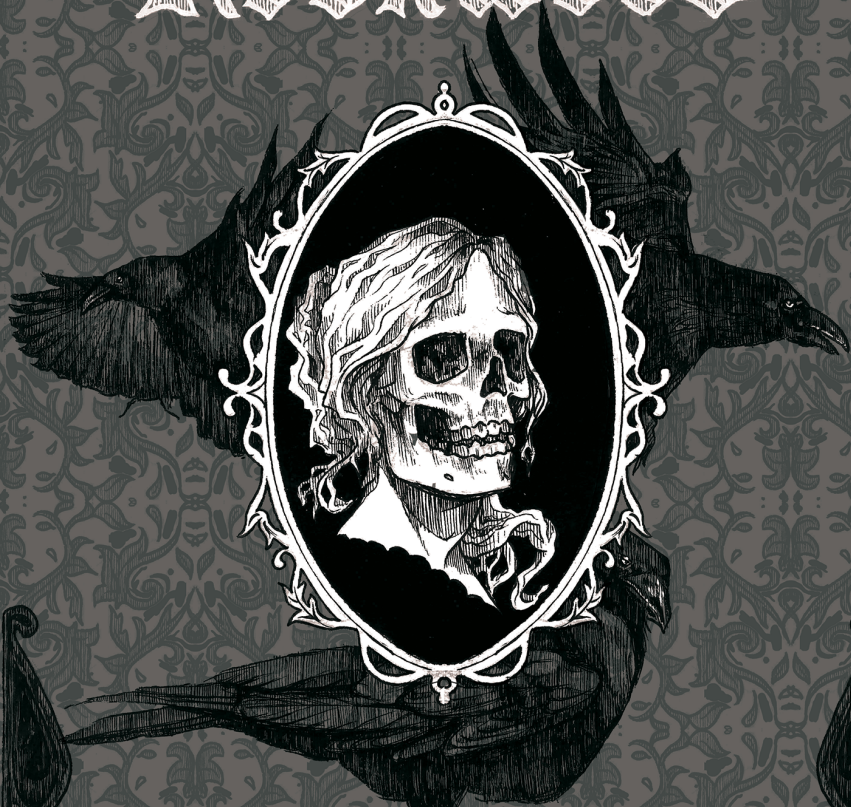


THE
Curse
OF THE
House
OF
Rookwood



Brian Bink
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The Curse of the House of Rookwood



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Introduction

This is a role-playing game of decaying nobility, Gothic horror, urban fantasy, and supernatural conspiracy--but above all else, it is about the fraying bonds of a dysfunctional family and their efforts to save themselves from their own darker natures. One player will take on the role of the Chronicler of the history of the Rookwood family and the other players will take on the roles of family members across several generations.

Needful Things

In order to play the game, you'll need a few things. The players should each have copies of the character sheet to record the details of their own Rookwood family members. The group should also have several six-sided dice in three different colors. Ideally, three dice of each color per player is best but 5 or 6 of each color is enough for the whole group if they can share the dice and pass them to each other without much hassle. If you only have one color of dice (or a hodgepodge), you can roll them in three different bowls or dice trays to distinguish them. The rules will assume that the dice are Black, Grey, and White for the mnemonic device "*Black=Brawn, Grey=Guile, White=Weird*". Feel free to rename the Traits to match the dice you have available, such as "*Brawny brown, Brilliant blue, Ghostly green*" or "*blood red Brawn, cool blue Logic, and these weird purple dice with lightning bolts for Magic*".

The players will also need a copy of the record sheet for Rookwood Manor, the family estate. A set of notepads or scrap paper will be useful for taking notes and for passing secret notes around the table. The Chronicler will also need paper, pencil, and dice. In addition, the group will need a small timer: a three-minute sand timer is ideal because it is quick and easy to start without needing to manipulate any settings like a smartphone app or adjustable kitchen timer.

The Chronicler

One player will be the Chronicler, who has several jobs:

As **referee**, the Chronicler will answer the questions of other players as they play: *“Can I hear anyone in the next room? Is the door locked? Can I find a tire iron in the boot of the car?”*

As **historian** of the Rookwood family, the Chronicler will ask questions of the other players to fill in information about the family and the world. For example, *“If the police search your office, what do you hope they don’t find? When your diary is eventually deciphered, what is the one line that stands out about this night? In the family photo taken at your brother’s wedding, why are you the only one not smiling for the camera? What have you got in your pockets?”*

As **narrator** of the family’s tale, the Chronicler will introduce details and events and ask the players how they react or what they do next: *“The family lawyer, Edward D. Featherstonehaugh, Esquire, has called and left a message asking you to come to his office to sign some papers relating to the sale of ‘the Green Man public house,’ but you’ve never heard of that pub. There’s no answer at his office when you call back. What do you do?”*

As **adjudicator** of action unfolding in the game, the Chronicler will enumerate the stakes of any dice rolls, decide results, and narrate any events beyond the players’ control.

As **gamemaster**, the Chronicler plays the role of all characters in the world other than the family members portrayed by the players: other family members, servants, enemies, the chimney sweep on the roof across the lane, innocent bystanders, the local MP, the giant demonic raven eating the chimney sweep on the roof across the lane, etc.

Safety

Just like real-life families, the drama of your fictional Rookwood family can be intense. Danger, horror, and family conflict are exciting and integral to the fun of the game, but might broach real life issues such as addiction, mental health, or abuse. Be aware that your friends at the table may have different thresholds for horror and drama, both realistic and fantastic. When you start a chronicle, ask each player if there are any subjects that they want to leave out of the game -- these are Lines, do not cross -- or subjects that would be uncomfortable to play out in detail, such as romantic encounters -- these are Veils, fade to black and move on.

Lines and Veils can help set expectations for your game, and keep everyone at the table safe. However, it is difficult to predict every topic that may come up in-game, so we have one more tool to help out -- the X-Card. Whenever you play, write an X on an index card or piece of paper and place it on the table. If a player feels uncomfortable with the direction of the game, they can simply touch or lift the card. Whoever is currently speaking should immediately stop the action, and look for another way to move the story forward. No explanation is required. Simply respect your fellow player's need, no questions asked.

On the back of your X-Card, you can also write an O. Anytime someone really likes what is happening in the game and would like more of the same in the future, they can hold up the O side to show support for the speaker!

Setting Expectations

At the start of each generation of the family's story, as a group, discuss the details of the setting. The Chronicler may have many setting details planned in advance while others can be suggested or made up by the players. In either case, this is the time to talk about it and get everyone on the same page before determining the details of the family members and their resources.

Note that the majority of the examples provided assume that the Rookwoods are a British noble family. Your version of the family may be any nationality, ethnicity, or culture you choose. Real world history is a great source for ideas, but remember that the Rookwoods live in an alternate history of magic and monsters. Change details to suit your vision of the Rookwoods' world.

Place: Where is the family? Have they relocated since the last generation's story arc? Are they living on a rural country estate or in an urban townhouse? Or are they traveling across a continent in their own private rail cars or sailing around the world on a yacht? Are they rock stars touring Europe by bus?

Era: When does this generation live? You can be as specific or as vague as you like: "*the opening scene will begin on the afternoon of June 3rd, 1862*" or "*the decades prior to the American Civil War*" or even just "*Victorian times*", for instance. (The Chronicler might choose an era in advance in order to prepare reference material.) Will the Rookwoods be facing Scottish witches in the Renaissance (and inspiring Shakespeare's "*Macbeth*")? Will they be facing werewolf highwaymen, dour puritan witch hunters, and demonic libertine hellfire clubs in the 17th century? Or maybe something closer to the present such as facing amphetamine-fueled mods and skinhead cultists in the swinging 1960s?

Themes: What media tropes and style will be involved? For example, the late Victorian era covers both Gothic literature and Western cowboy dime novels. Which style is more suitable for your generation? If the action takes place in Europe, you could feature the “*Gothic duality*” of period literature by giving all major characters both heroic and villainous character qualities. If you will be in the American southwest, you could give everyone a quality from Wild West media such as “*cowboy grit*” or “*city slicker sophistication*.” (See “*Eras of Play*” in Appendix III on pg. 122 for more ideas.)

Tone: This is a game of decaying nobility and disintegrating familial bonds, so it’s bound to be dark, but darkness comes in many shades. Will you drape yourself in Gothic angst like the dusty velvet pall that shrouds your tortured soul? Will it be a darkly comic confrontation with the world’s pain softened by gallows humor? Or will you be superheroes who dress all in black and kick ass and wax wistful about how sad it makes you feel to be such unstoppable badasses in a world that doesn’t want you? Or will it be a light-hearted romp against evil with wacky, ghost-busting, zombie-stomping hijinks? You can go any way you like as long as everyone agrees beforehand.





The Manor

Over the centuries, the Rookwoods have struggled with their family curse. As their fortunes wax and wane, it takes a toll on stately Rookwood Manor. During poorer generations, portions of the manor fall into disrepair or disuse. In wealthier times, the manor undergoes renovations and restorations. Sometimes old sections are torn down and new additions are built to fit the whims and needs of the family. As a result, the Rookwood estate is riddled with overgrown outbuildings, buried ruins, forgotten cellars, old wells, sealed rooms lost to living memory behind plaster and cobwebbed shelves, and many more mysteries. You can sketch or label these changes on the Rookwood Manor record sheet.

You play members of the Rookwood family over many generations. The successes and failures of each generation will determine how well the family fares in later generations. Once you know the starting era, you can determine the manor's location and the family's available resources.



Legacies and Resources

The wealth, power, and possessions of the family are represented by Family Resources. Family Resources are bought with Legacy points. The first generation of your chronicle has 7 Legacy points to distribute among the Family Resources that your generation has inherited from those before you. You don't have to assign points to each Resource. Starting Legacy points are assigned by answering the "7 Cursed Questions" about the family's history (see "*The Fall of the House*" pg. 15).

As each generation's story arc ends, your successes and failures will cause the Rookwoods to gain or lose Legacy points. When you gain a Legacy point, you add a new Family Resource. When you lose a Legacy point, you must lose a Family Resource.

Family Resources fit into one of the following five types: Money, Manor, Name, Favors, and Power. Each Family Resource can be spent once per session to benefit a family member. It can be spent after a dice roll to allow any number of dice to be rerolled, or before a dice roll to gain one automatic success. Example Family Resources are described below.

Money

Money is the family's purchasing power in the form of savings, business income, investment dividends, or credit. Spending a Money resource for an automatic success allows the family to (at least, temporarily) solve a problem by throwing money at it. Examples: A fire inspector is bribed to declare a mysterious explosion to be a gas leak. Witnesses to an indiscretion are paid to forget they saw anything. The organ of the local cathedral finally gets that costly repair (and the family finds itself in possession of a hogshead of holy water).

Manor

Manor is the family home and its facilities. Each Legacy point invested in Manor adds a resource that any Family Member may use while at home. Examples:

- **Occult Library:** The family home has a library full of rare tomes that aid in researching the occult.
- **Armory:** The manor has a supply of weapons, armor, ammo, and tools for repairing and altering weapons and armor.
- **Stables:** The manor is equipped with stables that house fine horses.
- **Garage:** The manor contains a garage that holds a variety of vehicles and the equipment to maintain them.
- **Staff:** The manor is maintained by reliable, loyal, and skilled servants that can be trusted with delicate matters. Spending a Staff resource for an automatic success can represent assigning the staff to perform a task on a family member's behalf: *while the family hosts a soiree, the maids serve hors d'oeuvres and eavesdrop on the guests.*
- **Regalia:** The family manor is lavish and impressive. The staff have smart uniforms; family members may also dress to impress if they choose. This Family Resource can make a big impression at the estate. *Charity galas gain more publicity. Business deals reach more favorable ends with comfortable and/or intimidated guests. Meetings with important people are easier to arrange if you invite them to a fancy dinner at your awesome house.*

Name

Name is the family's reputation. Each Legacy point in Name makes the Rookwoods famous (or advantageously infamous) among a particular social circle. For example:

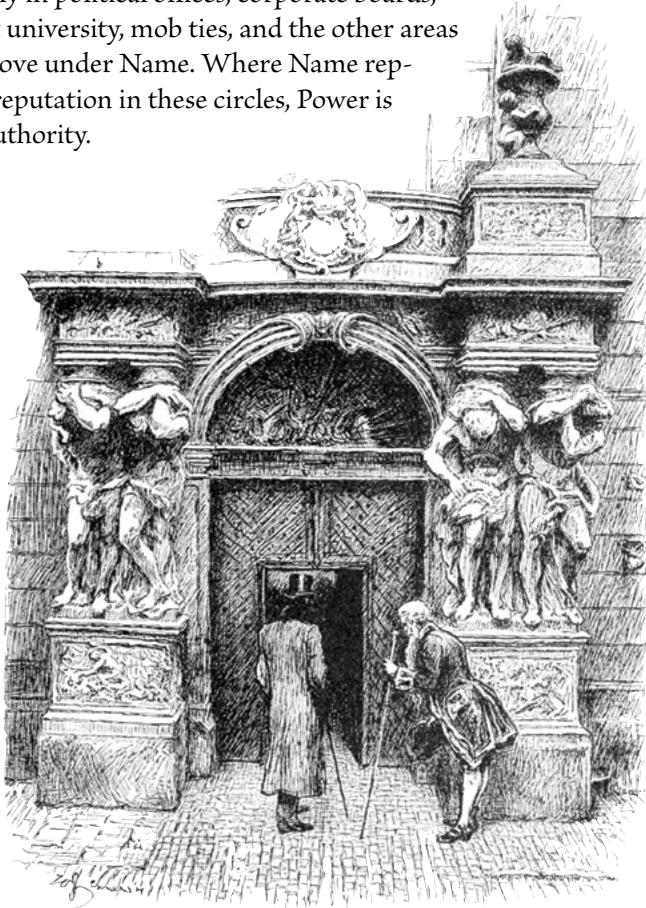
- **High Society:** Regardless of how much Money the family has, they are famous for wealth. No one questions their presence at red carpet, black tie events. When grandfather wears his magical rainbow kilt to stalk vampires at a gala, he will be "*an eccentric elderly gentleman*", not "*a crazy old man*".
- **Academia:** The family name is well known among the literati for the distinguished works and/or theories of its members. This can be used to gain access to a museum's private collection, obtain support for a "*scientific*" expedition, or get consulting help from other experts.
- **Corporate:** The Rookwood brand is strongly positioned in the market. If the captains of industry and finance held a business conference, a Rookwood could easily walk in.
- **Underworld:** Despite their above-board public face (or anonymity if they have no other points in Name), the Rookwoods are well known in the criminal world as an organized crime family. Whether they actually break laws is another matter, but they have connections with criminals and are well known to local gangs.
- **The Other Underworld:** The supernatural society that hides in the shadows (politicking vampires, rival witch covens, the goblin market under the Second Avenue Bridge, etc.) and the Rookwoods are well-acquainted with each other. If a Rookwood needs a silver talisman from the Troll Smithy, they can skip the usual "*How did you penetrate the veil of glamour around this place, mortal?*" and get right down to haggling..

Favors

Each Legacy point in Favors represents debts owed to the family, or useful contacts and family friends. Each Favors resource can be used to define one of these debts or contacts. This can be done at the beginning of a new generation's story arc or as the need arises (*"How are we going to get this crate to the Isle of Wight without filing a cargo manifest?" "Uncle Remy has an old Navy mate with his own boat who could take us there off the record."*)

Power

Each Legacy point in Power represents seats held by the family in political offices, corporate boards, chairs at university, mob ties, and the other areas listed above under Name. Where Name represents reputation in these circles, Power is actual authority.



Using Family Resources

Each Legacy point is assigned to a Family Resource. These resources can be non-specific features (e.g. *“the Manor has a competent housekeeping staff”*) or a specific feature (e.g. *“the Manor’s butler, Mr. Singh, is most resourceful”*). Family Resources can be used by any family member. Each Family Resource spent once per session before a dice roll to gain one automatic success, or after a roll to reroll any number of the dice. Family Resources can be spent for any roll that the player can justify to the Chronicler. Some Resources are skewed toward one Trait: an occult library will probably aid Guile checks for research or perhaps Weird checks for reading a magical incantation. It is unlikely to be used for a Brawn check to drop a heavy book on an enemy’s head—although it could!

Family Resources don’t disappear when their resource points are spent. If the Manor has a library, you can use it to justify making Guile rolls to do research even if the resource has already been spent for the session. The resource makes the research action possible, but spending it provides a one-time bonus when you really need it. Family Resources can vanish between generations as the result of family strife.

Multiple Family Resources may be spent at once and applied to different things, but they cannot be *“stacked”* on one Trait check. Don’t try to claim 4 automatic successes on a combat roll because you’re spending Staff, Armory, Garage, and Library resources to say *“I’m riding in the sidecar while reciting from the Necronomicon while Mr. Singh drives a motorcycle with one hand and fires a shotgun with the other!”* (Unless that’s the tone that your group is going for, in which case, *“tally-ho!”*) Any player may use a Family Resource. If the spending of a resource is in dispute, those in disagreement should argue it out and make opposed Trait checks, if necessary: if you can’t come to a quick agreement about a point of Garage, make a Brawn check to see who grabs the keys first.

The Fall of The House

Long ago, a member of the Rookwood family made a deal with a dark force. This pact granted the ancestor great power but also inflicted a terrible curse on the Rookwood bloodline. The players and Chronicler work together to answer the questions below after the setting is determined for the first generation, but before the family members are generated. The family's information may be inaccurate or incomplete, so it's ok if some questions have less detailed answers: "we think it may have been a feud with the Scottish Rite Masons" or "great-uncle Percy used to say it was voodoo from the West Indies, but he also thought avocados were soft-boiled crocodile eggs, so..."

The players answer the "7 Cursed Questions" below. For each answer, they must also describe one Legacy the family gained (directly or indirectly) as a result. The group can answer them together, take turns choosing, or distribute them randomly. Another option is to have each player write an answer for a question and the Chronicler picks one at random and reads it to the group before they answer the next question.

7 Cursed Questions

The questions are presented here with answers for an example chronicle in which the first generation of play will be set in mid-19th century England.

How long has the family been cursed? *"The Rookwoods have been cursed for nearly two centuries. It began in the civil war. It was at this time that we secured our position. Our Legacy is Power: a Lord's seat in Parliament for Earl Rookwood."*

Who was the ancestor that was the progenitor of the curse? *"William Rokewode, the first Earl Rookwood. He was a captain in the war. We have a proud military tradition. Many Rookwoods have held a commission. Our Legacy is in our Manor: it is equipped with an Armory full of old and new military equipment."*

When and where was the progenitor cursed? “William Rokewode was cursed when his forces were broken in battle. He fled to avoid capture, and hid in the only place available on the open plain: a prehistoric barrow mound in a ring of standing stones. Our Legacy is that Henge. Rookwood Manor is built around it and sits on a ley line junction that amplifies magical power in the stone circle.”

Why did the progenitor want power? “Rokewode was desperate and prayed to anyone listening. He was swallowed by the earth, given power over it, and protected by it, but the earth power also cursed him and his bloodline. Our Legacy from William’s dark gift is in our Manor: it is heavily fortified with thick stone walls and riddled with cellars and subterranean tunnels.”

What dark force granted it? “William Rokewode’s plea was answered by an elemental being of darkness and cold that was worshipped by druids and more ancient cults at the henge. We don’t know if it is a demon, an undead king entombed in the barrow, or an unseelie faerie. Perhaps it was all three. It still watches us, felt but unseen. Our Legacy is our supernatural guardian that occasionally grants Favors when one of us is in dire straits.”

Did the progenitor achieve their goal? “William Rokewode secured an earldom and lived a long life. The family has leveraged its seat in the House of Lords for generations. Our Legacy is a network of government officials who owe us Favors.”

How did the progenitor die? “Rookwood Manor was attacked by a druidic cult that wanted to reclaim our henge. William Rokewode used his power over earth and stone to fight them off. He led his children in battle in defense of our home. During the battle, he imprisoned the druids in the stone walls of the chapel, but his curse finally claimed him. His stony form is also embedded as a bas relief on the wall of the chapel. Our Legacy is in the walls of the Manor’s Chapel itself: William Rokewode and the druids are still semiconscious in the bas relief. Their captive spirits can be consulted for advice on magical, military, and occult matters.”



The Family

You take on the roles of members of the Rookwood family, an ancient aristocratic line that suffers a terrible curse. Each player will create their own family member, but the players should work together as they do so. The relationships between family members are important and are not one-sided. If you want to play a young gadabout who steals from the family to pay his gambling debts and you stole Uncle Charles' gold pocket watch, then the player of Uncle Charles needs to know his watch is missing.

There can be more living family members than players, so the players and Chronicler will decide which other family members will be present. The Chronicler will portray the non-player family members.

Once setting and tone is established, the group should discuss who the players' family members are, how old they are, what role they play in the family, and what other (non-player) family members are around. Each family member should be described initially with an adjective and a family role. Keep in mind that the Rookwoods are a cursed dysfunctional family, so the adjectives should not be entirely positive. Some examples:

Moody teenage daughter, rebellious son, stern spinster aunt, drunken bachelor uncle, dottering grandfather, domineering mother, unemotional father, absent-minded grandmother, cavalier sister, flighty brother, wastrel cousin.

Family Members

Once you have established your general roles in the family and you know the era and setting details and your family history, you can determine the details for your family members in the current generation. Each family member is defined by their Traits, Curse, Assets, Desire, and Skeletons.

Choose Traits

You have three traits that describe your physical, mental, and magical capabilities. You have 5 six-sided dice to distribute among these three abilities. You roll these dice when you perform any difficult or stressful actions. The dice also represent your resilience and reserves of energy. They can be temporarily spent to absorb damage, exert extraordinary effort, or activate special abilities. On your character sheet, circle the number of dice you wish to place in each trait and mark the circles with an X or slash mark as you spend them (use a pencil because you will restore them often).

- **Brawn (Black dice)** is your physical prowess: strength, agility, and toughness.
- **Guile (Grey dice)** is your mental prowess: reason, wits, and willpower.
- **Weird (White dice)** is your magical prowess: spiritual power, intuition, and ability to control and resist magic.

You can assign any number of your 5 dice to each Trait. If you want to play a big, brawny Rookwood who is as strong as an ox, but also as smart as an ox, you can put all 5 dice into Brawn and 0 dice into Guile and Weird. You can still do non-physical things, but you will be unlikely to perform above average in those Traits without dice.

Choose Curse

Your share of the Rookwood family's supernatural heritage is both a powerful gift and a loathsome curse handed down by the progenitor who struck a dark bargain. If you are a blood relative descended from the Progenitor, you begin with a Curse and a corresponding Dark Gift. If you are a Rookwood by adoption or marriage, you do not carry the Progenitor's blood and do not have a Curse or Gift, so you can skip this part.

Many example Curses are provided in the players' appendix, but you can also make your own. When describing the manifestations of your Curse, give it a dark, Gothic theme with imagery focused on things like darkness, graveyards, cobwebs, and shiny black ravens on the chimney-smoked lanes of a dreary November afternoon. Your Curse is defined by three parts: Rite of Passage, Gift, and Marks.

Your Rite of Passage (or "loss of innocence"), is the moment when your Curse first manifested. This usually occurs during the moody teenage years of puberty, but could appear at any stage of life. The first manifestation typically occurs during or soon after a traumatic experience: betrayal by a friend or lover, the death of a mentor, a humiliating failure, a painful injury, a near-death experience, or some other misery. Your Rite of Passage does not affect your abilities, but it colors your background and may influence your personality and how you interact with the family.

Your Gift represents your ability to turn your Curse to your advantage. When you use your Curse, you make a Trait check like any other action, but you must make a supernatural effort and roll 3 dice. If you have less than 3 dice to roll, you can't control your Gift. If you make up your own Curse, don't try to make its Gift universally useful--a good Gift has limitations complemented by other family members.

The Marks of your Curse are the price of your Gift. Your Curse changes you. Using it warps you and will be your undoing: the more the Rookwoods use their Gifts, the more monstrous they become. Every attempt to use your Gift carries the chance of rolling a double and gaining another Mark. You begin with one Mark of your Curse. If you create your own Curse, you must also create the Marks that show how it twists you. Your final Mark will be *“Lost to the Curse”*: your ultimate doom.

If your Curse lets you bring statues to life, your Marks could be symptoms of petrification: your face becomes hard and expressionless, your joints stiffen, your density increases, and so on. In the end, you turn completely to stone.

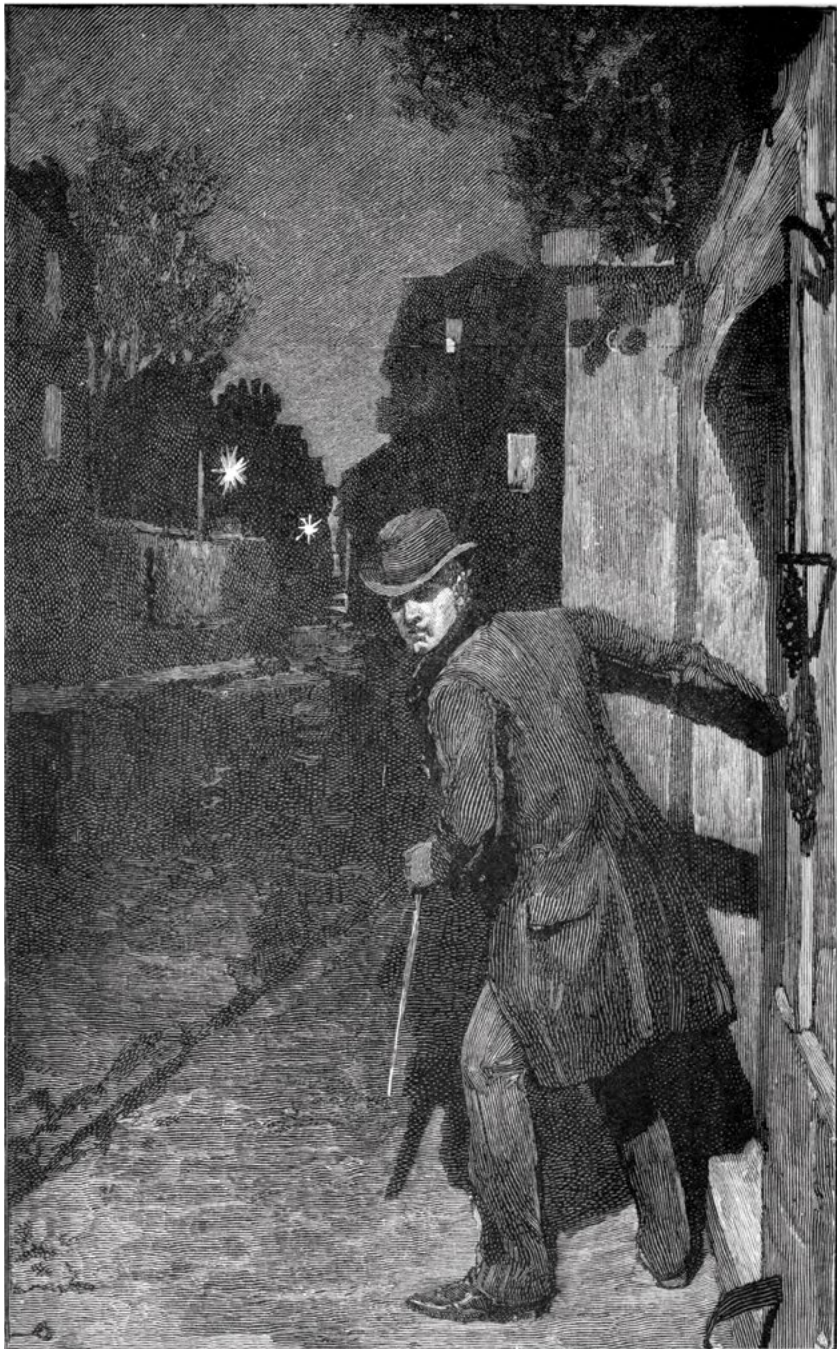
When you attempt non-supernatural Trait checks, your Marks inflict additional Risks to all actions where they can interfere.

If your Curse is slowly turning you to stone and you try to swim across a river, *“you might sink because you’re so dense”*. If you try to give a theatrical performance or convince someone of your sincerity, it will be more difficult to move your audience because *“your face might be too expressionless.”*

At the cost of 1 Weird die, you can suppress your Curse and hide your Marks for one scene, but only during daylight hours. From dusk to dawn, darkness is dominant and the Curse cannot be suppressed.

Late Bloomers

You may choose to play a Rookwood who has not yet experienced their *“loss of innocence”*. In the course of play, you may decide that any particularly stressful scene is your traumatic Rite of Passage. Your Curse manifests immediately at that point, but you don’t get to choose it: one of the other players will! Each of the other players can suggest a Gift that would be useful in that situation, then roll a die, play Rock-Paper-Scissors, or just vote to decide which occurs. The Chronicler will decide your first Mark. In compensation, you may start with an extra Asset (see pg. 26).




Choose Desire

Your Desire is something you really want but its indulgence is detrimental to the family. It can be a personal weakness or temptation that you pursue at the cost of achieving family goals: addictions such as gambling or morphine are good homewreckers (or “*wine, women, and song*” or “*sex, drugs, and rock & roll*” depending on the era). Obsession with a personal long-term goal incompatible with family goals also works: running your own business, winning the hand of a duke’s daughter, discovering the secrets of manned flight, or some other distracting fool’s errand. Every time you pursue your desire and cause trouble for another family member, you are reinvigorated and restore one spent Trait die.

Choose Skeletons

Every family has skeletons in its closet, but stately Rookwood Manor has extensive storage space. These “*skeletons in the closet*” are a core source of tension in the family. Each generation, your family will have to overcome the problems that threaten its relationships in order to ensure the success of the generations that follow. Strong relationships help build a successful family. Dysfunctional relationships weaken the family and threaten to break the bonds that hold it together. Unfortunately, the curse on your bloodline twists the hearts and minds of each new generation. If one generation fails to resolve its toxic issues, the next generation will suffer the fallout. However, even if one generation resolves all their issues, the next generation will still suffer issues of their own.

You start with one Skeleton in your closet. Failing to resolve it will harm the family as the tension tears them apart; however, resolving a skeleton means overcoming shared animosity. It strengthens familial bonds and gives the family a bonus for following generations. A Skeleton consists of a **Spine, Bones, and Spades**.



The Spine defines the core of the issue. Your skeleton disrupts the harmony in the whole family, but the Spine is the family member at the center of the issue. For example, “*Nothing I do pleases my father*,” “*I slept with my brother’s wife*,” or “*I stole uncle Charles’ pocket watch*.” You can keep your Skeletons secret from most other players but at least one should have an inkling of it. In many cases, you need to work with other players (or pass information through the Chronicler, if secrecy is needed) to make certain that everyone starts with the knowledge necessary for the Skeleton to work. If you stole your uncle’s watch, Uncle Charles will need to know that his gold watch is missing. If you slept with your brother’s wife, he may not know what you did but your sister-in-law definitely knows (and at least one of them should be played by another player).

Bones are other family members and the conditions that connect them to the problem. Every skeleton will involve at least two other family members. Each Bone of your skeleton has a condition or event that can happen in the story to bring the issue into the spotlight. Although they are unpleasant, you are rewarded when they come up: when a Bone occurs, both you and the family member that triggered it can restore a spent Trait die or Asset.

Spades are methods of “*burying*” the skeleton and resolving the issue so the family can get past it without being torn apart by it. Spades may be kept secret or openly known to the other players. A Spade can be an action that your character must take, or an action that another character must take, including (but not limited to) the Spine. Choose a positive and negative spade: what you hope will happen and what you fear will happen. If you can use the Hope spade to resolve the skeleton, your family will gain 1 Legacy point for the next generation. If you use the negative Fear spade to bury the skeleton, they will lose 1 Legacy point for the next generation. However, any skeletons that are not buried before the end of the generation will cost the family 2 Legacy points, so it is better to use the Fear spade.

A set of example skeletons are included in the player's appendix. You can use them as inspiration for making up your own skeletons or you can just personalize the examples by filling in the names of your family members.

Blood Will Out

While you are playing, remember that the Rookwoods are a cursed, dysfunctional family. You shouldn't operate with the brutal efficiency of a sociopathic genius. The rules of the game reward you for making irrational and emotional choices. If you keep your skeletons carefully hidden and never allow them to cause trouble, your life will be dull and uneventful. That's good for safety and security, but boring for a Gothic tale of family drama. This is why your Skeletons and Desires allow you to refresh your spent dice. If you play it safe, you won't be able to make exceptional or supernatural efforts: you will only accomplish things in small steps and you won't be able to use your supernatural powers.

Follow your desires: give in to temptation, lose your temper, say yes to the charming stranger with dark, alluring eyes. Don't hide your skeletons completely: act shifty, make Freudian slips in conversation, and confess to your crimes in a diary that you keep under your pillow instead of in an encrypted ledger locked in a safe deposit box. Watch as your family members do the same, keep track of their issues, and try to push their buttons. Keep picking at the family scabs until things come to a head. You'll be rewarded when the mess is cleaned up, but you'll be punished for letting things quietly fester.

Choose Assets

If you have a Curse, you begin with 3 Assets of your choice (4 if you're a late bloomer whose Curse has not yet manifested). If you don't carry cursed Rookwood blood in your veins, you can choose 6 Assets. Your Assets describe your unique mix of training, talent, and personal resources. Your Assets work like Family Resources but can only be used by you. If it is relevant to an action, you can choose to spend an Asset after a dice roll to reroll any number of the dice, or before the roll to add one success to the results of the roll.

You define your own Assets, but try not to make them overly broad or narrow. A good Asset should be useful in more than one type of scene, but not in every scene: being a cavalry officer is useful in a horse chase, a saber duel, or looking dashing in a crisp uniform at a formal affair, but it does not help in a foot chase, business negotiation, or ascertaining the provenance of a mysterious artifact. Assets can be applied to any Trait depending on the situation.

Assets generally fall into one of three categories:

- **A personal quality or talent:** superb athlete, commanding presence, sensitive artist.
- **Possessions**, whether unique (eldritch sword, custom hot rod) or generic (personal wealth, silent partner in local businesses).
- **Social connections**, whether general (“*well known in high society*”) or specific (“*Athenaeum club member*”).

Example Assets: Cavalry Officer in Her Majesty's Royal Lancers, The Darling of Last Season's Salon, Satirical Wit, Demolition Smuggler for the Resistance, Pickpocket, Gambler, Renowned Aesthete, Street Smarts, Dancing Prodigy, Gentleman Farmer, Fashion Trendsetter, Barrister-at-law, Incurable Rakish Dandy, Finely Crafted Rifle, Private Lake Cottage, Favor Owed, Influential Friend, Side Business, Personal Library, Personal Retainer, Souped-up Hot Rod, Cat Burglar, Big Game Hunter, Rable-rouser, Frustrated Thespian.

Playing the Game

Trait Checks

When a character attempts to perform an action that carries significant difficulty or danger, determine the scale and the stakes of the roll, choose one to three Trait dice, and roll them. Each die that shows a 4, 5, or 6 is a “success” or a “hit”. You can roll dice of any color, but 6s count as two hits if the dice color matches the type of action (e.g. black Brawn dice for physical actions). Each success allows you to resolve one of the stakes.

Roll one die for “*moderate effort*”. You can only achieve one hit (two if the color fits), so you cannot accomplish a lot at one time, but neither will you be stretched too thin.

Roll 2 dice to make an “*extraordinary effort*”. You exert yourself to have a better chance of success and can achieve greater degrees of success. However, you run the risk of exhaustion: if you roll doubles, you lose one of your dice from the roll.

Roll 3 dice to make a “*supernatural effort*” for a magical power, such as your Dark Gift. If you roll doubles or triples, you lose one Trait die and gain another Mark of your Curse.



You may have noticed that you only have a 50/50 chance of a success on one die, but you risk losing dice if you roll more than one. So how can you get anything done with only 5 Trait dice? Assets and Family Resources can give you extra hits or rerolls, but the intended play style is to take risks. Roll 2 or 3 dice and burn through your Assets and Traits to achieve your goals! Restore lost Traits by pursuing your Desire or dragging a Skeleton out of the closet. The Rookwoods are a dysfunctional family because they can't do anything together without a lot of foolish decisions and family drama blowing up in their faces.

Example: Lydia Rookwood is a pale, willowy girl with a manic demeanor but an impressive aura and intimidating presence. She has 0 Brawn, 1 Guile, and 4 Weird dice. If she rolls her 1 Guile die to pick the lock on a door, she could get an extra success if she rolls a 6, but she could choose to roll one of her Weird dice if she wanted. She's in a hurry and makes an extraordinary effort to kick the door open quickly, so she rolls two dice. She has no Brawn so she chooses 1 Guile and 1 Weird. She rolls and gets 5 and 5--Success with two hits!--but she rolled a double and strained herself with the effort. She has to lose one of the two dice she rolled. She chooses to drop the Weird die because she has them to spare. She now has 0 Brawn, 1 Guile, and 3 Weird dice. Later, she uses her dark gift to summon a murder of crows to attack her enemies. She rolls 3 dice for a supernatural effort: her 3 remaining Weird dice for best effect. She gets 6, 4, and 4. That's 4 hits--huzzah!--but also a double so she loses a die and gains a new Mark. Blood drips from her nose and she stares with the glossy, totally black eyes of a carrion crow as she directs her birds to attack.

Scale

The Scale of an action is how much time and effort is represented by one Trait roll. One roll could be a daylong battle between armies or one sword blow between duellists. If the outcome is important but the individual steps taken to reach it are not, such as searching a warehouse for evidence or picking a lock, it is a good idea to condense time-consuming actions to one roll. In these situations, one roll determines the outcome of one action. Breaking the action down step-by-step should be reserved for when you want to portray potential reversals of fortune or sudden upsets.



G. Doré

A. Ligny

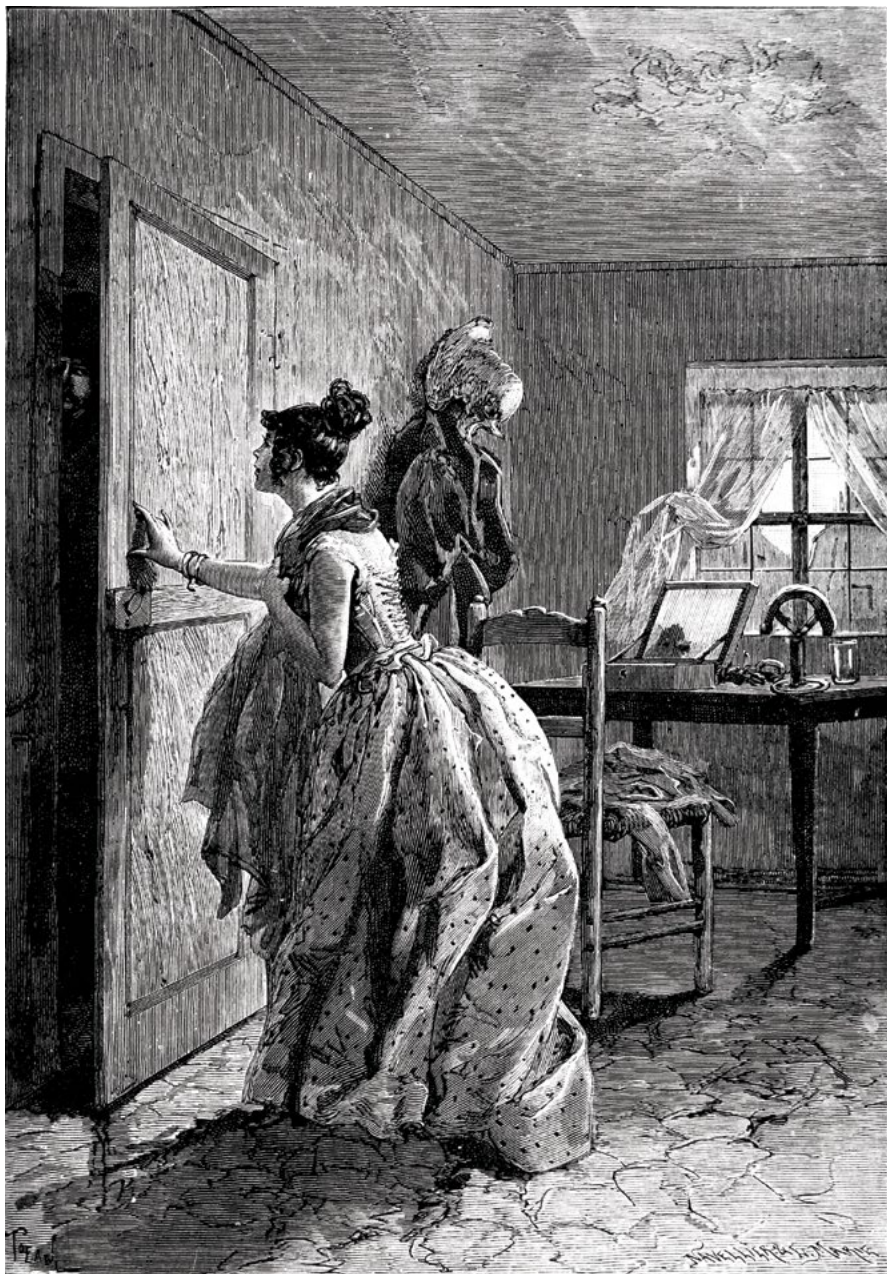
Setting Stakes: Risks and Rewards

The Stakes are the potential Risks and Rewards that can result from the action. When a player declares an action, the Chronicler should ask “*What do you hope to accomplish by doing that? What do you fear might go wrong?*” to set the stakes. The players should say what they want to achieve and what potential drawbacks concern them, then the Chronicler should enumerate the stakes. The Chronicler tells the players what bad things might happen (Risks) and what good things could happen (Rewards), based on the player’s stated intentions and the Chronicler’s judgment of the situation.

Risks are negative consequences that will result from the action if not prevented. Rewards are opportunities or benefits that can result with extra effort, skill, or luck. For each success on the roll, you can choose to eliminate one Risk or gain one Reward. Sometimes, these have to be done in a particular order (if you shoot an enemy, “*you could hit it in the eye*”, but not if you don’t first eliminate the Risk “*you might miss*”), but Risks and Rewards are not always mutually exclusive.

Phrase Rewards with the word “*could*” and Risks with the word “*might*”. This clearly divides the stakes into two groups, so the players know which ones need to be bought and which need to be paid off and avoided.

Every roll should have at least one Stake, the most basic being “*You might fail*”. If there are no consequences to avoid or extra benefits to gain, then you can do things without a roll. Also, note that “*you might fail*” is an option. There may be other Risks to an action even if “*success*” is a sure thing. Can you climb over that fence, run through the back garden, and climb the trellis to enter the back window of that creepy house? Of course! Can you do it without being spotted, getting cut up by the rose bushes, or breaking the window glass while entering? Roll to see how many of those Risks you can avoid!



Example Risks

- **You might fail:** The attack misses, the jump falls short, you lose the race, etc.
- **It might hurt:** You'll take some damage: many small hits ("you might take 3 hits, canceled separately") or one big hit cancelled by one success (e.g. "you might touch the wire and take a 3 hit shock").
- **It might exhaust you:** You risk losing a specific Trait die.
- **It might put you in a bad position:** knocked prone, off balance, dangling from a cliff, standing on the wrong side of the gate when it closes, etc.
- **Things might get out of hand:** The explosion is too big, your bullet ricochets, the rumor spreads too far.
- **It might cost more:** You waste materials, you pay too much, you break a tool or drop a piece of equipment.
- **It might take too long:** You overextend your swing and need time to recover, you need to reload before firing, you fall behind when your shortcut isn't short.
- **It might cause offence:** Your vulgar insult disgusts a bystander, you draw a powerful foe's wrath in combat, your sweet dance moves steal the spotlight from the bride at your cousin's wedding.
- **It might endanger a friend:** As one of the other Risks but applied to an ally (friendly fire, shifting the blame, etc.).

Example Rewards

- **You could do damage:** your attack does one hit of damage per success spent.
- **It could disadvantage the target:** knock a foe prone, entangle them, force them to turn, make them look foolish, etc.
- **It could benefit a following action:** aid a friend, feint in melee to set up an attack, maneuver into a better position, etc. Add a free success to the roll for the following action.
- **You could look good doing it:** Your action is particularly impressive.
- **It could be more efficient:** use fewer resources, use less ammo, get a discount.
- **You could interfere with your opponent:** Your action directly opposes another. Your hits cancel theirs: parry an enemy's blow, steady a friend who's being pushed over, deflate a windbag's boast with a cutting sarcastic remark.
- **You could do it faster:** If you spend more hits on this reward than another character who is acting at the same time, you will go first.

Any action happens as you declare it. If you say, “I punch the constable in the face,” your fist is hurtling toward that bobby’s face. If you don’t roll any hits, you fail to connect solidly, but you are still guilty of assaulting an officer. If many actions are declared at once, the Chronicler determines the order. Think like a film cinematographer: what order should these simultaneous actions be shown on screen? If it is important who acts first, roll competing actions with the Reward “*You could do it faster*”.

You may describe your actions as colorfully or plainly as you like. You may portray your family member as adept, inept, stupidly lucky, or anywhere in between. The purpose of the dice is to create suspense about the outcome, not to make you look stupid. If your Rookwood is a bumbling klutz but rolls 4 successes to stake a vampire, you can describe it as slipping and knocking the vampire onto a broken chair leg instead of expertly piercing its chest with a sharpened broom handle with the point control of an olympic fencer. If your expert sniper misses, maybe your target stubbed his toe and bent down just as you fired. The dice determine if you succeed or fail, but you can describe what that looks like.



Pushing Your Luck

If you roll a Trait check with one or two dice and do not roll any hits, you can increase your effort at a cost. You can add more dice to the roll (up to 3 total), but you must add another Risk for each die added. If there are no obvious additional Risks, use “*It might exhaust you: lose a Trait die.*”



Pressure and Time

When you are playing the game, there may be times when the action begins to stall. Negotiation is necessary when setting stakes but the back-and-forth can drag on. The Rookwoods are a family with toxic issues; if the players portray this with enthusiasm and accuracy, it can lead to heated exchanges in vicious circles (or downward spirals). All of this can be fun, but the drama has diminishing returns. To avoid getting bogged down in one spotlight-hogging scene, place a 3-minute sand timer in the middle of the play area within reach of everyone.

Any player (including the Chronicler) can flip the timer at any time. This signals that they think the current argument or scene has gone on long enough and those actively involved need to wrap it up and move on. When the sands run out, the current scene should be resolved one way or another: agree to disagree, storm off in a huff, make an opposed Trait check to settle it, or the Chronicler can take a page from Raymond Chandler: a man with a gun bursts in to forcibly change the subject!

Note that you don't need to flip the timer just because a scene has gone on a long time. If everyone is enjoying the scene (including players who aren't involved and are just watching) then let it continue. The timer is just a signal to keep things moving when it is tempting to overdo it.

Consequences

Damage

Physical injury is the most obvious, but damage can come in many forms: cuts and bruises, rattled nerves and broken concentration, or even crushing ennui and existential angst. When a character takes damage, they need to mitigate it somehow in order to survive. Damage can be absorbed or canceled in a few ways. If damage isn't canceled somehow, the character will be completely out of action: knocked unconscious, killed, getting blackout drunk in a dive bar, withdrawn and barricaded in their study in a fit of depressed nihilism, etc. How a character goes out is up to the Chronicler and the player, but it should match the situation in the scene.

Recovery

If you are forced out of action by losing all your traits, you can't come back on your own even if you are still alive. You can only be brought back into play by the intervention of your family. A dead family member might be brought back as a ghostly consultant by a relative with the dark gift to contact spirits. A family member who decides to crawl into a bottle or opium den won't "get over it" on their own, but could be dragged out by a relative who intervenes. However you justify it, the rescuer must give one of their Trait dice to the returning family member to restore them. It probably won't be a cheerful return, because that family member with one Trait die will need to indulge their Desire and Skeletons right away to restore more dice and regain their effectiveness.

Losing Trait Dice

You can absorb damage by sacrificing dice from Traits: 1 die per hit of damage. You don't need to lose dice from the same Trait that dealt the damage (losing Brawn for physical damage, Guile for mental assaults...). A physical blow could obviously hurt your Brawn, but it could also distract you with pain and cost Guile, etc.

Losing Assets

You can absorb damage by spending Assets if it makes sense in the fiction. When you lose an Asset, it doesn't necessarily mean that the Asset has been destroyed. It only means that it no longer helps you in a significant way. If you have a PhD and lose its Asset, you don't have to tear up your diploma. You just don't get to reroll dice for Trait checks where your degree would have helped until you restore that Asset. It's up to your group to decide if you want to justify this in a concrete way like a "*physics simulator*" or in a more narrative "*cinematic*" way.

If you want to treat the rules as the physics of the game universe, you can say physical damage can only be blocked by physical Assets. If a werewolf tries to bite your head off, you can save yourself by sacrificing your "*magic helmet*" but not your "*membership in an exclusive gentlemen's club*".

If you want to treat the rules as a complete abstraction, you can go the route of a poorly written movie script where a character displays a useful skill in Act I but then never brings it up in Act III even if it would still be very useful. The werewolf tries to bite your head off but you dodge at the last second (and for mysterious reasons, your private gentlemen's club membership just never comes up again). What is the causal link between dodging the werewolf and losing the bonus for your Athenaeum Club membership? There is none. It's a game and you gain a temporary advantage in the game by expending a resource.

It's recommended that you play somewhere in between these two extremes. You can use any Asset to avoid damage hits by providing a minimal fig leaf to justify it. The werewolf tries to bite your head off and you avoid the damage by sacrificing your "*member of the Athenaeum club*" Asset. How? By shoving your keyring down the beast's throat to distract it with the scorching pain of the silver key fob. By Jove, you've bought yourself a moment to escape that spot of bother, but now you can't get into the clubhouse until you meet with the membership committee next week to get a replacement key. Will these vexations never cease?

Gaining Marks

If you need to lose dice to absorb damage but you don't have enough dice left to spare (or you want to keep 3 Trait dice to use your Gift and can't justify using your remaining Assets), you can gain another Mark of your Curse instead.

Bonus Reserves

In addition to spending your regular Traits and Assets to avoid hits against you, you can also spend temporary Assets called Bonus Reserves. These situationally beneficial dice can be gained in several ways. The Chronicler may give them to one side in a conflict to represent a circumstantial advantage. For example, if you have the benefit of cover in a firefight, the Chronicler may give you 2 black Brawn dice of Bonus Reserves for cover that you could use to avoid getting shot or other physical harm.

You can also use your Gifts to generate Bonus Reserves for a particular scene. If you summon a murder of crows to fly around and give you a telepathic bird's eye view of your surroundings, you could use the hits on your Gift roll to buy Guile dice of Bonus Reserves to avoid ambush or aid rolls to search for something from the air. Like permanent Assets, you can only add one success to a Trait check by spending Bonus Reserve dice, but any number may be spent defensively to negate hits against you.



A New Generation

The default assumption for a Rookwood Chronicle is one story arc per generation. There may be many parallel plots and sub-plots within a generation, but only one major overarching plotline involving the entire family. When that major arc is resolved, time skips forward to a later generation that has to deal with the fallout.

“*Generation*” in these rules refers to all members of the Rookwood family, regardless of age, who are alive and active at the same time. A more accurate term might be “*contemporary familial cohort*”, but that’s really awkward so let’s stick with “*generation*”. When you decide that one generation’s story has reached a finale and move on to the next, you don’t have to advance to the next biological generation to play the children of your current characters. It may be preferable to skip ahead to your grandchildren, great-grandchildren, or even later to explore a new era.

Ending a Generation

At the conclusion of a generation’s story arc, you need to go through an epilogue or denouement that describes what happens to the surviving family members. Each player takes a turn describing a short final scene to provide closure for their character’s story. If time allows, players may attempt to bury any remaining Skeletons. If a skeleton can’t be satisfactorily resolved in a short scene, it goes unburied and the family slowly declines.

As part of these final scenes, you should describe the impact of each Skeleton. Each Hopeful burial gives the family 1 new Legacy point and each Fearful burial costs the family 1 Legacy point. Each unburied Skeleton costs 2 Legacy points. How does your Skeleton alter the family’s Legacy and Resources?

If the family’s total Legacy points dropped, how do you explain it? Did cousin Serena fall out with her father and move abroad with a large chunk of the family fortune? Did uncle Henry go mad and set fire to the carriage house?

If the total Legacy points increased, decide which Family Resources were gained. If you increased the family's Money, did an investment pay off or did you uncover a lost vault behind the wall in the wine cellar?

In late 18th century England, Eugenia and Eugene were the twin children of Eustace Rookwood. After their mother died in childbirth, they were raised by their father and aunts. Eustace was an emotionally distant man who didn't know how to relate to his children. Eugene's Skeleton was "*Needs approval from father*": he struggled to get any sign of affection from Eustace, who always criticized his shortcomings. Eugenia's skeleton was "*Rivalry with her brother*". Eustace may have criticized her brother but at least everyone recognized Eugene's efforts; poor Eugenia was often overlooked.

Eugene's curse slowly turned him into stone and Eugenia's flesh slowly hardened into wood. At the end of their generation, Eugene was claimed by the curse and turned into a marble statue when he used his dark gift one final time to save his sister's life. Fortunately, Eugene's skeleton was buried when Eustace finally recognized his worth. Eustace literally placed his son on a pedestal in the library with a plaque bearing a loving benediction. Eugenia was forever lost in her brother's shadow: her skeleton went unburied.

There was a net loss of 1 Legacy point for the family. Eugenia's player decides that she packed her trunks in 1783 and took the family's merchant ship, the "*Patient Endeavour*", to the newly independent American colonies. She remained there until her death; the ship was never returned. The family loses one point in Money and there is a statue of Eugene Rookwood in the library of the manor.

Beginning a New Generation

At the start of a new generation, decide how to spend the family's Legacy points for Family Resources. Will you keep the same resources or will you shuffle the resources around to show how time has passed? If you skip from 1853 to 1953, the Stables may have been converted to a Garage.

In addition to the Family Resources that you buy with Legacy points, the Chronicler may reward you with a specific resource due to your achievements: if you discovered and allied with a secret government agency, the Rookwoods may gain Favors from them.

Decide the setting for the next generation. Time advances to a later date but does the location also change? Make new family members appropriate to the new setting.

Aging Family Members

If you decide to advance the calendar to the near future, you can play older versions of some characters. Skipping ahead 50 years means that grandmother is gone, but "*Lydia the moody teenage daughter*" can become "*Great-Aunt Lydia, the irascible matriarch*".

To play an aged version of a family member from the preceding generation, you must change your family role and alter your Traits by moving at least one die. You may choose to change your Desire. A little boy loses Weird and gains Brawn as he grows from an imaginative lad to a grown man with a broken spirit. A bright young woman loses Guile and gains Weird as she becomes a senile crone.

Buried skeletons must be replaced by new skeletons for the new generation. Unburied skeletons may be kept if they still apply. The family still suffers the loss of Legacy points incurred by the skeleton being unburied earlier.



Chronicle Concepts

What the Rookwoods do throughout the centuries is up to your group and will vary depending on your family history and the origin of their curse. Your progenitor was cursed, but why? If the progenitor had a goal in mind, do the descendants agree with it or do they try to undo their ancestor's deeds? It might be a moot point if the progenitor wanted power for a cause that has already been decided. Suggested chronicles are offered below.

On Her Majesty's Occult Service

The Rookwoods and their "*peculiar skills*" are known to the Crown's intelligence services. They are recruited and employed to contain and eliminate supernatural threats to the kingdom (or, depending on the era, United Kingdom, Empire, or Commonwealth). In the late 19th century, they answer to a small office in the Department of Topography and Statistics and later to Military Intelligence. In the 20th Century and later, they work for the Director of MI-13, a branch that officially doesn't exist. Unofficially, Military Intelligence assigned the number 13 to the "*occult documentation and suppression section*". Prior to 1854, the Rookwoods were directed less formally by a liaison from a lord such as the Duke of Monmouth or the Earl of Marlborough.

In their role as intelligence operatives, the Rookwoods operate as spies for the Crown (or the Lord Protector's Lieutenant-General during the Interregnum) with a focus on documenting the existence and movements of supernatural entities, keeping them hidden from the public, and eliminating any that pose a threat to public safety and order.

Society Mediums and Exorcists

The Rookwoods move in the circles of high society to ply their talents as supernatural communicators and hunters. They flit in and out of the hellfire clubs to exorcise the ghosts and demons foolishly called up by club members. They attend fine salons and mingle among exotic foreign noblemen who never drink... wine. Selling their services would be uncouth and mercenary like a common tradesman, but there is nothing wrong with using their abilities for the sport and intellectual challenge. (Of course, it's only proper for those who benefit from their services to offer an emolument to show their gratitude...)

Whitechapel Vigilantes

The world is a dangerous place. In the dark narrow alleys of the city, it is more dangerous still. People are found in the mornings, lying on the cobbles drained of blood. Men go to the barber for a shave and haircut and are never seen again (but the meat pies are delicious, so it's not all bad news). Crime is rampant, and now there is a madman ripping apart prostitutes like some kind of beast.

The Rookwoods know more than most about the deeper darkness that exists behind the mundane shadows. They hunt the supernatural creatures that prey on humanity. Perhaps more importantly, they hunt the humans who willingly surrender their own humanity to become monsters.

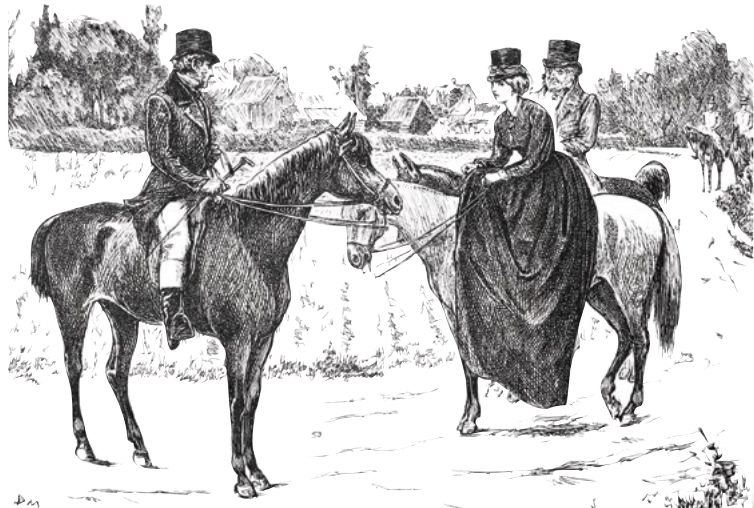
Outlaws in the Old West

Perhaps the Rookwoods have left England for the colonies. Was there a falling out after an unburied Skeleton caused a rift in the family and one branch crossed the pond to seek their fortunes? Did they follow a lead in their quest to lift the curse?

Regardless of why they are in America, their goals always seem to run afoul of the law. When the Rookwood gang robs a train and makes off with some large crates, lawmen and bounty hunters treat them like bandits. Nobody knows the Rookwoods are heroes who stopped the rise of Sekhmet-Ra. When they are wanted for killing a slaver and a dozen slaves, nobody knows that they put down a necromancer and the seed of a zombie legion. When they burn the house of a popular schoolmarm, nobody knows they saved the town from a witch.

Continental Travelogue

In their quest to end their curse or earn their redemption, the Rookwoods may cross Eurasia. They look for answers and hunt the darkness. They face genteel devil worshippers in Parisian salons, gnomes in the depths of the Black Forest, and vampires in Wallachia. The Rookwoods roam from place to place, constantly searching for the spoor of their next prey. All the while, they must look over their shoulders for those who would hunt them.



Taking the Show on the Road

The Rookwoods are a troupe of actors, circus performers, or musicians who tour the world to put on their show and face off with the darkness as they roam.

Perhaps, they are the special guests for the epic grand finale of the famed Théâtre des Vampires. Perhaps, the Rookwood Circus travels the rural roads and small towns to entertain the common folk and thwart the mad clowns of the dark Bruce & Utsler Traveling Carnival. Perhaps the Rookwoods have a death metal band called Ravenstone and they put on a killer show; between gigs, they put down the demons and ghosts that are accidentally (or sometimes intentionally) summoned by the other stage acts: when someone tries to recreate Bonham's 20-minute drum solo and a giant inflatable devil comes to life to battle a giant animatronic Eddie the Head across Wacken...! Where was I going with that? It was intense, dude! You couldn't handle that shit on strong acid, man!

Chronicle Goals

As you follow the Rookwood family for generation after generation in your chronicle, what is their ultimate goal? They may follow one goal throughout the generations or they may change course as each new generation chooses their own path. There are as many options as there are Rookwoods, but some suggestions are offered below.

Redemption

The Rookwood curse has damned their line unto the end of days. The curse cannot be lifted by any power on Earth, so the family's only hope is to earn purification by Heaven. They use their mundane and magical resources to cleanse the world of evil to buy their way back into grace. They use their wealth to fund charities. They use their dark gifts to seek out and fight the horrors that lurk in the dark. They inherit their crusade from the generations before them and pass it on to their children in the hope that someday one of them will redeem the family line and save them all.

Nepenthe & Panacea

The Rookwoods are searching for a cure for the curse. They conduct research into the mystical effects of plants to uncover a medicine that can lift the curse. After all, if wolfsbane and garlic can drive away supernatural creatures like werewolves and vampires, why should there not be a plant to counter the Rookwood affliction? Alchemists--in the family or patronized by them--seek a transformative cure, a panacea that can remove the stain from the bloodline like removing the tarnish from old silver.

In more advanced eras, the Rookwoods use their wealth to fund medical research seeking a genetic link to the curse. Researchers examine the effects of wolfsbane extract on werewolf tissue under a microscope or the influence of garlic on vampire blood; they sequence Rookwood DNA to isolate the corrupted markers in hopes of developing a retrovirus that can uncouple the curse from their genes.

Make the Scorpion Sting Itself

The Rookwoods have no hope of ever being free of the curse, but the curse also comes with power that can be turned against the darkness. They use their gifts to fight against the dark powers of the world in a quest for vengeance. The darkness cursed them, but the family will pay back every bit of pain that they can before their line is extinguished. If they can fight long and hard enough, maybe the House of Rookwood will do more good than harm before it falls into ruin forever.

Watch the Candles Flicker in the Wind

There is no hope of escape. The universe is a clock... winding down. The black void whirls as the stars snuff out one by one. Human existence is a bright anomaly against the dark tapestry of eternity, a brief spark in the endless darkness. Hope is a folly that presumes we do not already live in the best of all possible worlds. There is nothing better waiting after this. The future proceeds inevitably toward a cold, dark end. The clock will tick its last tock and dead black suns will tumble in silence forever. Until then, one can do nothing but enjoy the ride to the bottom of the pit and survive as long as possible.

Keep the Lanterns Burning on the Wall

The Rookwoods are weirdness magnets. They draw supernatural forces like moths to flame or crows to carrion. Regardless of whether the family seeks them out, creatures of the night come to them. Some feel they are kindred spirits with the darkness in the Rookwoods' veins. Some want to drink from those veins to absorb their power. Rookwood Manor is a fortress where the family prepares for the assaults from the darkness.

They mostly come at night.

Mostly.

Appendix I

Player Resources

This appendix contains character record sheets and several examples of skeletons, curses, and dark gifts. You can use these as they are or use them as inspiration in creating your own.

Each skeleton has a few examples of Bones and Spades. You can copy them and customize them by filling in the names of family members or you can alter them to make something specific to your characters. When making your own Skeletons, include 2 or 3 Bones to connect them to other members of your family. Spades don't have to be matched exactly to bury your skeletons. As long as the group agrees that you have reached a satisfactory end to the issue, you can bury a skeleton.

Each Curse has several examples of how its dark gift can be used, but these are not meant to be an exhaustive list. You can come up with all kinds of creative uses for your powers in play as long as they fit the theme of your curse.

Rookwood Character Sheet

Name _____

Family Role _____

Brawn

Guile

Weird

I lost my innocence when...

I suffer the curse of _____

Which gives me power over

My Curse has Marked me:

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- Lost to the Curse

My Desire is _____

Era _____

Assets

Bonus Reserves

Other/Notes

The Skeleton hidden in my closet is...

Spine (The problem you have with a relative)

Bones (You + a relative restore lost dice when...)

● _____

● _____

● _____

Spades (skeleton is buried; +1 new Trait die)

● *Hope (+1 Legacy)* _____

● *Fear (-1 Legacy)* _____



Skeleton: Dark Secret

You don't want _____ to know you have done something you're ashamed of. Describe it.

Bones:

Every time the Spine trusts you with something important, you both restore one spent Trait.

_____ knows your secret. (Tell that player what it is.) Every time they drop a veiled hint about it, you can both restore one spent Trait.

_____ possesses evidence of your secret, but doesn't understand what it means. Tell the Chronicler to tell them what they have and every time they show it to a new person, they will restore a spent Trait. So will you.

Bury when...

...you confess to the person in the Spine. You both gain a new Trait. +1 Legacy point.

...you destroy the evidence of your secret. You gain a new Trait. -1 Legacy point.

Skeleton: Need for Approval

You are desperate for approval from _____.

Bones:

Every time you do the Spine's bidding without reward, you both restore one spent Trait. If you sacrifice something to do it, restore 2 Traits.

_____ is always getting recognized instead of you. When they are praised for something you are good at, you both restore one spent Trait.

Bury when...

...you get the recognition you deserve from your Spine. You both gain a new Trait. +1 Legacy point.

...you refuse to help the person from your Spine. You gain a new Trait. -1 Legacy point.

Skeleton: Blackmail

_____ has evidence of a secret you are keeping and is blackmailing you. Tell them what the secret and evidence are.

Bones:

Every time your Spine makes you do something, you both restore 1 spent Trait.

_____ knows you are being blackmailed, but does not know why. You both restore 1 spent Trait when they eavesdrop on you and your blackmailer.

Every time you cause offense to hide your secret from a family member who doesn't know it, you both restore 1 spent Trait.

Bury when...

...you stop hiding and tell the blackmailer to let the secret out if they want. You both gain a new Trait. + 1 Legacy point.

...you gain equal leverage against your blackmailer or otherwise silence them. You gain a new Trait. -1 Legacy point.

Skeleton: Betrayal

You have openly betrayed _____ and want to make amends. Tell the family what you did.

Bones:

Every time you do something for your Spine without reward, you both restore 1 spent Trait.

_____ is angry at you. When they speak ill of you to the Spine, you both restore 1 spent Trait.

_____ wants the Spine to forgive you. When they advocate for you, you both restore 1 spent Trait.

Bury when...

...the betrayed helps you when you need it most. You both gain a new Trait. +1 Legacy point.

...the betrayed hurts you as badly as you hurt them. You gain a new Trait. -1 Legacy.

Skeleton: Rivalry

You are in competition with _____.

Bones:

When you or your rival demonstrate superiority over the other, you both restore 1 spent Trait.

_____ disapproves of your rivalry. When they sabotage your attempts to upstage or humiliate your rival, you both restore 1 spent Trait.

_____ is amused by your rivalry. Every time they praise or reward you for showing up your rival, you both restore 1 spent Trait.

Bury when...

...you ask your rival for help when you need it. You both gain a new Trait. +1 Legacy point.

...you give up and let your rival beat you. You gain a new Trait. -1 Legacy point.

Skeleton: Smothering

You are overprotective of _____.

Bones:

Every time you act as a “*third wheel*” or help your Spine when they specifically asked you not to do so, you both restore 1 spent Trait.

_____ is trying to come between you and the Spine. When you argue about it, you both restore 1 spent Trait. If your arguing makes the Spine run into danger, you all restore 2 spent Traits.

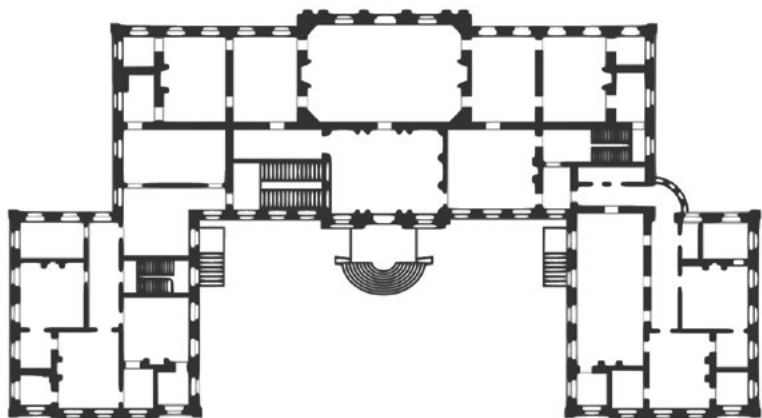
When another family member tells you off for neglecting your responsibilities to shadow the Spine needlessly, you both restore 1 spent Trait.

Bury when...

...you stand by and watch the Spine do something dangerous without your help. You both gain 1 new Trait. +1 Legacy point.

...you turn over responsibility for the Spine to another character. You gain a new Trait. -1 Legacy point.

Rookwood Legacies



Manor

Money

Name

Favors

Power

The Curse of the Gargoyle

You are slowly becoming a statue, but you have power over stone.

Have you ever walked through a silent cemetery or museum alone and felt eyes upon you? Have you ever seen the face of a garden gnome or fountain cherub out of the corner of your eye and sworn that it moved when you turned to look directly at it? Every statue contains a scrap of the sculptor's soul; you can awaken that small spark of life. Stone endures for countless ages.

How long will you stand still and silent?

- You can animate statues: a large statue, a gang of lawn ornaments, a swarm of chess pieces, etc.
- You can watch or listen through a nearby statue or carving. You may speak through its mouth with subtle whispers or commanding roars.
- You can become like a statue: generate Bonus Reserves to represent being as hard or as heavy as stone.
- Marks of the Gargoyle: Skin like Stone, Immobile Face, Slow as Stone, Blind as Stone, Perpetual Gargoyle Sneer, Heart of Stone, Stone Deaf, Stiff Joints, Petrified Limb.

The Curse of the Ironmonger

You are becoming hard and cold, but you have power over iron.

The streets of the city are full of cold wrought iron--gates to protect it, fences to contain it, lamps and weathervanes to adorn it. Every bit of it is an extension of your nerves. You can feel it, flex it, shape it like so many cruel fingers. Iron is your armor and your sword.

Iron are the shackles on your soul.

- You can animate iron fences, railings, and ornaments.
- You can use any piece of iron you touch as a sense organ: a length of wire becomes a feeler, touching the downspout of a rain gutter allows you to eavesdrop from the eaves, etc.
- You can harden your will like iron: generate Bonus Reserves to resist mental damage or distractions.
- You can use your Gift to forge cold iron with your bare hands by reshaping it like wet clay to any form you require.
- Marks of the Ironmonger: Groaning Voice, Creaking Joints, Cold Hands, Inflexible Attitude, Rusty Tear Streaks and Sweat Stains, Unsympathetic Demeanor.

The Curse of the Rookery

Someday black birds will feast on your entrails, but until then you have power over them.

Crows and ravens gather everywhere you go, watching with glittering black eyes, cackling over the secrets of the dead. They are your allies and supplicants, gifting you with the rumors and trinkets that they collect. They are always watching and screaming their animal screams.

It doesn't matter how you hide.

- Command crows to attack with piercing beaks and slashing talons.
- Ask nearby crows for favors or information. Remember to be polite. Use your Gift to gain an answer or a favor for each hit on your roll.
- You can command your crows to defend you: generate Bonus Reserves to deflect attacks with your swirling cloak of birds.
- A murder of crows is always close at hand. Dispatch them across a wide area as your own personal spy network.
- Marks of the Rookery: Feathers for Hair, Crow's Feet, Shining Black Eyes, Croaking Voice, Avian Demeanor, Kleptomania, Talon-Like Hands and Feet, Eyes Pecked Out.

The Curse of the Fading Echo

You will become nothing but a memory, but you have power over memories.

Long after our footprints have vanished and our voices have faded, the world remembers us. Our memories haunt every beam and cobblestone. You can awaken those memories, or become a memory yourself.

If you die without a trace, did you really live?

- With a touch, you remind a foe of every humiliation and injury they have ever suffered. The painful memories hit them as hard as a physical blow.
- You call forth a ghostly afterimage of events that occurred earlier in your present location.
- You assume a ghostly, incorporeal form that can pass through solid objects (or allow solid objects to pass through you).
- You can cause an object you hold or touch to become incorporeal for a short amount of time.
- Marks of the Fading Echo: Faded Appearance, Unearthly Glow, Touch of Dust, Hollow Voice, Fading Grasp, Lost in Memories, Ethereal Body Parts, Everyone Forgets your Name.

The Curse of the Abyss

You will be consumed by darkness, but you have power over shadows.

Even in the brightest light, the shadows thrive, shrouding and concealing. What mysteries lie hidden within the darkness? What horrors writhe unseen in its depths? Gaze too deeply into the shadowy abyss and the darkness may steal into the depths of your soul.

Darkness without light is darkness still.

- You can create tendrils from your own shadow that may lash at a foe or manipulate objects.
- You can feel the darkness around you as an extension of your own skin. Use your Gift to generate Bonus Reserves to avoid surprise or enhance awareness.
- You can turn your shadow into a portal to the Void. Anything that enters your shadow is trapped in a realm of hunger and darkness.
- You can enter any shadow and emerge from another shadow nearby.
- Marks of the Abyss: Shadow-Shrouded Eyes, Followed by Twilight, Inky Patches of Darkness Spread Across Skin, Photosensitivity, Independent Shadow, Light Dies Around You.

The Curse of the Burning Heart

You burn from within, but you can command flames.

When the world was night, the first light against the darkness was fire. Portable and comforting, vulnerable but elegant, the flame of a candle is the most intimate shield against the night. You keep a living flame inside your heart, ready to defend against the dark.

The fire within burns hotter than the flames around you.

- You can ignite any nearby candle, lamp, or kindling with a thought.
- You can sense the inner thoughts and the heart's desire of another person who gazes into the same flame as you do.
- You can reshape your own flesh like warm wax to seal injuries or alter your appearance.
- You can shape any candle or light you hold into a solid weapon or tool.
- Marks of the Burning Heart: Fiery Hair, Waxy Skin, Charred Flesh, Melting Face, Eyes like Flame, Hot Touch, Hungry for Air, Smoky Breath, Pyromania.

The Curse of the Mocking Visage

You will lose your own reality, but you control the false images in mirrors.

There is another world in the reflection of a mirror, a cold image that mocks us with perfect detail, perfectly perverted into a complete opposite of the original. You can enter that world, passing through mirrors like so many doors to the same room.

You are an illusion of light, a living lie.

- You can attack a foe's reflection and injure their real body.
- You can look into a mirror and see out of another into which you have previously gazed.
- Steal someone's reflection to wear as your own image. You look like their reflection, including being reversed.
- You can travel between any two mirrors that have ever reflected your image by passing through them like a doorway or window.
- Marks of the Mocking Visage: Faded Reflection, Reversed Appearance, Trapped in the Mirror World, Reversed Speech, Compulsive Mimicry.

The Curse of the Ossuary

Your own skeleton is a cage, but you are the master of dead bones.

Beneath all living flesh lies bone: cold, hard, and lasting. Piety and Propriety demand that the remains of the dead be put to rest, but burial confers no honor; it merely consigns the dead to eternal decay. You give dead things another chance to be valued and needed, to serve a purpose.

You give dead bones a second life.

- You can force your spirit into the remains of any dead person or animal to control it for a short time.
- You can perceive the world through the empty eye sockets of any of your bone creations.
- You can cover yourself with a layer of bones to create a protective suit of armor. Use your Gift to generate Bonus Reserves to resist physical damage.
- You can reassemble parts of dead things into new and useful forms.
- Marks of the Ossuary: Skull-like Visage, Withering Flesh, Wilting Touch, Stench of Decay, Rattling Voice, Exposed Bones.

The Curse of Medusa's Veil

You are a prisoner bound in your own hair, but you have the reach of a million sinuous limbs.

Hair writhes, entangles, conceals, and chokes. Hair is dead material that covers a living body, but continues to grow after death. When the flesh is gone, the hair remains in strands and coils, wispy reminders of lost beauty.

Your hair is more alive than any part of you.

- You can use tendrils of hair to grasp, constrain, or crush objects or enemies.
- You can hold almost unlimited numbers of small objects inside your thick, unruly mane and retrieve them later as needed.
- You can weave your hair into impenetrable armor around you. Use your Gift to generate a pool of Bonus Reserves to resist physical damage.
- You can use the twisting curls of your hair as fine tools or manipulators with a long reach.
- Marks of Medusa's Veil: Writhing Hair, Unnaturally Fast Hair Growth, Long Body Hair, Hungry Hair, Fanged Dreadlocks.

The Curse of the Shroud

Smoke and fog always cling to you, but they do your bidding.

What rolling moor or damp alleyway is not rendered terrifying by curling tendrils of fog at night? Even a bright spring day can become a grey autumnal twilight when blanketed by thick smog. What nocturnal horrors might walk in the day under cover of the miasma? The mists hold no terror for you.

The mists are all you really have.

- You can call forth a thick cloud of mist to obscure, conceal, or smother.
- You can fog a person's mind with a smoke more intoxicating than that found in any opium den. Use your Gift to exhale a cloud of smoke that dulls your target's senses or sways their emotions as you will.
- Turn your body into mist momentarily. Use your Gift to navigate a gap or generate Bonus Reserves to "dodge" by letting blows pass through you.
- Marks of the Shroud: Chilling Presence, Perpetually Damp, Translucent Skin, Mist-Clouded Eyes, Trailing Mist, Foggy Breath at Any Temperature.

The Curse of the Dryad

You are becoming a tree, but have power over wood and the strength of inexorable growth.

Beyond the comfortable walls of the city, the dark forests loom. In brightest day, the tangled brush grasps legs in the gloom under the canopy. Living trees reach for the sun; their roots dig deep into the dark earth. Dead trees stand twisted and naked or lie fallen and rot to punk and mold. The forest is a place of quiet, encroaching menace.

It calls to you.

- You can animate tree limbs and grasses to grasp and lash at foes.
- Speak through the rustling of leaves. You could cause your voice to appear to come from everywhere or from a particular tree.
- Take on characteristics of an oak: skin like bark, hard wooden flesh, or root yourself to the ground. Use your Gift to generate Bonus Reserves.
- Step into and merge with any wooden object large enough to contain you. Re-emerge from another nearby.
- Marks of the Dryad: Mossy or Leafy Hair, Rough Skin, Stiff Joints, Twigs Sprout from Your Body, Wooden Demeanor.

The Curse of The Gibbet

Ropes and chains reach for your throat, but they come when you call.

The gibbet cage and the gaoler's chains are indelibly linked to suffering and misery. The hangman's noose brings a life to a quick end with a short drop and a sudden stop, but the chains bind you to a path of misery with no certain end. Even if they let you move, their weight and constriction are a constant reminder that your life is constrained, your freedom lost and perhaps also your life. Every Rookwood is bound by their curse, but none so much as you.

Binding is your curse.

- Animate ropes, cords, and chains.
- Firmly hold someone (in your chains or a handshake) to sense what binds them: vows they have sworn and lines they will not cross.
- Enforce a vow with the ties of destiny: generate Bonus Reserves to overcome obstacles to keeping the promise.
- You can swing from lines, animated or otherwise, as easily as a spider.
- Marks of the Gibbet: Hobbled Gait, Ligature Marks, Clothing Constantly Tangled or Snagging, Followed by Spiders.

The Curse of the Gaping Maw

Your belly can never be filled, but your teeth never dull and you can devour anything.

The most bountiful feast satisfies you like a mouthful of ash. A river of wine slakes your thirst like a cup of dust. Hunger is the force that drives all Life; it is the oldest road to Death. Your hunger never ends. You strip the flesh, suck out the marrow, gnaw the bones, but your belly is never filled. Your teeth gnash, you lick your lips, and your navel chews on your spine. You know the essence of life.

You are hollow.

- You can bite through anything. You can't spit anything out, but nothing you swallow will swell your belly.
- You can distend your jaw and throat to swallow objects as large as yourself.
- You can extend your tongue great lengths to **taste** grapple enemies.
- You can digest anything. Nothing you put in your mouth will defile you.
- Marks of the Gaping Maw: Growling Stomach, Emaciation, Protruding Tusks or Fangs, Dry, Raspy Voice, Slavering Jaws, Rictus Grin.



Appendix II

Setting Resources

Example Competitors & Antagonists

Hunters

Hunters are people who track down and destroy the supernatural predators that prey on humanity. Some use supernatural means of their own to “*fight fire with fire*” while others use a potent combination of bravery, brute force, ignorance, careful study, and technical skill to bump back against the things that go bump in the night. In addition to a wide variety of unaffiliated and independent vigilante ghostbusters, vampire slayers, and zombie stompers, the Rookwoods may also run into more organized hunters with a great depth of knowledge and/or the backing of powerful patrons like the following groups.



Vörð Nafjarðar

The vörð nafjarðar--guardians of the grave-fjord--are Scandinavian necromancers that police the barrier between the mortal world and the spirit world. They call themselves “völva” but others call them “witches”. Regardless of their gender or age, they appear keen, feminine, and in their 40s, and carry some form of cane or walking stick. They use their sticks to beat down the restless dead as well as any living people who interfere. They can also alter a person’s memory by striking them with their sticks (albeit with more magical subtlety than the usual method of skull bashing). They are also quite skilled at manipulation and seduction (advanced practitioners are magically adept at it). Sometimes they can be allies of the Rookwoods who want to help put undead to rest or remove curses. Sometimes they just want to snuff out the blighted line of Rookwood.

Typical vörð nafjarðar (“VERTH NAH-fyar-thar”): **Brawn** 1, **Guile** 2, **Weird** 2, “Ironshod Cane”, “Sly Words”, “Fears no man”, **Speak spells:** can make a 3 dice supernatural effort for necromantic sorcery.

Saga Kjalarsdóttir, an experienced Icelandic völva: **Brawn** 2, **Guile** 2, **Weird** 3, “Ironshod Cane”, “Sly Words”, “Fears no man living or dead”, **Knows All the Ways:** can make a 3 dice supernatural effort for sorcery, prophecy, and beguilement.

The Universal Inquisition

The self-proclaimed “*Universal Inquisition*” is a rogue faction of the Roman Catholic Church’s tribunals of the Supreme Sacred Congregation of the Roman and Universal Inquisition. They are a group of priests and Swiss Guards that secretly seek out the supernatural to eliminate anything “*ungodly*.” They are catholic but they are operating outside the authority of the church. The bishop who leads them knows that he is overstepping his authority, but he is in denial about the correctness of his actions in the eyes of the church (he is technically a heretic). His subordinate priests and soldiers are in the dark and think they are on a top secret mission (which they are) under the auspices of the church (which they aren’t).

Through tenacity and bravery, misguided though it is, they have managed to root out and destroy a lot of dangerous supernatural threats to mankind. They have a better than 70% success rate in destroying vampires, killing witches, exorcising unclean spirits, and putting the restless dead at peace; unfortunately, their zealous pursuit of the darkness has also produced a lot of false positives and many innocents have been hurt as well.

Swiss Guard of the Universal Inquisition: **Brawn 3, Guile 2,** “*Zealous Soldier*”, “*Monster Hunter*”, “*Military Hardware*”.

Inquisitor Universalis: **Brawn 1, Guile 2, Weird 2,** “*Merciless Inquisitor*”, “*Kindly Father Confessor*”, “*True Faith*”, “*Trunk full of occult and theological books*”.

The Knights of Savoy

The Knights of Savoy are like the Universal Inquisition, but without the winning smile and cheerful disposition. They are a dour, humorless, Calvinist sect that split from Puritanism. Their style and methods are both spartan and puritanical (figuratively and literally, respectively). During the Interregnum, they operate openly in the Commonwealth. After the Restoration, they continue underground.

In some eras, they threaten the monarchy as terrorists. They are usually mistaken as republicans who want to eliminate the monarchy, but their actual disagreement is with the British monarch's role as Defender of the Faith. The Knights of Savoy think the faith is not being adequately defended: they want the Anglican church to be purified of any trace of its catholic roots. Outside of theology and politics, their main focus is usually on making Cotton Mather look like a weekend hobbyist.

Knight of Savoy: Brawn 2, Guile 2, Weird 2, "Stoic Zealot", "Slayer of the Invisible World", "Blade against the Shadows", "Dog-eared copies of the Geneva bible and 'Gangraena'".

MI13: "The Odds"

In the 20th century, the British military organized their intelligence service into numbered Military Intelligence sections. Each section had its own focus. Among the most well-known, MI6 gather information overseas while MI5 stay home to catch foreign spies sent against Britain. The number 13 was officially unassigned--it was "*bad luck*"--but unofficially, it was the "*Occult Documentation and Suppression Section*" or "ODSS" (called "*the odds*" by the few in the know).

MI13 boffins conduct research into the paranormal with an eye towards uncovering weaknesses and developing new defenses against supernatural threats. These defensive measures are issued to field agents who track supernatural creatures that may pose a threat to Britain. Due to the "*extreme extraterritoriality*" of entities like spirits and faeries, MI13 watches more borders than those shown on maps. When an entity is deemed hazardous, agents are authorized to exterminate it.

Their special equipment runs the gamut from magical (amulets, relics, and the occasional grimoire) to technological (silver bullets and cars with vampire-scorching UV headlamps). The most interesting gadgets fall in between. For example, if you need to repel unclean spirits, the simplest way is fire up a Karmic Field Generator: a diesel generator, several electric motors, and a set of Tibetan prayer wheels, all mounted on the back of a small lorry or jeep. It generates a protective field with a rating of 54.4 kiloPadme-Hertz.

MI13 field agent: Brawn 2, Guile 2, Weird 1. "*Professional, Courteous, and Deadly*," "*These cufflinks are not mere fashion*," "*This is not the strangest thing I've ever seen*," "*Special Forces Training*."

The Troll Smithy

The trolls that give the Troll Smithy its name are a faerie people of consummate strength and technical skill. Humans have called them “*dwarves*” or “*dark elves*” but they call themselves “*trolls*”. They claim to be strictly neutral arms dealers who sell to anyone, but their prices are on a sliding scale that gives a large discount to underdogs. If a potential customer has the upperhand in a conflict, the prices go up and become exorbitant when they are close to a final victory. The deepest discounts go to “*agents of chaos*” such as mercenaries or terrorists who only serve to aggravate a situation.

Under daylight or artificial light, trolls are disguised by an illusion that they call their “*seeming*”. Their seemings make them appear to be muscular humans who are far from average: they are always at the extremes of height, weight, and skin color. If a troll is tall, it is towering and rail thin. If a troll is short, it is very squat and broad. Light skinned trolls are pasty, nearly albino; dark skinned trolls are “*so black, they’re blue*”. Under indirect sunlight such as twilight or moonlight (or to magical illusion-piercing sight), their true visage can be seen.

A troll’s true appearance is like its human seeming pushed to an unnatural extreme. Dark skin is pitch black; light skin is snowy white. Tall, thin trolls are like humanoid stick insects. Short, thickset trolls are so broad, they are almost square. Their human seemings appear exquisitely handsome with fine, chiseled features. Their true faces have a bland loveliness that makes them all appear to be wearing the same porcelain mask.

The troll smiths produce weapons of exceptional quality, from the archaic to the cutting edge. For a hefty cash payment, they provide customers with top-of-the-line custom (but mundane) weaponry. For a more intimate fee, they provide magical arms and armor. In exchange for an item with a mystical Asset, they will take payment in the form of one of the customer's personal Assets. For example, they would exchange a "*smallsword that cuts ghosts*" or a "*gate-breaching flintlock*" for a personal skill or memory such as "*fashionable dandy*," "*witty socialite*," or "*physics professor*". More than one Rookwood has surrendered their dreams for a powerful armament: the troll smithy also takes Desires as payment.

Sometimes, instead of taking an Asset, they exact an oath that inflicts a ban on the customer's behavior. A ban is a supernaturally enforced limitation that the customer cannot break willingly. This functions like a Curse Mark (adding additional Risks to affected actions) but doesn't add to a character's Curse. For example, a character might be forbidden to touch leather or cross bridges.

Troll Smith: **Brawn 3, Guile 3, Weird 3.** "*Weaponsmith Extraordinaire*," "*Canny Merchant*," "*Standing between two worlds*."

Håndverket: can make a 3 dice supernatural effort to create or modify magical arms, armor, or devices.

Werewolves

There are three varieties of werewolves. The first is a kind of sorcerer who uses a magical herbal salve and a wolf pelt to transform into a wolf. They usually do this for nefarious purposes such as murder with plausible deniability. The very rare sorcerer transforms into a wolf for philosophical reasons. Those types tend to ramble on about “*the thrill of swift pursuit*”, “*the purity of hunger*”, “*love without doubt*”, and other such vigorous aliveness.

The more common types of werewolf are infected with a curse that gives them the form and ravenous appetites of a beast by moonlight. These infected lycanthropes are divided into two camps: solitary individuals who fight against their curse until they lose control and run wild; and, those who gather in packs to celebrate the moon, willingly surrender their human will to the beast within, and run wild.

Skin-changing Sorcerer: **Brawn 1, Guile 2, Weird 2**, “*Wolf pelt of shape-changing*”, “*Book of black magic*”, and either “*Scheming serial killer*” or “*nihilistic romantic anarchist*”. While in their animal form, they can choose to treat their Weird dice as Brawn or Guile dice as needed (typically for combat or tracking).

Reluctant Cursed Lycanthrope: **Brawn 2, Guile 2, Weird 1**, “*Lupine sense and sensibility*” and 2 Assets based on their human life. **Curse of the Wolf:** these lycanthropes do not have a dark gift, but they are marked by their curse with “*involuntary wolf form*” and “*lunacy*”.

Enthusiastic Cursed Lycanthrope: **Brawn 2, Guile 1, Weird 2**, “*Lupine sense and sensibility*”, “*Power-drunk predator*”, and 1 Asset based on their human life. **Curse of the Wolf:** can make a 3 dice supernatural effort to turn into a wolf or a humanoid wolf-man “*war form*”: spend hits to generate bonus reserves for regenerating injuries, gain new assets like “*keen senses*”, “*hulking muscles*”, or “*slavering jaws/wicked claws*”. Marked by “*mandatory wolf form by moonlight*” and “*full moon madness*”.



Zombies

Although the word “*zombie*” doesn’t appear in English until the 19th century (and doesn’t reach popular use until the 20th), the returned, hungry dead have always plagued the living. There are many varieties of revenant corpse that may appear in a Rookwood chronicle. They can be reanimated by sorcerers, possessed by evil spirits, or brought back by their own restless will.

Hungry Husk: These shambling corpses are unnerving but only truly dangerous in groups. **Brawn 1**, “*Rotting Flesh*”, “*Hunger for life*”. **Horde:** A handful of hungry husks can act together (simultaneously, not cooperatively) to make a 2 dice exceptional effort and a crowd of a dozen can make a 3 dice effort. You can treat a mob of husks as one large creature with 1 Brawn for each husk in the mob.

Possessed Corpse: These corpses have an evil mind controlling them (but they aren’t terribly bright: their bodies do have brain damage). They can talk in a limited way, but mostly use their powers of speech to issue short threats or make angry exclamations such as “*You will all die!*” and “*I hunger for your souls!*” **Brawn 1**, **Guile 1**, “*Hates Life*”, “*Soul Hunger*”, “*Frightening Visage*”.

Legionnaire: These are like possessed corpses but they are possessed by a legion of evil spirits. They first appear with **Brawn 1**, **Guile 1**, **Weird 1**, “*Hates Life*”, “*Soul Hunger*”, “*Frightening Visage*”. If they aren’t destroyed completely, they can make a 3 dice supernatural effort to regenerate Trait dice, gain more Trait dice (up to a maximum of 7), or transfer some of their Trait dice into nearby dead bodies (or severed parts of their own body, trees, inanimate objects with moving parts, etc.) to animate them as more possessed corpses.


Revenant

These are powerful restless corpses animated by their own powerful will or by magic. Some sorcerers raise themselves from the dead by preparing spells in advance of their deaths or they raise others through similar means. Some revenants are just cursed for their own misdeeds. A rare few are riven from death as a curse on the living: they are brought back by mysterious forces to punish wrongdoers.

Risen Sorcerer: **Brawn** 1, **Guile** 3, **Weird** 3, “*Will to Power*”, “*Thirst for Knowledge*”, “*Focus object (cuneiform tablet, book of shadows, runic staff, etc.)*” **Curse of the Open Lichgate:** can make a 3 dice supernatural effort for effects fitting the theme of their magical tradition with an added necromantic twist. Marked by “*mania*”, “*wasteful cruelty*”, “*disproportionate overreaction to setbacks*”.

Draugr: These blackened and bloated corpses hunger for the flesh and blood of the living and corrupt the area around their graves with their foul miasma. Birds fall from the sky around them; animals go mad and kill themselves in a frenzied panic.

Brawn 4, **Guile** 2, **Weird** 2, “*Massive Body*”, “*Aura of Decay*”, “*Fists like battering rams*”, **Trollskap magic:** can make a 3 dice supernatural effort to change their size and weight (from toddler to elephant size) or shapeshift into unnatural animals (skinless bull, inside-out horse, giant tentacled cat, raven with human hands for wings, etc.).



Grave-reft Avenger: Brawn 3, Guile 2, Weird 3, “Driven by Vengeance”, “Incredible Resilience”, “Wistful Melancholy”, “Psychopomp Familiar” (a small animal that acts as its guide from the other side and its link to the mortal coil: crows, cats, hummingbirds, owls, and moths are all common psychopomps). **Curse of Dead Memories:** can make a 3 dice supernatural effort to connect the mortal world with the other side. For example, they can see and hear memories imprinted on an object or place by someone who is now on the other side; they can heal their own body by restoring it to the form they remember it having in life; they can share the senses of their psychopomp familiar and understand its intentions on a visceral non-verbal level. Marked by “*painful memories*” of their own lives: if they trigger a painful memory and can’t shut it out, they suffer a bout of deep depression or a fit of explosive rage.

Vampires

There are a wide variety of vampires hiding in the shadows of the world, but they can generally be sorted into two types: intelligent super predators and mindless savage beasts. The bestial variety are usually visually indistinguishable from the “*hungry husk*” variety of zombie--a corpse that continues to move and tries to feed on the living--but they are faster, stronger, and tougher. These savage vampires usually arise spontaneously when another supernaturally evil being dies and is not properly consecrated and destroyed: witches, werewolves, other practitioners of black magic, and particularly awful people can all rise from the dead to feed on the living.

The more intelligent variety of vampire includes a broad range of creatures ranging from those who still appear to be normal humans to those who have monstrous inhuman forms. They have been known to possess a great variety of powers and vulnerabilities. Dealing with any given vampire may take some trial and error to find out what works and what doesn't.

Vampire powers may include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Superhuman strength, speed, or toughness.
- Hypnosis, charm, or mind control.
- Command of nocturnal animals.
- Shapeshifting into animal forms, growing claws, or changing appearance to mimic other people.
- Weather control or transforming into mist.
- Flying or clinging to surfaces like a spider.
- Creating illusions or hallucinations.
- Clairvoyance or prognostication.



Vampire weaknesses may include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Made powerless or destroyed by sunlight.
- Made powerless or destroyed by impalement, decapitation, or a nail through the forehead.
- Repelled by certain plants such as garlic, rice, barley, wolfsbane, lilies, amaranth, or lotuses.
- Unable to cross or step on running water, chalk lines, spilled salt, rice grains, consecrated ground, curved bridges, torii gates, or prayer rugs.
- Repelled or harmed by religious paraphernalia: crucifixes, holy water/oil, scriptures, phylacteries, eucharist, mjolnir, rune stones, pentacles, etc.
- Repelled or harmed by fire (but who isn't?).

Human Familiar: normal people tainted, controlled, and enhanced by a vampire's blood. **Brawn 2, Guile 1, Weird 1**, "Eager Servant", "Day Job", "Gift from Master (a minor version of a vampire power)".

Fledgling Vampire: **Brawn 2, Guile 2, Weird 1**, "Keen Senses", "Bloodthirst", "Immortal", **Curse of the Vampire:** can make a 3 dice supernatural effort for 1 to 3 vampire powers and Marked by an equal number of vampire weaknesses.

Master Vampire: **Brawn 2, Guile 3, Weird 2**, "Long View", "Sanguis Vita Est", "Secret Haven", "Herd of Familiars", "Undying", **Curse of the Vampire:** can make a 3 dice supernatural effort for several vampire powers. Marked by 3 vampire weaknesses: one deadly and two inconveniences.

Strigoi Mort: These evil creatures have lost all trace of humanity other than their body and their hunger. They rise from their graves each night to feed on the living until they are destroyed or they are permanently sealed into their tombs or pinned in their graves to prevent them from rising again. **Brawn 6, Guile 1**, "Blood!", "Ravenous", "The Grave".



Sorcerers

There are two main types of beings generally called “*witches*” by those in the know: human sorcerers (discussed here and under “*Hunters*”) and unique magical beings such as bog hags (covered under “*Bogeymen*”). It would be unfair and untrue to say that all witches are malevolent, but the balance does lean that way. If you ever need to ask “*Are you a good witch or a bad witch?*”, keep in mind that it isn’t a coin toss and the bad ones lie.

Sorcerers are people who have figured out how to use magic to alter reality. There are a wide variety of magical traditions around the world and most of their practitioners have no significant power. Some of them are charlatans; most are devout but mistaken in their methods; some are simply underdeveloped in their powers. The rare few possess both the talent and the insight or depth of knowledge necessary to access true magical power. Some examples of types of magical traditions and their powers are listed below.



Order of The Second Circle

The Order of the Second Circle is a mysterious esoteric secret society that pulls the strings behind many decadent Hellfire clubs. Their power and motivations fluctuate throughout the generations. At times, they focus on using their social connections and blackmail to amass wealth and temporal power. Other times, they are focused on the mystical and use their wealth as a means to acquire rare artifacts and grimoires. In some eras, they are spoiled hedonistic brats who happen to have some mystical secrets; they are little better than the hellfire clubs that they use as puppets.

Order Resources (usable by Initiates and Masters) fluctuate over the generations, but function like Family Resources: Money 3-5, Clubhouse 2-4 (library, staff, etc.), Favors 1-2, Power 2-3 (usually in banking or business).

Novice of the Second Circle: Brawn 1, Guile 2, Weird 1, “Gentleman of Leisure”, “Club Member in Good Standing”, “Deep Pockets”.

Initiate of the Second Circle: Brawn 1, Guile 2, Weird 2, “Gentleman of Leisure”, “Club Member in Good Standing”, “Deep Pockets”, plus 1-3 magical Assets representing spells or talismans such as “Hex” (inflicts negative conditions equivalent to a curse mark), “Sicken” (inflicts damage), “Spirit Body” (project an insubstantial astral body to travel and communicate quickly over great distances).

Master of the Second Circle: Brawn 1, Guile 3, Weird 3, “Gentleman of Leisure”, “Club Member in Good Standing”, “Deep Pockets”,
Clavis Inferni: the masters bear the Curse of the Key of Hell and can use their dark gift for black magic like hexes, poisoning, astral projection, flight, or mind control. Their marks are typically infernal: red glowing eyes, horns, spiked tail, odor of brimstone... For their last Curse Mark, they die as invisible demons rip them to shreds or the ground opens under their feet and they are sucked into a fiery chasm.

The Solomonariu

The Solomonariu are a group of wizards educated at a hidden school of black magic--the Scholomance--located somewhere northwest of Bucharest. They are primarily active in Central and Eastern Europe, but they can pop up anywhere. At any given time, there are only a few dozen of them with about a dozen new graduates every decade. They are usually drawn from peasant stock, but there has been the occasional Romanian nobleman among their number.

They can speak all languages (including the speech of animals) and can control the weather. They are said to be able to ride flying dragons and have a great deal of power but they only ever seem to use it for very petty things. In the past, they have been known to use their powers to destroy fields of crops with hail or sicken herds of livestock, usually for petty vengeance for some minor slight but sometimes as a part of a real estate scam.

Typical Solomonari: Brawn 2, Guile 1, Weird 2, “*Superstitious Peasant*”, “*Academic Sorcerer*”, “*Vengeful*”, **Natural Magic:** can make a 3 dice supernatural effort to control animals or alter precipitation from dry to downpour.

The Weathermaker, elite Solomonari: Brawn 2, Guile 2, Weird 3, “*Academic Sorcerer*”, “*Vengeful*”, “*Dragon Rider*”, **Natural Magic:** can make a 3 dice supernatural effort to control animals, control the weather (start or stop the rain, call down lightning, summon winds), summon a dragon.

Balaur dragon: When summoned by a Weathermaker, the balaur has one head for each hit on the summoning roll and an equal number of Brawn dice. It has no Guile or Weird dice. “*Large serpentine body*”, “*scaly hide*”, “*sharp claws*”.

Rainbow dragon: As the Balaur, but it has the Assets “*scaly hide*”, “*fiery breath*”, and “*Large leathery wings*”.

Zmey (dragon): The zmey is a scaly, fire-breathing dragon with a humanoid form and personality. They can make and use tools and weapons like humans, but they are exceptionally greedy and lustful. They have been known to steal valuable treasures and lure away beautiful youths. Brawn 5, Guile 2, Weird 3, “*Scaly hide*”, Curse of the Dragon: can make a 3 dice supernatural effort to shapeshift, fly, or spit fire, but they are marked by “*Greed*”, “*Wrath*”, and “*Lust*”.

Holy Mystics

Some priests or even laity of a religion who delve into the esoteric mysteries of their faiths can unlock magical powers they call “*miracles*.” These include Abrahamic faithful engaging in angelology/demonology, djinn summoning, and Kabbalah. This also includes some Hindu ascetic gurus and Buddhist bodhisattvas. Miracles vary greatly, but common powers include healing, immunity to physical harm, perception of the hidden or immaterial, and commanding or banishing spirits. The Abrahamic faiths have a rare but significant tradition of giving life to the lifeless: resurrecting dead people, turning sticks into snakes, turning sculptures into living people, etc. Dharmic miracles usually feature extraordinary senses more prominently: seeing through physical obstacles (i.e. “*x-ray vision*”), hearing unspoken thoughts, being aware of (and physically present in) more than one location simultaneously, etc.

Sister of Our Lady of Terrible Mercy: The Order of Sanguine Unction is a small catholic order of nuns and religious sisters. They have tiny convents scattered throughout western Europe and central and southern Africa. Their habits are quite distinct: a blue tunic topped with a red scapular and veil. The sisters operate free clinics or volunteer at hospitals to tend to the sick. The order was founded by a nun named Mary Marguerite d’Oude in Belgium in the late 18th century during a mysterious outbreak. When she noticed several anemic patients in her hospital had puncture marks on their necks or arms, she became suspicious. When she witnessed one of the victims rise from the morgue to feed on the blood of a doctor, she found a new calling: fighting fiends that stalk the night. Now the sisters wander in search of undead to put to rest and other nocturnal predators that threaten humanity. They also continue to serve in hospitals.

Brawn 1, Guile 2, Weird 2. *“Walks in the Valley of the Shadow of Death but fears no Evil,” “You get more with a quiet prayer and a 2x4 than just a quiet prayer,” “The broken bone heals twice as strong,” “Bedside Manner.”* **Curse of Living Blood:** can make a 3 dice supernatural effort to animate their blood to form lashing tendrils or slashing blades, cause their blood to burn like acid or flaming oil, or use their blood to *“wash away”* or regenerate injuries. Marked by *“bloodshot eyes,” “red tear streaks,” “dripping stigmata”*.

Sinister Minister, “one mean mm-hm servant of god”: **Brawn 2, Guile 2, Weird 1.** *“trying real hard to be the shepherd,” “if there is a hell that these things came from, then there’s gotta be a heaven,” “Bible in one hand and a shotgun in the other.”* **Walking the Path of the Righteous:** can make a 3 dice supernatural effort to generate bonus reserves to defend self or others, inflict extra damage against evil creatures by blessing weapons against them, or ward an area against evil influence.

Kabbalist Rabbi: Brawn 1, Guile 3, Weird 2. *“dignified man of letters,” “that ain’t kosher,” “self-deprecating sense of humor.”* **Kabalah:** can make a 3 dice supernatural effort to ward off evil or animate a clay golem; technically unable to see the future, but can get information about the past and present to make a really good, informed guess about the future.

Spirit-Callers

Some sorcerers perform magic by dealing directly with spirits and getting them to affect the world through bargains or coercion. They do this in a direct and practical way. Rather than extensive study and philosophical introspection, shamans use mind-altering substances, harsh physical conditions, monotonous chanting, and other means to enter a trance or otherwise force their consciousness into direct contact with the world of spirits where they bargain, bully, or flatter a spirit for magical favors. These favors typically involve the granting of healing, information, or protection.

Traditional Shaman: Brawn 1, Guile 2, Weird 2. *“traditional wisdom,” “natural psychologist,” “knows what you need to hear.”*

Shamanic practices: can make a 3 dice supernatural effort for divination, healing, or protection.

Self-proclaimed Spirit Medium: Brawn 1, Guile 3. *“pithy aphorisms,” “cold-reading con artist,” “knows what you want to hear.”*

Actual Spirit Medium: Brawn 1, Guile 2, Weird 2. *“vague warnings,” “sees through you,” “hears what you want to know.”* **Seance:** can make a 3 dice supernatural effort to make contact with spirits and communicate with them. On a roll of doubles, a spirit takes over their body until the medium loses a Trait die or makes a Weird roll to oust them.

Alchemists

Alchemists are magicians who seek to unlock the power to alter physical reality by understanding, controlling, and altering the spiritual reality that underlies it. And sometimes, vice versa: using physical changes to alter one's own spiritual nature. True alchemy includes the traditions of Western alchemy transmitted from Egypt through Greece; it also includes the Eastern traditions of Taoist alchemy and the Dharmic tradition of Rasayana (*"the path of essence"*). Alchemical powers include physical transformation at a fundamental level (changing one substance into another like lead into gold or water into wine), disintegration (crumbling solids to dust or dissolving them), and purification (ridding bodies of disease, refining metals, neutralizing toxins). Some alchemists are able to create life from lifeless matter, but their most sought-after power is usually longevity: the ability to *"purify"* a human being to the extent that they no longer fall ill or age.

Alchemist: Brawn 1, Guile 3, Weird 1. *"analytical perception," "laboratory or six-demon bag," "surprisingly wealthy."* **True Alchemy:** can make a 3 dice supernatural effort to make potions (bonus reserves for healing, grenades, etc), treat illness, or alter substances. Advanced alchemists can change their own Trait dice.

Psychics

Psychics or mentalists are sorcerers who have gained the power to control their own minds and the minds of others. Sometimes they are the result of a non-religious person being taken in and trained in the ways of a religious mystic or shaman. They see that the powers work, but they don't follow the philosophy or theology and instead practice the prayer-based powers as an act of purely mental discipline and concentration without the spiritual component. These "*mysterious outsiders trained in a foreign monastery*" are the exception. Most psychics stumble across their powers by accident and develop their talents through independent study. Their powers tend to fall into two categories: "*mind over matter*" and "*mind over mind*".

"*Mind over matter*" includes the obvious telekinesis but also all the various ways the psychic can control their own body through force of will. For example, making themselves immune to extreme temperatures or physical harm by concentrating on maintaining their own bodily integrity or shutting out any outside energies that would burn, freeze, or pierce them.

"*Mind over mind*" includes the classic tricks of hypnotism, telepathy, and animal magnetism. By means of telepathic suggestion, the psychic can alter the perceptions and thoughts of others to create illusions or alter behavior.

Spoonbender: **Brawn** 2, **Guile** 1, **Weird** 2. "*check this out!*", "*bend spoons by thinking really hard*", "*bend spoons by pinching really hard*".

Firestarter: **Brawn** 1, **Guile** 1, **Weird** 3. "*intimidating stare*", "*hot temper*", "*dramatic flare*". **Pyrokinesis:** can make a 3 dice supernatural effort to generate or control flames.

The Wraith: **Brawn** 2, **Guile** 2, **Weird** 2. "*knows the darkness in your heart*", "*a pair of chrome .45s*", "*very persuasive*". **The mind makes it real:** can make a 3 dice supernatural effort to alter perceptions, create illusions, or read minds.

Hermetic Sorcerers

The hermetics are what people typically think of as “wizards”. They wear strange clothes like pointy hats and robes. They carry magical implements like wands, staves, amulets, and crystal balls. They study books filled with odd symbols and complex diagrams. Most importantly, they cast spells by reciting incantations. Merlin is the prototype from which their mold was formed. In the medieval period, they didn’t stick out too much because their odd clothing and accouterments weren’t far from standard for academics, especially those who studied natural philosophy. In later eras, they are eccentric at best, although some of the more fashion-conscious wizards do make an effort to blend in at the boundaries of good taste. Their powers tend to be more versatile but less subtle than other sorcerers. They have access to a very wide range of spells with different effects, but they tend to be flashy and not easy to cast without drawing a lot of attention. Where other sorcerers might kill an enemy by causing them to fall ill or become injured in an “*unfortunate accident*”, wizards tend to favor explosive arson or siccing an invisible demon on their enemy to rip them apart in a public spectacle. It is still unknown whether this flashy display of power is a necessary component of hermetic wizardry or a universal personality defect among wizards.

Magician of the Hermetic Order of the Silver Twilight:
Brawn 1, Guile 2, Weird 2. “*dresses like royalty*”, “*brass bound grimoire*”, “*cool and confident*”. **Hermetic magic:** can make a 3 dice supernatural effort for magically summoning or controlling the classical elemental forces.

Les Damoiselles De La Triskèle

Les Damoiselles de la Triskèle, or simply Triskelions, are a group of sorcerers most prominent in France but scattered covens can be found in the British Isles as well, especially in Ireland and on the Isle of Man. They are often women who call themselves witches or druidesses, but there are male coven members who claim the title of warlock. La Triskèle is a divine trinity worshipped by the sorcerers, but it seems that each coven has its own ideas about what La Triskèle is. Some say that Triskèle is a trio of goddesses following the “Maid, Mother, and Crone” model. Other common options are “Sea, Earth, and Sky”, “Creation, Destruction, and Rebirth”, or “Sun, Earth, and Moon”. Even when two covens agree on the nature of the trinity, they usually call the three deities by different names. For this reason, Triskelions tend to speak about their tradition in very vague terms even with each other. They claim to be the builders of Stonehenge and the true heirs of the ancient druids, but there is no evidence of them existing prior to the 18th century.

Their powers are quite real, however, even if their history is false. Their powers include “vulgar” displays such as levitation or flight (brooms are a classic), but the bulk of their powers are blessings and curses that involve an exchange through sympathetic magic. For example, a witch might make herself appear younger and more beautiful by causing another woman to sicken and wither by making a doll of her; a man could be given the strength of an ox by slaughtering an actual ox and feeding him its heart.



Triskelions are dark, alluring, and destructively wild. If the first hints of their wildness excite you rather than frighten you away, you will soon find yourself mired in a terrible situation and it will be too late by the time you realize your mistake in judgment. New lovers, friends, apprentices, junior members of the coven: they all begin fascinated by the unfettered darkness of their Triskelion leaders but soon find themselves bled dry emotionally, financially--sometimes even literally.

Triskelion witch: Brawn 1, Guile 1, Weird 3. *“arresting stare”, “panoply of occult jewelry”, “mad artiste”.* **Curse of Two Hands:** Can make a 3 dice supernatural effort for either white or black magic, including their signature ability to ensorcel a companion and afflict them with the Desire *“help my Triskelion mistress”.* Marks of their curse include *“maniacal laugh”, “obsession with the number three”, “inappropriate outbursts”,* and other signs of their growing disregard for societal norms. However, if they roll doubles or triples on a roll to use their magic and need to lose Traits or gain a mark, *“they could force their ensorcelled companion to pay the price for them.”*

The People of The Mound

The People of the Mound, also known as “Children of Crom” or the “Circle of Cenn”, are another sorcerous sect in the British isles that calls themselves “druids”. Where La Triskèle are dangerously destructive but not always intentionally malevolent, the People of the Mound are fully aware of the costs to be paid for their power and they pay it willingly, even gladly. The Cennites are much like a communal, working class version of the Second Circle. The Second Circle are a group of wealthy aristocrats and gentlemen seeking their own private successes, but the Circle of Cenn focuses on the success of their cult as a whole, usually through agriculture. A remarkable number of their plans boil down to “trade blood sacrifices for more sheep and barley” (or “cattle and corn” among their American brethren).

Druid of the Mound: Brawn 2, Guile 2, Weird 1. “zealous cultist”, “agriculture enthusiast”, “not even slightly bothered by the smell of blood and offal”. A circle of Mound druids can work together to perform rituals with a collective 3 dice supernatural effort to produce a bumper crop, enhance livestock, or summon protection for their sanctums.

High Druid of Crom: Brawn 1, Guile 2, Weird 2. “zealous cult leader”, “heavily invested in crop and livestock futures”, “ritual dagger and noose”. **Sworn to the Crooked One:** can make a 3 dice supernatural effort to animate plants; grant Assets such as “warped muscles”, “hardened hide”, “ram’s horns” or other physical enhancements to allies; and reanimate bog mummies or other sacrificial offerings as Hungry Husks (see “Zombies” pg. 84).

Slough of Cenn: Brawn 2, Guile 2, Weird 3. “zealous blood priest”, “frightening appearance: no skin!”, “hideous but mighty body”, “standing between Life and Death”. **Chosen by the Crooked One:** can make a 3 dice supernatural effort as a High Druid and can also generate bonus reserves by encasing their bodies in peat or other decaying matter to resist damage, regenerate lost Traits, or inflict a curse.

Bogeymen

There are a wide variety of bogeymen around the world but Britain is literally crawling with them. Every village has its own particular menace threatening the populace. They are vile supernatural creatures; they seem to be some sort of faerie beings although many resemble the undead in appearance. As a rule, they all feed on fear, but many of them also have a taste for flesh. They are wild, chaotic, untameable creatures that ironically seem to respect order and virtue--or perhaps they are repulsed by it. The fact that they mostly prey upon the less virtuous may be the reason that there are few hunters dedicated to wiping them out, unlike vampires and other creatures of the night that feed on the innocent.

Fright-hounds are monsters that attack lone travelers at night. They bite and claw at their victims, chase them, and terrorize them to feed on their fear. They usually don't kill directly while feeding, but panicked victims can die from injuries sustained while fighting or fleeing or from an infected wound after their encounter. For example, Tommy Rawhead and Bloodybones are an animated skull and a decapitated skeleton that hunt as a pair. Buddacrawe (known colloquially as "*Beetlecrow*") appears to be a giant humanoid cockroach dressed in the rags of a scarecrow and black feathers.

Fright-hound: Brawn 3, Guile 1, Weird 1. "*jaws that bite*", "*claws that catch*", "*relentless pursuit predator*"; **Feed on Fear:** if a victim blocks their damage with anything other than Brawn dice or bonus reserves, the Fright-hound gains a Trait die. They usually leave a victim to collapse and recover after gaining 2 or 3 Traits.




“People-in-Black” are taloned humanoids dressed in black robes or long coats with hoods or big hats to hide their faces. Whereas fright-hounds chase their prey to terrorize them then leave after feeding on their fear, People-in-Black attempt to kidnap their victims and keep them in a hidden lair to feed on night after night. Some take one victim at a time, but some stock a full larder to provide a choice of tasty morsels. A rare few will release victims after feeding on them for a while (perhaps they tire of the same flavor night after night). Examples from in and near Europe include l’Uomo Nero, Babau, Mpampoulas, and Al-Bu’bu. People-in-Black known to be in Britain include Mumpoker (who lairs in dark attics), Tankerabogus (who lairs in wells or pits), and Tom-Poker (who lairs in dark closets and holes under stairs).

A common variant or subspecies of the People-in-Black are the Sack People. These creatures typically resemble vicious, old people with a distinctly inhuman trait. For example, Babaroga looks like a bitter old woman with horns growing from her forehead. Sack People all carry a large sack or basket to carry off their victims.

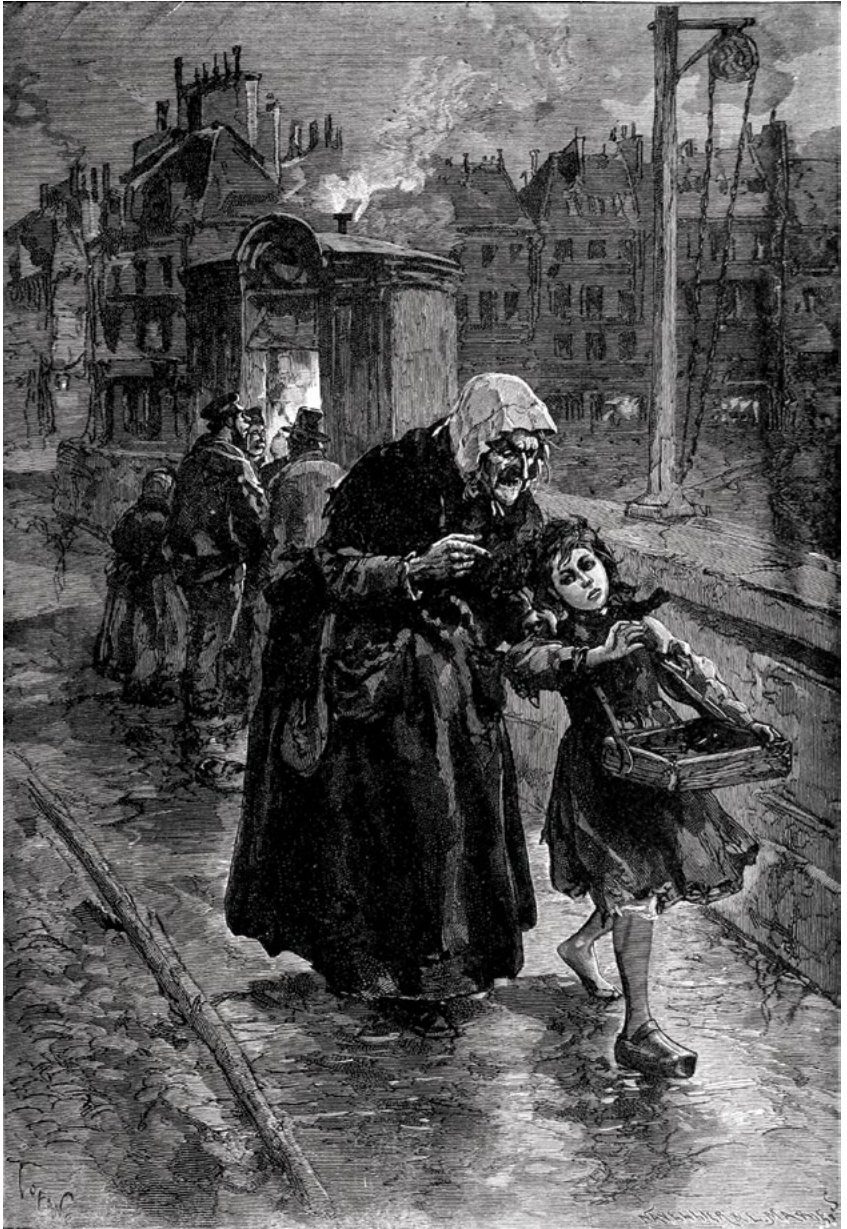
People-in-Black: Brawn 2, Guile 2, Weird 1. *“grasping talons,” “cloak of darkness,” “signature eerie sound (scratching claws on walls or the ground, clicking talons together, creepy laugh, etc.)”.* **Feed on Fear:** If they can imprison a victim in their lair, they can extract 1 Asset or Trait die each night to gain a Trait die of their own.

Sack People: Brawn 2, Guile 1, Weird 2. *“grappler,” “sack of nightmares,” “telltale sign (horns, red eyes, tail, etc.)”.* **Feed on Fear:** If they can imprison a victim in their lair, they can extract 1 Asset or Trait die each night to gain a Trait die of their own.



Collectors are bogeymen who want a particular trophy from their victims. They often appear to be shadowy and indistinct figures in their native form, but they can shapeshift into animals to follow, track, or catch their victims more easily. Once they catch you, they try to take their prize. For example, the Skinner is a faceless shadow with glowing red eyes that can shapeshift into a big black dog. It has no skin and wants to take yours. The skins it takes never last, so it always needs to find another before long. Gotchur is a nose collector and Gitcha wears a necklace of ears. Shadowbaby is a featureless silhouette of a crawling infant that carries a rattle filled with teeth.

Collector: **Brawn** 1, **Guile** 3, **Weird** 1. “*harvesting implement (sharp teeth, a large pair of shears, secateurs, axe, etc.)*,” “*shadowy form*,” “*detect trophies*,” “*ambush predator*.” **Collect trophy:** If they can score two or more hits of damage in one attack, the victim can choose to block the damage normally or let the Collector take the trophy it seeks instead. Missing body parts function like Curse Marks (but record them under “*other*,” not your Curse): they inflict additional Risks on all impacted rolls.



Child-eaters are territorial bogeymen that are known to prey on “naughty children” but are not above attacking adults that trespass in their territory. Most of them appear to be humans with some unsettling quirks. Typically they dress in bizarrely mismatched clothing and speak in complete nonsense phrases, as if they are imitating humans without understanding. Examples include Awd Goggie, Gooseberry Wife (she hides in berry bushes), Churnmilk Peg, and Melsh Dick. Tom Dockin is a particularly dangerous child-eater with a mouthful of iron teeth. Some child-eaters appear to be dangerous animals that ironically display more human behavior than the humanoid child-eaters. Examples include a giant raven called the Great Black Bird, and Bugbear, a flesh-devouring bear with shark teeth.

Child-eater: Brawn 2, Guile 1, Weird 2. “sharp teeth”, “confusing ramble”, “keenly aware of trespassers”. **Feed on Fear:** if a victim blocks their damage with anything other than Brawn dice or bonus reserves, the child-eater can regain a lost Trait die.

Hags are bogeymen who appear to be monstrous, grotesque old women. They kidnap victims like People-in-Black but feed on flesh like Child-eaters. Some hags also keep souvenirs from victims, although it is not their main goal as with Collectors. Some hags are also witches and can use magic to help capture their prey with tricks like telekinesis to strike or throw them or illusions to lure them. Some well-known hags include Black Annis (a hag with a blue face and iron claws who lives in a cave); Grindylow, Jenny Greenteeth, Peg Powler, and Nelly Longarms live in ponds and rivers and snatch those who come near shore, like crocodiles nabbing thirsty gazelles.

Bog Hag: Brawn 2, Guile 2, Weird 2. “Hideous visage”, “Amphibious ambush predator”, “Camouflage”. **Feed on Fear:** if a victim blocks damage with anything other than Brawn dice or bonus reserves, the hag can regain a lost Trait die.

Ghosts

There are probably more types of ghosts than there are living people in the world. Libraries of volumes have been written in an attempt to categorize them: poltergeists, angry echos, specters, class IV full torso free floating apparitions, bleeding walls and screaming, etc. If you want to include ghosts in your Rookwood chronicle, there are really only two categories that matter: ghosts that are characters and ghosts that are environmental hazards.



Ghosts as characters have Traits and Assets just like anyone else. A ghost could have 1 to 7 Trait dice and a similar number of Assets. At the weakest end, these ghosts may be fully insubstantial “presences” that can only be vaguely sensed and communicated with by a character with an appropriate mystical Asset or Dark Gift. They cannot interfere much with mortals and only serve as a source of vague information.

Poltergeist: Brawn 1. “bump,” “push,” “spill”

Lingering spirit: Guile 1, **Weird** 1. “remember life,” “whisper and moan,” “strong emotion: rage, sorrow, etc.”

As they grow in power, they gain more Trait dice to represent their physical influence, awareness, and presence. By default, ghosts are insubstantial but can materialize themselves by use of a 3 dice supernatural effort (if they have enough Trait dice to do so). If they don’t materialize themselves, affecting them by physical means requires special assets or gifts to either make the ghost susceptible or to enhance a weapon or tool to affect them.

A ghost's default abilities-the things it can do with a 1 or 2 dice effort-are based on its Trait dice:

Brawn 1: Gentle, weak actions (blow out candles, make lights flicker, push papers off a desk), tangible manifestation has the resistance of a stream of air.

Brawn 2: Normal actions that a living person could do with one hand (pick up a book, write with a pen, open and close doors), manifestation has the resistance of jelly.

Brawn 3+: Strong actions that a living person could do with both hands or violent actions (strike someone, throw objects), manifestation appears solid (but not necessarily sturdy or hard).

Guile 1: Know they are dead, know when living people are around, see or hear very emotional or gifted living people.


Guile 2: See and hear the mortal world, but dimly.

Guile 3+: See and hear the mortal world as clearly as the living do.

Weird 1: Appear indistinctly to the living (reflections in mirrors, shadows on the wall, sounds of footsteps).

Weird 2: Appear to the living in an obvious but insubstantial way, such as a transparent apparition.

Weird 3+: Manifest as a normal fully living person (although still insubstantial without Brawn dice).



Ghosts as environmental hazards are no longer truly present as sentient entities. They are psychic after-images or echos that continue to resonate in a particular place. They can be observed and perhaps empathized with, but they cannot communicate any more than a book or video recording could. This kind of ghost is not a “*person*” but only a remnant of a person like a fingerprint, signature, or lingering odor. At the weakest level, they are simply feelings or images or strange sounds. At stronger degrees, dangerous echos can harm the living in an indiscriminate and passive way: more toxic waste than deadly predator. A rage-filled spirit of an arsonist (or burning victim) might burn or scald any living being who enters their haunt, for example.

Both types of ghost can generally be exorcised or banished in the same ways, but sentient ghosts are either much easier or much harder because they are aware of--and either aid or resist--attempts to lay them to rest.


Fettered spirit: **Brawn** 1+, **Guile** 1+, **Weird** 1+. “*can’t let go of life*”, “*fetter: an object, person, or place that anchors the spirit to the physical world*”, “*regret: an unfinished task from life*”. **Apparition:** Can make a 3 dice supernatural effort to become visible, manifest physically, possess a sensitive person, or affect the material world.



Daemonic Cults

Mad cultists are a classic antagonist that comes in a variety of flavors: hedonistic revelers, power-hungry sociopaths, philosophical assholes, true believers in “*the old gods*”, nihilists who just want to watch the world burn and think the old gods will light the best fire, bankers, etc. If you want to use a cult in your chronicle, consider the following questions as you fill out the details.

What is it called? Does the cult have a name based on their object of worship like “*The Way/Path/Temple of ___*,” “*___ism*,” or “*___ology*”? Maybe they have an ironic twist name like “*The Temple of Light*” but they actually serve a daemon of darkness that wants to be the only source of (figurative) illumination. Maybe they have a mysterious name that not even their members understand until they reach the higher rankings of the inner mysteries, such as “*The Seal of Raltiel*”, “*MKHT*”, or “*Varia*.”



Who are they? Studious academics delving into ancient secrets best left buried? The poor and downtrodden seeking comfort, protection, and food? People with no self-esteem being dominated by a charismatic leader? Losers buying into a lie that they are secretly big winners who will one day rise up and show them all? People with a strong need to belong and submit to a higher power but with an iconoclastic streak that keeps them from joining a more traditional group?

What do they do? This could vary from level to level within the cult. Perhaps they have a public face that operates a soup kitchen, but the soup kitchen is just a recruiting ground for a prayer group, which is just an indoctrination tool for an organized crime ring that deals in drugs and assassination, which is really just a means to prepare the way for the great summoning ritual that will bring their dark god to Earth. Or maybe it's just a big Ponzi scheme dressed up in sinister robes. Maybe the cult throws big parties to attract impressionable young people or jaded old libertines then uses hard-partying as a slippery slope into more extreme thrills and eventually summoning daemons.

Who is in charge? Is the cult leader just another cultist with a fancier robe or are they something more? A vampire using the cultists' self-cutting and ritual bloodletting as a food supply. A necromancer using the cult's sacrificial victims as raw materials for a zombie legion. An alchemist drugging up the cult to trade "religious ecstasy" for free labor and an income stream to finance other projects. Or maybe the cult leader is a true believer and really worships the cult's deity (which doesn't preclude the possibility that the daemon is duping the cult leader for secret purposes).

Is there anything to it? Do the cultists actually get any power or other benefits (other than "a sense of belonging") from their membership in the cult? If the cult offers them magic powers, do they really work or are they always just out of reach ("You are almost ready for the deeper mysteries, but you must prove your devotion before learning the True Power")?

Cult Novice: One Trait die (**Brawn** for "jocks" and "criminals," **Guile** for "preps" or "nerds," and **Weird** for "creepy outcast weirdos"), "lemmings for the cause". A handful of novices can work together to make exceptional 2 dice efforts. Treat them as one character with all their combined Traits. When there are only two left (or if they are sufficiently frightened), they scatter as individuals again.

Cult Deacon: 3 Trait dice, "dog among the sheep", "concealed weapon", and either "true believer" or "in on the scam".

Cult Leader: As a Cult Deacon with 5 Trait Dice or use another type of antagonist (vampire, sorcerer, werewolf rabble-rouser, etc.).

Other People

The world is full of other people--that's where Hell got the idea. In their chronicle, the Rookwoods will run into people from all walks of life: politicians, crimelords, crooked developers/landlords, regular lords, burglars/"*art dealers*"; evil clowns, constabulary, regular (i.e. less-evil) clowns, and just passersby on the streets. Some will be enemies, some will be allies, some will be neither, and a frustratingly large number will be difficult to classify until it is almost too late. For most innocent bystanders, you will probably never need to know any stats. If a need for a roll comes up, just grab 1 to 3 random Trait dice for them and keep in mind that they can't make a 3 dice supernatural effort if they don't have a supernatural ability.

For more significant characters with names, choose 3 to 5 Trait dice and three to five Assets. In a pinch, you can default to the sentence pattern "(Name) is an (adjective)(noun) who (verbs)" to generate Assets. Lady Bismouth is a "wealthy" "socialite" who "knows all the high society gossip". Percy Pendrake is a "cowardly" "banker" who "works for the vampire conspiracy". Chastity Smith is a "sheltered" "minister's daughter" who "wants to rebel against her Puritan parents."

Appendix III

Chronicle Resources

Locations

An important part of a Rookwood chronicle is Rookwood Manor itself. The family home is almost a character in its own right. In modern times, family resources can be somewhat detached from location: money is accessible by international wire transfer or using credit cards directly at the point of sale, authority can be exercised by phone or email, and so on. In earlier times with slower methods of communication and transportation, location is much more important. Several locations are suggested below, but you can place the manor anywhere that you like for your own chronicle (and it may be moved if the family relocates between generations, as well).

A Country Estate

Rookwood Manor is in the village of Ravenstone in the borough of Milton Keynes, Buckinghamshire, about 60 miles northwest of central London. Traveling between London and Rookwood Manor takes about an hour and a half by car on the M1 or two to three hours by train in modern times. In earlier time periods, it takes much longer. When traveling by horseback or carriage, it takes a couple of days, typically with an overnight stop in Aylesbury. A determined rider with a healthy horse could make the ride in about 12 hours, but the horse will be exhausted and might be injured. The distance can be walked in two days if you're desperate (or a day and night if you're really desperate). It's about a 9 or 10 hour walk between Aylesbury and either Ravenstone or London.

In the real world, Ravenstone is a small village of about 2000 people, but you could make it into a larger town or small city in your chronicle if you want to have more urban environments around the manor.

Urban Townhouse

Instead of placing Rookwood Manor in a village like Ravenstone, you could put the manor in London or another major city. A large sprawling estate is less likely in central London, but there will be many other famous real world locations near the house that you can use in your chronicle.

The London borough of Hackney was church land seized by the crown during the Tudor period and became a popular retreat for the wealthy and the nobility who moved there in great numbers and “*gentrified*” the place in the 16th and 17th century. The Rookwoods could easily rub elbows with royalty and nobility here and still be a short distance from Whitechapel to the southeast, for those evenings when they feel the need to rub elbows (or other body parts) with the lower classes.

A Fictional County

You could even make up an entirely fictional county to place Rookwood Manor. For example, let’s take a look at the map of Great Britain. There is a bay called Morecambe by a city of the same name between Cumbria and Lancaster. Let’s make a new county there by filling Morecambe Bay with a large island between Lancaster and the Isle of Man. We’ll put it close enough that it is possible for it to be connected to the mainland by bridges in recent centuries, but far enough from shore that we don’t have to alter any shorelines to squeeze it in. The peninsula on the Cumbria side of Morecambe Bay is called Furness, so let’s name our new county Wesfurness (located on West Furness Island, which is usually also called Wesfurness). The people of Wesfurness are known colloquially as Wessies or Weffers (although the latter is more commonly associated with supporters of the Wesfurness football club).

In the 16th and 17th centuries, Wesfurness is reached by ferries from Isle of Man, Lancaster, Blackpool, and Liverpool. In later centuries, Wesfurness is connected to the mainland by a bridge between Barrow-in-Furness on the Cumbria side and Nytham-on-Nash on the Wesfurness side. In the 20th century, a major issue in local politics is the proposed construction of the Morecambe Bay Bridge to connect the port town of Dovelin at the southern end of Wesfurness to the town of Fleetwood in Lancaster county.

A Foreign Estate

Perhaps the Rookwoods have left Britain to pursue their goals elsewhere (or to flee troubles at home). If they moved with substantial resources, they could establish a new stately manor elsewhere. If the family builds Chateau des Corbeaux in France, will they survive the Terror of the revolution? Will they work for or against Emperor Napoleon?

Or maybe the family moved to America to chase monsters across the Old West and set up a new home in the town of Crow's Peak, Wyoming. Or perhaps they move to colorful San Francisco and establish Rookwood Place in one of the famous "*Painted Ladies*." (Rookwood Place is the drab grey one on the end of the row...)

Eras of Play

A Rookwood chronicle spans many generations across centuries of history and around the globe. You can choose to set the generations of your chronicle in any time or place that you wish. The only limitation is that each successive generation takes place later in time.

Some examples of time periods with Era Assets are listed below. At the Chronicler's option, Era Assets can be given to each player character and important non-player character in the time period. These should not be used for "everyman skills," because those should be assumed by default. Era Assets are useful for encouraging genre tropes in each time period. For example, the Gothic duality (being simultaneously virtuous and villainous like Heathcliff in *Wuthering Heights* or Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde) in 19th century literature or the pervasive paranoia in 1990s conspiracy media could be represented by giving appropriate bonus Assets to all major characters in those eras.

Elizabethan Contradiction (1558–1603)

A time of adventure, discovery, and the search for new experiences. The time of Shakespeare, Spenser, and Marlowe. There is deep intellectual thinking about the world and re-examination of older sources, like the Greco-Roman classics, for timeless truths. Western Europe is open to new ideas and fresh perspectives, but still hasn't shaken off the ignorance and naivete of its earlier ages. Exploration and colonization bring new goods and ideas from around the world, but at a cost that is largely overlooked by those in power. Everyone knows Science will surely bring new Wonders, but everyone also knows Magic and Monsters lurk in the Night. Everyone loves watching a good play, especially tragicomedies and romances.

The essence of the Elizabethan Era is contradictorily “*Bright & Dark*”: scientific reason walks hand in hand with superstitious ignorance; the tragicomic combination of tears and laughter leads to pervasive gallows humor; brave explorers are willing to travel to the ends of the Earth, but gullible enough to believe any legends they hear about such far-off places; royalty and commoners both sit in the same audience to watch the same plays featuring crude humor and deep philosophical pondering.

For an Era Asset, each important character can choose a free contradictory Asset that shows this dual higher and lower nature: “*superstitious scientist*,” “*foolhardy explorer*,” “*vulgar diplomat*,” “*cynical priest*,” “*chivalrous commoner*,” and so on.

Jacobean Conspiracy (1603-1625)

When Elizabeth dies, James VI of Scotland becomes James I of England. He tries to style himself “*King of Great Britain*” to unite the island as one nation, but it never sticks. The contradictory Bright & Dark nature of the Elizabethans continues under James. James himself is very interested in both theology and witchcraft, which he sees as two sides of the same coin. He is most famous for his version of the Bible, but more importantly for a Rookwood chronicle, James also writes a book called “*Daemonologie*” about his opposition to witches. He personally hunts witches (although in keeping with the Bright & Dark theme, he doesn’t trust accusations without investigation: he is a “*skeptical witch hunter*”).

James also writes two books about kingship and “*divine right*,” but despite promoting absolute monarchy, he enjoys popular support; however, he is also the target of several conspiracies that seek to kidnap or kill him. The Bye Plot features Catholics and Puritans conspiring together to kidnap James: “*Politics makes strange bedfellows*” indeed! Ambrose Rookwood was a Gunpowder plotter along with Guy Fawkes and others: you can decide whether he is a relative in your chronicle or a stranger who shares a surname.

As an Era Asset, each major character can choose a free contradictory Asset that shows a dual Bright & Dark nature as in the Elizabethan era, or a conspiratorial asset to show their propensity for intrigue and plotting.

Caroline Chaos (1625-1649)

Under Charles I, the brightness of the preceding eras is fading. The 30 Years War rages in Europe while Britain is at peace, but tensions are steadily building toward civil war and Charles directly causes a lot of unrest. He fully embraces the “*divine right of kings*” and constantly butts heads with his Parliaments over the extent of his authority. Sectarian issues abound: Catholic vs Protestant, Scottish Kirk vs Church of England, moderate Anglicans vs fundamentalist Puritans, and more. The king never clearly picks a side but he intrudes into every dispute and hamfistedly tries to declare himself the winner, so he appears to be everyone’s enemy.

The king’s sectarian blunders directly lead to the Bishops’ Wars. His attempts to illegally raise taxes and other tyrannical behaviors lead to multiple secular civil wars. When Irish rebels and both the Scottish and English Parliaments decide to oppose the king, Britain is wracked by war. When cornered by one faction, Charles negotiates for peace with another but he burns through goodwill quickly. Finally, the army under Cromwell decides they have had enough of his bollocks. They stage a coup, execute the king for putting his own power before the good of the country, and Britain becomes a republic.

In this Era, everyone has a strong opinion. Each major character can have a free asset to indicate their side (“*Cavalier*,” “*Roundhead*”) or the strain of living with intense unrest (“*hot tempered*,” “*comfortable with chaos*”).

Puritanical Protectorate (1649–1660)

Cromwell rules the Commonwealth with an iron fist. His 11 major-generals keep the British Isles under martial law. Under Puritan rule, fun is frowned upon--Puritans are expert frowners!--and the Irish are scorned. Inns are shut, theatres are closed, most sports are banned. Boys playing ball on Sunday are whipped. Swearing is fined; repeated swearing incurs prison time. Soldiers stop anyone wearing makeup to forcibly scrub their faces clean. Going for a Sunday stroll can be fined unless it is to or from church. Feast days have become “*fast days*” with no food: Christmas is banned and holiday foods are confiscated. Irish children are shipped to the West Indies to work (and die) as slaves to decrease the numbers of potentially traitorous Irish Catholics.

If you play a generation during this era, you can make up any petty, arbitrarily cruel, cartoonishly over-the-top, stick-up-the-arse villainy and you won't be wrong. It's like Nazi Brownshirts and the Morality Police teamed up to fight a war on smiling.

In this Era, everyone endures suffering, but the Puritans enjoy it (which is ironic because enjoying things is a sin). Each major character can have a free asset to indicate how they endure the misery, whether Puritan (“*cruel necessity*,” “*endure life, don't enjoy it*”) or not (“*whiskey in a hollow bible*,” “*secretly wearing scarlet knickers*”).

Restoration of Excess (1660–1714)

The Protectorate's repression ends with the restoration of the monarchies and the pendulum swings to the other extreme. Theaters reopen, the first women actors take to the stage, and “*comedies of manners*” revel in vulgarity. Actors become celebrities for the first time due to the “*sex romp*” and “*gross out comedy*” genres. Even the king encourages vulgarity in casual speech. Everyone tries to be more shocking than everyone else.

While most are unleashing their pent up frustrations, the Puritans double down on their doom and gloom. Under Charles II and James II, it is insufficient to merely attend court: one must make a statement. You must consume or abstain conspicuously. If you drink and fornicate, you must be a debauched libertine; if you are a chaste teetotaler, sit among the revelry in your black clothes and suck the joy out of it like a frowning martyr.

The newly restored monarchy is hardly stable. Institutions constantly shift and settle into new arrangements. Old grudges linger from the civil wars; it matters what side your family was on.

Major characters have two Era Assets: one to show their family's past loyalties and one for their own (im)moral conspicuousness ("*rakish dandy*," "*licentious lady*," "*always up for it; yes, even that*," "*Everything in moderation except moderation*," "*a thousand times humbler than thou art*").

Industry and Colonialism (1714-1837)

The Kings George didn't care much for rulership and were largely content to let their ministers handle it. Politics takes the form of parties arguing in Parliament, rather than individuals trying to sway the king. Under the Georges, Britain explores and exploits the globe in colonial conquests that bring great riches to Britain. These riches are also plundered in the Caribbean during the last hurrah of the "*golden age*" of piracy. In the New World, the American colonies thrive, rebel, and break free. In the Old World, industrialization leads to the dark satanic mills that convert misery into wealth; the gap between haves and have-nots widens in a way familiar to anyone who has read Jane Austen and Charles Dickens: quaint garden parties, dainty tea sandwiches on china plates, workhouses, debt prisons, orphans begging for scraps in the gutter.

In this era, major characters can have a free Asset to showcase their class whether it is very high (gentleman of means) or very low (lord of the ragamuffin pickpockets).

Gothic Garden Parties (1811- ca.1860)

In the Regency and early Victorian period, Gothic literature really takes off. This is the time of *Wuthering Heights* and *Frankenstein*. A common feature of Gothic literature is Gothic Duality: possessing both virtuous and villainous traits simultaneously. For example, Victor Frankenstein is a life sciences genius who wants to conquer death and spare humanity from the misery it brings, but he treats the life he creates very callously and causes it undue suffering. To represent this duality, major characters in this era can have two free Assets: one for a virtue and one for a vice.

Dime Novels & Penny Dreadfuls (1860-1901)

The late Victorian period was the time of dime novels about sensational exploits in the American Wild West and penny dreadfuls about sensational exploits elsewhere. Some stories were just rip-offs or shallow imitations of earlier Gothic literature (transformed from tragic pathos to lurid melodrama) and others were the literary equivalent of schlocky action movies. In addition to human heroes (or anti-heroes) like two-fisted cowboys, gunslingers, and masked highwaymen, there were also many inhuman characters such as Spring-heeled Jack and Varney the Vampire.

In this era, major characters can have a free Asset to represent an extraordinary skill or quality like the protagonists of these cheap books ("*hide as tough as saddle leather*", "*phenomenal jumping prowess*", "*master of hypnotism*").

Modernism & the Great War (1901–1918)

During the Enlightenment, people thought the miracles of Science and Reason would lead mankind into a new glorious future. In the Edwardian (1901–1914) and the Great War (1914–1918) period, mankind learned that the fires of Prometheus that drive away cold and darkness can also burn and destroy. Gas, machine guns, and industrialized warfare, caused disillusionment with the promise of Enlightenment. Progress is not inevitable and there is no guarantee that history is an upward slope out of barbarism.

In this era, major characters can have a free Asset to showcase the Dying of the Light: they may have a free Asset describing something creative, constructive, or virtuous, on the condition that it can only be spent for something stupid or destructive. For example, a “*sense of honor*” used to stay in an unwinnable fight or a “*Rolls-Royce Silver Ghost*” used as a battering ram.

Pulp Noir (1919–1945)

The Interwar period and the Second World War was a tumultuous rollercoaster of highs and lows: Armistice and rebuilding; the Roaring ‘20s, the Great Gatsby’s fabulous parties, and the hijinks of Wooster and Jeeves; rumrunners, bootleggers, and gangbusters in North America; the Great Depression; and the rise of Fascism and the war to crush it.

This was a period of Feast or Famine (and sometimes both). People in pulp noir and other period literature are often depicted as either soft and subtle or hard and direct. In this era, major characters can have a free Asset to showcase their Softness or Hardness: “*slippery rat*”, “*manipulative femme fatale*”, “*eyepatch and mensur scar*”, “*boxer’s nose*”, “*hands like meathooks*”.

Scientific Wonders and Blunders (1950s)

After the nucleus was split and became the quintessential “bomb”, people look upon the atom with simultaneous hope and fear. On one hand, “*better living through chemistry*” means that all the young lads are strapping and the girls are properly red-blooded examples of their nationality. Scientists are all-knowing and all-powerful techno-wizards. People wake up to their radioactive glow-in-the-dark digital alarm clocks and eat complete breakfasts full of essential vitamins and minerals. Rockets and robots wait for us in the not-too-distant future, so eat a hot meal from your Radarange microwave oven and hop in your fin-tailed car until they perfect the food pill and personal gyrocopter!

On the other hand, no one knows if the world will be destroyed tomorrow. If it is, will it be destroyed in nuclear fire by the Reds or will it be some kind of atomic super mutants that appear after one too many nuke tests? Fortunately, everyone is ready to duck and cover under their stockpile of canned goods.

In this era, major characters can have a free Asset to show their scientific prowess (if they are an egghead) or their coolness (if they are not): “*captain of the football team*”, “*leather-clad biker*”, “*sliderule and pocket protector*”, “*interdisciplinary lab coat*”, “*PhD in a little bit of everything*”.

Cold War, Cool Jazz, & Hot Spies (1960s)

The Cold War is in full swing (and full of cool, swinging spies). NATO and the Warsaw Pact countries are spying on each other and many independent operatives are looking to play both sides against each other or just use their fancy spy gadgets to commit really cool crimes like jewelry heists from museums guarded by lasers. Microfilm has surpassed magazines and newspapers as the preferred written medium of the day; biros that shoot poison darts, shoes that hold hidden blades, and wristwatches that contain tiny cameras are de rigueur.

In this era, major characters can have a free Asset to showcase their spy credentials: “lucky at baccarat”, “tuxedo with hidden jetpack and scuba tank”, “bulletproof luxury car”, “master of disguise”, “deadly judo chops”.

They Don't Want You to Know (1990s)

The Cold War is over, but nobody really relaxed. The commies are no longer a threat and they aren't spying on the West anymore, but why does it feel like we're being watched? If the war is over and there are no more enemies to spy on, why is the intelligence apparatus still just as big as ever? People once trusted their governments to protect them from enemies sneaking in the dark, but the enemies are gone and their governments are still sneaking around. Who are they spying on now? There are so many questions and no real answers. The Truth is out there, but it probably wants to kill you. Be afraid of everything and trust no one.

In this era, major characters can have a free Asset to show their paranoia or their knowledge of the conspiracy: “*knows a guy who knows a guy*,” “*surveillance countermeasures*,” “*untraceable phone line*,” “*extra set of ID and credit cards under an alias*,” “*friends with a retired spook who can pull some strings*”.

Terms of Service; Didn't Read (2010s)

In the ironically wireless “*Wired Age*,” information is everywhere and readily accessible. For any conceivable need you may have, there is probably a tech startup with insufficient vowels in its name that makes an app that can help you to meet your needs. Do you need an exorcist at 3 a.m. in northwest London? Just download the Exor app on your smartphone and make your request with a few taps. You can select from Catholic priests or Vodou bokor or more. If you have a coupon code, don't forget to enter it when placing your order!

Do you need a courier to bring you a box of silver bullets or garlic bulbs pickled in holy water in the next 30 minutes? Just open your Slvr app and place an order! If this is likely to be a regular thing, maybe you should sign up for a monthly subscription to Black Cape's Loot Coffin service. Every month a new box of ingredients and tools with easy to follow instructions will be delivered to your door so you can assemble your own monster-fighting gear from raw materials hand selected by the experts.

In this era, major characters have a free Asset to show “*there's an app for that!*”

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Editing by Sarah Addison

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Special Thanks to Sarah Addison, Donna Davies, Wil Peregrine, Jeff Hawley, Andy Agin, Bill Carey, Mary Myers, Michael Grote, Chris Fox, Jen and Joe Williams, and everyone else that has breathed life into a Rookwood or Ravenstone over the years.

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Printed in PRC

Concepts

Lines and Veils from Sex and Sorcery by Ron Edwards

X-Card by John Stavropoulos

<http://tinyurl.com/x-card-rpg>

O-Card by Kira Scott

<http://www.gamingaswomen.com/posts/2013/01/finding-my-o-with-the-x-card/>

Art

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