

THE ETERNAL COURT

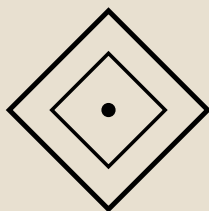
CAMPAIGN WORLD GUIDE

WORLD BUILDING & LORE



JESSE ALEXANDER

THE ETERNAL COURT
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Campaign Guide

& the Wider World

*Albion, Terrassia, the trenches between — the political geography of
a hundred-year war seen from a peace wedding.*

KORMOR KIRAK · VIDEK · ANNO 1793

FORMAT
Guide · A5

SCOPE
The Two Empires

VOICE
Cartographer

CAPITULUM

PART ONE: THE WORKED AT WAR

CAPITULUM

THE KNOWN WORLD

The world of The Eternal Court is a place of empires and old magic where steam-driven industry collides with forces that predate human memory.

Factories belch smoke across scarred landscapes. Coded messages travel by homing pigeon between command posts. Airships thread through mountain storms, their hulls groaning under pressure, their captains desperate to avoid the worst of the weather. Mechanical men hunt the living through factory districts and occupied towns, their clockwork hearts beating in rhythms no flesh can match. And beneath it all, older powers stir in the dark places of the world, rising from graves and forgotten temples, demanding blood as payment for their resurrection.

This is a world of late-18th-century grandeur twisted through wartime exhaustion and uncanny industry. The aesthetic is one of gas lamps and gunpowder, aristocratic formality, and rigid social hierarchies beginning to crack under the weight of perpetual war. Smoke hangs in the air like a second sky. The sounds of riveting hammers and steam whistles form a constant industrial symphony.

In the capitals and manufacturing centers, the wealthy live in marble estates while workers labor eighteen-hour shifts in foundries that burn hot enough to see in the dark. This is a world of contrasts, where divine right and mechanical precision coexist uneasily, where tradition and progress wage their own war within the minds of ordinary people.

The dominant power structure is that of two empires locked in a death struggle for supremacy. For one hundred years, these powers have bled each other dry. Neither can claim victory. Neither can afford to admit defeat. The frontlines

have calcified into trenches and fortifications that consume soldiers like furnaces consume coal. A young man who enlists has approximately a twenty percent chance of surviving his first day of combat. If he does survive that crucible, he faces a ten percent chance of living through each subsequent day of service. Across the span of a decade, such mathematics reduce an entire generation to ghosts.

CAPITULUM

THE ALBION EMPIRE

Albion is a nation convinced of its own divine mandate. The people of this industrial powerhouse believe with absolute certainty that they were chosen by God to rule the world. This isn't mere nationalism or typical imperial pride. This is a faith as deep as any religion, woven into the very fabric of Albion society from childhood onward. Children recite loyalty oaths with fervent devotion, words that burn into memory through repetition: "By the grace of our Divine Emperor, I serve

Albion. Yesterday, today, and tomorrow. In life everlasting." These aren't empty formalities. These are declarations that bind soul to state.

The capital city embodies this conviction in marble and iron. White marble government buildings rise like temples to bureaucratic order. The

Parliament House dominates the skyline, a monument to governance, and overlooks Griffin Plaza with its massive statue of a griffin wielding twin swords, a symbol of martial superiority and divine favor. Every street radiating outward from this central point is named after a victory. Every monument celebrates conquest. The city itself is a statement of power written in stone.

But the true beating heart of Albion is not the Parliament or the grand estates of noble families. The heart of Albion is the factories. They ring the capital like a second wall, vast structures of brick and steel that belch black smoke into the sky at all hours. Armament factories produce rifles and ammunition in quantities that would have seemed impossible a generation ago. Military trains move through the city constantly, carrying platoons of soldiers, supplies, ammunition, spare mechanical parts. The work never stops. The furnaces never cool.

The Counting Houses of Albion are temples of a different sort. Here, rows of uniformed accountants work comptometers with mechanical precision, processing the staggering finances of a war economy. Every coin, every resource, every human life is calculated, tracked, and allocated according to elaborate spreadsheets that would make old accountants weep at their complexity. The military-industrial capacity of Albion is staggering. Truly staggering. The nation has transformed itself into a machine for producing war, and that machine runs at maximum capacity year after year after year.

The Parliament itself has become something curious, almost contradictory to its original purpose. It contains representatives from diverse cultures and ages, united not by shared vision but by a unified martial ethos. These men and women are grim and drained by a century of conflict. Many have lost limbs or loved ones to the war. Many carry shrapnel scars that will never fully heal. Yet they convene daily to debate military appropriations, to authorize new offensives, to commit yet more resources to the endless struggle.

Within this machinery of state and war, a peculiar economic argument has taken root. There are those in power who ask, with genuine anxiety, what will happen when the war ends. Without a foreign enemy to fight, what will the factories produce? Without the constant demand for ammunition and military equipment, how will the economy sustain itself? The very thought of peace has become economically terrifying to those who have built their fortunes on perpetual conflict. This fear, more than any strategic consideration, may be the greatest obstacle to ending the war.

The architecture of Albion's cities reflects influences from the great trading cities of the old world. Dubrovnik's stone walls and strategic fortifications inform defensive structures. Nordlingen's orderly streets and guild organizations shape how districts are organized. The

European aesthetic of grand avenues and public squares has been married to modern industrial needs, creating cities that are simultaneously beautiful and utilitarian, inspiring and oppressive.

CAPITULUM

THE KINGDOM OF TERRASSIA

If Albion is an empire that believes in its own divine mandate,

Terrassia is an ancient kingdom that knows in its bones that it has a right to rule. This is a difference worth pondering. Albion's faith in its destiny is new, born of industrial success and martial confidence.

Terrassia's claim runs deeper, tangled with older traditions, supernatural bloodlines, and a relationship with magic that predates modern industrial civilization.

The Kingdom of Terrassia has not transformed itself into a war machine to the same degree as Albion. Instead, Terrassia has integrated new mechanical technologies into older ways. The clockwork engineering of

Terrassian artisans is sophisticated enough to craft prosthetic limbs that rival natural appendages in function and grace. Steam vehicles thread through Terrassian streets, but alongside ancient guild halls and temples whose stones have stood for centuries. There is tension in this coexistence, a constant strain between old world and new world that runs through the kingdom like a fault line in stone.

In the attic laboratories of noble houses and secret workshops hidden beneath marketplaces, Terrassian inventors build automatons and mechanical constructs of terrible elegance. These are not the mass-produced mechanical soldiers of Albion, stamped out by the thousands from standardized designs. Each Terrassian automaton is crafted individually, often by artists as much as engineers, with mechanisms refined across months of painstaking work.

Mechanical assassins have been assembled from racks of spare parts, their joints articulated with such precision that they move like predators, like things of deadly grace.

The ruling family of Terrassia carries bloodlines that mark them as fundamentally other than ordinary humans. Queen Kiraline is a vampire who has reigned for longer than most historians can accurately trace.

Her very existence is a statement of power, a supernatural claim to rule that supersedes mere mortality. Princess Szeret, her daughter, is a shapeshifter whose true form is known only to the royal family and a handful of sworn guards. When the princess must appear in public, she does so wearing borrowed flesh, a face chosen for political purposes rather than born into. The princess at the center of the peace wedding is not fully human, and both courts know this fact with complete certainty.

This supernatural element in the ruling line creates a peculiar dynamic within Terrassian society. Magic is real here, undeniable, woven through the fabric of governance and power. Yet Terrassia has not rejected the mechanical and industrial innovations of the modern age. Instead, the kingdom walks a careful line, maintaining traditions while adopting new technologies, mixing ritual with machinery, blood magic with steam and gears. It is an uneasy balance, and the tension never fully resolves.

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THE VIDEK MOUNTAINS

Separating Albion from Terrassia is a mountain range of staggering proportion. The Videk Mountains are more than a geographical feature; they are a natural barrier that has shaped the entire course of the war, a wall between two competing visions of civilization. The range spans the horizon in both directions, disappearing into mist and cloud. The stone peaks are jagged and aggressive, shaped by ancient geological forces that still occasionally remind the world of their presence through earthquakes and sudden rockslides.

These mountains are plagued by ever-present storms. The weather patterns in the Videk range are notoriously unstable and dangerous. Clouds roll in from nowhere. Wind speeds that can snap a man's bones blow through the passes without warning. Rain comes down in sheets that reduce visibility to mere feet. Even experienced airship crews, men and women who have navigated sky combat and mechanical malfunctions, give the

Videk Mountains a wide berth if at all possible. The penalties for miscalculation are steep. Airships have been dashed against stone peaks.

Entire crews have been lost to weather alone.

On one side of the mountains stretches the industrial new world of

Albion, with its factories and cities and mechanical soldiers. On the other side lies the older kingdom of Terrassia, where magic and tradition hold their ground against the march of industrial progress.

The mountains enforce this separation absolutely. There is only one practical way across: the mountain road to Kormor Kirak, a passage that winds through the high passes and connects the two great powers. This single route has

become choked with caravan traffic over the centuries, and every merchant who travels it accepts the risk of storm and disaster as the price of commerce.

The Videk Mountains have defined the geography of war itself. They are the frontier, the barrier that has prevented Albion from simply marching an army across to crush Terrassia beneath superior industrial force.

They are the shield that has allowed Terrassia to maintain independence despite Albion's overwhelming capacity for war production. The mountains have kept this conflict localized to the areas where the two powers actually meet, creating a terrible stasis: neither side can decisively win, yet neither can afford to surrender.

CAPITULUM

THE CENTURY WAR

For one hundred years, Albion and Terrassia have waged war against each other. One hundred years of conflict. Twenty generations of young people who have never known a world without organized killing. The war has consumed countless lives, countless resources, countless hopes. The numbers are so large that they cease to have meaning. A thousand dead soldiers becomes a statistic. Ten thousand casualties becomes a line in a report. The human cost is so vast that it has become abstract.

The frontlines haven't moved in years. The trenches of Gravinia have become something like permanent settlements, with reinforced positions, supply chains, communication networks, and the terrible routines of trench warfare. Young men and women wake each morning knowing they might be dead before noon. They clean their weapons. They eat food that tastes like ash. They wait for orders. They advance when told. They die in numbers that defy comprehension. And the lines, after all the blood and suffering, remain almost exactly where they have been for the past decade.

Both sides have developed terrible weapons. Terrassia deployed asphyxiating gas that burns the lungs and blinds those who breathe it.

Albion has weapons of its own, atrocities developed in secret laboratories that researchers refuse to discuss even with their own families. Neither side claims moral superiority anymore. Both sides have crossed lines that once seemed uncrossable. Both sides have sacrificed their very souls for a war neither can win.

The soldiers themselves have forgotten what they are fighting for. Ask a veteran why the war began, and the answer will be vague. Something about

sovereignty. Something about imperial rights. Something about old insults and older claims. But the reasons have worn away like river stones smoothed by constant passage. What remains is only the war itself, a self-perpetuating machine that exists for its own sake. Young people march off to die not for glory or justice or any comprehensible cause, but because that is simply what young people do now. That is the shape of their world. That is their inheritance.

The economic, social, and psychological damage wrought by a century of war is incalculable. Entire regions have been depopulated. Farmland lies fallow. Trade routes have collapsed. The educated classes have been decimated by officer casualty rates. Society has become militarized at every level. Children are trained for warfare from infancy. Women work in factories instead of pursuing other callings. The elderly counsel younger generations based entirely on military experience. Everything has been subordinated to the war machine.

Yet there is a glimmer of hope, fragile and uncertain. Both Albion and Terrassia have recognized that victory is impossible and defeat is unthinkable. Some voices in power have begun to speak of peace, a word so foreign that it seems almost obscene in these times. The path toward peace, it has been decided, will run through a marriage. A royal wedding between the Albion prince and Princess Szeret Veresz

will symbolize the end of the war and the beginning of a new era of peace between the empires.

This wedding will be held in a neutral location, a mountain city called Kormor Kirak, situated in the high passes of the Videk range. It is the only place that both sides trust to host such an event, far enough from either power base to seem impartial, yet accessible by the mountain road that connects both realms. The city itself is neither fully Albion nor fully Terrassia, but something

in between. It will become the stage upon which the fate of the world may be decided. It will become the place where old enemies gather in the name of peace, bringing with them their suspicions, their grievances, their secrets, and their dangerous guests.

CAPITULUM

KORMOR KIRAK: CITY OVERVIEW



Kormor Kirak rises from a remote mountain valley like a memory carved in stone. The city wears the aesthetic of old Europe, walls and buildings modeled after the fairy-tale cities of Dubrovnik and Nordlingen, all sharp peaks and defensive lines built when fortifications meant survival. Craggy mountains loom on every side, their faces sharp with ancient erosion, while cobblestone streets wind through quarters dominated by peaked-roof buildings that crowd against one another as if for warmth. Red-tiled roofs catch what little light penetrates the perpetual mountain mist, and the overall effect is one of stepping backward through time.

Torony Piros, the castle, dominates the skyline. Its spires reach toward a sky that rarely clears, a Gothic architectural excess that seems to defy the practical military logic of the walls that support it. One entire side of the plateau drops away to a sheer cliff that plunges down into fog so thick it obscures the mountains beyond entirely. Those mountains remain perpetually cloaked, their distant peaks visible only on the rarest clear mornings, giving the city the sensation of floating in a cloud kingdom, cut off from the world below.

The city is ruled by Queen Kiraline Veresz Eroszakos of Terrassia, a woman whose title and authority rest upon the strange foundation of careful neutrality. Kormor Kirak claims to stand apart from the great powers that vie for dominion in the lands beyond the mountains, maintaining consulates for both Albion and Terrassia within its walls.

This neutrality is, of course, a performance; few cities exist that are truly above the games of nations. Kiraline opened the gates to foreigners through strategic calculation, transforming what was once a sealed mountain fortress into a crossroads where diplomats, merchants, and would-be heroes converge.

The Red Guards patrol the cobblestone streets in polished armor the color of drying blood, each one loyal to the queen and sworn to maintain the fiction of order that keeps tensions between the consulates from erupting into open violence. Ward symbols are painted in fading red ochre on walls and doorframes throughout the city, ancient sigils meant to ward off evil spirits. Some are old enough that the paint has become barely visible; others are fresh, hastily applied by nervous hands after dark. In the spaces between tradition and modernity, between the old world and the new, Kormor Kirak sustains itself.

This is what Eppy Flinder, owner of the Bastion Inn, means when she says, "You live in the new world. We live in the old." The statement carries no judgment, only the weariness of someone who has watched civilization's relentless march press against the edges of something older and stranger. In

Kormor Kirak, the old world and the new collide daily, generating friction and opportunity in equal measure.

CAPITULUM

TORONY
CASTLE

PROS:

THE



Torony Piros straddles the city wall itself, half its bulk resting within the fortifications and half suspended over the vertical cliff that falls away to fog and distance. It is a structure that seems to defy gravity and good sense in equal

measure, built as if the architect possessed some secret knowledge about how to anchor stone to air. The spires reach toward the sky with Gothic excess, and at night, light flickers behind opaque glass windows in patterns that suggest no consistent illumination source.

The interior of the castle is a landscape of contradictions. The grand ballroom, on the upper levels near the castle's heart, hosts masquerades that earn it a reputation throughout the region. These gatherings are non-traditional affairs, marked by severe court finery with Gothic flourishes and masks crafted from materials that should not be worn against human faces: animal hides scraped thin enough to see through, scales mounted in careful arrangement, fur matted with something that might be oils or might be something far worse, bones carved into mockeries of noble features. Aerial gymnasts perform on ropes and wires suspended above the dancers, their movements deliberately debauched and theatrical, the entire affair calculated to transgress against propriety with precision and grace.

Szeret, the queen's daughter, maintains a bedroom in the upper reaches of the castle, appointed with furniture that seems to have been salvaged from different eras. Near the window stands a telescope of considerable quality, positioned to observe the city below. The scope is old, its brass fittings tarnished to shades of green, and through it Szeret watches Kormor Kirak with the intensity of someone studying a game board.

Beneath this theatrical excess lies the castle's true architecture: dungeons where prisoners hang in chains, kept alive and intact as if they were assets rather than people. It is in these dungeons that the queen and her daughter feed at night, though what precisely they feed upon is a question best left unasked by those who wish to maintain their sanity. The dungeons smell of straw and copper, and the walls weep a moisture that might be seepage from the cliff or might be something else entirely.

Kiraline's private chamber exists deeper still, beyond the dungeons, in a space that seems geometrically impossible given the castle's external dimensions. Here, the evidence of necromantic ritual is unmistakable.

Bodies are positioned in wooden trellises, arranged as if growing like vines, their angles unnatural and their preservation impossible through any mundane means. Runes are carved into the chamber's walls and floor in patterns that hurt to look at too long, each one a fragment of some vast working that stretches beyond this single room into territories of power that few mortals are equipped to understand.

An upper balcony overlooks much of the city. It is here that Kiraline receives visitors of significance, Barron among them. The balcony possesses a peculiar property: Kiraline can apparently traverse it instantaneously, appearing at different points along its length without crossing the intervening space. Whether this is genuine teleportation or something more elaborate remains unclear to those who witness it.

Torony Piros is beautiful in the way that terrifying things often are, its horror inseparable from its grace. It is full of doors that guests should not see, corridors that shift direction when observed from peripheral vision, and the constant sense that the castle contains far more space than its external dimensions should permit. Those who spend time within its walls carry away the conviction that they have witnessed only the thinnest surface of something vast and hungry.

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THE ALBION CONSULATE

The Albion Consulate occupies a two-story stone building on one of

Kormor Kirak's main thoroughfares, marked by an official seal plaque that announces, to any who read such documents, that this space belongs to Albion and operates under Albion law. This technicality carries more weight than a casual visitor might assume. The Red Guards acknowledge the boundary; they do not cross the threshold without permission, and their authority ends at the consulate's door. Within these walls,

Albion's representatives maintain a sanctuary from the competing pressures of Kiraline's court and Terrassian intelligence operations.

Feeney's office occupied the ground floor of this building, a space arranged with the careful precision of a man who understood that paper and files were as much weapons as any blade. A large bulletin board covered one wall, its surface a chaos of theater plans, sketches for set designs, municipal permits, and correspondence with various construction contractors. Wooden filing cabinets lined another wall, each drawer stuffed with folders containing everything from budget allocations to lists of suppliers. An official desk of impressive size dominated the room, its surface usually clear except for whatever piece of work demanded Feeney's immediate attention.

At the rear of the consulate lay the vault, a complex arrangement of magical and mechanical locks designed to protect Albion's most sensitive assets. The vault door required two separate operations to open: first, a signet ring had to be placed face-down into a small depression, activating the magical locks; second, three combination dials had to be manipulated within a narrowly defined time window before the mechanism reset. This layered security

reflected Albion's assumption that the threats to its assets in Kormor Kirak were sophisticated and patient.

The vault's contents included a considerable quantity of gold coin, currency meant to fund the construction of the Theater of Everlasting

Peace. The gold represented a massive investment in the peace effort, a physical manifestation of Albion's commitment to preventing the city from becoming a battleground. This gold is no longer there.

When the vault was discovered after the attack, its door stood open and its interior was caked with dried blood. Feeney's body hung suspended within the vault itself, wrapped in a trellis of entwined branches that appeared to have grown within the confined space, pressing against the vault's walls in a pattern of such precise geometry that it was clearly intentional. Eighty-eight ritual wounds covered Feeney's corpse, each one positioned to form part of a larger design. When viewed as a whole, the wounds traced demonic runes across his skin, a working of such malevolence that its mere presence seemed to taint the air.

The method of his death, the positioning of his remains, and the missing gold all point toward portal magic of a sophisticated and deeply necromantic nature. Something was opened in that vault, something was fed what Feeney had to offer, and something was transported away with the gold that was meant to build the theater.

CAPITULUM

THE TERRASSIAN CONSULATE

The Terrassian Consulate sits on High Street, the thoroughfare where Kormor Kirak's most prominent buildings cluster. From street level, the consulate appears to be a standard diplomatic establishment, all bureaucratic efficiency and guarded reserve. But the building contains a secret that transforms it from mere political office into a center of cold military operations.

In the consulate's attic, accessed through carefully hidden stairs and passages known only to select personnel, lies a laboratory. Here, in dust and shadow, the Automatic Assassins are built and maintained. A man in his thirties, scarred and methodical, oversees this operation. His right arm is a masterwork of clockwork engineering, all visible gears and articulated joints, a mechanical replacement that moves with an eerie fluidity that no natural arm could match. He works surrounded by racks containing dozens of mechanical limbs and severed heads, each one a potential weapon, each one networked into systems that make individual human agency almost irrelevant.

The attic's centerpiece is a radar-like device, its painted blueprint of Kormor Kirak serving as a screen. When activated, blips of light appear across the blueprint, marking movement in the streets below. The device represents the outer edge of a much broader Terrassian intelligence operation, a web of observation and control that extends throughout the city. The spare parts arrayed throughout the attic, the detailed technical knowledge embedded in the man who tends them, and the obvious redundancy of the systems suggest that Terrassia is prepared to build many more assassins as needed, to maintain

and refine their design, to expand their reach until they penetrate every significant location in Kormor Kirak.

CAPITULUM

KERESKEDO MARKET



The Kereskedo Market occupies the oldest building in Kormor Kirak, a sprawling structure that has served commercial purposes for longer than anyone alive can quite remember. The building seems to have grown organically, with each generation adding a wing or expanding a section until the market became a labyrinth of corridors, alcoves, and open-air courts that feel less like a single structure and more like a small city unto itself.

The atmosphere evokes a Silk Road caravanserai crossed with the sensory chaos of a Persian bazaar and the negotiable space of a North African souk. Vendors pack every available surface, their stalls draped in fabrics of improbable colors and patterns. They sell everything from formal dresses

suitable for court functions to exotic textiles imported from distant lands, from common tools to materials whose purpose remains obscure to casual observation. The air carries the mingled scents of exotic spices, dyes, and the peculiar staleness that comes from goods stored in dim corners for seasons at a time.

Rozito Vallikozo manages the market through royal appointment, a position that grants him considerable power within Kormor Kirak's commercial sphere and makes him beholden to Kiraline in ways that everyone understands and no one acknowledges directly. Rozito is the city's resident fixer, the person who makes things happen through a combination of charm, favors owed, and carefully calibrated threat.

Within the market, his authority is absolute; outside its walls, his influence extends in subtle but unmistakable ways into every significant commercial operation in the city.

One corner of the market houses a dressmaker's shop, a cramped space where nervous models parade in formal outfits designed for particular occasions. More often than not, these occasions are associated with

Szeret; when the queen's daughter develops an interest in new fashions, word travels quickly to the dressmaker, and the real work begins. The models move through their routines with the mechanical precision of soldiers, their expressions carefully blank, aware that any comment on the garments or their fit might be misinterpreted as criticism of the designer's work or, worse, of Szeret's taste.

Rozito stands at the market's main entrance most days, dressed in an intentionally eclectic combination of foreign fabrics in clashing colors and patterns. His appearance announces that he is of the market but somehow apart from it, a man who has moved through many lands and learned to navigate their customs. He forces smiles at merchant and customer alike, maintaining an obsequious public face that masks whatever genuine emotions might lie beneath. In

Kormor Kirak, discretion about one's true thoughts is both a survival skill and an art form, and

Rozito has perfected both.

CAPITULUM

THE BASTION INN

The Bastion Inn is a two-story structure of solid stone, its exterior giving nothing away about the genuine community that thrives within its walls. It serves as the primary gathering point for Barron's expedition and for the various factions that converge in Kormor Kirak, making it functionally more important than its modest appearance might suggest.

The inn is owned by Eppy Flinder, a woman of earthy aesthetic and pointed ears that hint at non-human heritage, though she tends to deflect questions about her origins with a smile and an offer of another drink.

The ground floor contains the dining hall, a cavernous space dominated by a long bar backed by shelves of bottles and casks in various states of emptiness. Tables appropriate for dining and cards scatter across the floor in deliberate chaos, while a small dance floor occupies one corner and a musician's platform sits ready for whatever performers might arrive on any given evening. The walls are decorated with an eclectic collection of weapons, colorful rugs, and paintings depicting fantastic beasts: unicorns rendered in a style more sinister than magical, werewolves caught between human and animal form, bats rendered with anatomical precision, elves that possess the cold beauty of predators rather than the delicate prettiness of common depiction.

The ceiling is painted with a trompe l'oeil rendering of an unfamiliar night sky. The constellations depicted do not match the actual stars visible above Kormor Kirak, and a painted comet streaks across the sky in a trajectory that suggests it is falling directly toward the viewer, creating a sense of suspended vertigo that many visitors find disconcerting until they accustom themselves to it.

The inn's signature drink is Dewrder Hylifol, a honey-based concoction brewed according to a recipe taught to Eppy by her grandmother in a language that belongs to no civilization the learned scholars of Kormor

Kirak can identify. The drink is sweet to first taste, warm in the throat, and deceptively potent. A first-time drinker will experience a progression from initial joy and camaraderie, through stages of increasing intoxication, until reaching a point where the sweetness turns to nausea and the room spins with the intensity of something falling from a great height. Eppy serves it knowing this progression and seems to find genuine amusement in the process.

The Bastion Inn is where alliances form and dissolve, where secrets are traded as currency, where factions meet across tables laden with food and drink to negotiate terms that may or may not be honored come morning. It is a neutral ground in the way that few spaces in Kormor

Kirak achieve, a place where different powers maintain at least the pretense of civility. Beneath this civility runs a current of tension; everyone present understands that the Bastion's neutrality is fragile and could shatter if the correct pressure is applied with the correct force at the correct moment.

CAPITULUM

THE THEATER OF EVERLASTING PEACE

The Theater of Everlasting Peace exists as both physical structure and symbol, a concrete manifestation of the peace effort that defines

Kiraline's reign and Albion's continued investment in stability within

Kormor Kirak. When complete, the theater will stand three stories tall, arranged in the round to maximize sight lines and create an amphitheater that can accommodate several thousand spectators. The entire structure is to be constructed from wood, a choice that speaks to the aesthetics of the vision: a theater of living material, organic and warm, designed to host performances of rare scale and ambition.

The theater serves a dual purpose that few outside the innermost circles of negotiation fully understand. Its public function is obvious: it will be the venue for performances, gatherings, and cultural events that emphasize Kormor Kirak's position as a center of enlightenment and sophistication. But beneath this public identity, the theater contains a second space, a purpose that exists below the main structure in a series of chambers designed to be invisible to the general audience. This lower level is where the real work will occur, where delegates from Albion,

Terrassia, and other interested powers will negotiate the terms that determine whether war or peace governs the region beyond the mountains.

The current blueprints show modifications to the original design. The roof has been removed from the plans entirely; the theater will be open-air, with the audience exposed to the mountain weather and whatever weather the night sky

chooses to provide. This change has been justified as an artistic decision, a bold statement about transparency and openness. Few pause to consider that an open-air theater provides fewer places for assassins to conceal themselves and fewer avenues for agents to move undetected through the structure.

The Theater of Everlasting Peace was approximately thirty percent complete when Feeney set it ablaze with Molotov cocktails, a calculated act of destruction that killed the structure's visible progress and left its charred skeleton visible from nearly every point in the city.

Feeney believed, based on intelligence he had gathered, that the Lich

Cult intended to exploit the theater for dark purposes once it was completed, that they would use the dual nature of the structure to perform workings of such power and malevolence that the peace effort would not merely fail but would transform into something far worse.

Whether Feeney's conviction was correct, whether he acted on genuine intelligence or paranoid misinterpretation, remains a question that divides those who knew him.

The destruction of the theater created a crisis that extends far beyond the simple matter of rebuilding a structure. The festival that is meant to conclude with the peace wedding will require a grand venue. The peace negotiations that will occur behind the theater's public functions need a secure location. Albion's investment in the gold now means the theater must be reconstructed using alternative funding sources, or the entire peace effort collapses under the weight of its own failure. And there are forces within Kormor Kirak who are actively working to ensure that the theater is not rebuilt, that the peace effort dies along with Feeney's faith in it.

CAPITULUM

THE HALLASET FIELDS



The Hallaset Fields occupy the plateau edge at Kormor Kirak's outskirts, where the land simply ends and drops away to fog and distance. The fields are the city's cemetery, though the term feels inadequate for the strange landscape that greets those who venture here.

The grass grows head-high, reed-like stalks fed by soil enriched across a thousand years of human decomposition. The earth itself is literally built from the remains of the dead, layered and compressed until the boundary between soil and corpse becomes indistinct.

A network of trails cuts through the grass, maintained through constant use and the simple fact that vegetation refuses to grow where human feet have

worn the earth bare. These trails connect raised stone plinths spaced throughout the fields at irregular intervals. Each plinths marks a burial site, though the term obscures the actual practice. Bodies are brought here and left, deposited on the stone platforms where carrion birds attend to the work of decomposition. This is sky burial translated to earth, the local variation of an ancient practice that acknowledges death as transformation rather than ending.

Drifting mist hangs perpetually between the reed stalks, the moisture collecting from the cliff-edge location and the constant weather that dominates this exposed plateau. The mist obscures sight lines and creates a landscape where distance becomes unreliable, where something fifty paces away might be invisible or might suddenly emerge from the fog as if it had always been present. Memorial stones are scattered throughout the fields, their surfaces carved with names and dates in fading letters. Fresh ward symbols mark the newest graves, painted in red ochre that has not yet faded to invisibility, each symbol a desperate ward against the thing that is happening in the Hallaset

Fields.

The air carries the scent of Hallaset flowers, strange blooms that grow nowhere else in Kormor Kirak, fed by something in the enriched soil that makes them unique. The fragrance is perfume-like on first encounter, sweet in a way that speaks of growth and renewal, but lingering beneath the initial sweetness lies something unsettling, an organic smell that suggests decay and transformation, the scent of things being unmade and remade into new forms.

The Hallaset Fields are where the party first encounters the physical evidence of necromantic workings on a scale beyond the isolated horror of Feeney's death. Body parts move across the ground of their own accord, sliding through the reed grass with evident purpose. A Necrotic

Bulk, reanimated flesh from dozens of corpses sewn together through magic and violation, hunts through the fields consuming newly dead bodies and dismembering older remains to incorporate into its growing mass. The dead that are meant to rest in the Hallaset Fields increasingly refuse to rest, pulled back from decomposition into a mockery of animation by forces that emanate from somewhere deeper in the mountain valley.

The Hallaset Fields represent the breaking point, the moment when the city can no longer deny what is being done within its borders. The dead rest here, or they used to. Now they are being harvested, being transformed, being used as raw material for something vast and terrible.

As long as the Hallaset Fields remain a space where the dead refuse to stay dead, Kormor Kirak remains a city under siege by forces that few are equipped to identify or resist.

OLIVIA FAREN: THE ACCOUNTANT'S AWAKENING

When Olivia Faren was assigned to Lord Barron Whitehallow's mission, she believed it a promotion. She had spent her entire life in the service of the Albion Capital's financial apparatus, beginning in the state dormitory where she was raised alongside other children of no particular importance. Numbers were her only inheritance. She learned young that precision, discipline, and unwavering attention to detail could transform chaos into order, disorder into beauty. The comptometer became her instrument of truth; her fingers moved across its keys with such extraordinary speed that her lips would move in silent accompaniment, as though her mouth was counting along with her hands, verifying each calculation twice over before the machine delivered its verdict.

Her speech betrays her origins: short declarative sentences delivered with a street accent that the Counting House never quite polished away. She recites the Albion oath -- "By his grace, I rise" -- like a mantra, invoking it when frightened, when proud, when reminding herself of the empire that raised her

from nothing. She claims Albion has better versions of everything she encounters, a habit that is simultaneously annoying and endearing, the patriotic reflex of someone who has never had anything else to be proud of. Beyond the comptometer, her fingers know older methods: Chisanbop counting, where each digit represents a number and her hands become a living abacus; beaded strings she manipulates with startling dexterity; knotted cords that encode values in their patterns. These are the tools she reaches for when the machines fail or when counting itself becomes a comfort against anxiety.

At twenty-four, Olivia has never traveled beyond the capital's reaches.

She has never tasted alcohol nor danced in a ballroom. She has never been within twenty miles of royalty. Her entire world has been governed by ledgers and imperial policy. When she discovered the financial anomalies in Barron's departmental records, she did not hesitate; she brought them directly to Lord Wooster, presenting the evidence with the same mathematical certainty that had defined her life. The irregular flows of gold, the unexplained withdrawals, the careful obfuscation of certain transactions, these were not opinions or suspicions. They were facts. Numbers do not lie.

But Lord Wooster's response shifted something in her. The reassignment came not as accusation but as opportunity. Barron needed someone with her particular gifts. Someone who could see patterns where others saw only chaos. What Wooster did not tell her, what she would discover only through bitter experience, was that she had been chosen precisely because she possessed no attachments, no one to lose, no emotional obligations that might cloud her judgment during the trials ahead.

Olivia's greatest strength was her isolation; it was also her most dangerous vulnerability.

Her motivation has always been straightforward: to serve the system, to maintain order, to prove her worth through work. Yet something fractured the

moment she noticed those anomalies. The empire she had served with absolute sincerity, the one she could recite the oath for without a tremor in her voice, was not what she believed it to be. Her greatest fear is not danger or death; it is meaninglessness, the possibility that all her discipline and sacrifice have been in service of something rotten at its core. Her weakness lies in her need for certainty. When the systems that have always guided her begin to fail, she retreats into simple sums, counting her breaths like a child, trying to restore the orderly world she understands.

What drives her deepest secret is not ambition but something far more personal: the recognition that the locket she carries, the one bearing an illustration of Prince and Princess that she touches like a talisman, represents the only real hope she has ever dared to hold. When anxious, when the world becomes too complex to calculate, she opens that locket.

It is not faith in any traditional sense; it is faith that something about the world might still be just, that somewhere nobility and goodness still exist in their purest form.

The friendship that forms between Olivia and Princess Szeret becomes the emotional engine of everything that follows. It is unexpected, intense, and profoundly terrifying to a woman who has never allowed herself to care about anything but her work. Szeret sees in Olivia not an accountant, not an outsider, but a person worthy of fascination. She finds Olivia's hand-held mechanical calculator, that brass cylinder with its intricate levers, more mesmerizing than any jewel in the castle. In turn, Olivia begins to see the world through Szeret's eyes and finds it both beautiful and terrible. Her arc carries her from absolute certainty into profound doubt and, eventually, toward a kind of faith that is neither naive nor dependent on systems that can fail. She learns to dance, to let loose the control she has maintained so carefully, to allow herself to be known.

During the campaign, Olivia suffers from terrible airsickness on the blimp, an indignity that shakes her composure more than danger ever could. She

discovers she becomes drunk with remarkable ease, a vulnerability that embarrasses her. She develops a complex jealousy watching Jack and Eppy together, a feeling she cannot calculate or control, which troubles her deeply. Yet she also proves herself capable of extraordinary things: she defeats Devorlen Koss at cards through nothing but observation and logic, and her mind becomes sharply attuned to the patterns of corruption and deception that plague the kingdoms.

Olivia's outward presentation is precise. Her hair is always tied back, her clothing practical and unmarked by excess. She moves with economical grace. Jack calls her 'Liv, a familiarity that both pleases and unsettles her in ways she cannot quite articulate. Inside, she is learning what it means to have something to lose, to care for someone beyond the reach of calculation or control.

She builds friendships the way she builds ledgers: through service. When she helps Eppy balance the Bastion Inn's books, when she untangles Rozito's market accounts, when she finds the error in a merchant's figures that has been costing him money for months, she earns trust without asking for it. This is how she connects in a city where she is a stranger: by being useful in the most practical sense, by demonstrating that her particular gift for numbers can make other people's lives better.

Secret

SHE LIES WHEN SHE TELLS HERSELF THE EMPIRE IS JUST, THAT DEVOTION TO ITS SYSTEMS WILL KEEP HER SAFE. THE TRUTH IS FAR MORE DANGEROUS: SAFETY IS AN ILLUSION, AND THE VERY SYSTEMS SHE HAS SERVED MAY BE THE SOURCE OF THE SUFFERING SHE WITNESSES. HER JOURNEY IS LEARNING TO HOLD BOTH TRUTHS SIMULTANEOUSLY AND TO CHOOSE HER PATH NOT BECAUSE THE SYSTEM DEMANDS IT, BUT BECAUSE HER CONSCIENCE REQUIRES IT.

Campaign Use

OLIVIA SERVES AS THE PLAYER CHARACTER MOST LIKELY TO QUESTION AUTHORITY, MAKE DIFFICULT MORAL DISCOVERIES, AND GROW THROUGH EMOTIONAL CONNECTION RATHER THAN COMBAT. SHE IS THE CAMPAIGN'S CONSCIENCE AND CALCULATOR. GAMES THAT EMPLOY HER AS A PROTAGONIST SHOULD EMPHASIZE INVESTIGATION, DISCOVERY, AND THE EMOTIONAL WEIGHT OF LEARNING THAT TRUSTED INSTITUTIONS HARBOR CORRUPTION. HER JEALOUSY, VULNERABILITY, AND GROWING STRENGTH CREATE NATURAL STORY HOOKS. SHE BRIDGES THE GAP BETWEEN MUNDANE REALITY AND MAGICAL TRANSFORMATION, MAKING HER AN IDEAL VIEWPOINT CHARACTER FOR UNDERSTANDING THE STAKES.

BARRON WHITEHALLOW: THE DYING DIPLOMAT

Barron Whitehallow moves through the world with the practiced grace of a man who has spent four decades learning how to present precisely what others need to see. At sixty-three, he remains striking; his modified

Foreign Minister's uniform reflects taste and confidence. The blood-red lining of his coat catches light as he descends the parliamentary steps, his high-collared vest framing a face that still carries the bones of the man he was when younger. The cape sweeps behind him with deliberate elegance. Yet anyone paying close attention would notice the tremor in his hand, the way he steadies himself against the railing, the careful rhythm of his breathing.

He is dying. The illness moves slowly enough that only those intimate with him truly understand the urgency, but it is there nonetheless, a passenger he has carried since his time at the Mounds near Barrow, where

Terrassia's asphyxiating gases scarred his lungs, or perhaps from something far more personal, far more complicated. The handkerchiefs he carries are fine linen, monogrammed, and he has learned to excuse himself with practiced discretion when he needs to cough. When they come away with blood, he simply folds them quickly and moves forward.

What drives Barron is not ambition, though he has climbed high enough to sit in the councils of power. It is the belief, perhaps naive, perhaps courageous, that violence can be prevented through dialogue, that understanding can bridge even the deepest chasms between enemies. When asked how he justifies his peaceful philosophy in a world bloodied by warfare, he answers with mathematics: Where hate and violence reduce populations, love, consistently, does the reverse. He has seen enough of war to know the mathematics of peace are far superior, yet he has never quite found the courage to face the price such mathematics demand.

His greatest fear is not death; he has made peace with that. It is irrelevance, the possibility that his carefully constructed philosophy might crumble on contact with truths he has spent decades avoiding. His weakness is his romantic history, specifically his unresolved entanglement with Kiraline. That relationship is complicated in ways he has never fully disclosed, touching on obligations and debts that have twisted through the years into something neither quite friendship nor quite enmity. Kiraline can appear at his bedside uninvited; she moves through the castle as though walls do not constrain her. She is dangerous, and Barron is aware of this, yet he cannot quite summon the will to remove her from his life entirely.

What few in the present know is that Barron first came to Kormor Kirak decades ago as a young General Counsel, and in those years he and Kiraline

shared something genuine. Whether it was love or mutual fascination between two brilliant strategists hardly matters now. She earned his trust, and he earned hers, and the debt that created runs deeper than any diplomatic arrangement. He still wears the old uniform from those days -- modified, elevated, but recognizable to anyone who knew him then. The sword cane he carries is from that era as well, an elegant weapon that most mistake for a gentleman's affectation.

What others do not know, what Barron himself tries not to examine too closely, is that he carries not one but two powerful artifacts. The gold medallion bearing a dragon's head with amber eyes and blood-drop pupils remains his key to the castle's deeper places. His signet ring accesses vaults where state secrets rest in shadow. He recruited Olivia, Jack, and others to this mission not through calculation but through something closer to instinct. He sensed in them qualities his mission would require: Olivia's incorruptible logic, Jack's loyalty despite his burden, and a capacity in all of them to transform fear into action.

Barron's lie is elegant in its construction: he believes he can broker peace without confronting the personal debts he owes to the queen, the complicated history that binds him to Kiraline, the way his youthful choices have shaped the present conflicts. His truth is far more devastating: his body is failing, his past is catching up with inexorable force, and peace may ultimately require a sacrifice so personal and so complete that he cannot yet name it. By the series' progression, the complications of his history ensnare him. Kiraline turns him, not through force but through the leverage of past affection and present desperation. He becomes her unwitting agent, serving ends he does not fully comprehend, trapped between his dying body and his divided heart.

Those who knew him before the ministry, those few remaining friends like

Lord Wooster, still call him Benji in private moments, and in those moments something younger flickers across his face. He was a General

Counsel in Kormor Kirak before his present post, and the skills he learned there, the alliances he forged, the enemies he made, all of these continue to shape his present. He dresses with purpose; every button, every fold of fabric, communicates authority and refinement. Yet beneath the uniform, he is increasingly hollow, running on will and momentum, drinking more than he used to, sleeping less, his cough becoming a constant companion he can no longer quite excuse away.

Secret

HE LIES WHEN HE CLAIMS HE CAN NAVIGATE THE PRESENT CRISIS WITHOUT RECKONING WITH HIS PAST. THE TRUTH IS THAT HIS PERSONAL HISTORY HAS BECOME INEXTRICABLE FROM THE POLITICAL MOMENT; HIS DEBTS ARE BEING CALLED DUE, AND THE COST MAY BE EVERYTHING HE HAS BUILT IN THE NAME OF PEACE.

Campaign Use

BARRON FUNCTIONS AS THE CAMPAIGN'S MORAL CENTER AND ITS POINT OF MAXIMUM VULNERABILITY. HE IS MENTOR, GUIDE, AND CAUTIONARY TALE. GAMES THAT EMPLOY HIM EFFECTIVELY SHOULD EMPHASIZE THE WAYS GOOD INTENTIONS CAN BE CORRUPTED THROUGH PERSONAL COMPROMISE, THE WAY NOBILITY AND PRAGMATISM COLLIDE, AND THE TRAGIC COST OF CHOOSING PEACE OVER JUSTICE WHEN CIRCUMSTANCES DEMAND BOTH. HIS ILLNESS PROVIDES NATURAL NARRATIVE TIME CONSTRAINTS; HIS RELATIONSHIP WITH KIRALINE OFFERS OPPORTUNITIES FOR BETRAYAL, REDEMPTION, OR BOTH. HE IS THE CHARACTER WHO TEACHES PLAYERS THAT INFLUENCE AND POWER CREATE OBLIGATIONS THAT CANNOT BE ESCAPED THROUGH WILL ALONE.

JACK WINBOW: THE SOLDIER'S SHADOW

Jack moves through the world as though expecting violence at any moment, yet his violence, when it comes, carries a grace that speaks to years of discipline.

At thirty-eight, he appears a decade younger, until you look at his eyes; they have seen things that have worn the youth out of them gradually and completely. He is introduced to the party in the role of a stable-hand, an identity he maintains so thoroughly that several members miss what he truly is until the moment becomes impossible to ignore. His hair is unkempt, falling across his scarred face with a kind of deliberate negligence, and when he smiles, it reaches those tired eyes with genuine warmth that seems almost incongruous for a man built like he is.

His instinct in any confrontation is to de-escalate. He positions himself between threats and the people he protects, uses body language and calm voice before he ever reaches for a blade. But when the situation turns and de-escalation fails, something else takes over -- a berserker fury that has frightened allies as much as enemies. The shift is sudden and total. The man who was talking a drunk out of a knife fight becomes something primal and devastating. He hates this about himself. He drinks too much, a habit he manages rather than controls, and the alcohol dulls the edges of memories he would rather not carry. He speaks half a dozen languages picked up from years traveling the empire with the military, and he uses this knowledge to make anti-empire comments just pointed enough to needle Olivia without quite crossing the line into genuine disrespect. His love of animals runs deep, rooted in his years working the stables at the Battle Academy before Barron recruited him. Horses, dogs, even the rats in the stable walls -- he understands them in a way that goes beyond training into something instinctual, something connected to the nature he carries inside him.

He stops a Cavalry Count in the act of beating a stallion with a shove so casual it appears almost accidental; the Count finds himself on his back, stunned not by violence but by the absence of it. Jack guides a horse through an obstacle course of flame as though horse and rider were one organism, moving with the effortless certainty of someone for whom such things represent basic

competency rather than achievement. He carries a Shamsir, an elegantly curved blade that speaks to training beyond the kingdom's standard military practice, and a pouch of throwing daggers, each weighted with the precision of a weapon trusted in crisis. Yet his primary weapon is something altogether different: a

Spetum that folds into a cane, a marvel of engineering that extends to a six-foot length with a central blade flanked by side prongs. In his hands it becomes something alive, an extension of will and training that moves through combat like a dance executed at lethal speed.

The scars along his back tell their own story, parallel claw-mark lines that no standard weapon could produce. On full moon nights, his room is empty, and those who ask where he has gone receive no answer from Barron beyond a cryptic observation: your affliction may prove advantageous.

Nero, the dog who appears mysterious in other ways, sniffs the air when

Jack enters a room and something passes between them, an understanding that requires no words. Eppy, when the moment comes, whispers to him that she knows what he is. He is a lycanthrope, a werewolf, a man who contains within himself a nature that civilization teaches him to deny and fear.

What drives Jack is the need to protect others from himself and from the darkness of the world both. He is haunted not by supernatural dread but by the mundane horrors of military service. He describes battle in terms both visceral and raw: a scrum of hacking and slashing, barely-grown kids screaming and crying, then going quiet. He has killed. He has watched children die. He has seen enough of human cruelty to know that his own supernatural nature is not the most dangerous thing in the world. His greatest fear is not losing control but losing the ability to choose, becoming a thing that acts on instinct alone rather than will.

His weakness lies in his isolation. He has trained himself to distance from others, to keep his burden private, to believe that his curse remains his problem alone. He processes his trauma through physical discipline; he practices combat forms endlessly, moves that have become meditation more than training. He cleans his weapons with the patience of ritual. He invites Olivia to dance, a gesture that costs him something because it means stepping outside the armor he has constructed. He tells her something true and brutal: you could also try fear. If something you encounter scares the hell out of you, run. The advice is less tactical than philosophical; it grants her permission to acknowledge terror as valid response.

His relationship with Eppy is tender in ways that catch people off-guard. She whispers to him; they dance together; she makes tea for two when she prepares her evening drink. There is in this relationship the possibility of genuine connection, someone who knows what he is and does not flinch. It is perhaps the thing he fears most: not rejection, but acceptance. Acceptance means he cannot maintain the narrative that he must suffer alone.

Jack's outward presentation is carefully constructed casualness. The unkempt hair, the scarred face, the worn leather of his clothing, all of these communicate that he is not concerned with how others perceive him.

In truth, the casualness is as deliberate as formal dress would be. He wears scars like other men wear medals. Internally, he is learning what it means to exist as something other than human without surrendering his humanity. His lie is that he can outrun what he is, contain it, keep it sealed away from those he cares for, never allow it to define or determine his actions. His truth is far more complex: his nature is part of himself he must learn to accept, and the people he has sworn to protect may ultimately have need of him to embrace it fully.

Secret

HE LIES WHEN HE CLAIMS HIS AFFLICTION IS SHAMEFUL, SOMETHING TO HIDE FROM THOSE WORTHY OF PROTECTION. THE TRUTH IS THAT HIS NATURE, PROPERLY INTEGRATED, IS A SOURCE OF STRENGTH, AND THE PEOPLE WHO LOVE HIM MAY NEED THAT STRENGTH MORE THAN THEY NEED HIS SELF-PUNISHMENT.

Campaign Use

JACK REPRESENTS THE CAMPAIGN'S CAPACITY FOR REDEMPTION, THE POSSIBILITY THAT WHAT SOCIETY DEEMS MONSTROUS MIGHT INSTEAD BE MISUNDERSTOOD. HE IS THE CHARACTER WHO TEACHES BY EXAMPLE THAT TRAUMA NEED NOT DEFINE DESTINY, THAT ISOLATION IS A CHOICE RATHER THAN NECESSITY, AND THAT STRENGTH WITHOUT CONNECTION BECOMES CRUELTY. GAMES THAT EMPLOY HIM SHOULD EMPHASIZE HIS CONFLICT BETWEEN TRAINING AND INSTINCT, CONTROL AND ACCEPTANCE, ISOLATION AND BELONGING. HIS WEREWOLF NATURE PROVIDES OPPORTUNITIES FOR BOTH SPECTACULAR ACTION SEQUENCES AND INTIMATE CHARACTER MOMENTS. HE IS THE CHARACTER WHO DEMONSTRATES THAT THE REAL WORK OF GROWTH HAPPENS NOT ON BATTLEFIELDS BUT IN QUIET MOMENTS OF TRUST.

PRINCESS SZERET VERESZ: THE DARK CHEERFUL THING

Princess Szeret Veresz gallops out of the castle gate on horseback at night, racing through streets designed for carriages and protocol, and the people cheer as she passes. They have learned not to cheer too loudly or for too long, because their faces fall after she disappears, as though her presence grants them something their normal lives cannot sustain. She is in her twenties, with a goth's aesthetic and a child's spirit, dark and menacing in appearance but cheery and delightful in manifestation. The contradiction, rather than confusing those who know her, forms the core of her appeal. She is everything she appears to be, and none of it, simultaneously.

Her garb is carefully chosen to evoke menace and danger; her clothing speaks of shadows and forbidden things. Yet she moves through the world with an impulsiveness and joy that seems incongruous with her appearance. When she greets Rozito, the famous duelist, her first words are not protocol but directness: don't bow to me, we're friends. She strips down to garter and hose in a dressmaker's shop, entirely unselfconscious, to try on the leather bodysuit she prefers to the dresses her mother insists she wear. She has a telescope in her bedroom, hidden behind curtains, because she uses it to observe the world she is forbidden to explore.

Szeret has never seen the ocean. She cannot read. She does not know what mathematics is. She has never encountered electric lights or indoor plumbing, existing in a castle that seems frozen in time, cut off from the modern world by palace walls and her mother's strict protection. Yet she possesses a clarity that sophisticated adults often lack. She finds Olivia's hand-held mechanical calculator more fascinating than any jewel in the royal vaults. She rates people and experiences by food names, a personal taxonomy that seems nonsensical until one realizes it is actually quite accurate: Mushroom for earthy things, Tomato for passionate things, Lettuce for boring things, Peach for delightful things. She says Flirty-Flirt-Flirt with genuine delight when something amuses her, and Uggh when she finds something tedious. She refers to herself in the third person: Szeret loves dancing. Szeret hates rules.

What drives her is a hunger for experience, for knowledge, for freedom.

Her greatest fear is remaining imprisoned, not by walls but by her own limitations and her mother's control. Her weakness is her inexperience and her trusting nature; she assumes others operate from the same impulsive goodness she embodies and is repeatedly surprised and hurt by selfishness. Her deepest secret is something she does not fully understand herself: she can transform. Her body can shift into something else, something leopard-like and powerful, and when her excitement or anger reaches certain heights, the transformation

occurs whether she wills it or not. Her clothes shed as her body shifts, leaving her temporarily naked and utterly undefended in her human form during the transformation process. She has charged Rozito in the Hallaset Fields in her beast form, moving with speed and strength capable of taking down a grown man. She possesses the power to be a warrior, yet no one has ever trained her in how to use such power.

Her relationship with her mother is a constant tension. Kiraline wants her daughter away from humans, isolated, controllable. Szeret wants the opposite; she craves connection, conversation, the everyday messy intimacy of friendship. Her immediate attachment to Olivia is intense and charged, running deeper than simple friendship. She sees in Olivia something she recognizes as kindred, a fellow prisoner of duty learning to value freedom. This relationship becomes the emotional engine of the entire series, transforming both women, complicating their paths, making them vulnerable to each other in ways that terrify and delight them both.

She moves through the city like something wild wearing a crown. Her preferred mode of travel is parkour -- leaping between rooftops, scaling walls with her Spider Climb, dropping from heights that would kill a human and landing in a crouch that barely interrupts her stride. She is bisexual and polyamorous, loving freely across the boundaries that her mother's court considers proper, and this openness is both her strength and a source of constant tension with Kiraline. When strangers arrive in Kormor Kirak, Szeret follows them. She shapeshifts into birds, cats, or other small creatures and tracks the newcomers through the city streets, watching them with animal eyes that carry an intelligence no beast should possess. This is how she first encounters Olivia and Jack -- not as a princess but as a pair of bright eyes observing from a rooftop, a creature that seems to be everywhere they turn.

What others do not understand about Szeret is that her cheerfulness is not naivete; it is a deliberate choice. She could rage at her confinement, could

resent her mother's control, could withdraw into bitterness. Instead, she chooses lightness, finds joy in small moments, treats friendship as the most precious treasure. Yet she is also her mother's daughter, a creature of power and danger. Her lie is elegant in its tragedy: she believes she can bridge the gap between her constrained royal life and the wider world without consequences, can be both the princess imprisoned in the castle and the wild thing she is becoming, can love freely without drawing danger to those she loves. Her truth is darker: she is her mother's daughter in ways she does not yet understand, and that heritage may carry costs she cannot yet calculate.

Szeret's outward presentation is a studied contradiction. Dark clothes, dark atmosphere, yet the way she moves is light and free. She carries herself with royal bearing when required, but her bearing is always undercut with playfulness, with the sense that she finds protocol tedious and convention absurd. Inside, she is learning what it means to love beyond the castle walls, to trust that goodness exists outside her mother's warnings, to discover that her own power is not something to hide but something to understand.

Secret

SHE LIES WHEN SHE TELLS HERSELF SHE CAN EXPLORE THE WIDER WORLD WITHOUT DRAWING DANGER TO THOSE SHE LOVES OR UNDERSTANDING THE DARKNESS IN HER OWN NATURE. THE TRUTH IS THAT SHE IS INCREASINGLY AWARE OF HER MOTHER'S PLANS, HER OWN POWER, AND THE WAY HER HERITAGE COMPLICATES EVERYTHING.

Campaign Use

SZERET EMBODIES THE CAMPAIGN'S CAPACITY FOR JOY AND THE TERRIBLE COST OF MAINTAINING INNOCENCE IN A WORLD THAT DEMANDS GROWTH. SHE IS THE CHARACTER WHO TRANSFORMS OTHERS BY FORCING THEM TO EXAMINE THEIR ASSUMPTIONS, WHO LOVES FIERCELY AND RISKS DEVASTATION, WHO REPRESENTS POSSIBILITY ITSELF. GAMES THAT EMPLOY HER SHOULD EMPHASIZE HER GROWTH FROM SHELTERED ROYAL TO SOMETHING FAR MORE COMPLEX, THE WAY HER FRIENDSHIPS TRANSFORM HER UNDERSTANDING OF THE WORLD, AND THE CONSTANT TENSION BETWEEN HER DESIRE FOR FREEDOM AND HER DESTINY AS A CREATURE OF DARKNESS. HER TRANSFORMATION ABILITY PROVIDES SPECTACULAR COMBAT MOMENTS, BUT HER REAL POWER LIES IN EMOTIONAL AUTHENTICITY. SHE IS THE CHARACTER WHO TEACHES THAT CHEERFULNESS AND DANGER ARE NOT OPPOSITES BUT CAN COEXIST IN A SINGLE SOUL.

CAPITULUM

QUEEN KIRALJNE VERESZ EROSZAKOS



The ballroom falls silent when she enters. Not from sound, but from cessation. The air itself seems to pause. She descends from the upper balcony as though

the laws of movement do not quite apply to her, each guest finding themselves on bent knee before conscious thought arrives.

Kiraline Veresz Eroszakos wears the appearance of a woman in her forties, but this is theater. The truth is older, patient, and lethal.

Her wardrobe is a statement of deliberate anachronism: she wears clothing from earlier eras, ornamental couture that predates the current fashions by centuries, draped in silks from the Terrassian southern reaches, jewelry that catches light in ways that defy simple geometry. The effect is regal and unsettling in equal measure -- a queen dressed for a court that no longer exists, embarrassing her daughter with fashions that belong to a different age. When she moves, there is no weight to her. The dress does not sway so much as flow, as if she walks on currents invisible to others. She crosses entire rooms by means she does not explain, and the observers develop sudden interest in their feet. There is magic here, but not the kind studied in academies.

The queen once held something with Barron that was romantic in appearance. A hunter can seem gentle to prey. She strokes his face with fingers that contain centuries, kisses him with lips soft enough to draw blood, then tastes what she has drawn. When he refuses her offer of eternal bond, she drops the masquerade entirely. Her jaw unhinges to impossible angles, revealing rows of serrated teeth arranged in spiraling patterns. A tongue moves with serpentine grace, tasting the air between them. This is what she is beneath the couture and the charisma. This is what she has always been.

Her greatest fear lives in contradiction: she fears irrelevance more than destruction, yet moves through the world as though destruction itself should fear her. She loves power absolutely, loves dominion, loves the sensation of will imposing itself upon flesh and bone and spirit. Her weakness is in her own mythology. She has convinced herself that she is inevitable, that history bends toward her ambitions, and this certainty has made her sloppy. She keeps a Gawky Model in her private chambers, and when the girl no longer entertains

her, she does not simply discard her. She transforms the death into performance: the body suspended in trellis formation, runes carved in necromantic patterns, the corpse pressed into service as a bridge to other realms.

This is the action of someone who has never been questioned. This is the action of someone who has forgotten how to hide.

What drives her is the conviction that humanity's reign is failure, that civilization of flesh and mortal thought is a disease upon the world. Her deepest secret is that she practices necromancy despite outlawing it among her subjects, because the outlawing serves a purpose: it makes the practice rare enough to be hers alone, makes her the only hand that can reach across the veil. The wedding was never about peace.

It was bait. The wealthiest and most powerful humans of both empires gathering in one place, unguarded in their celebration, while she built a working large enough to trap their souls and bind them into service.

She opened the gates not from generosity but from tactical calculation.

When the paranormal age arrives, when humanity's order collapses beneath the weight of things that should not exist, she will stand at the center of the ruin and call herself mother.

She rarely speaks, and this is part of her power. When she does, the words carry the weight of pronouncement rather than conversation. Her speech is precise, musical, utterly devoid of accent or regional inflection. She speaks as though language itself is something she invented. Her court reflects her aesthetic: a Cenobite grandeur where beauty and suffering exist as complements rather than opposites, where the masquerades blur the line between pleasure and horror, where guests are never entirely certain whether they are being entertained or tested. Her habits include the consumption of specific bloods, the collection of artifacts from dying civilizations, and the keeping of journals written in ciphers that would take centuries to decode. Her outward presenta-

tion is immaculate, calculated, and designed to make you forget you are in the presence of a predator. Her internal experience is one of pure satisfaction. She knows what she is. She knows what comes. She is patient because she has learned that the cruelest victories are the ones that no one sees arriving until it is far too late to stop them.

Secret

THE LIE KIRALINE TELLS THE WORLD IS THAT SHE IS A BENEVOLENT QUEEN OFFERING PEACE BETWEEN EMPIRES, A BRIDGE BETWEEN OLD ENMITIES. THE TRUTH IS THAT SHE IS AN APEX PREDATOR BUILDING A TRAP VAST ENOUGH TO END AN AGE. SHE IS NOT OFFERING SALVATION. SHE IS OFFERING DAMNATION WITH EXCELLENT TABLE SETTINGS.

Campaign Use

KIRALINE SERVES AS THE HIDDEN ANTAGONIST WHOSE TRUE NATURE ONLY EMERGES THROUGH INVESTIGATION AND REVELATION. EARLY ENCOUNTERS SHOULD EMPHASIZE HER PRETERNATURAL CHARISMA AND POWER, MAKING HER SEEM GENUINELY DIPLOMATIC. AS EVIDENCE ACCUMULATES (THE GAWKY MODEL'S BODY, NECROMANTIC RESEARCH, THE MISSING SOULS FROM THE WEDDING), PLAYERS SHOULD REALIZE THEY ARE NOT PREVENTING A CONFLICT BUT INTERRUPTING A WORKING ALREADY IN MOTION. HER RESOURCES ARE VAST, HER REACH EXTENDS INTO BOTH EMPIRES, AND SHE HAS CULTIVATED AGENTS THROUGHOUT THE CITY. DIRECT CONFRONTATION MAY NOT BE THE PATH TO VICTORY. STOPPING HER MIGHT REQUIRE UNDERSTANDING HER PHILOSOPHY DEEPLY ENOUGH TO TURN HER OWN SERVANTS AGAINST HER, OR FINDING A WAY TO CORRUPT THE WORKING ITSELF.

CAPITULUM

DEVORLEN ROSS



Terrassian officers rarely smile. The war took that from them. Koss rides alongside Barron through streets rendered temporary by steam and smoke, his clockwork arm producing a steady click-whir rhythm that becomes almost

meditative if you stop resisting it. The mechanical fingers are precise, calibrated, less remarkable in their construction than in how completely Koss has integrated them into his identity. When asked about the arm, he offers no self-pity, no ceremony. "The least remarkable element of my identity," he says, and means it.

He is a soldier in the way some people are born to soldiering. His uniform fits him the way skin fits bone. His eyes catalog threats the way weather vanes read wind. The war cost him his arm and gave him a prosthetic that functions better than flesh ever did, which strikes Koss as fitting. He lost a limb in the service of empire and received a machine in return. The metaphor requires no elaboration.

What drives Koss is pragmatism so complete it becomes almost a philosophy. He does not believe in peace, not truly, but he believes in the cessation of active violence as a practical tool. When he explains to Olivia the truth about the wedding, he does so without apology but also without cruelty. Children who have never met. A political arrangement wearing the mask of romance. He tells her this because she deserves the truth and because lying to her would insult her intelligence. Later, speaking to Barron, he apologizes for the gas attacks and the casualties of the war. Soldier to soldier. No abstraction. No empire between them, just the mutual acknowledgment that they ordered people to die and that the people died. His greatest fear is that someday he will stop feeling the weight of those decisions, and his weakness is that he suspects this fear may already be realized.

His deepest secret is that he does not know whether his contributions to the theater reconstruction serve peace or serve a larger Terrassian strategy. The machines he provides do the work of three men in half the time. The efficiency is undeniable. But machines can be tools of development or instruments of control, and Koss understands both possibilities well enough to remain genuinely uncertain which he is facilitating. He loves the game of cards, loves

the mathematics of risk, loves the way a truly good player reads not the cards but the people holding them. He loses to Olivia because she is genuinely better, and he respects her for this without reservation.

Koss's habits are the habits of a soldier: he maintains his equipment meticulously, he sleeps lightly and wakes quickly, he speaks only when speech serves a purpose. His speech patterns are clipped, efficient, stripped of flourish. His clothing is military, even when civilian, with subtle tells of rank and training visible in the way he wears it. His internal experience is one of profound isolation. He has lived in war and trained in war and now exists in a provisional peace that feels like a performance everyone has agreed to. He suspects it will not last. He suspects that many things will not last.

Secret

THE LIE KOSS MAINTAINS IS THAT HE IS SIMPLY A SOLDIER FOLLOWING ORDERS, THAT THE RESPONSIBILITY FOR WHAT HE DOES BELONGS TO THE EMPIRE GIVING THE ORDERS. THE TRUTH IS THAT HE CHOOSES, EVERY DAY, TO FOLLOW THOSE ORDERS, AND THIS CHOICE IS HIS ALONE.

Campaign Use

KOSS FUNCTIONS AS THE REPRESENTATIVE OF TERRASSIAN INTERESTS AND AS THE VOICE OF PRACTICAL MILITARY PERSPECTIVE. HE CAN PROVIDE INFORMATION ABOUT TERRASSIAN CAPABILITIES AND INTENTIONS, SERVE AS A BRIDGE TO TERRASSIAN RESOURCES, OR BECOME A PROBLEM WHEN HIS INTERESTS DIVERGE FROM THE PARTY'S. HE IS NOT CRUEL AND NOT EASILY CORRUPTED, BUT HE IS COMMITTED TO HIS EMPIRE'S SURVIVAL IN A WAY THAT TRANSCENDS PERSONAL MORALITY. WHAT MAKES KOSS MOST INTERESTING AS A CAMPAIGN ELEMENT IS THAT HIS AGENDA IS NOT THE SAME AS THE TRUE VILLAIN'S. WHEN THE CONSPIRACY REVEALS ITSELF IN ITS FULLEST FORM, KOSS MAY PROVE TO BE AN UNLIKELY ALLY -- HIS PRAGMATISM LEADING HIM TO WORK WITH THE HEROES AGAINST A THREAT THAT ENDANGERS TERRASSIA AS MUCH AS ALBION. USE HIM TO RAISE DIFFICULT QUESTIONS ABOUT THE ETHICS OF MILITARY ACTION, TO PROVIDE ACCESS TO RESTRICTED INFORMATION, OR AS AN ANTAGONIST WHO IS FUNDAMENTALLY RIGHT ABOUT THE DANGERS THE CITY FACES EVEN AS HIS METHODS REMAIN QUESTIONABLE. HIS EVENTUAL COOPERATION WITH THE PARTY, SHOULD IT OCCUR, SHOULD FEEL EARNED RATHER THAN GIVEN.

CAPITULUM

EPPY FLINDER



The Bastion Inn is older than it should be. Eppy is younger than she should be, or perhaps timeless in a way that makes age irrelevant. She wears earth tones and natural fabrics, moves through the world with a freedom that suggests she

has forgotten most of the petty rules that constrain others. Her ears are her most distinctive feature: uniquely shaped, sleek, pointed, elegant in a way that speaks to ancestry rather than affectation. Not human. Or not entirely.

Her grandmother spoke a different tongue, one that belonged to a time when empires were not yet dust. The ancestors ruled the world so long ago that the world has forgotten this fact entirely, has rewritten history to position humanity as the original inheritors. The few who remain from that age stay alive in secret, keeping their knowledge close, their genealogies closer. Eppy knows what Jack Mackie is before he knows it himself, and she tells him gently, without judgment, the way one might acknowledge a secret shared between old friends.

What drives Eppy is the preservation of the old knowledge, the keeping of things that would otherwise vanish. Her greatest fear is irrelevance, the slow fade into legend, the transformation of her entire civilization into myth. Her weakness is that she cares too much about individuals when she should be thinking systemically, and this has gotten people killed. Her deepest secret is that the comet that fell from the sky centuries ago was not chance, and her grandmother's death was connected to its arrival in ways she has never fully understood. She loves solitude and she loves good liquor and she loves the specific pleasure of seeing someone understand something true about themselves in a single moment of clarity.

The cocktails she mixes are constructed with intention: honey and herbal ingredients arranged in combinations that should not work but do,

Dewrder Hylifol among them, recipes from a time when herbalism was closer to magic than it is now. She whispers in Jack's ear at the bar with the casual intimacy of someone who has known him across multiple incarnations. When he tells her he does not love Kormor Kirak, she responds with certainty: "You will." Not optimism. Knowledge. She bridges the old world and the new in a

way no other character can because she remembers both clearly, has seen them shift and change and resolve.

The Trompe l'Oeil ceiling of the Bastion Inn is a map of history nobody else remembers. The patterns seem abstract to most observers, but to those with eyes to see, they chart the rise and fall of civilizations that predate both empires by distances that make history as humans know it seem like recent events. Eppy knows necromancy not as theory but as practical craft, learned from her grandmother in quiet moments, used sparingly and with full understanding of the cost. Her speech is warm and unhurried, with occasional lapses into older word patterns that suggest languages running beneath her modern fluency. Her habits include the collection of objects from lost times, the keeping of records in forms that will survive multiple deaths of empires, and the playing of music on instruments most would not recognize.

Secret

THE LIE EPPY PRESENTS TO THE WORLD IS THAT SHE IS SIMPLY AN INNKEEPER OF CONSIDERABLE SKILL AND MYSTERIOUS TASTES. THE TRUTH IS THAT SHE IS A REFUGEE FROM A CIVILIZATION SO OLD THAT ITS EXISTENCE HAS BECOME MYTHOLOGY, AND EVERYTHING SHE DOES IS AN ACT OF PRESERVATION AGAINST INEVITABLE FORGETTING.

Campaign Use

EPPY SERVES AS THE KEEPER OF IMPOSSIBLE KNOWLEDGE, THE GUIDE TO THE OLD WORLD THAT CONTINUES TO BLEED INTO THE NEW. SHE CAN PROVIDE INFORMATION ABOUT WHAT JACK MACKIE IS, ABOUT THE NATURE OF NECROMANCY, ABOUT THE TRUE HISTORY OF THE LAND. SHE OFFERS WISDOM WITHOUT IMPOSING IT. SHE IS NOT AN ENEMY UNLESS THE PARTY MOVES AGAINST THE OLD WORLD, BUT SHE IS ALSO NOT A SIMPLE ALLY. HER LOYALTIES ARE TO PRESERVATION AND TO INDIVIDUALS WHO HAVE EARNED HER RESPECT. SHE CAN POINT TOWARD LARGER TRUTHS OR WITHHOLD THEM ENTIRELY. USE HER AS A QUESTGIVER WHO SENDS THE PARTY TOWARD UNDERSTANDING RATHER THAN MERE ACTION, AS A SOURCE OF DANGEROUS KNOWLEDGE, OR AS SOMEONE WHOSE FRIENDSHIP WITH ANOTHER CHARACTER CREATES INTERESTING COMPLICATIONS.

CAPITULUM

ROZJTO VAEJKOZO



The market manager moves through his domain like a merchant working three deceptions simultaneously. Rozito is a fixer of exceptional competence, a dealer in solutions for problems that official channels prefer not to

acknowledge. He dresses in foreign fabrics and colorful patterns that seem chosen specifically to make him memorable, to ensure that when people think of the market, they think of him. He is a royal appointee, given this position by Kiraline herself, which means he serves at her pleasure and knows it.

What drives Rozito is the desire to be useful, to matter, to exercise influence in a city where most people spend their lives being moved like pieces on a game board. His greatest fear is that his usefulness will be exhausted, that he will be discarded the moment the queen finds someone more compliant or more talented. His weakness is that this fear makes him dangerous, pushes him toward commitments that he would not otherwise make, toward practices he does not fully understand but pursues anyway in the hope that they might grant him protection or power or relevance.

His deepest secret is that he is not merely sympathetic to dark magic.

He is a practitioner. And he is operating under the queen's nose in a position she personally appointed, which means either he is being permitted this pursuit or he is being tested, and he genuinely cannot determine which.

He calls Szeret a friend and claims to be a traditionalist, someone who respects the old ways and the structures that hold society together.

When royals approach, he shifts nervously, forces smiles that do not quite reach his eyes. But when he is alone at Hallaset Fields, when the witnesses are limited to the trees and the thing in him that has been waiting, his mask slips entirely. He moves with efficient violence: the carriage driver's throat opens beneath the elegant scalpel he produces from a hidden sheath, blood spraying across earth that has seen older magics spilled here. Two Red Guards die next, quick thrusts between armor plates, the blade finding gaps that should not be so obvious but are when you know what you are looking for. And then the body. The corpse laid out, the runes carved with precision, the patterns

forming the shape of a figure with head and arms and legs, something ancient being pulled into modern flesh.

Rozito loves his work because work is the only place he feels fully real. He hates the constant performance, hates the feeling of being watched by his own patron, hates the possibility that he is being slowly positioned for some larger sacrifice. His internal experience is one of constant paranoia laced with ambition, a mind always calculating the next move, the next risk, the next person who might be useful or dangerous. His practical skills include the operation of the market, the management of complex supply chains, the practice of necromancy, and the ability to identify which officials can be bribed and which must be eliminated. His speech is jovial in company, precise and clipped when alone, with occasional slips into older words that suggest his family has connections to magical traditions running deeper than the official histories acknowledge.

Secret

THE LIE ROZITO TELLS HIMSELF IS THAT HE IS IN CONTROL OF HIS SITUATION, THAT HE HAS CHOSEN TO PRACTICE NECROMANCY AND THAT HE CAN STOP WHENEVER HE WISHES. THE TRUTH IS THAT THE MAGIC HAS CHOSEN HIM MORE THAN HE HAS CHOSEN IT, AND THE MOMENT HE ATTEMPTS TO STOP, HE WILL DISCOVER HOW LITTLE THE CHOICE WAS EVER HIS.

Campaign Use

ROZITO FUNCTIONS AS AN ANTAGONIST WHO MIGHT BE FLIPPED OR NEGOTIATED WITH, A VILLAIN WHO BELIEVES HE IS PRAGMATIC RATHER THAN EVIL. HIS POSITION IN THE MARKET MAKES HIM AN ESSENTIAL CONTACT FOR INFORMATION AND RESOURCES, BUT HIS INVOLVEMENT WITH NECROMANCY AND HIS POSITION AS THE QUEEN'S APPOINTEE MAKES HIM DANGEROUS. EARLY ENCOUNTERS SHOULD PRESENT HIM AS A HELPFUL MERCHANT BEFORE THE REVELATION OF HIS TRUE PRACTICES SHIFTS THE DYNAMIC. HE CAN SERVE AS A QUEST-GIVER, A RIVAL, OR AN UNLIKELY ALLY IF THE PARTY APPROACHES HIM CORRECTLY. HIS FEAR OF THE QUEEN MAKES HIM POTENTIALLY VULNERABLE TO RECRUITMENT IF THE PARTY CAN OFFER SOMETHING THAT SEEMS SAFER THAN HIS CURRENT SITUATION. HIS KNOWLEDGE OF NECROMANCY MEANS HE HAS INFORMATION ABOUT THE QUEEN'S PLANS, THOUGH EXTRACTING IT MAY REQUIRE NEGOTIATION OR SIGNIFICANT PRESSURE.

CAPITULUM

VARGA: THE WOLF IN PLAIN CLOTH

Varga is the local drunk, a fixture of the Bastion Inn's bar, always present in the background of scenes but never featured. He is large, hairy, and disheveled, with a booming laugh and an appetite for Eppy's Dewrder Hylifol that would kill a lesser man. Most people in Kormor Kirak consider him harmless -- a sad case, perhaps, someone who lost his way and found comfort at the bottom of a cup.

This is precisely what he wants them to believe.

Varga is a werewolf, and he works for Barron Whitehallow's darker purpose. He is the muscle behind operations that require deniability, the agent who carries out tasks that cannot be traced to the Albion Embassy or to anyone in the diplomatic establishment. He was recruited through a promise that cuts to the core of his condition: a cure for his lycanthropy. Barron -- or rather, the forces Barron serves -- promised Varga that when the great working is complete, the curse that has defined his life will be lifted. He will be human again. Whole again. Free to live without the monthly terror of losing himself to the beast.

The promise may be genuine or it may be a lie designed to exploit a desperate man. Varga does not know and has trained himself not to examine the question too carefully. He does what is asked: he killed the previous tax collector, he helped steal the treasury gold, he intimidated those who asked too many questions. He did these things with the efficiency of someone who has accepted that morality is a luxury reserved for people who are not monsters.

His presence in every scene is the detail nobody notices until it is too late. He was at the Bastion Inn when Olivia arrived. He was in the market when Rozito made his deal. He was near the Hallaset Fields on the nights when the dead refused to rest. Always in the background. Always dismissed.

What drives Varga is the desperate hope that he can be made whole. His greatest fear is that the cure will never come, that he has traded his soul for nothing, that the things he has done in service of a promise will define him in the end. His weakness is that this fear makes him dangerous and unpredictable; a man who believes he has nothing left to lose is capable of anything.

Secret

VARGA LIES WHEN HE PRETENDS TO BE NOTHING MORE THAN A TOWN DRUNK. THE TRUTH IS THAT HE IS THE MOST DANGEROUS PERSON IN ANY ROOM HE ENTERS, OPERATING AS THE HIDDEN ENFORCER OF A CONSPIRACY THAT MOST OF THE CITY CANNOT SEE. THE DEEPER TRUTH -- THE ONE THAT MIGHT REDEEM OR DESTROY HIM -- IS THAT HIS LOYALTY IS NOT TO THE CONSPIRACY BUT TO THE CURE, AND IF SOMEONE COULD OFFER HIM A GENUINE ALTERNATIVE, HIS ALLEGIANCE MIGHT SHIFT IN AN INSTANT.

Campaign Use

VARGA FUNCTIONS AS THE HIDDEN VILLAIN NOBODY SUSPECTS UNTIL THE REVEAL RECONTEXTUALIZES EVERY SCENE HE APPEARED IN. HIS PRESENCE SHOULD BE ESTABLISHED EARLY AND OFTEN, ALWAYS IN THE BACKGROUND, ALWAYS SEEMINGLY IRRELEVANT. WHEN THE TRUTH EMERGES, PLAYERS SHOULD EXPERIENCE THE SHOCK OF RECOGNITION -- HE WAS ALWAYS THERE. HIS WEREWOLF NATURE MAKES HIM A FORMIDABLE COMBATANT, BUT HIS REAL DANGER LIES IN WHAT HE KNOWS AND WHO HE SERVES. HE CAN BE TURNED IF THE PARTY OFFERS A CREDIBLE PATH TO CURING HIS LYCANTHROPY, MAKING HIM A POTENTIAL ALLY WHOSE INFORMATION COULD UNRAVEL THE ENTIRE CONSPIRACY.

CAPITULUM

ABBODAS AND BOLDOS: THE GATEKEEPERS



The Gatekeepers of Kormor Kirak are supposed to be the city's law enforcement, an autonomous institution that predates the current political arrangements by centuries. In practice, they are corrupt, brutal, and answerable to no

one. Aggodas and Boldogg are the senior pair, the ones who set the tone for the entire organization.

Aggodas is tall, lean, and quiet in a way that makes people nervous. She carries a staff topped with a knot of dried herbs that she burns during patrols, the smoke trailing behind her like a second shadow. The herbs are not ceremonial. They are a narcotic compound that enhances her connection to the spirit world, allowing her to sense things that ordinary perception cannot detect. She uses this ability to find contraband, identify shapeshifters, and locate hidden rooms -- but she uses it just as often to extort those who think they are hiding something she cannot see.

Boldogg is broad, loud, and perpetually amused by the suffering of others. He wears the old Gatekeeper armor, a mismatched collection of plates and chain that belongs to an era before the Red Guards existed, and he polishes it with devotion that borders on religious. He can summon minor spirits through rituals involving blood, herbs, and chanting in a language that predates Common. These spirits serve as scouts, intimidation tools, and occasionally weapons. He uses them freely, and the citizens of Kormor Kirak have learned to stay inside when they hear chanting in the alleyways after dark.

Together, Aggodas and Boldogg run protection rackets throughout the city. They shake down merchants, demand tribute from the criminal organizations in Terra Sotto, and maintain a network of informants built on fear rather than loyalty. They are not aligned with any particular faction -- neither Albion nor Terrassia, neither the queen nor the conspiracy. They are an autonomous remnant of the kingdom's earliest days, and they consider themselves above the petty politics of empires.

Their relationship to the party should be adversarial from the start. They demand bribes at the gate. They confiscate weapons they consider inappropriate. They follow the party through the city, watching, noting, filing away information for future use. They are not the main villains, but they are an

obstacle that recurs with maddening persistence, a reminder that Kormor Kirak's institutions serve their own interests first.

Secret

AGGODAS AND BOLDOGG LIE WHEN THEY PRESENT THEMSELVES AS SERVANTS OF PUBLIC ORDER. THE TRUTH IS THAT THEY SERVE NOTHING BUT THEIR OWN POWER AND THE ANCIENT PREROGATIVES OF THE GATEKEEPER INSTITUTION. THEIR DEEPER TRUTH IS THAT THEY KNOW MORE ABOUT THE SUPERNATURAL ACTIVITY IN KORMOR KIRAK THAN THEY LET ON -- THE SPIRIT-SUMMONING AND HERBAL SIGHT GIVE THEM ACCESS TO INFORMATION THAT OTHER FACTIONS WOULD KILL FOR -- AND THEY HAVE BEEN WATCHING THE CONSPIRACY UNFOLD WITH THE CALCULATING PATIENCE OF PREDATORS WAITING FOR THE RIGHT MOMENT TO ACT.

Campaign Use

THE GATEKEEPERS FUNCTION AS RECURRING ANTAGONISTS WHO ARE DISTINCT FROM THE MAIN CONSPIRACY. THEY REPRESENT INSTITUTIONAL CORRUPTION AND THE SELF-SERVING NATURE OF POWER IN A CITY WHERE EVERY FACTION IS PLAYING ITS OWN GAME. THEY CAN BE BRIBED, THREATENED, OR TEMPORARILY ALLIED WITH, BUT THEY ALWAYS ACT IN THEIR OWN INTEREST FIRST. THEIR SPIRIT ABILITIES MAKE THEM USEFUL INFORMANTS IF THE PARTY CAN DISCOVER THE RIGHT PRESSURE POINTS, AND THEIR KNOWLEDGE OF THE CITY'S SUPERNATURAL UNDERBELLY MAY PROVIDE CLUES THAT NO OTHER SOURCE CAN OFFER. THEY ARE ESPECIALLY USEFUL AS OBSTACLES DURING TIME-SENSITIVE MISSIONS, WHEN THE LAST THING THE PARTY NEEDS IS A SHAKEDOWN AT A CHECKPOINT.

CAPITULUM

SUPPORTING CAST

CAPITULUM

LORD WOOSTER

Benji Wooster wears his wealth the way others wear skin, a thing so integrated into his being that he seems unable to remember life without it. Chief Accountant at the Counting House, now in his sixties, his hands are manicured with the precision of someone who has never worked a day in his life and has no intention of starting. Eccentric in dress and habit, he greets Barron as an old friend with the kind of warmth that suggests either genuine affection or the consummate skill of a man who has spent decades learning to perform it perfectly. His office overlooks ranks of accountants bent over ledgers, and the walls are decorated with indigenous artifacts from the empire's conquests, objects of genuine beauty that have been stripped from their original contexts and displayed as art.

When Olivia presents her evidence of financial irregularities, Wooster trades a furtive look with Barron that communicates entire conversations in a single glance. He moves with remarkable speed to reassign her, and his delight at getting rid of her is barely concealed beneath a veneer of bureaucratic necessity. Wooster is fundamentally corrupt, a man who has learned that the best way to maintain your position is to ensure that enough powerful people owe you favors that they cannot afford to have you investigated.

Campaign Use

WOOSTER WORKS AS A CORRUPT OFFICIAL NPC WHO MIGHT BE NEGOTIATED WITH, BLACKMAILED, OR REMOVED AS AN OBSTACLE. HIS FINANCIAL KNOWLEDGE MAKES HIM VALUABLE AS A QUEST-GIVER OR INFORMATION SOURCE. HIS CONNECTIONS PLACE HIM IN POSITION TO FACILITATE OR HINDER LARGE-SCALE OPERATIONS. HE IS MOST USEFUL WHEN THE PARTY NEEDS INSTITUTIONAL LEVERAGE OR WHEN THEY ARE TRYING TO FOLLOW TRAILS OF MONEY. HIS CORRUPTION IS CASUAL, OLD, AND COMFORTABLE, WHICH MAKES HIM LESS OBVIOUSLY DANGEROUS THAN MORE AGGRESSIVE ANTAGONISTS BUT POTENTIALLY MORE DIFFICULT TO DISLODGE.

CAPITULUM

FEENEY

Albion's Counsel in Kormor Kirak is a man living in constant panic disguised as professional competence. His hair is perpetually mussed, his eyes maintain the wild look of someone who has glimpsed something beyond the acceptable boundaries of reality. He burns the theater with

Molotov cocktails because he genuinely believes that what is being built there is a nest for things that should not exist. He sets fire to the plans, encodes a message on parchment, and sends it by pigeon toward

Albion, desperate for someone to understand the danger.

The Automatic Assassin catches him in the vault. Two crossbow bolts find him before he can scream, and his body is left suspended in necromantic trellis formation, eighty-eight wounds carved into his flesh to form demonic runes that serve as a portal to other realms. He dies believing he was trying to prevent catastrophe. He dies correctly.

Campaign Use

FEENEY IS THE INCITING INCIDENT NPC, THE DEATH THAT BEGINS THE INVESTIGATION. HIS BODY AND THE MANNER OF ITS DEATH PROVIDE CLUES TO THE NECROMANTIC WORKING. HIS ENCODED MESSAGE, IF THE PARTY FINDS IT, OFFERS CRUCIAL INFORMATION ABOUT THE THEATER AND THE THREAT IT REPRESENTS. HIS DEATH ALSO DEMONSTRATES THAT CERTAIN FORCES ARE WILLING TO ELIMINATE THOSE WHO UNDERSTAND TOO MUCH, WHICH RAISES THE STAKES CONSIDERABLY. THE MYSTERY OF WHY FEENEY WAS KILLED CAN DRIVE THE EARLY CAMPAIGN, WHILE THE REVELATION OF HIS CORRECT UNDERSTANDING RESHAPES THE PARTY'S ENTIRE PERSPECTIVE ON THE THREAT.

CAPITULUM

NERO AND ZAFFIR

The two roughnecks who lead construction crews for the theater are locals who understand the city in ways outsiders cannot comprehend. Nero is vocal and skeptical, quick to identify problems and quicker to voice them. Zaffir works beside him with the quiet competence of someone who has done dangerous labor most of his life and has learned to trust his own judgment implicitly. Together, they are essential to the theater's reconstruction, which gives them leverage they are not entirely certain how to use.

They need protection for night work because nights in Kormor Kirak are not safe for outsiders. The darkness brings things that the city's daylight permits the comfortable to ignore. Nero sniffs the air when

Jack Mackie enters, his survival instincts registering something other, something that triggers ancient warnings in the reptile brain. Zaffir studies the stranger with careful eyes, determining threat level and usefulness simultaneously. These men are not educated, but they are wise in ways that matter.

Campaign Use

NERO AND ZAFFIR FUNCTION AS ESSENTIAL LOCAL CONTACTS, QUEST-GIVERS FOR CONSTRUCTION-RELATED PROBLEMS, AND SOURCES OF INFORMATION ABOUT THE CITY'S TRUE NATURE. THEIR NEED FOR PROTECTION CAN DRIVE A SERIES OF ENCOUNTERS THAT REVEAL THE DANGERS LURKING IN KORMOR KIRAK AFTER DARK. THEY KNOW THE CITY IN PRACTICAL DETAIL AND CAN SERVE AS GUIDES, INFORMANTS, OR COMPLICATIONS DEPENDING ON HOW THE PARTY TREATS THEM.

CAPITULUM

THE MAN WITH THE CLOCKWORK ARM

In the attic laboratory of the Terrassian Consulate, someone quiet works with careful precision. The Automatic Assassins are constructed here, maintained here, deployed from here with the precision of someone managing an operation of significant scale. The Man with the Clockwork

Arm is unnamed in official records, which itself is a kind of name. One arm is clockwork prosthetic, similar to but distinct from Koss's, suggesting a shared history or shared craftsmen. His presence is quiet but the scope of his operation suggests someone of considerable importance moving in the shadow of official channels.

He monitors the city through mechanical radar, watches patterns of movement and behavior through systems that most would not recognize as observation. He cleans the Assassins after each kill, maintains them with ritualistic precision, and plans their next deployments with the care of someone playing a game several moves ahead.

Campaign Use

THE MAN WITH THE CLOCKWORK ARM FUNCTIONS AS A MYSTERIOUS ANTAGONIST OR POTENTIAL RELUCTANT ALLY. HIS TRUE IDENTITY, HIS ALLEGIANCE, AND HIS ULTIMATE GOALS ARE OPEN QUESTIONS THAT CAN DRIVE INVESTIGATION. ENCOUNTERS WITH HIS AUTOMATIC ASSASSINS CAN LEAD TO QUESTIONS ABOUT THEIR MAKER. CONTACT WITH HIM DIRECTLY MIGHT BE POSSIBLE THROUGH NEGOTIATION OR PURSUIT, AND HIS KNOWLEDGE OF TERRASSIAN OPERATIONS AND KORMOR KIRAK'S HIDDEN INFRASTRUCTURE MAKES HIM VALUABLE. HE REPRESENTS THE INTERSECTION OF MILITARY TECHNOLOGY AND ASSASSINATION, OF PRACTICAL SKILL AND COLD CALCULATION.

CAPITULUM

THE GAWKY MODEL

She is tall and ungainly in the way that makes her striking rather than beautiful, an assemblage of angles and awkwardness that catches the eye precisely because she does not fit the patterns people expect. She works in the dress shops, modeling garments for people too rich to care whether they fit properly. Szeret notices her the way certain people notice certain other people, with the focus of someone recognizing something kindred or beautiful or broken in just the right way. She sleeps in Szeret's castle chamber for a time, and this matters because it suggests that Szeret is capable of connection, of wanting something beyond the surface performances.

She is found dead in Kiraline's private chamber, suspended in necromantic trellis formation, her body transformed into a working and a warning. The manner of her death reveals Kiraline's true nature as clearly as any speech could.

Campaign Use

THE GAWKY MODEL IS A TRAGIC VICTIM NPC WHOSE DEATH SERVES AS EVIDENCE OF KIRALINE'S TRUE CAPABILITIES AND TRUE CRUELTY. THE DISCOVERY OF HER BODY IS THE REVELATION MOMENT WHERE SUSPICIONS CRYSTALLIZE INTO CERTAINTY. HER IDENTITY AND HER CONNECTION TO SZERET CAN COMPLICATE THE EMOTIONAL LANDSCAPE OF THE INVESTIGATION AND CAN DRIVE PERSONAL QUESTS FOR JUSTICE OR REVENGE.

CAPITULUM

THE CAVALRY COUNT

A late adolescent aristocrat learning to ride, the Cavalry Count is arrogance embodied in fine clothing and expensive horsemanship that is technically sound but morally bankrupt. He tries to beat his horse, applying the crop with the casual cruelty of someone who has never experienced consequences. Jack Mackie stops him, confronts him, and when the Count attempts to assert his social superiority, Jack demonstrates that horsemanship is not about bloodline or money but about understanding the animal beneath you and treating it with respect.

Humiliated in front of onlookers, the Cavalry Count represents the entitled Albion ruling class, the assumption of natural superiority, the belief that wealth and birth grant permission to inflict damage on the world.

Campaign Use

THE CAVALRY COUNT FUNCTIONS AS A COMIC RELIEF NPC AND AS A REPRESENTATIVE OF THE SYSTEMIC PROBLEMS WITH ALBION'S ARISTOCRATIC STRUCTURE. HE IS NOT A SERIOUS THREAT BUT HE IS A USEFUL TOOL FOR ILLUSTRATING CLASS TENSIONS AND FOR SHOWING HOW SYSTEMS OF PRIVILEGE PROTECT THE INCOMPETENT. HE CAN BE REFORMED THROUGH HUMILIATION OR RETAINED AS AN OBSTACLE FOR THE PARTY TO NAVIGATE. HIS ULTIMATE FATE CAN SERVE AS A COMMENTARY ON WHETHER SYSTEMIC CHANGE IS POSSIBLE OR WHETHER IT MERELY TRANSFORMS THE INDIVIDUALS WHO BENEFIT FROM THE SYSTEM.

CAPITULUM

PARTS
SEVEN

FOUR

THROUGH

CAPITULUM

PART FOUR: MAGIC AND THE SUPERNATURAL

The magic of The Eternal Court emerges from darkness, from the intersection of dead things and dying light. It is not the flashy elemental pyrotechnics of fantasy tradition. Here, magic feels ancient, wrong, and powerful.

Necromancy stands as the defining magical art of the campaign world. As

Barron describes it, necromancy is "abominable craft," and his assessment carries the weight of someone who has witnessed its work firsthand. The practice involves ritualistic carving of runes into dead flesh, elaborate arrangements of corpses within wooden trellis frameworks that serve as both containers and conduits. The runes themselves belong to a demonic language, each stroke and curve carrying meaning beyond human understanding. Bodies become portals. The murder of

Feeney demonstrates this principle in devastating detail: eighty-eight wounds carved in deliberate patterns, the corpse suspended within entwined branches, transformed into a doorway through which a breach was forced into a vault believed impenetrable. The necromancer Rozito carries this art forward, carving rune patterns into fresh corpses that form shapes suggesting figures, entities, or commands in that same profane language.

The consequences of such magic are manifested in creatures like the

Necrotic Bulk, where body parts drawn from multiple corpses writhe into a vaguely humanoid mass that attacks the living with bestial fury. These things cannot be killed because they are already dead, already violated.

They collapse only when the magic sustains them no longer, and no weapon or spell can grant them the mercy of true death. They are abominations in the truest sense: the dead forced into service, their very existence a violation of natural law.

Vampirism, by contrast, presents itself with grace and seduction before revealing its teeth. Kiraline, the primary vampire of this setting, maintains a regal form of preternatural charisma; she is serene, weightless, beautiful in the manner of things that should not exist.

When her mask slips, the truth emerges: her jaw unhinges to impossible angles, revealing rows of serrated teeth and a snaking tongue that seems to move with independent will. Her apparent immortality is functional, which is to say proven. She crosses distances instantaneously, moving between locations as though space itself bends to her will. She visits the dungeons of Torony Castle to feed upon prisoners, and she offers something to others that she calls an "eternal bond." Those who accept this offer discover, too late, that it is enslavement. The true mechanics of how vampires turn their victims, how they feed, and how the hierarchy of the undead operates remain mysteries that will unfold across the campaign, fragments of truth scattered like pieces of broken glass.

Shapeshifting manifests in Szeret, the princess of Kormor Kirak, as something violent and transformative. Her shift from woman to quadrupedal leopard-like beast is physical and brutal; she tears herself out of clothing, the transformation a violent rupture rather than a seamless transition. In her leopard form, she gains speed, strength, and perceptive faculties that far exceed human norm. Even in her human shape, however, she displays superhuman strength, suggesting that the boundaries between her forms are blurred even when she appears human.

The relationship between her shapeshifting and the vampirism that dominates her mother's nature remains an open question, one that may yield secrets as the campaign unfolds.

Jack Winbow exists as a mystery wrapped in physical evidence. He is never named directly by those around him, yet the clues accumulate. He disappears on nights of the full moon. Claw-mark scars crisscross his back, evidence of something that clawed its way into or out of his flesh. Barron speaks of an "affliction that may prove advantageous," suggesting he knows something of Jack's condition. Nero, the queen's hound, sniffs the air when Jack passes, a reaction of wariness or recognition. Eppy speaks with certainty: "I know what you are." The marks on his back suggest not a voluntary transformation but something involuntary, triggered perhaps by being clawed by another of his kind.

Lycanthropy, then; a curse as much as a gift. In Kormor Kirak, where the queen is a vampire and the princess is a shapeshifter, a man afflicted with involuntary transformation becomes something between a weapon and a liability, useful but unpredictable, frightening to those who do not understand what he is.

The Lich Cult represents an older threat, one that Kiraline claims to have crushed. A Lich is a powerful wizard who achieves a terrible resurrection; they are dead but persist with memories, skills, and agenda intact, their consciousness preserved through dark ritual while their flesh rots or transforms into something other. The Lich Cult was once the only real threat to Kiraline's reign, and their resurgence is the primary existential threat to her power and her plans. They worship dark practice and operate through hidden practitioners, their influence distributed through people like Rozito. Their recent interest in the

Theater, the spectacle of the Masquerade, suggests an endgame far more ambitious than mere sabotage; something is being built, some final expression of power that will require a stage and an audience.

Ward symbols appear throughout Kormor Kirak, painted on walls and doors by hands that remain unseen or anonymous. Olivia initially mistakes them for tax identification, a mark of bureaucratic ownership. Barron corrects her understanding; these wards protect against evil spirits and entities that the locals take with absolute seriousness. The symbols appear freshly painted on memorial stones in Hallaset Fields, suggesting a recent escalation of whatever threat they guard against. Whatever the nature of the evil they protect against, the people of Kormor Kirak maintain these painted marks by hand, refreshing them with frequency and care. Desperation born of necessity.

The comet falls through the campaign as a central mystery. Eppy references it with the weight of ancient knowledge; the Bastion Inn's

Trompe l'Oeil ceiling depicts falling stars in constellations unfamiliar to any known map, and among them, a comet in descent. What was it? When did it fall through the sky? What did its impact awaken in the earth and the spirits of this place? The connection between this celestial event and the supernatural presence that haunts the region remains a central mystery, one that will likely yield revelations only through investigation and discovery.

CAPITULUM

PART FIVE: TECHNOLOGY AND INDUSTRY

The technology that powers The Eternal Court is grounded in

late-18th-century military modernity and gaslamp industry, but its distribution is profoundly uneven. Albion leads in large-scale industrial capacity: airships, factories, military infrastructure, the machinery of empire itself.

Terrassia excels in precision engineering, the craftsmanship that produces clockwork prosthetics and automatons of remarkable sophistication. Kormor Kirak, by contrast, remains in a technological twilight; locals paint ward symbols on doors by hand and have never seen indoor plumbing. This asymmetry of technology mirrors the asymmetry of power and wealth in the campaign world.

Airships and blimps represent the pinnacle of Albion's technological achievement, though their utility remains constrained by natural forces.

Barron's blimp is equipped with a lower-deck wardroom complete with observation glass and a map table where routes can be plotted and strategic decisions made. An observation deck crowns the gondola beneath the gas bag, offering views of the terrain below and early warning of approaching threats. These vessels are remarkable still, capable of connecting the Capital to distant mountain passes, though the final legs of journeys require descent to mundane carriage travel. Videk storms present a constant threat to airship operations, a reminder that nature still maintains dominion over human ambition.

Automatic Assassins emerge as clockwork constructs of frightening efficiency. They possess clockwork eyes that whirl with cold mechanical precision and metal hands capable of gripping with inhuman force.

Hydraulic systems power their movements, giving them capabilities that blur the line between human and machine. They are armed with pneumatic crossbows capable of firing explosive bolts tipped with flaming gel, and they can bend metal with their hands. When one is decapitated, neck cables leak fluid like a dying creature, eyes dimming as the consciousness, such as it is, fades from the machine. They are built from racks of spare parts, interchangeable components that can be swapped and replaced, suggesting an entire infrastructure of manufacture and maintenance behind their creation.

Clockwork prosthetics represent Terrassian engineering at its finest, artistry applied to the intimate scale of the human body. Koss wears such a prosthetic on his arm; it clicks and whirls with each articulation, sophisticated enough for delicate tasks like dealing cards or manipulating a handkerchief, precise enough for the subtle finger-flicking that marks a skilled gambler. The man in the lab where some of the investigation occurs wears one as well, a visible reminder that this world's war has extracted a price in blood and limb. These prosthetics serve as constant reminders of what has been lost and what technological skill can, if only partially, restore.

Counting machines occupy high-ceilinged rooms throughout the empire, their percussion symphony of clicking keys and ringing bells marking the rhythm of bureaucratic life. Olivia carries a personal calculator, a hand-held brass cylinder resembling a pepper mill, fitted with levers and switches. It serves her as both tool and comfort object, something she can touch and manipulate when the world feels too chaotic. The tactile feedback of calculation provides a form of order when everything else feels uncertain.

Communication across distances relies upon coded messages transcribed onto arcane machines, producing paper strips of encrypted text. Homing pigeons

carry these messages in chest capsules, flying in protective flocks rather than as solitary birds. Barron unlocks these capsules with his signet ring, and he orders messenger boys to chew the tape after reading; messages and messengers alike leave no trail. Information is power, and power requires discretion.

Steam vehicles begin to replace carriages, though the transition remains incomplete. Barron and Koss arrive in a self-propelled steam vehicle that marks them as modern, equipped with the latest in Albion's technological advancement. Military trains carry troops across the campaign world, though they move slowly and remain vulnerable on the rails. Traditional carriages remain the standard transport for most journeys, still the preferred method for anything requiring discretion or escape from predetermined routes.

The weaponry of the campaign world blends traditional and modern. The

Shamsir, a curved sword, remains a weapon of choice for those trained in close combat. Throwing daggers rest in pouches, waiting for quick deployment. The Spetum folds into a cane barely longer than a walking stick but extends to a six-foot polearm when deployed, perfect for those who must conceal weapons. Pneumatic crossbows fire explosive bolts tipped with flaming gel, weapons of terrible efficiency. Molotov cocktails provide portable fire, simple in construction but devastating in deployment. The mix of the ancient and the modern reflects the world itself; old powers and new technologies exist in uneasy balance.

CAPITULUM

PART SIX: CULTURE, FAITH, AND THE COST OF WAR

The Imperial Faith of Albion forms the foundation of the empire's ideology and its control. Belief in the Divine Emperor underpins everything; conviction that Albion is chosen by God, that its expansion and its wars serve a higher purpose. A loyalty oath permeates society, woven into the structure of institutions and the expectations placed upon citizens. For Olivia, this faith is the closest thing she possesses to family, identity, and purpose. Raised in state orphanages and levied into dormitory service, she has known nothing but the structure and meaning provided by the Imperial Faith. Whether this constitutes genuine religion or state-engineered devotion designed to ensure compliance remains an open question, one that may trouble her conscience as the campaign unfolds.

The Old World exists in distinction from the world of technology and politics that dominates Albion's self-conception. Eppy makes this distinction clear: imperials live in the new world, a place of machinery and governance, of rational systems and documented authority. Her people, the old world inhabitants, survive in secret, hidden within the margins of the new world, maintaining ancient traditions and ancient understanding. The old world is revealed in fragments: in Eppy's pointed ears, in the ward symbols painted on doors throughout Kormor

Kirak, in the grass of Hallaset Fields that whispers with meaning to those who understand it, in the Trompe l'Oeil ceiling of the Bastion

Inn that depicts constellations and comets that no imperial astronomer recognizes. Szeret understands this distinction instinctively, responding to the old world's power with recognition. Olivia does not yet understand, but the campaign will force her toward comprehension.

The Masquerade stands as Torony Castle's signature theatrical event. It is non-traditional, debauched, and theatrical, neither pure civilization nor pure savagery. Attendees dress in severe court finery with Gothic flourishes and wear masks constructed from animal materials, blurring the boundaries between human and beast. Aerial gymnasts perform above the assembled crowd. The event occupies the strange space between a late-Regency court revel, a pagan ritual, and a nightmare staged with perfect aristocratic manners. It is the place where status is performed, where power is displayed, and where the boundaries between the civilized and the wild grow thin.

Class and station form the rigid scaffolding upon which society rests.

In Albion, hierarchy is explicit: Parliament, Lords, Ministers, uniformed civil servants, each rank distinct and understood. Olivia exists at the bottom of this structure, raised as a waif in state orphanages, levied for dormitory service. Lord Wooster calls her

"bricky to a fault," a term suggesting both durability and expendability. In Kormor Kirak, the hierarchy is equally rigid but differently organized: queen, princess, Red Guards, royal appointments, with common people occupying the bottom tier. The crowd cheers for

Szeret when she appears in public, but when she departs, their faces fall, returning to expressions of resignation and weariness.

The War's Toll defines the campaign world more profoundly than any other single fact. A generation of children has known nothing but conflict; young people march to the frontlines and either return transformed or do not return at all. The frontlines do not move; neither side advances, yet both continue to

sacrifice. The economic damage is incalculable: resources diverted to military purposes, infrastructure neglected, economies strained to the breaking point. The social damage runs deeper: families fractured, communities depleted of their young people, normal human development interrupted by the necessity of survival and service. The psychological damage may be most profound of all; both sides have forgotten why they fight. The original causes, the reasons that justified the initial declaration of war, have been buried beneath years of accumulated trauma and loss. People fight now simply because fighting is what they know, what they have always done, the only context within which their lives make sense.

CAPITULUM

PART SEVEN: RUNNING THE CAMPAIGN

Running The Eternal Court requires understanding the campaign not as a traditional heroic fantasy but as a story grounded in the tension between competing forces and the cost of choosing sides in a conflict larger than any individual. The Game Master serves as the guide through this landscape, the keeper of mysteries and the architect of choices that matter.

The core themes that should resonate through every session establish the fundamental tensions that drive the narrative. New World versus Old

World represents the master tension; Albion's technological civilization pressing against the ancient traditions and powers that predate it, neither fully capable of destroying the other. Duty versus

Desire pulls at every player character; Albion citizens feel the loyalty oath pulling them toward service and compliance, while their own desires and consciences may demand different actions. Trust and Deception operates throughout; almost no one is what they initially appear to be, and characters must constantly re-evaluate their assumptions about allies and enemies alike. The Cost of Peace remains abstract until the campaign forces its concrete reality home; achieving peace will require sacrifices that no participant wants to make. Companionship as Salvation stands in opposition to the isolation that the campaign world imposes; characters who cling only to their original allegiances will find themselves diminished, while those who forge genuine bonds with their companions discover strength. The Lie and the Truth forms the deepest theme; every character carries both, and the campaign will force them to confront where truth ends and lies begin in their own hearts.

Faction Dynamics in Kormor Kirak operate through the interaction of multiple competing interests. Albion pursues its strategic and economic interests; the war remains distant but its impact is immediate.

Terrassia maintains its own agenda, sometimes aligned with Albion, sometimes pursuing independent goals. Queen Kiraline rules from Torony

Castle with her own mysterious purposes, playing all sides as it suits her while her true endgame remains obscure. The Lich Cult operates in hidden cells, using practitioners like Rozito to advance their agenda toward resurrection and power, while Barron Whitehallow secretly consolidates those cells under his own rising authority. The Old World locals, represented by people like Eppy, maintain ancient knowledge and old alliances, sometimes protecting the player characters and sometimes working toward purposes the characters do not understand. Neutral parties and independent operators fill the gaps, people motivated by profit, personal vendetta, or simple survival. Game Masters should track which factions benefit or suffer from player actions, allowing consequences to ripple through the social landscape. A decision that helps Albion might alienate the Old World. A choice that protects Kiraline might anger the

Lich Cult's hidden servants.

Adventure Seeds provide concrete hooks that Game Masters can deploy to move the campaign forward. The Theater Rebuild offers both social and investigative opportunities; working to restore the damaged structure brings the players into contact with diverse groups, each with their own interests in the project. The Vault Investigation deepens as players uncover the truth about Feeney's death and the necromantic ritual that enabled the breach; this path leads toward confrontation with Rozito and the Lich Cult's agents. Hallaset Fields Necromantic Activity suggests that the ward symbols are failing or being overcome; investigating what rises from the soil there puts the party in direct conflict with undead constructs and the practitioners who control them.

Masquerade Intrigue uses the grand ball as a setting for social complexity; characters might attend to gather intelligence, prevent an assassination, or uncover secrets that powerful people want kept hidden. Lich Cult Infiltration creates ongoing threat; discovering the cult's presence and penetrating their organization creates a campaign-spanning adversary that cannot be simply defeated in a single encounter. Cross-Cultural Diplomacy Missions leverage the tension between Albion and Kormor Kirak; players might be tasked with negotiating agreements, delivering messages, or uncovering the truth about violations of the supposed peace.

Mystery Box Management separates what should be explained now from what should be revealed gradually and what should remain mysterious. Game

Masters should explain the basic rules of magic early; players need to understand that necromancy exists as a threat and that vampirism is real and dangerous. The political situation should become clear through play rather than exposition; show factions working against each other, show the impact of the war, let players experience the constraints of Albion authority. Explain who is in charge and what their ostensible goals are, though the hidden agendas can remain obscure. Character secrets and faction agendas should be revealed gradually; as the campaign progresses, players learn more about Barron's past, about the nature of

Eppy's people, about what Szeret truly is beyond the princess the public sees. Keep as mystery boxes the most central secrets: the identity and goals of the Lich Cult, the true nature of the comet and what it awakened, Eppy's full heritage and powers, the mechanics of vampire hierarchy and how it might be challenged. Never explain some mysteries; leave them as open questions. What is Jack Winbow's ultimate nature? Can he be saved from his affliction or is he doomed to transformation? How many secrets does Kiraline carry in her immortal heart? The best mysteries are those that provoke discussion at the table and generate multiple possible answers.

Using the Characters as NPCs requires understanding each character's position and motivations. Barron functions best as a quest-giver and authority figure, though he carries enough mystery and moral complexity to avoid being a simple source of jobs. He provides direction and resources, but his agenda is not entirely transparent. Jack, Eppy, and

Szeret work best as allies; they accompany the party, offer their own perspectives, and develop relationships with the player characters through shared experience. They remain flawed and unpredictable, sometimes pursuing their own needs, sometimes surprising the party with hidden knowledge or unexpected loyalties. Kiraline and Rozito function as antagonists, though antagonists who must be treated as intelligent and capable. Kiraline in particular should rarely be encountered directly; her power is such that direct confrontation is suicidal, and she is sophisticated enough to work through proxies. Koss and Wooster serve as wildcard contacts, neither entirely trustworthy nor entirely hostile. They pursue their own interests and might aid the party one moment and betray them the next. Bringing these characters to life at the table means allowing them to surprise the Game Master as much as the players; let them make choices that complicate the narrative, that force players to re-evaluate what they thought they knew.

Creating Player Characters that fit within The Eternal Court requires matching character concept to the world's structure. Albion Loyalists offer the most straightforward option; characters who believe in the empire, who serve the loyalty oath with conviction or at least surface compliance. These characters experience the campaign as a journey toward doubt and re-evaluation. Terrassian Agents bring different perspectives; they serve Terrassia's interests, which may or may not align with

Albion's, creating internal party dynamics. Old World Locals, particularly if players are willing to take non-human races, offer characters who understand the hidden landscape and the ancient powers.

Characters like Eppy, with pointed ears and connection to the old world, bring knowledge that imperials lack and create the potential for teaching moments and cultural clash. Independent Operators motivated by profit, personal vendetta, or simple curiosity offer freedom from factional loyalty; they follow their own agendas, which can either unify with or divide from the party's goals.

The classes and backgrounds that map well to the setting should be interpreted through the world's aesthetic. Fighters become soldiers trained in imperial methods or wandering mercenaries. Rogues become agents and spies, people comfortable with deception and working in the shadows. Clerics take on faith in the Imperial Faith or in older traditions tied to the Old World. Rangers work as scouts and trackers, people adapted to the wild spaces between civilization. Wizards might be researchers uncovering the secrets of necromancy or practitioners of older traditions. Bards work as spies, influencers, and people who move through society with ease. The world offers room for all the core classes, though their expression should be filtered through the campaign's aesthetic and concerns. A cleric of the Imperial Faith plays very differently from a druid tied to the Old World. A wizard researching necromantic defenses pursues a different agenda than one investigating the Lich Cult's plans. The setting supports multiple character concepts and multiple playstyles, but it works best when characters are rooted in the world's factions and conflicts, when they have reasons to be in Kormor Kirak beyond simple adventure-seeking.

CAPITULUM

PART EIGHT: BESTIARY AND ADVERSARIES

CAPITULUM

MORTAL ADVERSARIES

CAPITULUM

RED GUARD

The soldiers of Kormor Kirak wear uniforms of deep crimson, the color chosen to match the bloodstained history of their queen. They are the military backbone of the kingdom, the armed force that maintains order through visible force and the promise of violence. A Red Guard uniform is a statement of authority; citizens step aside when they approach, merchants lower their eyes, and common people learn from childhood to obey without question. The guards themselves are drawn from the kingdom's military tradition: young men and women trained in swordcraft, trained in formation, trained in the absolute obedience that monarchy demands. They are not cruel by nature, though cruelty is often their instrument. They are not evil; they are simply the mechanism through which a vampire queen imposes her will upon the world.

The Red Guards patrol in squads of four to six, marching in loose formation through the streets and squares of Kormor Kirak. They maintain watch at gates and bridges, checking papers and credentials, enforcing the queen's laws with mechanical precision. Some are aware of

Kiraline's true nature; the senior officers know they serve a vampire, and they have either accepted this reality or suppressed the knowledge so thoroughly that it no longer troubles them. Most common soldiers maintain the comfortable fiction that their queen is simply an immortal monarch, no more unusual than any other ruler. They know that the dungeons of Torony Castle hold prisoners who do not emerge; they have heard rumors of the Masquerade and its strange nature; they have seen things that should not be possible and learned not to ask too many questions. Loyalty to the queen transcends logic, and that loyalty is instilled through training, repetition, and the reward structures that favor obedience above all else.

Campaign Use

RED GUARDS SERVE AS THE EVERYDAY OBSTACLE, THE AUTHORIZED FORCE THAT PLAYER CHARACTERS MUST NEGOTIATE WITH, EVADE, OR OPPOSE DEPENDING ON THEIR RELATIONSHIP WITH THE QUEEN AND THE LAW. THEY CAN BE ENCOUNTERED ON PATROL, MANNING CHECKPOINTS, OR ASSIGNED TO INVESTIGATE PLAYER ACTIVITIES. THEY FUNCTION MOST EFFECTIVELY WHEN THEY REPRESENT ENFORCEMENT RATHER THAN COMBAT THREAT; A SUPERIOR FORCE THAT PLAYERS MUST OUTTHINK RATHER THAN OUTFIGHT. HOWEVER, A SQUAD OF WELL-TRAINED RED GUARDS CAN ESCALATE ENCOUNTERS QUICKLY IF THEY FEEL THEIR AUTHORITY IS BEING CHALLENGED, AND REINFORCEMENTS CAN ARRIVE WITH DANGEROUS SPEED. USE THEM TO REINFORCE THAT KIRALINE'S RULE IS NOT MERELY A DISTANT ABSTRACTION BUT AN ACTIVE, VISIBLE PRESENCE ON THE STREETS OF KORMOR KIRAK.

CAPITULUM

RED GUARD CAPTAIN

The captains who command squads of Red Guards represent a step up in authority, training, and ruthlessness. They wear polished plate armor, ornate though functional, marking them as officers of standing. A captain moves with the confidence of someone who has never questioned their right to give orders and who expects absolute obedience in return.

They are typically younger than one might expect for their rank, products of a system that rewards loyalty and competence but also values the rigid class structures that define Kormor Kirak's social hierarchy.

These officers are fanatically devoted to Kiraline; they view service to the queen as the highest possible purpose, and they carry out her orders with enthusiasm that transcends mere compliance.

A Red Guard Captain carries authority to arrest, to detain, and in emergency circumstances, to execute those who pose a threat to the queen's peace. This makes them dangerous to player characters who find themselves on the wrong side of royal justice. A captain views the player party as either subjects to be controlled or threats to be eliminated, depending on circumstances. They negotiate from a position of assumed superiority, expecting characters to comply with orders instantly and completely. Most captains are not corrupt; they do not extort bribes or abuse their power in obvious ways. Instead, they abuse their power in ways they do not recognize as abuse, viewing harsh punishment as natural consequence, detention without trial as routine, and violence as the appropriate response to disrespect. They are dangerous not because they are cruel but because they serve a system that permits them to

view ordinary people as resources to be deployed rather than individuals to be respected.

Campaign Use

A RED GUARD CAPTAIN FUNCTIONS BEST AS A SOCIAL OBSTACLE OR AUTHORITY FIGURE WHO CAN HELP OR HINDER THE PARTY. USE THEM AS NPCs WHO DELIVER OFFICIAL MANDATES, WHO BLOCK ACCESS TO RESTRICTED AREAS, OR WHO INVESTIGATE THE PARTY'S ACTIVITIES ON THE QUEEN'S BEHALF. A FACE-TO-FACE ENCOUNTER WITH A CAPTAIN OFFERS OPPORTUNITY FOR NEGOTIATION, DECEPTION, OR INTIMIDATION, DEPENDING ON THE PARTY'S APPROACH AND RESOURCES. THE CAPTAIN'S TRAINING AND ARMOR MAKE THEM A FORMIDABLE INDIVIDUAL COMBATANT, CAPABLE OF DEFEATING MOST PLAYER CHARACTERS IN STRAIGHTFORWARD MELEE COMBAT, WHICH SHOULD ENCOURAGE PLAYERS TO FIND OTHER SOLUTIONS. THE THREAT OF A CAPTAIN MOBILIZING THE FULL FORCE OF ROYAL AUTHORITY CAN BE MORE POWERFUL THAN THE THREAT OF IMMEDIATE COMBAT.

CAPITULUM

KERESKEDO RUFFJANG

MARKET



The Kereskedo Market is a place of commerce and exchange, but it is also a place where the underworld operates in open sight. Street-level criminals work the crowd: pickpockets who select targets with practiced eyes, thieves who slip through alleys carrying stolen goods, protection racket operators who collect “insurance” from shopkeepers too frightened to refuse. Some of these criminals work independently, relying on skill and nerve to survive. Others operate as part of informal networks, answering to local fixers and crime bosses who control territories through reputation and the threat of violence. The

market ruffians represent the lowest tier of organized crime, the workers rather than the strategists, though many harbor ambitions of advancement.

In a city where the queen is a vampire and the dungeons swallow people into darkness, the criminal underworld develops its own survival instincts. The ruffians learn which alleys are safe and which are haunted by things that hunt in darkness. They learn to avoid the

Hallaset Fields after certain hours. They develop superstitions about ward symbols and the necessity of caution near them. They whisper about the disappearances, the people who vanish during Masquerade season or who are found drained of blood in ways that no ordinary weapon creates.

The street criminals survive by understanding the city's true dangers, by developing networks of information that tell them what is safe and what is lethal. Despite their low status, many have access to valuable intelligence, connections, and the willingness to move through Kormor

Kirak's dark spaces that more respectable people avoid.

Campaign Use

MARKET RUFFIANS PROVIDE THE ENTRY POINT FOR STREET-LEVEL ADVENTURES, CRIMINALS TO NEGOTIATE WITH, MINOR OBSTACLES TO OVERCOME, AND SOURCES OF INFORMATION ABOUT THE CITY'S UNDERWORLD. THEY CAN BE EMPLOYED, INTIMIDATED, OR BEFRIENDED DEPENDING ON THE PARTY'S APPROACH. INDIVIDUAL RUFFIANS ARE NOT PARTICULARLY DANGEROUS; A SINGLE THIEF OR ENFORCER REPRESENTS A MINOR THREAT. HOWEVER, THEY FUNCTION BEST AS PARTS OF NETWORKS, CONNECTED TO LARGER CRIMINAL ORGANIZATIONS AND CAPABLE OF CALLING FOR REINFORCEMENT. USE THEM TO ESTABLISH KORMOR KIRAK AS A PLACE WHERE THE LAW IS ENFORCED BY DISTANT AUTHORITY FIGURES WHILE THE REAL POWER OPERATES IN THE SHADOWS THROUGH NETWORKS OF CONNECTIONS AND MUTUAL OBLIGATION. A PARTY THAT LEARNS TO WORK WITH THE RUFFIANS GAINS VALUABLE ALLIES; ONE THAT MAKES ENEMIES OF THE ENTIRE MARKET DISTRICT DISCOVERS HOW QUICKLY INFORMATION SPREADS THROUGH INFORMAL NETWORKS.

CAPITULUM

GANGSTER LIEUTENANTS

Above the market ruffians operate the mid-level criminals who run organized operations. These are the people who coordinate smuggling networks, who manage protection rackets across multiple territories, and who maintain information-gathering operations that rival the queen's official intelligence services. A gangster lieutenant moves through

Kormor Kirak with confidence born of successful ruthlessness; they have survived the constant culling that eliminates the incompetent and the careless. They dress in eclectic fashions, wearing fabrics imported from distant cities, displaying wealth and good taste in ways that common soldiers could never achieve. They carry hidden blades; daggers tucked into sleeves, thin swords that fit into walking sticks, weapons designed for situations where official notice must be avoided.

Some of these lieutenants operate with the tacit approval of Kiraline, running operations that funnel information back to Torony Castle. Others maintain enough independence that they can work both sides of conflicts without appearing to serve either. Still others have connections to

Rozito, the necromancer, which may mean they are aware of the Lich

Cult's operations and may be supplying them with information or resources. The most dangerous gangster lieutenants are those who understand the true nature of the city they operate in, who know that

Kiraline is a vampire and that things older and darker than any crime boss move through the Hallaset Fields. These individuals have adapted their operations to account for supernatural threats, developing their own wards and protections,

hiring people who understand the hidden landscape, becoming something more than simple criminals but less than organized opposition to the queen.

Campaign Use

GANGSTER LIEUTENANTS FUNCTION BEST AS INVESTIGATION CONTACTS, AS EMPLOYERS FOR MORALLY GRAY MISSIONS, AND AS OBSTACLES THAT MUST BE NEGOTIATED WITH RATHER THAN FOUGHT DIRECTLY. THEY PROVIDE HOOKS FOR THE CRIMINAL UNDERWORLD AND ACCESS TO RESOURCES THAT ORDINARY PEOPLE CANNOT OBTAIN. A PARTY THAT GAINS THE TRUST OF A LIEUTENANT GAINS ACCESS TO SAFE HOUSES, WEAPONS, INFORMATION NETWORKS, AND THE KIND OF LOCAL KNOWLEDGE THAT COMES FROM OPERATING IN THE SHADOWS. A PARTY THAT MAKES ENEMIES OF LIEUTENANTS DISCOVERS THAT THE UNDERWORLD MOVES AGAINST THEM EFFICIENTLY AND FROM MULTIPLE DIRECTIONS. USE THEM TO PROVIDE MORAL COMPLEXITY; THESE ARE NOT GOOD PEOPLE, BUT THEY OPERATE ACCORDING TO UNDERSTANDABLE PRINCIPLES, THEY HONOR AGREEMENTS, AND THEY CAN BE MORE RELIABLE ALLIES THAN PEOPLE OPERATING ACCORDING TO OFFICIAL LAW.

CAPITULUM

CAVALRY SOLDIERS

The mounted military patrols that ride the mountain roads and maintain supply lines through the Videk passes represent a different breed of soldier than the Red Guards who police Kormor Kirak's streets. Cavalry soldiers are young, trained in lance and saber, selected for physical prowess and horsemanship as much as obedience. They serve both as highway patrol and military scouts, watching for bandits and checking credentials of travelers who move through the mountain passes. Most cavalry soldiers are untested in real combat, products of a class system that rewards breeding and social station over merit and actual military competence. The Cavalry Count who commands them exemplifies this system; he is arrogant, incompetent, and dangerous precisely because his high rank is not matched by his actual abilities. He leads patrols with the confidence of someone who has never faced consequences for his mistakes.

The cavalry soldiers themselves view their service as a step toward advancement, as a way to rise through the ranks or gain wealth through acceptable corruption. Some are idealists who believe in the causes they serve. Many are simply young people doing what they were trained to do, following orders because that is what soldiers do, experiencing the mountain roads as tedious duty punctuated by moments of danger. They face mountain wolves, sudden storms, and the constant risk of ambush by enemies of the state. They are not trained for the supernatural threats that haunt the passes; they have heard stories of the Hallsset Fields and its animated dead, but most do not truly believe. Those who encounter such things often do not survive the experience or arrive at their destinations changed in ways they do not fully understand.

Campaign Use

CAVALRY SOLDIERS WORK BEST AS ROAD ENCOUNTERS, AS MILITARY OBSTACLES THAT THE PARTY MIGHT NEED TO NEGOTIATE WITH OR EVADE, AND AS POTENTIAL ALLIES IF THE PARTY CARRIES PROPER CREDENTIALS OR CAN CONVINCE SOLDIERS THAT THEY REPRESENT LEGITIMATE AUTHORITY. THEY PROVIDE STRUCTURE AND CONSEQUENCE TO TRAVEL; MOVING THROUGH THE MOUNTAIN PASSES IS NOT MERELY A MATTER OF DISTANCE AND SUPPLIES BUT OF AVOIDING OR MANAGING MILITARY AUTHORITY. AN ENCOUNTER WITH A CAVALRY PATROL CAN ESCALATE QUICKLY IF THE SOLDIERS FEEL DISRESPECTED, BUT MANY CAN BE TALKED PAST OR BRIBED, DEPENDING ON THE SITUATION. THEIR INCOMPETENCE, PARTICULARLY AT THE COMMAND LEVEL, OFFERS OPPORTUNITIES FOR CLEVER PLAYERS TO WORK AROUND THEIR AUTHORITY. USE THEM TO REINFORCE THAT THE WORLD BEYOND KORMOR KIRAK'S STREETS IS STILL CLAIMED AND CONTROLLED BY ORGANIZED POWERS, THAT THE PARTY CANNOT MOVE WITH COMPLETE FREEDOM REGARDLESS OF SKILL OR CUNNING.

CAPITULUM

MECHANICAL ADVERSARIES

CAPITULUM

CLOCKWORK SCOUTS

In the hidden workshop beneath the Terrassian Consulate, clockwork engineers construct small mechanical devices that serve as eyes and ears for those willing to invest in their creation. Clockwork scouts are brass constructs no larger than a clenched fist, with multiple articulated legs that allow them to scuttle through shadows like spiders fashioned from metal and clockwork gears. Their optical systems consist of multiple lenses that can focus, rotate, and measure, capturing images with mechanical precision that rivals any human observer. These devices serve as surveillance instruments, sent into spaces too small or dangerous for human investigators to access, remaining in position for hours or days, recording what they see through mechanisms that remain obscure even to those who use them. Their purpose is information gathering, a silent way to watch locations and activities without revealing the watcher's identity.

The clockwork scouts represent a constant paranoia fuel in a campaign; the party never knows if they are being observed, if some glittering eye is watching them from a vent or a high shelf, recording their movements for future analysis. The scouts operate with complete reliability; they do not need to sleep, they do not fail to pay attention, they do not miss important details. If one is discovered and destroyed, that act itself may alert whoever deployed it that someone in the party has knowledge of surveillance techniques. The mechanism by which scouts transmit information to their operators remains mysterious; they may be collected by agents once their watch is complete, or information may be read from memory mechanisms built into their frames. The presence of scouts implies sophisticated infrastructure dedicated to

observation, multiple such devices deployed across the city, a comprehensive surveillance network that operates silently and invisibly.

Campaign Use

CLOCKWORK SCOUTS WORK BEST AS FORESHADOWING DEVICES, AS SOURCES OF PARANOIA, AND AS INVESTIGATION ENCOUNTERS THAT HINT AT LARGER SYSTEMS OPERATING BEHIND THE SCENES. THE PARTY MIGHT DISCOVER A SCOUT, LEADING THEM TO WONDER WHO DEPLOYED IT AND WHAT INFORMATION IT MAY HAVE RECORDED. THEY MIGHT FIND MULTIPLE SCOUTS IN A SINGLE LOCATION, SUGGESTING THAT SOPHISTICATED POWERS ARE WATCHING SPECIFIC PEOPLE OR PLACES. THE DISCOVERY OF SCOUTS CAN SERVE AS A MOMENT OF REALIZATION THAT THE PARTY IS NOT OPERATING IN SHADOW AS FREELY AS THEY ASSUMED, THAT THEIR ACTIONS ARE OBSERVED AND RECORDED, THAT THEY MUST ADJUST THEIR APPROACH ACCORDINGLY. USE THEM SPARINGLY; THE MYSTERY OF SURVEILLANCE IS MORE POWERFUL THAN FREQUENT ENCOUNTERS WITH THE DEVICES THEMSELVES.

CAPITULUM

AUTOMATIC ASSASSINS

The mechanical killing machines built in the Terrassian Consulate's attic workshop represent the pinnacle of steampunk engineering applied to the purpose of assassination. An Automatic Assassin stands roughly human in height but with proportions that mark it as fundamentally other: longer arms for maximum reach, legs jointed in ways that allow impossible agility, a torso that contains the bulk of its mechanical systems. The head consists almost entirely of optical apparatus: clockwork eyes that whirl and focus with cold precision, lenses that rotate to capture information, mechanisms that process visual input and translate it into targeting data. When an assassin moves, every joint hisses with hydraulic pressure; the sound of a predator that makes no effort to conceal its approach because the sound itself generates fear and paralysis in prey.

The assassins are armed with pneumatic crossbows capable of firing explosive bolts tipped with flaming gel, creating weapons that combine precision with devastating area effect. They can bend metal with their hands, powerful enough to tear apart locked doors or deform armor. When one is destroyed, its neck cables leak fluid like arterial spray, its eyes dimming as consciousness, mechanical though it is, fades from the machine. They pursue targets with relentless efficiency, crashing through obstacles, climbing impossible surfaces, never stopping until their target is dead or they themselves are disabled. They are manufactured in batches from racks of interchangeable components, meaning that destroying one does not permanently eliminate the threat; the mechanical parts can be salvaged, repaired, and reassembled into new assassins. The man with the clockwork arm maintains these machines, replacing damaged components, upgrading systems, perhaps even building new ones. The ques-

tion that hangs over the campaign is whether these machines can be turned against their creators, whether someone with sufficient knowledge could reprogram them to pursue different targets or serve different masters.

Campaign Use

AUTOMATIC ASSASSINS FUNCTION AS BOSS-LEVEL ENCOUNTERS OR AS STEALTH-HORROR SETPIECES WHERE THE PARTY HEARS THE HYDRAULIC HISS BEFORE THEY SEE THE MACHINE EMERGING FROM DARKNESS. THEY WORK BEST DEPLOYED AGAINST THE PARTY SPARINGLY, AS SIGNIFICANT THREATS THAT CARRY REAL DANGER OF CHARACTER DEATH OR TRANSFORMATION. A PARTY HUNTED BY AN ASSASSIN EXPERIENCES A DIFFERENT KIND OF PRESSURE THAN A PARTY FACING CONVENTIONAL ENEMIES; THE MECHANICAL NATURE OF THE THREAT MEANS IT WILL NOT BE SWAYED BY NEGOTIATION, INTIMIDATED BY THREATS, OR DETERRED BY MINOR OBSTACLES. AN ASSASSIN PURSUING THROUGH NIGHTTIME STREETS OR THROUGH THE DARK CORRIDORS OF TORONY CASTLE CREATES ATMOSPHERIC TENSION THAT TRANSCENDS MERE TACTICAL CHALLENGE. USE THEM TO REINFORCE THAT THE WORLD CONTAINS FORCES BEYOND THE PARTY'S CURRENT CAPACITY TO CONFRONT, THAT SOME THREATS MUST BE EVADED OR HIDDEN FROM RATHER THAN FACED DIRECTLY.

CAPITULUM

SUPERNATURAL ADVERSARIES

CAPITULUM

UNDEAD SHAMBLERS

The most basic product of necromantic practice, undead shamblers are individual corpses animated through rune-carving, raised to service through dark magic that bypasses the normal laws governing death and decay. A shambler retains the rough shape of its original form; skeleton or rotted flesh depending on age, arms and legs that once belonged to human frames now driven by compulsion rather than volition. These creatures move slowly, predictably, driven by nothing more than the magical imperative to attack the living and cause destruction. A shambler is barely intelligent; it cannot solve problems, cannot plan, cannot deviate from its simple programming. A single shambler is barely a threat; a competent warrior defeats one with minimal difficulty. A dozen shamblers emerging from the tall grass of Hallaset Fields in moonlight is a different story entirely, a tide of rotted flesh and grasping hands that overwhelms through numbers rather than skill.

The Lich Cult uses shamblers as foot soldiers, expendable and easily replaced. The cult's necromancers care nothing for the individual creatures; they exist only as instruments of will, to be deployed, discarded, and replaced. Because the dead of Kormor Kirak are readily available, because the Hallaset Fields supply fresh corpses and bones in abundance, because the cult's purpose is served by using the dead as tools against the living, shambler production continues at whatever rate the cult's resources allow. These creatures serve as the lowest rung of the cult's power structure, the point of contact that most people encounter if they stumble into actual necromantic activity. They are what people tell stories about in whispered conversations; the walking dead, the reanimated corpses, the proof that something is fundamentally wrong in the places where they appear.

Campaign Use

UNDEAD SHAMBLERS FUNCTION AS ATMOSPHERIC ENCOUNTERS AND EARLY-GAME THREATS, AS VISUAL CONFIRMATION THAT NECROMANTIC FORCES ARE OPERATING IN THE CAMPAIGN WORLD. THEY ESCALATE ENCOUNTERS EFFICIENTLY; A SCENE THAT SEEMED STABLE BECOMES DANGEROUS WHEN A SHAMBLER LURCHES FROM HIDING, FORCING DECISIONS ABOUT WHETHER TO FIGHT, FLEE, OR HIDE. USE THEM TO ESTABLISH THAT HALLASET FIELDS AND OTHER NECROMANTIC SITES POSE ACTIVE DANGERS, THAT THE WARD SYMBOLS THAT LOCALS MAINTAIN ARE NOT MERE SUPERSTITION BUT NECESSARY PROTECTION. A MASS ENCOUNTER WITH MULTIPLE SHAMBLERS PROVIDES A COMBAT CHALLENGE THAT TESTS A PARTY'S ABILITY TO HANDLE WAVES OF ENEMIES, THEIR UNDERSTANDING OF TACTICS AND RESOURCE MANAGEMENT. SHAMBLERS WORK BEST AS ENVIRONMENTAL HAZARDS IN NECROMANTIC LOCATIONS; THEIR PRESENCE MARKS CERTAIN AREAS AS DANGEROUS AND ACTIVELY HAUNTED.

CAPITULUM

THE NECROTIC BULK

The corpse-horror that emerged from the Hallaset Fields represents advanced necromantic artistry, a construction that demonstrates the power of those who practice the demonic runes. The Necrotic Bulk is roughly humanoid in shape but assembled from parts harvested from multiple bodies, a chimera of death that should not exist yet does.

Individual body parts, whole heads, severed arms, fingers moving independently within the mass, writhe with their own animation, each carrying residual magic that drives motion. The bulk kills Red Guards with ease, powerful enough to tear armored soldiers apart, fast enough to move across open ground at speeds that horses struggle to match. It chases the party through tall grass with terrible speed and terrifying purpose, a predator that remembers its prey.

The Necrotic Bulk collapses only when Rozito, its creator, is killed or when the animating magic expires, which may require days or weeks depending on the strength of the original ritual. The thing cannot be permanently destroyed while necromantic energy flows through the

Hallaset Fields; it may be temporarily disabled, its parts separated, but reassembly remains possible if the cult chooses to invest the effort. Its physical form combines strength, speed, and a sickening resilience; wounds that should be fatal barely slow it. The true horror of the Necrotic Bulk is not its combat capabilities but the wrongness of its existence, the violation of natural law that it represents, the awareness that human remains have been desecrated in service to dark purposes. Seeing it move, watching severed hands grasp at the air,

observing the coordination between parts that should not coordinate, plants deep psychological trauma in those who witness it.

Campaign Use

THE NECROTIC BULK FUNCTIONS AS A BOSS-LEVEL ENCOUNTER OR A HORROR SETPIECE DESIGNED TO TERRIFY RATHER THAN TO TEST PURELY MECHANICAL COMBAT CAPABILITY. IT SHOULD BE ENCOUNTERED AT MOST ONCE OR TWICE DURING A CAMPAIGN, EACH ENCOUNTER PROVIDING A REVELATION ABOUT THE DEPTH OF NECROMANTIC THREAT AND THE COMMITMENT OF THOSE WHO PRACTICE THE DARK ARTS. USE IT TO ESCALATE PERCEIVED STAKES; A PARTY THAT DEFEATS A SHAMBLER MIGHT FEEL CONFIDENT UNTIL THEY FACE SOMETHING LIKE THE BULK AND REALIZE HOW FAR THE THREAT EXTENDS BEYOND SIMPLE ANIMATED CORPSES. THE TACTICAL CHALLENGE PRESENTED BY THE BULK IS SECONDARY TO THE HORROR IT EVOKES; CLEVER PARTIES CAN USE THE ENVIRONMENT AGAINST IT, SEPARATING IT FROM ITS CREATOR, LURING IT INTO TRAPS, USING FIRE TO SLOW OR DISABLE PARTS. THE BULK'S MINDLESS NATURE MEANS IT CAN BE MISDIRECTED BY CLEVER STRATEGIES, BUT ITS POWER AND RESILIENCE MEAN THAT DIRECT COMBAT CARRIES SERIOUS RISK OF CHARACTER DEATH.

CAPITULUM

LICH CULT ACOLYTES

The rank and file of the necromantic order that once threatened

Kiraline's throne and now resurfaces with unknown intentions consists of ordinary people dedicated to extraordinary purposes. An acolyte appears human, unremarkable, dressed in the clothes of whatever profession provides cover for their true activities. They might be merchants, servants, laborers, artisans, or scholars; people who move through Kormor Kirak's streets with no obvious reason for suspicion. In secret, these individuals gather to perform rituals, to carve preliminary runes into corpses, to prepare the framework that enables the more elaborate necromantic constructs. They maintain the trellis structures that serve as containers and conduits for dark portals. They gather information about the movements of Kiraline and Szeret, about the locations of significant corpses, about the opportunities for expanding the cult's operations.

The commitment of individual acolytes varies dramatically. Some are true believers, convinced that the Lich they serve carries truth or purpose superior to conventional law and morality. Others have been coerced through threats, blackmail, or magical compulsion. Still others are opportunists, people who believe that serving a rising power represents a path to advancement and resources. The heterogeneity of the acolyte ranks means that individual members might be negotiated with, turned against the cult, or convinced to provide information to the party.

However, the cult also includes mechanisms for ensuring loyalty; those who betray are revealed, and betrayal carries consequences that extend beyond simple death into the realm of transformation and supernatural torment. Most

acolytes maintain their loyalty not out of conviction but out of fear, and fear proves a sufficient motivator for most purposes.

Campaign Use

LICH CULT ACOLYTES FUNCTION AS INVESTIGATION ENCOUNTERS, AS SURPRISE REVEALS THAT ESTABLISH HOW DEEPLY THE CULT HAS PENETRATED KORMOR KIRAK'S INSTITUTIONS, AND AS SOURCES OF MORAL COMPLEXITY. THE PARTY MIGHT DISCOVER THAT SOMEONE THEY CONSIDERED AN ALLY OR AT LEAST A NEUTRAL PARTY IS ACTUALLY A CULT MEMBER, FORCING RE-EVALUATION OF RELATIONSHIPS AND A RE-EXAMINATION OF PREVIOUS INTERACTIONS. INDIVIDUAL ACOLYTES ARE NOT PARTICULARLY DANGEROUS IN DIRECT COMBAT, BUT THEIR ACCESS TO INFORMATION AND THEIR CONNECTIONS TO LARGER NETWORKS MAKE THEM VALUABLE INTELLIGENCE SOURCES OR POTENTIAL ALLIES. USE THEM TO ESTABLISH THAT THE LICH CULT IS NOT A HISTORICAL THREAT OR A DISTANT DANGER BUT AN ACTIVE, PRESENT FORCE, OPERATING THROUGH NETWORKS THAT THE PARTY IS ONLY BEGINNING TO UNDERSTAND. AN ACOLYTE WHO IS CAPTURED AND INTERROGATED PROVIDES A POINT OF ESCALATION; THE CULT WILL LIKELY WORK TO ENSURE THE ACOLYTE DOES NOT PROVIDE INFORMATION, EITHER THROUGH RESCUE OR THROUGH MORE PERMANENT MEANS.

CAPITULUM

THE NECROMANCERS

CULT

At the apex of the cult's practical hierarchy sit the true practitioners, individuals trained in the demonic language of the runes, capable of creating effects that rival any conventional military force.

Necromancers are rare, perhaps fewer than a dozen in the entire region, but each represents a threat serious enough to warrant significant attention and resources. Their power derives not from innate talent but from study, ritual, and practice; given time, materials, and corpses, a necromancer can create artifacts and creatures of terrible power. Rozito exemplifies this category at its most refined: a man who carves elegant scalpels through dead flesh with surgical precision, assembling necromantic constructs from carefully selected and positioned parts, creating things that move and kill with frightening coordination.

The question that undergirds the campaign is whether these practitioners serve the Lich Cult alone or whether Kiraline herself has co-opted their art. The queen of Kormor Kirak is a vampire whose immortality might benefit from knowledge of necromantic preservation, whose power might be enhanced through necromantic allies or servants. The possibility that a vampire queen and a death-cult might be allied creates threat geometry that transcends simple opposition; if the two powers work together, no conventional force can oppose them. Necromancers represent the cutting edge of research into the practices of death and resurrection, people who understand the boundaries between life and death, who know how to push past those boundaries and force them to yield. The presence of a single necromancer in a region marks that region as

touched by forces beyond normal understanding; the presence of multiple practitioners suggests coordinated activity toward some larger purpose.

Campaign Use

LICH CULT NECROMANCERS FUNCTION AS MID-TO-LATE CAMPAIGN THREATS, AS INVESTIGATION TARGETS, AND AS POTENTIAL SOURCES OF FORBIDDEN KNOWLEDGE. THEY ARE INTELLIGENT, EDUCATED, DANGEROUS IN DIRECT COMBAT AND INFINITELY MORE DANGEROUS IN CIRCUMSTANCES WHERE THEY HAVE TIME TO PREPARE MAGICAL DEFENSES AND INVOKE NECROMANTIC POWER. A PARTY THAT ENGAGES A NECROMANCER IN PREPARED TERRITORY FACES ODDS THAT STRONGLY FAVOR THE PRACTITIONER. A PARTY THAT CATCHES A NECROMANCER AWAY FROM PREPARATION OR WITHOUT SUPPORTING CAST HAS A REALISTIC OPPORTUNITY TO DEFEAT THEM THROUGH CUNNING AND SUPERIOR NUMBERS. USE NECROMANCERS SPARINGLY; THEY REPRESENT SIGNIFICANT POWER, AND THEIR PRESENCE SHOULD CARRY WEIGHT AND CONSEQUENCE. A NECROMANCER ENCOUNTERED EARLY IN THE CAMPAIGN MIGHT BE RECAPTURED OR RESURRECTED LATER; THE CULT DOES NOT ABANDON ONE OF ITS MASTERS WITHOUT SIGNIFICANT REASON. THE KNOWLEDGE THAT NECROMANCERS POSSESS MAKES THEM VALUABLE TARGETS FOR INVESTIGATION AND INTERROGATION, BUT EXTRACTING INFORMATION FROM SOMEONE TRAINED IN RESISTANCE TO PAIN AND FEAR REQUIRES APPROACHES BEYOND SIMPLE TORTURE.

CAPITULUM

VAMPIRE SPAWN

The lesser undead created when Kiraline feeds are victims transformed through supernatural predation into creatures bound to her will. These spawn retain enough intelligence to follow commands, to disguise themselves as human servants in dim light, to infiltrate positions of trust and move through society as human imposters. They are neither fully alive nor fully dead; they exist in a state between existence and nonexistence, animated by hunger for blood and obedience to their creator. During the Masquerade, prisoners were taken to the castle dungeons where Kiraline and Szeret fed; some of those victims rose again as spawn, bound to eternal service for the price of their lives. They haunt the castle corridors after dark, patient and silent, servants of the queen who move through the night while human servants sleep.

The spawn can pass for human in dim light, wearing the faces of people who once had names and families, who once had lives that extended beyond service to a vampire queen. In darkness or under close examination, the truth becomes obvious: their skin carries a gray pallor, their eyes reflect light unnaturally, their movements are too smooth, lacking the slight hesitations and imperfections of genuine human motion. They do not eat, do not sleep, and do not age, which makes explaining their eternal presence in the castle's staff complicated. Some of the castle's servants whisper about which of their colleagues have become undead, spreading fear and paranoia among the human population. Others maintain careful silence, understanding that revealing knowledge of the spawn results in being silenced permanently, perhaps by becoming a spawn themselves.

Campaign Use

VAMPIRE SPAWN FUNCTION AS HORROR ENCOUNTERS AND SOCIAL DECEPTION CHALLENGES, AS CHARACTERS WHO CAN HELP OR HINDER THE PARTY DEPENDING ON CIRCUMSTANCES AND RELATIONSHIPS. A SPAWN WHO REMAINS BOUND TO KIRALINE REPRESENTS AN ENEMY WITHIN THE CASTLE WALLS, SILENT AND PATIENT. A SPAWN WHO DEVELOPS DOUBTS OR QUESTIONS LOYALTY BECOMES A POTENTIAL ALLY, ONE WHO CAN MOVE THROUGH AREAS WHERE HUMANS CANNOT GO UNNOTICED, WHO CARRIES KNOWLEDGE OF THE CASTLE'S LAYOUT AND THE QUEEN'S ROUTINES. USE THEM TO REINFORCE THE HORROR OF WHAT VAMPIRISM TRULY MEANS; THE SPAWN ARE TRAGIC FIGURES, PEOPLE DESTROYED AND REMADE INTO SERVITUDE, LIVING EVIDENCE OF KIRALINE'S PREDATION. ENCOUNTERS WITH SPAWN WHO REMEMBER THEIR HUMAN LIVES CREATE EMOTIONAL COMPLEXITY; THESE ARE NOT MERELY ENEMIES BUT VICTIMS WHO MIGHT POSSIBLY BE SAVED, IF SALVATION IS EVEN POSSIBLE FOR THE UNDEAD.

CAPITULUM

MOUNTAIN WOLVES

The grey wolves of the Videk Mountains grow larger and more aggressive than their lowland cousins, shaped by harsh conditions and centuries of evolution in unforgiving terrain. They hunt in packs of four to eight, coordinating through body language and low vocalizations that carry across distances, directed by an alpha that enforces pack discipline through violence and authority. Normally they avoid humans, intelligent enough to understand that organized groups of people represent danger exceeding any advantage that hunting them provides. However, in winter when prey becomes scarce or during full moons when something in the mountain air seems to awaken primal instincts, their behavior changes.

They grow bolder, more aggressive, willing to pursue humans for the sake of food or territorial assertion.

Jack's presence agitates the wolves in ways that defy easy explanation.

The packs sense something in him that makes them wary or aggressive, depending on the circumstances and the particular pack's disposition.

Some avoid him completely, giving wide berth as though he carries a scent that marks him as dangerous or infectious. Others become unusually aggressive, drawn to him by something that transcends ordinary predatory instinct. Eppy, with centuries of observation behind her, understands the wolves' patterns and knows how to read their behavior, how to advise the party on whether a particular pack can be avoided or whether they must be confronted. She knows the seasons when the wolves are most dangerous and the places where they den. This knowledge represents practical survival advantage; the party traveling

with someone who understands mountain predators experiences far fewer surprise encounters.

Campaign Use

MOUNTAIN WOLVES FUNCTION AS WILDERNESS ENCOUNTERS, AS ENVIRONMENTAL HAZARDS ON MOUNTAIN ROADS, AND AS FORESHADOWING OF JACK'S SUPERNATURAL CONDITION. A PACK OF WOLVES PROVIDES A COMBAT ENCOUNTER THAT ESCALATES ENVIRONMENTAL CHALLENGES BEYOND SIMPLE TRAVEL; THE PARTY MUST NAVIGATE TERRAIN WHILE DEFENDING AGAINST COORDINATED PREDATORS. THE WOLVES' BEHAVIOR TOWARD JACK SERVES AS A CONSTANT REMINDER THAT HE CARRIES SOMETHING OTHER THAN HUMAN, THAT HIS CONDITION MARKS HIM AS FUNDAMENTALLY UNUSUAL EVEN TO CREATURES THAT SHOULD BE INCAPABLE OF UNDERSTANDING HUMAN COMPLEXITY. USE WOLVES TO ESTABLISH THE VIDEK MOUNTAINS AS GENUINELY DANGEROUS TERRAIN WHERE SURVIVAL REQUIRES MORE THAN SUPPLIES AND DETERMINATION; IT REQUIRES KNOWLEDGE AND THE WILLINGNESS TO ADAPT TACTICS TO CIRCUMSTANCES. A PARTY THAT LEARNS TO WORK AROUND WOLF PACKS DISCOVERS THAT THE MOUNTAINS OFFER PASSAGE FOR THOSE WILLING TO MOVE CAREFULLY. A PARTY THAT ENGAGES EVERY PACK THEY ENCOUNTER DISCOVERS THAT THE MOUNTAINS WEAR THEM DOWN THROUGH ACCUMULATED DAMAGE AND EXHAUSTION.

CAPITULUM

PART EIGHT: THE CONSPIRACY -- A GAMEMASTER'S GUIDE

Secret

THIS SECTION CONTAINS MAJOR SPOILERS FOR THE ETERNAL COURT CAMPAIGN. DO NOT SHARE THIS WITH PLAYERS UNLESS YOU INTEND TO REVEAL THE CAMPAIGN'S FINAL TRUTH.

The conspiracy that drives The Eternal Court is not what it initially appears to be. On the surface, the threat is Kiraline, the vampire queen whose hunger for power and immortal hunger for blood make her the obvious antagonist. She is powerful, dangerous, and genuinely monstrous. But Kiraline is not the architect of the campaign's central plot. She is a tool, and the hand wielding her belongs to someone far more dangerous: Barron Whitehallow.

The Architect of Ruin

Barron Whitehallow is a dying man, and his dying is the source of all that unfolds. His lungs are scarred, his body failing, his time running out like sand through an hourglass with nothing at the bottom. He has come to Kormor Kirak ostensibly to broker peace between empires, to position himself as a statesman and a uniter in the final chapter of his life. In truth, he has come to escape death itself, and he has found a path that he believes will succeed where all others fail.

Barron intends to become a Lich. His plan is precise and terrible: he will engineer his own death, be buried in the Hallaset Fields where the necromantic energy runs deepest, undergo the ritual of resurrection, and emerge as an undead sorcerer of terrible power. But he does not intend to remain himself. His ultimate goal is to possess the body of the boy king of Albion, the child ruler whose divine right Olivia venerates with such certainty. To wear that stolen flesh. To rule the empire in that body, with an immortal consciousness and the accumulated knowledge and power of a lich directing decisions from behind the young king's eyes.

His romance with Kiraline was calculated with precision. He seduced her, earned her trust, positioned himself as lover and confidant. She believed she was controlling him, believed she had found someone who could empower her kingdom and help it grow strong. In truth, he was learning the secrets of necromancy from her, studying the depth of her power, preparing himself for the working that would transform him into something beyond mortality. He has been manipulating her narcissism, her need to believe herself superior, her hunger for dominance. Every kindness from Barron has been a layer in a con designed to extract information and access. Every moment of vulnerability has been performance.

What drives Barron is the refusal to accept the limitation of mortality. He has spent his life accumulating power, knowledge, and influence, and he cannot bear the thought of it ending. His greatest fear is that death is final, that everything he is will cease to exist. His weakness is that this fear has made him willing to sacrifice anything and anyone to achieve transformation. He has murdered people without hesitation. He has stolen from treasuries and conspired with vampires. He has transformed the city into a playground for dark working. And he has done all of it with the serene confidence of a man who believes he is playing a game he cannot lose.

The Agents

Barron could not work alone. The conspiracy requires agents spread through the city, people positioned to act at critical moments and gather necessary resources.

Varga serves as Barron's enforcer, promised a cure for his lycanthropy in exchange for his service. The promise is the only thing keeping Varga bound to the conspiracy. He is dangerous because his commitment is conditional; if the cure never materializes, if Varga comes to believe he has traded his soul for nothing, his allegiance may shatter.

Rozito practices necromancy under Barron's indirect guidance, preparing the Hallaset Fields for the ritual that will transform him. Every corpse buried with ritual precision, every grave opened under cover of darkness, every working carved into dead flesh brings the Fields closer to the state of necromantic saturation required for the transformation. Rozito does not know the full extent of Barron's plan; he believes he is serving a conspiracy related to the Lich Cult's ambitions. His ignorance is intentional, maintained by Barron to prevent him from understanding too much and becoming an independent threat.

The previous tax collector was murdered when he discovered financial irregularities connected to the conspiracy -- money stolen from the Albion treasury and redirected to fund the ritual components. His death was necessary. His body was used in one of the early workings in the Hallaset Fields, an experiment to determine whether the earth there would accept the corpses of the innocent.

An architect overseeing the construction of the Theater of Everlasting Peace was also killed. He had discovered that the theater's underground chambers were being modified for purposes that had nothing to do with peace negoti-

ations. The modifications were preparation for the final ritual, the space beneath the stage designed as a nexus point where the barriers between life and death grow thin enough for a man to cross between them. His knowledge made him a liability. His death made him useful, his corpse employed in another working as the conspiracy's architects tested their designs.

The Timeline

Everything converges on a moment of celestial alignment. At noon on Thursday, September 5, 1793, the sun will go dark over Kormor Kirak. A total eclipse, the barrier between light and darkness made literal. This is the moment of maximum necromantic potency, when the veil between life and death thins to nearly nothing, when a man with sufficient knowledge and power could step across and be reborn on the other side.

The ritual must be completed during the eclipse or it fails entirely. This is not a flexible timeline; this is an absolute constraint. Barron has already begun the count. The parties have already been positioned. The murders have already been committed. The working is in motion, and nothing short of catastrophic intervention will halt it before the eclipse reaches its culmination.

This gives the campaign a ticking clock. It gives the players a deadline they will come to understand only gradually, as clues accumulate and suspicion hardens into certainty. It creates pressure that escalates with each passing day, until the city itself seems to be holding its breath, waiting for the darkness to come at noon.

The Breadcrumbs

The conspiracy leaves threads for the party to pull. Each thread, when followed carefully, leads toward the same terrible center.

The murdered tax collector. The stolen treasury gold. The financial discrepancies that Olivia was sent to investigate, the irregularities that brought her to Kormor Kirak in the first place. These threads, when pulled, reveal a pattern of theft and misallocation, money moving from official accounts into the hands of people without official capacity.

The architect's body found in the vault, suspended in necromantic trellis formation, ritual symbols carved into his flesh with surgical precision. Eighty-eight wounds arranged in a pattern that forms a working, a doorway, a breach in the vault's protections. The pattern is demonic, the language primal, the meaning opaque to those without training in the dark arts.

The construction of the Theater of Everlasting Peace, that stage being built for something other than speeches and performances. The modifications to its underground chambers. The discovery by Feeney that something terrible was being prepared there, and his consequent murder by an Automatic Assassin, his body becoming another working, another experiment in the conspiracy's necromantic research.

The second body in the vault, wrapped in branches, covered with eighty-eight ritual wounds. The Gawky Model, Szeret's lover, displayed as a warning and as an offering. Her death marks the moment when Kiraline discovers Barron's true intentions or when Barron chooses to eliminate someone who has become inconvenient. Either way, her death is a message and a demonstration of power.

The increasing undead activity in the Hallaset Fields. The nights when the party cannot sleep because the fields are restless, the dead refusing to rest, shapes moving between the memorial stones. Each appearance is a sign that the necromantic saturation grows deeper, that the working is advancing.

Varga's constant background presence. Every scene where the party plays a role, Varga is somewhere in the shadows. At the Bastion Inn when they arrive. In the market when they move through it. Near the fields when they investig-

ate. Always there. Always dismissed. Until the moment when his presence is revealed and every previous encounter recontextualizes itself.

Each of these threads is a puzzle piece. The party that gathers them all will begin to see the shape of something far larger than simple murder or treasure theft or political maneuvering. They will begin to understand that the conspiracy is not about Kiraline's ambitions but about the ambitions of the man she thought she was controlling.

The Misdirection

The campaign is deliberately structured so that the players will initially suspect Kiraline as the primary antagonist. She is a vampire. She is powerful and cruel and demonstrably capable of terrible acts. She practices necromancy, or at least employs those who do. She commands resources and authority. She has the motive and the means and the willingness to undertake dark working.

All of this is true. Every suspicion the players harbor about Kiraline has basis in fact. She is dangerous. She is not the villain of this story; she is a supporting character who happens to be monstrous. The distinction is important.

Kiraline is being manipulated. Her narcissism is being exploited by someone who learned to read her over years of careful observation. Her trust in Barron is a weapon being turned against her. Her power, which she believes gives her control over everything in her city, is being channeled toward ends she does not understand and does not consent to. She is being used.

The real villain is the dying diplomat who recruited the party in the first place, the man who sends them into danger while quietly preparing his own apotheosis. The man who seems so helpful, so genuinely concerned with their welfare, so committed to their success. Every piece of guidance Barron provides is filtered through his own agenda. Every mission he assigns is in

service of his own design. The party trusts him because he has earned that trust, because he presents himself as an ally in a dark city full of enemies, because he is right about the threats that surround them.

The reveal -- when Barron's true nature becomes clear -- should recontextualize everything the party has experienced. It should feel like betrayal, because it is. It should feel like the ground has shifted beneath them, because the person they have been working for, the person they have trusted with information about their plans and their fears, is the person causing the catastrophe they have been trying to prevent.

This misdirection is the campaign's central strategy. It makes Kiraline a red herring wrapped in genuine danger. It makes every conversation with Barron a test of the party's perceptiveness, a moment where they might have seen the truth but did not. It makes the final confrontation more personal because the party will feel that they have been personally betrayed by someone they came to rely on.

Koss as Wild Card

Devorlen Koss is a Terrassian spy, and his agenda does not align neatly with the conspiracy. He is in Kormor Kirak to monitor Albion's activities, to ensure that whatever Barron is doing does not threaten Terrassian interests, and to gather intelligence that might prove useful in future negotiations between empires.

Koss is pragmatic. He cares about preventing catastrophic instability. A dying diplomat achieving lichdom and possessing the body of Albion's king would be catastrophic on multiple levels. It would destabilize the empire. It would create a supernatural threat of unprecedented scale. It would violate the treaties between nations. It would necessitate response from Terrassia, likely in the form of intervention or invasion.

When the full scope of Barron's plan becomes clear, Koss may become an unlikely ally. His pragmatism may lead him to cooperate with the heroes against a threat that endangers both empires. He may reveal information he has been gathering in secret. He may provide resources or access that would otherwise be unavailable. He remains untrustworthy, remains committed to Terrassian interests first, but he becomes useful because the threat transcends national boundaries.

The party must decide whether to trust Koss, whether to accept aid from someone who serves an empire that has its own ambitions in Kormor Kirak. This decision is theirs, and it carries consequences either way. But Koss exists as proof that the conspiracy's threat is so severe that even enemies may find common cause against it.

CAPITULUM

PART NINE: USING THE BESTIARY

The threats of The Eternal Court achieve their greatest power when deployed with narrative purpose rather than numerical abundance. A single Automatic Assassin stalking the party through nighttime streets, the sound of hydraulic pressure echoing in darkness, creates more memorable tension than a dozen assassins fought in straightforward combat across open ground. The Necrotic Bulk should be encountered once or perhaps twice during a campaign, each encounter serving as a horrifying revelation about the depth of necromantic power and the absolute commitment of those who practice dark arts. Vampire Spawn work best when the party recognizes someone they once knew wearing an expression of wrong that sends chills down spines, when interaction with a former acquaintance forces understanding of what has been done to them and what they have become.

The power of The Eternal Court emerges from the intersection of the mundane and the monstrous, from the tension between ordinary governance and extraordinary threat. Red Guards serve a vampire queen without necessarily knowing it or acknowledging what they serve. Street criminals avoid certain alleys after dark for reasons they cannot articulate, having learned through experience that some places are haunted by things worse than human enemies. Wolves refuse to enter the

Hallaset Fields even when prey runs there, animals responding to dangers that human senses cannot perceive. Every encounter should make players wonder what else is hiding behind the ordinary facades of the city, what darkness runs

beneath the surface of merchant transactions and social interaction, what dangers wait in the spaces between light and shadow.

The bestiary exists to provide the material substance for that inquiry, to transform vague unease into concrete, memorable threat.

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APPENDIX A: TIMELINE OF KEY EVENTS

Ancient Era: The Founding

The Veresz dynasty rises in power in the lands beyond the Videk Mountains. The original citadel of Torony Piros is built from red stone quarried from the cliff face itself. The city of Kormor Kirak begins to grow around the fortress as a trade settlement along the mountain pass.

Three Centuries Ago: The Red Guard Formation

Queen Mirella Veresz establishes the Red Guard as the primary military and police force of Kormor Kirak. The force remains under direct command of the Queen and swears personal loyalty rather than loyalty to abstract concepts of law or order.

Two Centuries Ago: The Tower of Thorns

Queen Mirella seals the Tower of Thorns after events within drive her to madness. The tower remains sealed for two hundred years. The circumstances of the sealing are lost or deliberately obscured.

One Hundred Years Ago: The Century War Begins

War erupts between the Albion Empire and the Kingdom of Terrassia. The Videk Mountains become the primary barrier separating the two powers. Kormor Kirak officially declares neutrality, positioning itself as a trade hub accessible to both empires.

Fifty Years Past: The Albion Consulate Opens

The Albion Empire establishes a formal consulate in Kormor Kirak. This marks the beginning of more intensive Albion involvement in the city's politics and commerce. The consulate becomes a center of espionage and political maneuvering.

Twenty-Five Years Past: The Terrassian Consulate Opens

The Kingdom of Terrassia establishes its own consulate in response to Albion's presence. The two embassies maintain uneasy coexistence, each watching the other's activities with suspicion and precision.

Five Years Past: The Peace Negotiations Begin

Both Albion and Terrassia, exhausted by a century of conflict with no decisive advantage for either side, begin secret negotiations toward peace. Kormor Kirak becomes the primary location for these discussions. A marriage treaty is proposed: the young Albion prince will marry the Terrassian princess, symbolizing an end to hostilities and the beginning of a unified, peaceful era.

Two Years Past: The Theater of Everlasting Peace is Commissioned

Albion funds the construction of the Theater of Everlasting Peace in Kormor Kirak as a permanent symbol of the peace effort. Gold is transferred to the city. Feeney, the consulate's financial officer, oversees the arrangement. Plans for the theater showcase Albion's commitment to lasting peace and cultural investment in the city.

One Year Past: Barron Whitehallow Becomes Ambassador

Ambassador Barron Whitehallow arrives in Kormor Kirak to oversee Albion's diplomatic mission. He becomes a key figure in the peace negotiations and quickly gains influence with Queen Kiraline. He begins developing his true agenda in secret.

Six Months Past: First Disappearances

The first victims of Barron's necromantic experiments disappear from Kormor Kirak. Their bodies are later found drained and arranged in ritual patterns. Official explanations blame wild animals or suggest victims fled the city for unknown reasons.

Three Months Past: The Murder of Feeney

Feeney, the consulate's financial officer, is found dead in the Albion Consulate vault. His body is arranged in a trellis of supernatural vines and marked with

eighty-eight ritual wounds. The gold meant for the theater's construction is missing. The murder becomes the campaign's opening event.

Two Months Past: Theater Construction Halts

The Theater of Everlasting Peace construction site becomes the focus of strange occurrences. Accidents plague the workers. Foreman Nero struggles to keep the project moving. The construction timeline slips. Rumors spread of supernatural interference.

Present Day: The Eclipse Deadline

September 5, 1793. An eclipse is scheduled to occur on this date. This is the deadline Barron has been working toward. On this date, at the precise moment of eclipse totality, he plans to perform the ritual that will allow him to achieve lichdom and possess the body of the Albion prince during the wedding ceremony. If successful, he will have ensured a supernatural threat sits upon the Albion throne and gains access to the empire's absolute power.

The campaign begins. The party is recruited. The clock is already running.

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APPENDIX B: PRONUNCIATION GUIDE

KORMOR KIRAK (KOR-mor KEE-rahk) - The neutral mountain city that serves as the setting for the campaign.

KIRALINE (KEER-ah-leen) - Queen Kiraline Veresz Eroszakos, the vampire ruler of Kormor Kirak and the castle Torony Piros.

SZERET (SEHR-et) - Princess Szeret, the Queen's daughter, a shapeshifter who wears borrowed flesh.

VERESZ (VEHR-ez) - The royal dynasty of Terrassia and Kormor Kirak. The name carries ancient weight and implies power over death itself.

EROSZAKOS (AIR-oh-ZAHK-os) - Part of the Queen's full title, indicating her lordship over Kormor Kirak.

TERRASSIA (TEHR-ah-shuh) - The ancient kingdom aligned with magic and tradition, ruled by Queen Kiraline.

TORONY PIROS (TOR-oh-nee PEER-osh) - Literally "The Red Tower" in an older tongue. The castle that dominates Kormor Kirak and serves as the seat of power.

KERESKEDO (KEHR-es-KAY-doh) - The great market of Kormor Kirak, a sprawling structure containing commerce and hidden dealings in equal measure.

HALLASET (HAH-lah-set) - The fields outside Kormor Kirak where the dead are buried and where supernatural threats gather.

ROZITO VALLIKOZO (roh-ZEE-toh vahl-ee-KOH-zoh) - The market master of Kereskedo, appointed by Queen Kiraline and responsible for the flow of commerce in the city.

AGGODAS (AH-goh-dahs) - One of Queen Kiraline's agents and a figure of mystery in the city's shadows.

BOLDOGG (BOHL-dog) - A figure encountered in the campaign whose exact allegiances remain ambiguous.

VARGA (VARGA) - A name whispered in connection with dark rituals and necromantic power.

Eppy Flinder (EP-ee THOON-der) - Owner of the Bastion Inn, a woman who has seen much and forgotten little.

GILLIKOI (GILL-i-koi) - A location of wild beauty and danger, forest lands where the rules of civilization hold less sway.

ERDO (AIR-doh) - The hot springs in the mountains above Kormor Kirak, a place of healing and hidden negotiations.

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APPENDIX E: FACTIONS AND ORGANIZATIONS

The Albion Empire

Summary: An industrial powerhouse convinced of its divine mandate to rule, locked in a century-long war with Terrassia and secretly manipulated by its own ambassador's dark agenda.

Key NPCs: Ambassador Barron Whitehallow (secret leader of the Lich Cult and hidden architect of its conspiracy), the Albion Prince (the eventual target of possession), Lord Wooster (diplomat and observer).

The Kingdom of Terrassia

Summary: An ancient kingdom maintaining tradition alongside mechanical innovation, ruled by a vampire queen and allied with supernatural bloodlines.

Key NPCs: Queen Kiraline Veresz Eroszakos (vampire ruler), Princess Szeret (shapeshifter heir).

Terrassian Intelligence

Summary: A sophisticated espionage operation based in the Terrassian Consulate attic, focused on mechanical assassins and surveillance networks throughout Kormor Kirak.

Key NPCs: The scarred Terrassian operative (overseer of the Automatic Assassins laboratory), Devorlen Koss (pragmatic spy and potential ally).

The Lich Cult

Summary: A network of necromancers devoted to undeath and the consumption of life force. Operating in the Hallaset Fields and using Barron as a tool to advance their agenda.

Key NPCs: The Cult leadership (shadowy and mysterious), Necromancer acolytes stationed throughout the city.

The Gatekeepers

Summary: An ancient order concerned with preventing the escape of supernatural threats from sealed places. They maintain knowledge of the Tower of Thorns and other sealed locations.

Key NPCs: Unknown, but their presence hints at greater powers operating beneath the city's surface.

The Red Guard

Summary: Queen Kiraline's personal military force, distinguished by crimson uniforms and absolute loyalty to the throne. They maintain order in Kormor Kirak and protect the castle.

Key NPCs: Red Guard Captains at key installations, soldiers rotating through patrols and gate duty.

The Merchant Guild

Summary: The loose confederation of traders and commercial interests that control the flow of goods through Kormor Kirak. Rozito Vallikozo acts as their representative to the Queen.

Key NPCs: Rozito Vallikozo (market master), merchant representatives from both empires.

The Court of Kormor Kirak

Summary: Queen Kiraline's direct circle of advisors, servants, and political allies. A place of constant intrigue and careful performance.

Key NPCs: Queen Kiraline (absolute authority), Court Advisors (various positions and allegiances), servants and attendants maintaining the castle's operations.

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CREDITS AND LEGAL

CREATED BY Jesse Alexander

BASED ON The screenplay *The Eternal Court* by Jesse Alexander

This Campaign World Guide is designed for use with tabletop roleplaying games and can be adapted to a wide range of systems, including Dungeons & Dragons 5E and Daggerheart.

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