by the grief that binds them to the world that they never truly achieve any understand of themselves. They exist as driven, miserable and bleak spectres consisting of sorrow and little else.

Rules

Shades of the Dead are chained to the mortal world because of an **Obsession**. In the mortal world Shades, in fact, consist of little more than raw Obsession. In their normal state Shades exist as near invisible shadows. They will not be seen Whenever a Shade tries to affect the mortal world, be it by moving a physical object or manifesting in a visible state or uttering real sounds in order to communicate with the living a Shade must make a Successful Test of Obsession, usually at Average, but may vary if a Shade attempts to have a more substantial than usual affect on the mortal world.

Shades consist of only three attributes when haunting the mortal world, **Obsession**, **Pneuma** and **Torment**. All three are measured on a scale from one to six. Obsession is used by Shades as a means to channel raw emotion and evoke real effects in the mortal world. **Pneuma** defines a Shade's substance, its solidity in the mortal world, its grip

on reality and in a manner of thinking, its raw power.

When in the Netherworld a Shade becomes something more solid and more rational, and is defined by other attributes, skills and fears much as they were when alive.

Obsession

Shades are defined according to the Obsession that dominates their existence. Treat the following as a list of suggestions.

Covet

The desire to keep and retain that which the Shade owned in life. Covetous Shades tend to haunt their treasures, lurking watchful in order to frighten or force away those who would steal their most precious things.

Longing

The desire to have that which the Shade could never have in life or lost near the point of death. Longing Shades may be searching for a way home, a treasured toy lost in childhood, or lingering in a rose garden wishing after an unrequited love.

Regret

Regretful Shades linger because of guilt and regret over things once done. Regretful Shades may attempt to do right by those who they once wronged, others miss their chance to put things right and are forced to wander the world forever reliving their crimes in an eternal nightmare.

Sorrow

Pure misery brought on by painful death, betrayal, or despair in life. Suicides sometimes linger as Sorrowful ghosts. Those who are betrayed by those they love suffer deeply and also sometimes find themselves shackled by their own overpowering sorrow.

Wrath

Raw anger. Shades of those who felt they were on justified crusades or missions or revenge and justice will sometimes be drawn back to the mortal world by their own fiery wrath. Wrathful Shades will try as best they can to continue their missions in life after crossing the veil of death.

Pneuma

Shades do not possess levels of Health in the way that most creatures and characters do. They have instead an Attribute called Pneuma. Pneuma measures the Shade's firmness of self-belief, its ability to remain anchored to both its manifest shape and the mortal world. Whenever a Shade is 'injured' in some way it must make a Test of Pneuma (diff. Average). If the Test of Pneuma fails then the Shade either has to let go its grip on the mortal world and allow itself to be drawn as a shadow into the Netherworld, there to dwell, or if it is desperate to remain 'real' and anchored it must gain a rank of Torment to do so.

Torment

Shades suffer Torment as their time on earth prolongs or they suffer setbacks in their missions on earth. A Covetous Shade who finds his treasures looted will suffer a rank of Torment. A Longing Shade who sees his lost love with another man will likewise suffer Torment.

As Torment increases a Shade loses more and more of its grip on reality until eventually it slips forever into a dark spiral of insanity. Shades that reach a Torment of Six forget entirely about the reason they bound themselves to this world in the first place and turn driven, insane and violent. Insane Shades become wandering, malign and aggressive and may in time forget their initial obsession completely as they turn increasingly to savage attacks on any and all who cross their paths.

Each rank of Torment works against the Shade's sense of duty to fulfil its Obsession. If the Shade's Torment is less than its Obsession it will remain guarding or pursuing its Obsession almost to the exclusion of the living world around it. If, however Torment grows to be greater than its Obsession then the Shade must make a Test of Obsession each time it wishes to resist the crazed urge to attack the living (diff. Average). If the Test of Obsession fails then the Shade leaves its self-imposed duties and descends upon what unfortunates are nearby.

This can turn into a dark and slippery slope for the Shade. By leaving its Obsession alone the chances of the ghost returning and finding its goal set even further back increase. Whether the Shade returns to find even more of its treasure stolen, or the grave of the its lover even more overgrown and forgotten, the consequences are the same – an increase in Torment and step closer to perpetual madness.

The following are a few ideas for haunting Shades that characters might well encounter in some lonely place.

The Bloodied Princess

A vain and prideful young lady of the kingdom of Aragon murdered by a jealous would-be lover who she publicly taunted and teased one too many times. The Bloodied Princess is said to haunt the halls of her ancestral home hungry for attention and praise she can no longer have and afraid of her murderer. She does not entirely understand that she is dead and goes about the castle, usually unseen, performing daily tasks as if she were still alive. She is in effect longing to continue life and cannot let herself slip into the Netherworld.

When manifest in a physical form the Bloodied Princess appears in the ragged night slip she wore on the night of her murder and is covered in blood and frenzied stab wounds. The ghost of her murderer is said to haunt the crossroads where he was garrotted.

Obsession:	Six
(Longing)	
Pneuma:	Three
Torment:	Two
Trauma:	Two

The Burning Woman

An elderly woman of Dublinia who was in the year 1032 falsely accused of witchcraft, tortured and burned. She appears now as a sobbing, angry spectre with shrivelled black flesh, a flicker of flame about her and hollow, burned away sockets where her eyes ought to be. Occasionally seen wandering the back alleys where she once lived, the Burning Woman wanders part of the time in apparent pain, but has obsessed herself with revenge upon those who tormented her.

Many a priest, witch-hunter or judge has been found pale and dead in bed with a look of horror and fear fixed on the face.

Obsession:	Five
(Revenge)	
Pneuma:	Two
Torment:	Six
Trauma:	Two

The Cauld Lad

The ghost of a young lad who died of cold and hunger begging for bread at the shut door of a wealthy clan Broch in the highlands of Scotland in the year 562. The Cauld Lad had become a relatively commonly seen spectre about the now ruined broch, the local town and the new tower-house built by the clan that turned him away years before. He goes about in a misery with an empty bowl desperate for good and warmth, and is bound to the world because of the sheer hunger and misery he suffered at his death. He does no one any harm, but to see him is considered a dark omen.

Obsession:	Three
(Hunger)	
Pneuma:	One
Torment:	Three
Trauma:	One

Charlaroth's Shade

Charlaroth was a knight under the rule of a long forgotten Visigoth King of Valentia in or about the year 565. Charlaroth's name has, through the years, been changed and romanticised and is all but unrecognisable as Visigoth, the original shape of his name being long since lost.

During the Umayyad Invasion of Iberia Charlaroth betrayed his fellow knights for the sake of the love of an Umayyad Princess. His companions in arms were ambushed and slain to the last, but when Charlaroth presented himself as vassal and suitor to the Princess he was spurned. Cast out onto the road he travelled north and wandered Aquitaine a penniless sword-for-hire beset by guilt and horror. At the end of his days, suffering from Typhoid he returned to the now ruined Visigoth castle that he once shared with his fellows and there lay down and died.

Charlaroth is said to haunt those ruins still, forever watchful, for a hundred years and more attacking and waylaying Moors on the roads and now that they are gone waiting and convinced that the Moors will one day return. He seeks an eventual redemption of his betrayal.

Obsession:	Six
(Redemption)	

Pneuma:	Six
Torment:	Four
Trauma:	One

The Grey Lady

The Grey Lady is the sad but gentle shade of a young noblewoman of Southern England who was in her day prevented from marrying her lover – an impoverished knight - and forced into an engagement with an old and miserable and very rich earl.

The Grey Lady drowned her self in the river that ran through her family estate and her lover hung himself soon after from an oak at the borders of the estate. The two shades are never seen together but are always hunting and searching, looking for one another through the grounds, gardens and halls of the demesne.

Obsession:	Four
(Longing)	
Pneuma:	Two
Torment:	One
Trauma:	One

Simulacrum

A casual observer will not initially notice anything untoward about a Simulacrum. Unnatural they may be, but they are formed is a near-perfect likeness of humans, and their behaviour although a little silly and shallow is also human-enough to deceive most.

But unnatural they are. Simulacrum are unnaturally cold to touch, their conversation never runs much deeper than the weather or how nice some music is, they have no need or food or drink, nor even the ability to swallow and are very easily distracted and confused.

Simulacrum are typically given a beautiful or handsome appearance by their creators and there are certainly some practitioners of the Esoteric arts who have created Simulacrums in a misguided attempt to cure loneliness or make charming companions. Simulacrums obey the commands of their makers a little too readily to be very charming, and tend to take instructions and even offhand comments very literally.

They are useful as servants, for light labour and lighter conversation but very little else.

Simulacrum are also made more difficult to employ by their general fragility. Attempts to dress them in armour and set them to battle tend to end swiftly. Simulacrum guards and knights in armour are good for show and bluffing but are not very competent if pressed to actually fight. When destroyed a Simulacrum literally melts away, leaving behind mist and melting snow and ice.

The Test of Fear below is needed only at the point when a character realises that the Simulacrum is not of mortal flesh.

Skills:	Normal
Attack:	Rank Two
Armour:	None
Health:	Two
Fear:	Average
Trauma:	None

<i>Might:</i>	3
<i>Deft:</i>	5
<i>Wits:</i>	3
<i>Will:</i>	3

Sleepless Dead

There are those Shades of the Dead who through powerful Obsession remain inhabitants of their old bodies long past death and decay. Such Shades vary in their ability to give animation to bone and dust. Some are merely presences dwelling within a skull lying deep in a catacomb. Others manage in a clumsy way to hold together most of their body and create a shambling decayed body – frightening to behold, but awkward and clumsy. Restless dead are incapable of speech unless very recently dead, and have no power to prevent their eventual decay into nothing. When a body finally crumbles to dust and yellowed shards of bone the Shade I forced to give up its mortal shell and must then wander as formless as any ghost.

Shades of the Dead that have remained within their body pursue the Obsession that binds them to the mortal world just as any other Shade must do, though perhaps with better success. Possessing physical form, however ungainly, makes the pursuit of tasks in the mortal world that much easier.

Restless dead possess such high ranks of Armour and Health because their bodies are all but indestructible. Swords pass through them, fire singes but does not burn, arrows do nothing, axes hack through a limb that then fails to fall to the ground. The body is held together by the intangible aura of the Shade's obsessive will. One of the Restless must be cut to pieces or cast onto a bonfire or tied to a rock and thrown into the sea before it can be safely said to be done with. And even then the Shade may simply give up its flesh and recommence its Obsession as a ghost.

<i>Skills:</i>	Normal
<i>Attack:</i>	Rank Two
<i>Armour:</i>	Six
<i>Health:</i>	Eight
<i>Fear:</i>	Very Difficult
<i>Trauma:</i>	Three
<i>Might:</i>	4
<i>Deft:</i>	3
<i>Wits:</i>	2
<i>Will:</i>	2

Strega Mort

Called in Italy Strega and in the Iberian lands Bruja or Bruxa, the Strega is a widely spread coven of witches that have a number of patron demons and in particular are known for taking the gift Skin-of-Beast in return for a piece of soul.

The Strega are only loosely organised, tend to be solitary in their arts and ways, and use their bestial forms for personal gain and revenge as much as to further the cause of the Kingdom of Darkness.

As a part of their bargain with Hell the Strega rise as

Revinir after death to continue their service. This has given rise to the Revinir Strega, called often Strega Mort to be sure of the difference to the living Strega, or Strega Vii.

Strega Mort, unlike most Revinir, are unable to pass on their curse to others. Those who the Strega Mort drain of blood, for it is blood they feed on, suffer a greater chance of remaining in the mortal world as a tortured Shade, but will not rise from the dead as Revinir.

Strega Mort retain their power to turn into whatever bestial monster they became in life and usually continue to attend the covens of witches that they visited in life – though often from a small distance and in the shadows. They appear much as they did in life, so much so that an unwitting relative is the Strega Mort's easiest and favoured victim. A ruse that works all the better if the victim lives far away and may not have heard of their relative's death yet.

<i>Skills:</i>	Uncanny
<i>Attack:</i>	Rank Three
<i>Armour:</i>	Rank One
<i>Health:</i>	Ten
<i>Fear:</i>	Average
<i>Trauma:</i>	Two
<i>Might:</i>	6
<i>Deft:</i>	6
<i>Wits:</i>	6
<i>Will:</i>	6

Strigoil

A kith of Revinir that has spread through lands from Italy to Constantinople. The original sin of the Strigoil Progenitor has been lost to the vagaries of time. This strain of dark creature has existed since Roman times, and is record in several very ancient texts.

The Strigoil have the power to change into a slightly too large, slightly too cunning looking owl at will. If decayed in human form, the Strigoil becomes a decayed owl also. Strigoil feed on blood, be it human or animal, and many live in the darker, wilder forests preying on beast in preference to man simply for the ease of it.

As a very old line the Strigoil have founded more than one very old stronghold, especially in the lands around Serbia. They have engaged in secret wars with other upstart strains of revinir and reduced at least three species of Revinir to a few scattered and remnant individuals. Moreson than any of strain of undead creature the Strigoil work together, attack in flocks and possess in a crude, cruel and evil kind of sense, a form of society. In small valleys and remote kingdoms where the Strigoil exist in large numbers many have taken power by passing the curse into the blood of the ruling family. In these dark kingdoms the Strigoil rule over peasant chattel with a fairly brazen indifference whether or not they are suspected of allegiance with hell.

<i>Skills:</i>	Uncanny
<i>Attack:</i>	Rank Four
<i>Armour:</i>	Rank Two
<i>Health:</i>	Ten
<i>Fear:</i>	Average
<i>Trauma:</i>	Two

<i>Might:</i>	6
<i>Deft:</i>	6
<i>Wits:</i>	6
<i>Will:</i>	6

Succubus

Lower ranking demons that take the form of young, beautiful woman in order to offer not riches and gold in exchange for soul, but rather sex. Succubus, like all Archonic Spirits, are able to take up or drop away their physical form and use this to advantage. At night Succubus creep into the rooms of men who may be prone to temptation and appear there to offer what the mortal cannot otherwise have in exchange for a piece of Soul.

The celibate monasteries and houses of clergy are a favourite haunt of Succubus and are certainly places that are worth the while the haunt.

The male form of Succubus is termed Incubus by occult scholars, though the two spirits are the same race. Spirits like little real concept of gender except in as much as it plays an important role in human lives and that sex can be a powerful bribe. This is the very reason why many spirits appear to be androgynous and combine both male and female aspects – the angel or demon simply hasn't concerned itself with understanding what is expected of one form or another.

Succubi, however, are expert students of form and can easily change from beautiful maiden to handsome and smouldering stranger in a moment.

As with Merchants-of-Souls, Succubus store Soul that is bought in crystal decanters marked with arcane symbols to be delivered to their lords when the night is done.

Succubus place such effort into taking up a beautiful and mortal seeming form that their appearance out of the darkness does not incur a Test of Fear or Trauma. If a mortal sees a Succubus appear or vanish before his eyes, then a single rank of Trauma is immediately suffered, or two if the mortal has just slept with the creature.

Skills:	Supernatural
Ascendancy:	Rank Two
Manifestation:	Rank Three
Attack:	Three
Armour:	Three
Substance (<i>Health</i>):	Eight
Fear:	None
Trauma:	None
Might:	4
Deft:	4
Wits:	7
Will:	7

Taxim

A kith of **Sleepless Dead** (see above) that arise from the grave, bent on revenging themselves against a person who wronged them during life. Taxim tend to come about only in instances of terrible betrayal and murder. Like all Restless Dead they are slow, ambling and clumsy, but also impossible to injure and tireless.

A murderer may flee across a dozen borders, over sea

and desert, and still a Taxim will know where he is and will walk tireless by night, every night, to seek out revenge.

See the entry above for Restless Dead for more information relating to Taxim.

Skills:	Normal
Attack:	Rank Two
Armour:	Six
Health:	Twenty
Fear:	Very Difficult
Trauma:	Three
<i>Might:</i>	5
<i>Deft:</i>	2
<i>Wits:</i>	2
<i>Will:</i>	2

Vampyr

I was told by an aging man, grim-faced, gap-toothed, that he had been on the island of Lastovo about six years ago, gathering coral. Many people died on the island at that time... "Vampyr" he told me in a hushed whisper... "Vampyr".

None know from what demon or dark spirit the line of Vampyr has sprung. They are hell's children on earth, neither dead nor living, not the still alive but soulless Deathless, nor yet the walking corpse that is the Revinir.

The Vampyr are a kith of accursed mortals, infected by the seeds of Hell, and made into a servant of the Kingdom of Darkness. Vampyr appear superficially alive. They have a pulse, are warm to touch, but do not need to eat or drink - although they can do both if pressed. During the day a Vampyr act much like a normal person, if a very lethargic one, given to laziness and dreary moods. Their memory of the past is always hazy, and especially during the day a Vampyr will remember nothing in detail further than ten or twelve year into the past. Vampyr can, despite what charlatans and the such tell you, walk in broad daylight unharmed. Few of the other superstitions attached to Vampyr have much worth. Vampyr cast reflections and not afraid of garlic or charms against Dark Incarnate. Prayers and religious chants, however, are irritating for a Vampyr, and no Vampyr will willingly go near a church. Vampyr also find religious texts such as the Testament or Koran unbearable to either touch or read. And yet despite the aversion to holy ground and words, religious symbols, crosses, crescents and the like have little affect on Vampyr. A holy symbol arouses irritation and anger rather than repulsion.

At night Vampyr take on an entirely different form altogether. The demon in them awakens and hungers. At night a Vampyr is able to change into a shadow at will, and can pass through locked doors and windows with ease. And it is at night that the Vampyr hunt. What they hunt is the soul. When a Vampyr finds a sleeping victim it falls upon the victim's chest and begins sucking out the stuff of life. The victim suffers horrible nightmares while a shadowy creature drains out his or her life. A mark is left on the flesh, somewhat like a small and bluish bruise. Each night a Vampyr is able to drink One Rank of Soul and will

return again and again until the victim becomes Soulless. Over this time the victim will become lethargic, despondent, grey and flesh and face and also suffers one **Small Death** for each piece of Soul taken. Victims of a Vampyr who loose all their Soul die, and after approximately a week arise from the grave as **Revinir** (see above).

But how do Vampyr beget Vampyr? Once in a long turn of years a Vampyr will find itself drawn into a kind of fascinated, horrible mockery of love with a mortal. The Vampyr while both 'normal' during the day and demonic at night becomes unable to leave their life's love alone. The Vampyr will dote on the person, spend as many hours as possible in their company and at night will slowly begin feeding upon the loved one's soul.

A loved one who looses all of his or her soul becomes Vampyr and may, for a time at least, wander with their creator. But the Vampyr forget everything in time, and eventually the two lovers part ways and the hunt begins anew.

Note that the Test of Fear and Trauma listed below is needed only when either a you realise that the person you are taking to is a Vampyr, or you encounter a Vampyr in its demonic form.

Skills:	Supernatural
Attack:	Rank Six
Armour:	Rank Four
Health:	Twelve
Fear:	Very Difficult
Trauma:	Three
Might:	8
Deft:	8
Wits:	8
Will:	8

Varcolac

The Varcolac are a kith of Revinir that have the power to slip into the skin of any creature, man or woman, that they can get hold of. Without a skin the Varcolac are a fleshy, yellow-veined, black-blooded monstrosity that exists in a state of mild pain until it places on a skin.

When crawling into a skin the Varcolac's bones pop and disjoint, grow, reshape and reform to match the new flesh.

Varcolac's are a typically solitary species of Revinir that lair in lonely places and keep numerous spare skins hanging on hooks or heaped in piles on the floor. Each skin will only serve a Varcolac for about two weeks before it becomes to rotten to use. So in addition to need to feed to maintain their existence the Varcolac also hunt for new skins to wear.

It is said that Varcolac can only sustain themselves by devouring the hearts of their victims. Rumours exist also of Varcolac that stitch together monstrous forms out of the skins of man and beast to wear when hunting.

Skills:	Supernatural
Attack:	Rank Five
Armour:	Rank Three
Health:	Ten
Fear:	Very Difficult
Trauma:	Four

Might:	7
Deft:	7
Wits:	7
Will:	7

Vieczy

Also known by the name Upierczy, this line of Revinir haunt mostly the northern and eastern lands of Poland. The Vieczy are a relatively new strain of Revinir and their inception can be traced back to the year 982 when the blood-thirsty and murderous King Bulat the Vieczy died peacefully in his bed after a reign of blood lasting forty years.

Bulat's favourite means of executing those who had in some trifling way offended him was to lower them into a deep oubliette that had regularly thrown into it vermin, rats, venomous snakes, spiders and other small things with too many legs and eyes.

Soon after Bulat was interned his son was killed in a uprising and the large and marbled mausoleum was opened in order to posthumously hang and burn the hated king only to be found empty.

Bulat had already gone, risen as a Revinir. His dwelling place now is deep and hidden, a cave where it is rumoured he still holds he bloody court.

Vieczy are said to have powers of all vermin, rats, flies, snakes and worse. They can draw to them swarms of flitting, biting, nasty things and command them as a general commands his soldiers.

If wounded, it is said that the Vieczy do not bleed blood, but instead small, nasty insects crawl from the wound. If beheaded or burned then the whole body is said to burst and a swarm of small, nasty, crawling creatures, maggots, rats and snakes spread out from the dead Vieczy. It is said that if but one of these creature escape then the dark spirit of the Vieczy escapes too, and will eventually gather together and grow into a Revinir again.

Skills:	Supernatural
Attack:	Rank Four
Armour:	Rank Two
Health:	Ten
Fear:	Very Difficult
Trauma:	Three
Might:	7
Deft:	7
Wits:	6
Will:	6

Wild Huntsman

Demon of a lower rank given the task of either mastering and controlling the hordes of Hellhounds that are used in the Wild Hunt or scouting ahead for those poor unfortunate Shades who may be in the path of the hunt.

The Wild Hunt is a supernatural host of demons and damned ridden out from Hell to hunt the stormy night. The hunt, despite the fear it incurs among poor serfs and lords alike, does not hunt the living but rather seeks out the dead. The Wild Hunt rides in search of the haunting Shades to seize and carry away to Hell. In tales about the fire it is

said theta the hunt is looking for sinners, unbaptised and unshriven, though in truth the hunt will take any Shade that it can find. Any ghost that walks the mortal earth runs the risk of being seized by the claws of Hell and bourn away. Nor does the hunt fly through the night as is so often said. It must walk the ground like other things.

The dogs of the hunt are Hellhounds (see above), Dark Incarnate made from the tormented souls of mortals. The horses of the hunt are lower ranking demons made into that form as punishment for some wrong or insult committed against a more powerful duke or prince of Hell.

Small numbers of Wild Huntsmen, sometimes just the one or two accompanied by a pack of six or so Hellhounds, will ride out specifically to take the soul of a mortal who has made a bargain with Hell. Such small rades of Huntsmen move quickly through the countryside stopping for nothing except on occasion ask directions in a hissing voice from beneath their dark hoods. They will wait near the dying mortal ready to seize the Shade once it has left the body.

Wild Huntsmen appear from a distance at least to be human. They are heavily hidden breath black furs and pelts, and long flowing cloaks. Most carry great bows, daggers and hunting horns – all of which are bone-white.

Anyone who moves closer than a few dozen paces, however, will see at once that the Huntsmen are far too large to be human and that the eyes of their horses and hounds are subtly aglow with a pallid sort of light. At this point a mortal suffers immediate Trauma and must make a Test of Fear. The Huntsmen, however, ignore the living or speak in their terrifying voices only to ask, in an often strangely polite way, for directions to some town or another where, they will add with a laugh, there are said to be a great many sinners.

The Fear and Trauma listed below are for meeting one or two Huntsmen. If a mortal sees an entire hunt pass by, then the Test of Fear increases to Insanely Difficult and the Trauma immediately taken increases to Five Ranks.

Skills:	Supernatural
Ascendancy:	Rank Two
Manifestation:	Rank Four
Attack:	Four
Armour:	Four
Substance (Health):	Ten
Fear:	Difficult
Trauma:	Two
Might:	6
Deft:	6
Wits:	4
Will:	7

Werewolf

Called in the east Vlukho and in the lands of the Franks Loup Garou, the Werewolf is a clan of Dark Incarnate that have through dark sorcery and accursed rite mixed their blood and soul with that of the tainted wolves of Europe. A Werewolf is as much a wolf who may walk as a man, as a man who may walk as a wolf. Their existence borders on both existences and wanders in and out of both worlds.

When wearing a mortal skin Werewolves are more aware of their dual nature than some Dark Incarnate who wear a human mask and with it a human forgetfulness. Werewolves retain a wolfish cunning when in mortal form and will act in any way that is needed in order to prevent their true nature being found out.

It is said that Werewolves wear their wolfish skin of the inside, and turn themselves inside out when they change from the one form to the other. It is believed by some that a Werewolf can be found out by cutting the skin, and looking for fur beneath.

Werewolves are said by some to need a belt of fur given to them by a king of hell to turn into a wolf. If the belt of fur is lost then the Werewolf cannot change into a wolf. Some say also that a piece of a Werewolf, a paw or ear, cut from it while it is a wolf, remains wolfish in form until it is brought back to its owner – at which time it transforms into it human shape.

It is said also that as with witches, Werewolves return to the world as Revinir in the form of Strega Mort after death. A dead Werewolf must be either burned or bound in irons and buried at crossroads to prevent its eventually and vengeful return as Revinir.

Skills:	Uncanny
Attack:	Rank Five
Armour:	Rank Four
Health:	Twelve
Fear:	Average
Trauma:	Two
Might:	8
Deft:	8
Wits:	8
Will:	8

Wurm

In days of old the loathsome Wurm was the favourite of Hell's servants on earth. These Incarnate, created through the sorcerous binding together of damned souls and the corpses of men and serpents, became a much feared scourge, and anywhere one of these flesh-eating, venomous, rotten-scaled, grave-digging monsters resided, warriors of every kith and kin marched forth to kill them.

The overwhelmingly obvious power and evil of Wurms was, in many ways the end of them. They proved to be simply too greedy, too ferocious, too savage, too solitary and too utterly obvious to be useful in Hell's greater plans. Wurms, refusing even the company of other hellish things, were easily hunted down and overwhelmed by enough mortal warriors armed with long spears and iron shields. Be warned here that the stories of a single warrior facing down a Wurm are fanciful inventions of a later era, as are the stories of Wurms as large as hills - Wurms seldom grow larger than twenty or thirty paces, which remains in most opinions quite large enough.


By the end of 600 the lords and princes of Hell were no longer breeding Wurms or sending them forth into the forests and mountains of the world. Those few that are left lairing in Europe now survive as best they can in a world full of increasingly sharper swords and lances. Although

the Wurm is now rare to the point of fairytale, all would agree that if there are but a handful of Wurms left hiding in the dark swamps and forests of Europe then it is a handful too many. Yearly hunts for Wurms are still common in some places – though it has been a long time since one has been found and killed – and rumours of a Wurm have been enough to stop a war between two kingdoms long enough to work together to ally and hunt down the creature.

Wurms came into the world in a weird mixture of forms. They are always rotten looking about the scales, bony and spiked, and stink with an almost venomous power. Some are huge coiled legless monsters, others possess two or four scimitar-clawed limbs and others have wings. The winged Wurms are sometimes able to glide a short ways, but are poor flyers as the wings rot and decay over time. Wurms that were given the gift of breathing a hellfire of scarlet and green are the most famed of folklore, and if such a beast is discovered still alive today it should be approached only with a small army in tow.

A Wurm capable of spewing Hellfire is able to deal one level of injury to everyone within twenty paces of its fang-toothed mouth every round of battle. The hellfire comes out in a misty, billowing cloud and cannot be either dodged or shielded away. Wearing several layers of heavy, wet skins helps but only briefly. The skins will protect you for three rounds before they dry out and begin to crisp and blacken.

Skills:	Godlike
Attack:	Rank Six
Armour:	Rank Six
Health:	Thirty
Fear:	Insanely Difficult
Trauma:	Five
Might:	15
Deft:	10
Wits:	8
Will:	8



Two Horrors



Chapter Ten

The Troubled Priest

A scenario for **Danse Macabre** by Dean Suter

Seeking the aid of the Good Lord, Father Theodore heads to the nearest town to pray for guidance and protection from hellish dreams. When will these nightmares end? Why is the priest being punished?

Synopsis

The protagonists will be called on by a parish priest to help him solve the mystery of reoccurring nightmares. They will discover the source of the nightmares to be from a demon summoned every other night by a sorcerer who seeks revenge after the priest expelled the man from a nearby hamlet. The protagonists will have to discover the sorcerer's whereabouts and somehow force him to stop his devilry.

Hook

The characters may meet the parish priest in a number of ways. The two most likely occurrences would be upon the road or in a church praying at the altar.

Upon the road: The characters will see a lone traveler approaching them along the road. The man is wearing the vestments of a parish priest, and he looks somewhat haggard. The man is moving slowly, in a stumbling walk, his head hangs heavily. As he nears the group, he looks up, his eyes are heavy with fatigue and his face sags with exhaustion. "Please good folk, can you help me?" Upon which the man collapses to the ground. He will lie on the ground breathing heavily. He asks if he can be escorted to the nearest church to pray for peace from his dark dreams.

In a church: If the characters are good God-fearing folk, they may go to church to pray. While in the church they will see a priest in a travel-stained garment on his knees praying at the altar. At some point the man will suddenly fall to one side and lie still for a moment. Then the priest will unsuccessfully try and push himself upright. If the protagonists move forward to help the man, he will smile

weakly at them and explain his reason for being so near death from exhaustion.

Father Theodore

The name of this priest is Father Theodore. He is a man of middle years with graying, mousy hair and a sorrowful looking face. Theodore is of average height with a lean frame.

He is a parish priest from a small hamlet at least two days walk from where the protagonists first meet him. He has wandered from roadside shrines and churches always praying for peace from dark dreams of terror. He has had little sleep due to his dreams, and his fatigue is worsened by the fact that he has been on the road the last few days, seeking aid. The dreams are always of a similar nature. A feeling of hot fetid breath upon Theodore's face, a dark shadow pressing upon him until he can hardly breathe and then he suddenly awakens to find himself alone and out of breath. Sometimes the nightmares are slightly different, he might hear his name being called upon hissing breath or awaken to find bruises upon his chest or shoulders, but the pressure upon the chest and hot breath are always present. Be sure to play out Theodore's dreams to the fullest when the group travels with him. Have him start gasping in his sleep, or groaning. If there are any onlookers they may see a depression on the priest's chest, they may also hear hissing or whispering on a successful awareness check. When the priest awakens, all is quiet and nothing is to be found.

Theodore is at his wit's end. He fears going to sleep each night and when he does drift off, the nightmares occur and he is awakened again, deprived of sleep. Even on nights when he doesn't have the dark dreams, his sleep is restless due to his fear of not knowing when the dreams will strike again.

Theodore does suspect foul play as the nightmares began the night after he banished a man by the name of Jared Cooper from the priest's hamlet.

A little history

Jared had been living with the miller of the hamlet for close to one year prior to his banishment. Claiming to be a pilgrim, Jared had asked that someone within the hamlet provide him with board, in return he would work for his supper and a roof over his head. At first no one wished to have a stranger in their house. As it was, most of the folk lived in small cottages of turf and mud, they hardly had enough room for their stock and themselves let alone another mouth to feed. So it was that the miller took pity on Jared and let him stay with him.

The real reason for Jared's appearance was one of evasion. Jared had been worried that his practice of the unclean arts might be discovered by members of the Church at the town he used to live in. So he quickly decided to move out and take his practice elsewhere. Winter was close to setting in when he stumbled upon a small hamlet off the beaten path. He was desperate for shelter so his initial plea was genuine. He really would work for food and board if he could get it.

Being close-knit peasant folk, no one of the hamlet trusted Jared for many months. He did as he said he would, however, and put his energy into helping the miller as best as he could, it was a means to an end. After a while the folk became used to seeing the stranger about the place and fears slid aside. Jared started to become anxious to renew his dark work, so after two months of hard toil with the miller, Jared decided that things had settled enough that he could now return to his studies of sorcery. Jared would creep away from the mill at night with his writings and notes and go deep into the nearby woods to draw his circles and consort with dark spirits. The spirits would whisper things to Jared, tempt him with power and convince him, slowly, over time, to pursue his sorcerous studies more and more often.

Jared's activities went mostly unnoticed, even by the miller, except for the watchful eyes of one particular person, Father Theodore.

The good father had been accepting of Jared at first but as time went on he discovered that Jared knew his letters and the priest thought it odd that a learned man was living with peasant folk. So it was that he would keep an eye on Jared. As time went on, his uneasiness grew, time and time again he would see lights out in the woods, these lights became more frequent. The miller began to grumble about how lazy Jared had become and how he was sleeping later and later into the day.

It became too much for Father Theodore and he decided to investigate the lights one night, along with a local cowherd. The two men moved quietly through the trees, towards the light. As they drew closer, they could hear Jared's voice; his queries were being answered by another, quieter, hissing voice. Finally they were able to get closer enough to see Jared standing on a patch of cleared ground. Before him was a large circle drawn into the soil, five black candles illuminated the circle and in its very centre was etched a strange symbol. It was not the circle that drew their attention however, but the thing of shadow they saw

within. They could not name it beast nor man, but something altogether different and made entirely of darkness. Crossing themselves and making a hasty retreat, Father Theodore and his companion moved back to the hamlet, horrified by what they had seen.

The next morning, Theodore decided he must act in the name of God and stop this madness. Taking a group of good stout men, he went to the mill and asked for Jared. As was to be expected, Jared was sleeping late. The group set upon Jared with knotted cudgels and rope and pulled him from his sleep. Caught completely off guard, Jared did not even resist being manhandled and taken to the centre of the hamlet. Here Father Theodore announced his discovery to the village folk, his claims supported by the cowherd. An outcry ensued and people wanted to see Jared burned immediately for witchcraft, however, Theodore was a compassionate man and not without a good heart. He decided that Jared had done no harm to the hamlet, despite having demonic dealings and should leave that day and if ever he showed his face again, death would be his reward.

Jared saw his chance to escape and took it. He was handed a loaf of bread and two silver coins – the traditional last rights of the banished – and then stalked off across the fields never to be seen in that hamlet again. No sorcerous writings were ever found amongst the belongings left behind by Jared. All suspected he had hidden them somewhere in those woods and most likely retrieved them as soon as he was gone from the hamlet.

Jared the Pilgrim

Jared is a man in his early twenties. He has dark brown hair that falls to the shoulders and a close beard. He is of average height and weight and has charming blue eyes. He is dressed in typical traveler's garb that has seen a lot of wear.

Jared is a bitter man. Perhaps, had he not been listening to the poisoning words of the spirits he summoned he would have thanked Theodore for saving him from a burning. This is not the case. He blames Theodore for his being discovered and the expulsion from the hamlet and has sworn vengeance. He appealed to the spirits to help him. The dark spirits would help him of course, for a price.

So it was that Jared summoned forth the aid of a demon to seek out Theodore during the night and torment him, but not kill him. Jared wishes the priest to slowly descend into madness.

Jared is a dangerous adversary, for he consorts with dark forces and should he realize he is being hunted by the protagonists, he will surely retaliate.

Enter the protagonists

Once the players agree that their characters will help Father Theodore, he will tell them that he suspects Jared has not gone far from his hamlet. They will need to ask serfs and peasants of the surrounding farms if they have seen a lone traveler that fits Jared's description. The biggest distinguishing factor about Jared is his charming blue eyes. If they are mentioned, people will know who the

protagonists are talking about.

Jared has been spotted a few times by farmers when he has approached them either for food, or to ask them where the nearest roadside inn is. The protagonists will track Jared down to a lone homestead where Jared, in his ever-increasing descent into darkness has now murdered the couple that once lived there and taken up the place as his own. He has hidden the bodies under the pile of firewood behind the cottage.

The inside of the cottage has become a ritual room. He keeps a circle permanently on the floor, drawn from the blood of his victims. The circle drawn in the cottage, in blood, is a powerful, nested circle, using Summoning, Binding and Truths. Balam's Sigil is in the centre.

If the protagonists are careful, they may be able to track down Jared without him knowing. However, should he catch wind of a group of people looking for him, he will summon forth a lesser demon to act as a spy to find out what the group is about. Once he realizes the group is with Theodore he will react at once. He will summon forth a powerful demon to destroy the group, but will leave Father Theodore untouched. Jared does not want to see the priest quickly killed, he wants the man to suffer. The demon he will summon to be commanded to go out and attack is Arioch, this means he will have to start the process of making a circle from scratch as his present circle summons Balam. Be sure to take into account how long it will take him to do this; it may be the difference between the protagonists living or dying.

Many outcomes are possible in this scenario. The most important turning point in the plot depends on whether or not Jared discovers he is being hunted. If he does not, he does not pose much of a threat. If the group manages to track him down, he will attempt to flee with his dark writings. If cornered he will offer the group shared power through sorcery using his Enthrallment skill. If this fails he will fight them with whatever is at hand. He will most likely be overcome in this manner.

If he discovers that he is being hunted then things change for the worse for the protagonists. Provided he has time, Jared, in his madness, will attempt to summon the most powerful demon he knows of to destroy the group, offering their souls to the spirit. Now here, things could have a twist, the Storyteller should make the appropriate rolls for this summoning, or simply decide on the outcome that feels best for the game. If Jared makes a mistake here, the demon will likely break free of its circles and snatch up Jared's flesh and soul. The protagonists will find Jared's cottage, a bloodstained and charred ruin within, the scattered remnants of Jared testament to the folly of dealing with demons. The only problem is that the demon Arioch may not chose to return quietly to Hell. The players may very well walk into the ruined, blasted cottage only to hear a throaty snarl and snickering laugh in the shadows.

If Jared succeeds, then all is very likely doomed for the group. A spirit of this power will very easily overpower even an experienced group. Immediate flight is the only real option. If the confrontation with a powerful demon comes down to a final, desperate scene where the protagonists try to stand and fight make the last stand

dramatic. Give the players a little hope, let one or two of the characters escape a small distance, only to be snatched in the end.

Conclusions

If Jared does not realize he is being hunted and is discovered, he may be overcome or he may flee. If he is overcome, then it is up to Father Theodore and the group to decide what to do with him.

If he flees, forget about him for now. Have him come back in another scenario. Perhaps he now decides that certain members of the group deserve Father Theodore's fate. Jared could become a thorn in the group's side for quite awhile, always moving, always just escaping attempts to snare him. He would be a dangerous villain indeed.

Jared might realize that the group is after him but does not have enough time to perform the ritual to summon the demon. Perhaps the group comes upon him midway through the summoning? In this case, Jared will most likely be dealt with as above.

The worst possible outcome for the players and their characters is the summoning of the demon to take their souls. No more needs to be said here.

Game Statistics

Below is the relevant information for Father Theodore and Jared the Pilgrim.

Father Theodore

Theodore wears a simple priest's habit and has a small wooden cross hanging from his neck by a thin cord.

Dogma ••••
Elegiacs •••
Fable ••••
Folklore •••
Husbandry •••
Occult Lore ••
Scribe in Latin •••

Jared the Pilgrim

Jared's Goetic skill grants him knowledge of the following: Circle of Summoning, Binding and Truths. Sigils of Darkness, Balam and Arioch.

Goetic Magic ••••
Scribe in Latin •••
Classics ••
Enthrallment •••••
Occult Lore •••••
Trade – bookbinder •••

See the Sigil of Arioch for information on that demon and its powers. If you want to give your players a fighting chance you can replace Arioch with a smaller, less powerful demon, but keep in mind that fighting chances are really in the spirit of horror.

The Ashen Man

A scenario for **Danse Macabre** by Dean Suter

The travellers will need to seek shelter for the night, they will stumble upon an old bastion but upon entering find they are trapped. What is the mystery behind this place and who is the Ashen Man?

Synopsis

The protagonists will become trapped in a haunted building and must convince the spirits of dead children that the Ashen Man who stalks the halls is to blame for their deaths.

Background

Many years ago a village was under the shadow of a bastion, ruled by a tyrannical lord. The lord was a poor noble who had slowly over time become intrigued with the occult. He invested all of his limited wealth into learning more of dark rituals and demonic dealings. It was not long before his diminishing wealth took its toll on the serfs. Demanding more of his people, the lord worked them harder and harder, trying to squeeze every ounce of profit from his vassals. The area started to suffer terribly and the peasants started to mumble about a revolt. Word of this got to the lord and in an act of desperation he had his soldiers take all the children of the village and lock them in his keep. Young children were torn from the arms of their mothers and fathers, infants taken, crying into the heart of their dark master's bastion. He then announced that the villagers must work harder or never see their children again. Shocked by the utter madness of their ruler, the serfs continued to work on, what else could they do?

Meanwhile the lord had finally lost all sanity and decided to appease the dark spirits that he consorted with. His twisted mind came up with a dark ritual of mass slaughter. Taking all the children he had stolen from the serfs he had them strangled or run through while he chanted praises to dark spirits.

This final act of absolute evil repulsed even his most loyal servants. That very night the soldiers, stable boys, kitchen maids and head servants left the bastion and entered the village to tell of what had passed.

Cries of anguish and outrage echoed through the village, serf and soldier stood side by side as they moved as one angry mob toward the keep, torches held high. The lord saw what had occurred and quickly locked and barred the keep from intrusion.

This would not stop the crowd, however, men and women shedding tears for their offspring started to coat the surrounds of the keep in oil. Then the oil was lit and flames leapt into being all about the building. As the building was consumed, the curses of the village folk could be heard over the roar of the fire.

Many years have passed since that horrible night. The lord has become cursed never to be released from the

torment of the flames. Once a year, on the same day of the burning, the lord's bastion appears at dusk. It has the appearance of a very old, but strong looking keep. No lights or noise come from the phantom building. The lord walks the halls in torment as an incarnate known as the Ashen Man. His skin is blackened and cracked and he has the ability to summon and control flame within the confines of his keep. The Ashen Man is not alone in his misery. The spirits of the slaughtered children still dwell in this place. They can not leave this world as they mistakenly blame their parents for letting them be taken by the lord. The keep remains on the mortal realm for the entire night. As the first rays of dawn touch it, the building is whisked back to the netherworld for another year. Any mortals trapped inside are taken with it.

Hook

Start the protagonists traveling a lonely road at dusk. It becomes obvious very quickly that shelter will need to be found as a dark bank of cloud is drifting ever closer. Flashes of lightning rent the clouds. Quite a storm is brewing.

As the group continues on and wind starts to build, heavy drops of cold rain fall and thunder can now be heard.

Suddenly, up ahead through the rain, the protagonists can see a large building upon a hillock.

As the group approaches, they will see no sign of life. The main door enters at the base of a square tower at one side of the bastion. The door is closed but not locked.

The main door leads into the bottom of the tower. A single spiral staircase winds upwards into darkness.

Trapped

The storyteller should wait until all protagonists are in the building. If the main door has been left open, have it suddenly swing shut with a boom. Once the door is shut its wooden panels will then creak and splinter slightly as the door is wedged past its normal resting position.

Anyone who tries to open the door finds it to be stuck fast. No amount of strength will force it open.

As the group focuses on the door, add the following, "Suddenly you can hear something bouncing down the stairs. It has the familiar clacking sound of wood on stone."

If the characters look to the stairs,

"You see a small wooden ball rolling down the stairs. It eventually falls from the last step with a final 'clack' onto the stone floor and rolls out into the middle of the room. Here it traces a lazy circle and finally rolls to a stop."

This is purely for atmosphere. The ball is not dangerous in any way. It is a simple wooden ball.

Allow the players to throw theories around and speculate for a few moments but don't let them dwell here too long.

After a few moments read the following.

"You can hear the cries of children, the sound of a deep voice chanting and the sudden anguished cries of pain."

Small droplets of blood are starting to appear on the walls in this room. The blood continues to well until it starts running in rivulets down the walls."

Let the players take this in.

"The rivulets run to the floor and start to pool. The blood is spreading out across the floor."

This horrible vision is a tool to get the group moving up the stairs.

The blood will continue to pool on the floor until it covers it entirely.

Fear checks against the unnatural will need to be made if anyone wishes to stay on the bottom floor.

The spiral stair leads up to the second level of the tower. From here the characters can enter the main building of the keep or continue upward.

No map has been given of the bastion; this is left mostly to the Story Teller's imagination. At its most basic it is has a square tower that is joined to a long, low, main building with two floors. The main building has long halls (you shall see why later) and all the windows have been shuttered and no force will open them. There will be a play room and of course a cellar where the horrible massacre took place.

The tower is one level higher than the main building and has narrow windows every so often facing the darkness and storm out side. The top most level of the tower ends with a ladder and a trap door in the ceiling. This trap door cannot be opened during the night.

Once the tower has been explored the order by which the main building is searched is unimportant. However a few encounters should occur along the way.

The child in the hallway

This should occur the first time the protagonists encounter a long hall and should only be used once. As they enter the hallway they should see a little girl walking away from them dragging a soft toy of some sort. She will be singing a little tune.

"La, la, la. La, la, la." Sing this in an eerie way using the high pitch of a girl.

The girl will ignore any attempt to call out to her.

When someone finally approaches her, she will turn around when they are almost upon her. The girl is missing her face. It is just caved in and appears to be eaten away.

Her voice echoes in the hallway "It's your fault mummy!"

Fear check!

The girl then dissolves into shadow.

Playroom

As the protagonists pass they will hear giggling and shrill laughter coming from a door.

If they open the door they will see what appears to be a play room. Many different toys and cushions lie about the floor. The room is otherwise empty. However as soon as someone enters the room have them make an awareness

check. If they succeed, read the following,

"Was that movement beneath that pile of toys?"

If the toys are investigated they will suddenly hear whispered giggling in another area of the room.

If the protagonists continue to stay in the room, eventually the noises will stop.

Continue to make the players do awareness checks now and again as they investigate the rest of the building. Have one of them feel a cold touch on the leg or feel a cold breeze move past and the sound of giggling on the air.

As time goes by slowly change the mood of the place. Have the children's voices start using accusatory tones. Have a character hear a stamp or a whimper.

Use phrases such as,

"It all your fault!"

"Why did you do this papa?"

"Don't you love me anymore?"

The Toddler

When the mood of the children changes, a toddler will appear in one of the rooms that the characters happen to be searching. The toddler will move forward with hand outstretched.

"I'm scared"

If the hand is taken, the character will be stricken with extreme cold and fall backwards stunned for a moment. Soul loss will occur as the spirit drains the character's life essence.

The toddler vanishes.

The Ashen Man

As well as the progressive encounters with the children going from happy to angry, now and again slip in the Ashen Man.

Be sure to never have an encounter with the children near or at the same place as the Ashen man. The Incarnate fears the child spirits so you will never encounter him with the spirits. Don't let the players know this. Let them work it out. As a rule of thumb, the Ashen man will always appear where the characters have a chance to run. If they get wise they will start to use areas such as the play room as a sanctuary.

The first time the protagonists sense that something else is wrong is when this happens.

"As you move along, you start to notice that the air is getting very warm. In fact it is getting uncomfortable. You are starting to break out into a sweat, is it from the heat, or from fear?"

If the characters move away from the area, they will cool back down.

The next time the ashen man is near,

"Again you start to feel an oppressive heat, you look behind/ahead (this will depend on where the protagonists are) of you to see flickering light on the wall as if something burns around the corner. Then as you watch on, you

imagine you can see the shadow of a man on the wall as well.”

If the characters run, let them go. If they stay to watch on, read the following,

“Suddenly the heat becomes intense and a figure steps around the corner. Your eyes fall upon a man totally devoid of hair or clothes, he is barely recognizable as a man. His skin is blackened and cracked. His breath comes in gasps, his white eyes glare from within a blackened face. He starts to raise his arms, the walls on either side of him erupt in flame and the heat is becoming unbearable.”

The players should run now, if they don't the whole area is about to be engulfed in hellish flame. Anyone caught in this conflagration will be hideously burnt and fall to the ground in agony. For sake of game mechanics, put them Near Death. Oh, don't forget to have the characters check fear!

At this stage the players will realize that there are two distinct things going on here. Haunting child spirits and some sort of burned man.

The Bedchamber

This room will appear like any other lord's bedroom. A large bed will take up a good proportion of the room; upon a writing desk to one side are pieces of parchment. Anyone who can read will see that a diary entry has been written, “...and so I have decided that my only hope is to take their children. The dark ones suggested it, I think it a good idea, now they shall work the harder for fear of me harming their young ones.”

As soon as this is read, the parchment bursts into flames. The room starts to feel warm...

The players should leave here if they don't want a visit from the Ashen Man.

The Study

This room has bookshelves lining on wall, a large writing desk and many pieces of parchment upon it. The books on the shelves are of an occult nature, no grimoires however are apparent.

More diary entries are found here.

“Even loyal Gareth has deserted me. Did the ritual repulse him that much? What has the world come to, when a lord has no servants? Damn them. Damn them all.”

On another piece of parchment,

“The voices speak to me again, they warn me to lock my doors and windows. They'll come for my blood. Ungrateful fools. I hear them even now, my treacherous vassals...”

As before, these pieces of parchment will burst into flame upon reading them.

The Cellar

Read the following when the characters reach the bottom most room of the bastion,

“You stand within a large dark room; your light illuminates a horrid sight. Many bodies of small children lie about the

room. It appears as if they have been killed and dropped on the spot. Some have horrid sword wounds; others appear to have been strangled.”

Have the players make an awareness check.

Read the following to those who succeed,

“You notice strange markings on the wall just on the limit of your light.”

The markings are sigils of demons. This room was used for the horrendous ritual that the evil lord performed.

After the characters have had a look at the sigils have them hear crying in the darkness. Have the crying intensify until all that can be heard are shrill cries of agony and the ring of steel.

Suddenly everything goes quiet and the room becomes very cold. The protagonists' breath will start to mist.

Then the following will be heard,

“It is your fault!”

“You are mean mama!”

“Don't you love me?”

The voices will be of boys and girls and often different children.

If the characters attempt to communicate in this room, spectral children start appearing in the room. They have looks of scorn and contempt upon their faces.

At this point the only way to leave the bastion is to convince the children that their parents are to blame for their deaths. They must be told as a parent to a child, that the Ashen Man is to blame. This must be forceful, any reasoning or appeasement does not work. The spirits have the minds of children so they need parental guidance here.

Once the protagonists command the children to stop blaming their parents and tell them it was the ashen man's fault the children will suddenly vanish.

Nothing more will occur until the characters leave the cellar. Once they leave the cellar have the protagonists meet the ashen man one more time. Again, the area will become hot and stifling. The Ashen Man will appear and raise his arms. At this point something different will happen. The Ashen Man will stop and start looking about, then in a raspy voice will say,

“What? What is happening?”

A child spirit will appear and approach the ashen man, then another child will appear, then another and another.

The heat of the room starts to subside and the Ashen man starts backing away with his hands raised in defence.

“No. No, stay away!”

Suddenly the children overwhelm the Ashen man and drag him to the ground, the spirits and man vanish. The temperature of the room returns to normal.

The characters will now find that they can leave the bastion. As they leave it fades from existence never to return to the mortal realm again.