

The Nightmare Dominancy

Near a vast blue ocean, a city of blackened iron and twisted spires sits under a faintly glowing dome of sickly pale green. This is the great city of Dominancy, where the last vestiges of humanity live in servitude to their masters; creatures from the darkest corners of the continent. Servitude is preferable, however, to the threats beyond the magical barriers. At the edge of sight and Beyond, dark shadows dance with corpses, twisting vision and mind alike. For those who live inside the walls, one truth rings clear: Only the Beasts can save you...

Overview of Dominancy

The Nightmare Dominancy is a world where the few remaining humans have come under the rule of oppressive monsters, after centuries of fleeing the darkness of what lies in the everlasting twilight hours of the Beneath and the Beyond. The Beasts of this city, true monsters to behold, offer protection to the humans of Dominancy in return for unwavering servitude. Even then, the threat of being devoured, disemboweled, or strung up on a steeple at a whim looms over every human. Or worse. Only a select few “favourites,” known as Quislings, ever make it to any position of relative comfort; and even they still glance over their shoulders on foggy nights.

The city itself, massive and sprawling as far as the eye can see, is enclosed on land by a great stone and split into six districts, ruled by six great creatures known as the Beasts. Through a binding pact established long ago, each Beast is a pillar to the magical barrier protecting Dominancy, inviting the monstrous races inside, and providing Thus each Beast rules over their human population with supreme power. Their domain extends over any living (and sometimes, that trait is difficult to verify) creature. Each district of the city is unique and relatively insular. Though citizens of Dominancy can travel between the districts freely, their occupations, lack of transportation, and general superstitions tend to discourage them from leaving their home

district. Most districts also share a similar architectural design, favouring slim stone buildings with intricate accents of black metal, high-arched windows, and dark tile roofs sporting small angled chimneys; thick smoke spouting into the sky from various workhouses. Very little vegetation grows between the densely laid cobblestone streets, as everything but wispy, slender grass and weeds dies in the thick, smoky air. Towards the outskirts of the heart of the city, the skyline transforms abruptly to the thick gnarled trees of the Untamed Woods and the moors of the Farmlands Districts.

Life for the humans in Dominancy mostly consists of working in either a trade skill or menial labour, with only occasional rest. Humans are expected to bend the knee and present absolute fealty, given tasks as befits the Beast they serve. Most humans live as simple peasants, fearing for their lives, and seeking comfort within their chuckaboos and large extended families. Though they are compensated for their devotion in “protection” and the most basic allowances; there are no dreams of riches or retirement for humans. Simply being kept fed and clothed exhausts most of the light in their eyes. Those humans that do push past the poverty line tend to be the Quislings, preying off of the rest of their race in order to squeeze out as much comfort and coin as possible. Quislings have only slightly extended means, and are deeply loyal to the command and will of the Beasts, but not removed from human ranks. Other than Quislings, merchants, performers, and exceptional crafters may live to one day see real coinage in their hands, though heretics whispered about in taverns may come across these as well. To the working underclass though, the Quislings are just as tyrannical as their fanged and winged overseers.

While education falls far below trade skills and basic survival, some humans, especially those working in the Athenaeum, pride themselves in being useful in uncovering lost knowledge. The ordinary human, however, is more concerned with keeping their head down and doing their job more so than any intellectual pursuit. As such, very little progressive or technological development comes from the human race directly. This has led to the popular and widely accepted belief that the Beasts are the sole inventors of our modern world, and that limb and life lost for that minute progress are but a small price to pay. They are worth only what a Beast sees them as.

For those who unfortunately live near the borders of the magical barrier where the smaug is thinnest and the city less dense, few dare to wander close or look up past the wall for much longer than a glimpse. Curiosity and temptation stir. Visions of horrific nightmares or elusive treasures invade the mind. To gaze through the barrier to the Beyond will take something from you. Stories and songs circulate through the taverns of people driven mad by the torments of what lies waiting in the darkness outside, knowing that they are a stone's throw from the Vile Shadows that nearly eradicated humanity once before.

History of the Settlers of Dominancy

The Human Flight

Stories and tales of the Human Flight, and eventual settlement, of Dominancy are passed down over cooking meals, flagons, and permitted social gatherings across the city. Though an accurate history is a mixture of these oral traditions, most humans know the basic docket of humanity's journey, as published by Lady Merle ("Maerl"). As for the history of the various monstrous races, each one holds those secrets individually. Stories tell of Lady Harmonía (Arr-moh-nee-ah), who kept the Great Tome of Divined History hidden somewhere in her inner sanctum, but it was lost to modern scholars of monster and man alike when the Lower Catacombs fell to darkness.

Very little is known of human civilization before the Human Flight, as the speed and necessity of their migration left little room for written records. Those that claim to know might do so only under the influence of Black Moss Beer, swearing that their great great something-or-other was a friend of one of the original Flight, but this is considered maddened ramblings at best. The only agreed upon 'fact' is that something brought destruction to the great cities of old, and in doing so, unleashed the Vile Shadows.

The darkness known as the Vile Shadows have existed for all of humanity's recorded and oral history, though their origin and true nature are unknown. Early settlers to the South sing tales to children of humanoid, shadowy figures moving beneath the waters of the lakes. Every child grows to know the stories of the hungry shadows, and nearly every adult has a personal ritual to keep them away. In modern times, death by Vile Shadow is rare enough, but all humans have seen someone devoured from the inside by a black mist and know enough to understand their threat. Even the Beasts and lesser creatures of Dominancy stay inside the Barrier, as the Shadows do not discriminate in their consumption.

The earliest stories of the Human Flight tell of their encounter with the semi-aquatic Huji, a race of tribal warriors who made their homes along a vast river, now known as the Boundless Run. Though initial contact proved dangerous, and in some cases deadly, eventually diplomats from the Human Flight brokered a peace with the Huji: the Huji would let the humans past their river and assist in it's crossing, and in return, the human's would never return to these Huji lands on pain of death. The deal struck, the Huji honored their words by crafting great rafts to ferry the humans across. True to their words as well, upon seeing it's last member on firm ground, the Human Flight left the Huji forever. No one knows if the humans gave any warning about what pursued them...

The Settled Age

Humanity took root in the rolling foothills of a large southern mountain range, plentiful in fishing, hunting, and fertile soil. No Vile Shadows were seen during this time, presumed to have been stopped, or gorged upon, by the Huji civilization. For several generations, it seemed that humanity had found a promised land, free of all supernatural dangers. Many new families were created, and humankind experienced a boom in births and expansion. With dozens of small settlements cropping up, humanity pushed to the borders of their new domain.

However, this age of prosperity was not to last. Stories from merchants began to circulate that a town had been discovered far to the east, totally devoid of life, but with nary a single drop of spilt blood or unsettled stone. In fact, the discovery is only punctuated by one strange sign of the supernatural: each door is missing its doorknob.

Shortly after, Kesgrave, a fishing village on the Boundless Run was suddenly blanketed in screams, as swift, scaled figures emerge from the water, dragging the unsuspecting humans down to their drowned fate. The attack of what would be later called the Grey Huji Incursion claims the life of nearly every settler in the village overnight. Later, when humanity returned to their Flight, some would say they could see the bleached bones of the captured as they passed, arranged along the shore in bizarre configurations.

Then, the night many had feared arrived. Cloaked in an unnatural twilight, wisps of blackened smoke began to rise from the ground, like exhaust from a recently extinguished flame. As many settlements had never really abandoned the nomadic principles of their ancestors; these groups were among the only survivors, packing their essentials and leaving the towns as quickly as possible. Those that did not heed the warnings quickly enough soon found their lungs filling with a thick choking smog, their eyes burning from unseen flames, and their mind suddenly pierced with a thousand screams. The Vile Shadows had caught them, and the rolling cloud of darkness began to swallow the land once more. Sounding alarms as they went, the Human Flight began once again.

The Human Flight and Farcoast

The Human Flight fled west, easily outpacing the rolling ebon cloud, but ever vigilant of its ceaseless pursuit. Finding themselves pushed against a mountain range that scraped the sky, the combined Flight began to send scouting parties up and down the foothills, seeking safe passage. For nearly a generation, humanity survived on wild game, some simple crops, and the occasional stream fish. Still, across the great plains they had crossed, the tiniest speck of black grew ever closer.

Then, one day, salvation. A team of explorers had found a strange, iron fortress built into the sheer side of a mountain, and below it, a clear path through. They claimed the structure was

entirely devoid of life, although it contained frames for beds, empty bookshelves, and even livestock pens. Even stranger, the entire building was crafted of a heavy, impossibly black iron, but with no sign of a forge at all, and no way to transport the immensely heavy materials up the cliffs.

Thus the final leg of the Flight began: every man, woman, and child carefully traversed the narrow path to the Black Iron Fortress, and then down the winding bridges that carried them out of the mountains. The land they found beyond was idyllic; a lush forest extended as far as could be seen to the north, there were ample fertile plains to the south, and a great sea stretched from the west. Further, and without explanation, the onslaught of the Vile Shadows stopped at Blackmetal Pass; hovering and churning, but never crossing to the other side, and not reaching tall enough to overcome the peaks. It seemed that Humanity had finally found its respite.

The town of Farcoast was established, the last known living settlement, growing exponentially in the years that followed. With strong crops and plenty of fishing, humanity entered the Second Age of Prosperity. A central government was established, and humanity lived in peace for many years...though guards at Blackmetal Pass kept a wary eye on the Vile Shadows below.

The Beasts and the Ward

Humanity, content to now settle down after the Flight, began to explore their new lands. Adventurers discovered a ruined castle along the northern coast, its tattered banners still flapping in the sea breeze. Fishing ships were constructed, and although they never strayed too far from the coast, they were able to reel in larger and larger catches of the colorful fish and turtles. A mining expedition uncovered a pre-constructed tunnel heading deep underground, slowly winding its way for miles in darkness. Woodsmen ventured deeper into the seemingly infinite forest, returning with stories: mysterious silhouettes of men and gigantic birds. Strangely, a foreign group of humans emerged from near the mountains, though the scouts at Blackmetal Pass claimed to have never seen them. Though dressed in similar clothing as the settlers of Farcoast, they are far hardier and more battle-worn, claiming that their village escaped the Shadows only recently, by scaling the mountain range at its southernmost tip.

Then, the Shadows came.

Almost as soon as the warning horns echoed through Blackmetal Pass, a rolling cloud of darkness erupted from over the peaks, tumbling down with an unholy weight. With nowhere to go but to the sea, the great fishing ships were called to shore, but as they approached, hundreds of Grey Huji emerged from the shores of the ocean, tearing the sailors to pieces with their clawed hands. Woodsmen to the north swung their axes above their heads in a desperate attempt to ward off the gigantic avian predators that suddenly struck, plucking unlucky humans from the ground and impaling them on the tallest trees. Panic began to run throughout Farcoast, as those with weapons attempted to fight back against the explosion of horrors, to no avail.

Trapped between the seas of Grey Huji and mountains of Vile Shadows, humanity had nowhere left to flee.

Salvation, however, came from what appeared as a young woman whom no one knew or had seen before. Speaking words in a tongue long lost to time, she called forth a great wall of shimmering green that slammed into the Vile Shadows, driving them back across the plains. She turned her gaze to the Huji, who slunk beneath the waves once again. Then her eyes fell upon the great Bonecatcher birds, who squawked and cried out, but receded to feast on those they had left still alive, clinging to the highest branches. Her name was Leranna, and she was the First. She spoke again, and suddenly the town square was filled with slender, ethereal humanoids, their bright eyes scanning the terrified human colony.

“This city is mine. But you may live here, provided you swear loyalty to me and my kin.”

Recent Memory and Modern Times

After the madness of the attack, and how helpless they had been to stop it, many humans began to submit to Leranna. The elegant and powerful sorceress, calling herself the leader of the Mimétisme (“mee-meh-tees-m”) and Herald of the Dominancy, established a relative perimeter, her magic repelling the Vile Shadows. Many more Mimétisme emerge from beneath the ground, taking over all aspects of Farcoast's administration, and placing strange marks upon the foreheads of the human survivors. For several months, humanity is allowed to continue its existence, as normal, apart from constructing a great tower in the center of Farcoast.

Leranna's claim comes at a cost, however, as a force of bestial men soon arrive from the north forest, riding upon great monsters of flesh and claw. Their leader claims that his forces are displaced by the “Black Cloud of Death,” and that they will take the city of Farcoast as payment for the trees taken from their Forest. Calling themselves the Chasseurs (“shu-s-air”), they began to attack the edges of the city, using their great winged mounts to strike from the sky. The ensuing colony broke into civil war; some humans fought for Leranna, but many found their alliance with the Chasseurs, preferring their primitive ways to the alien practices of the Mimétisme. Distracted with the conflict, the barrier weakened. As the Vile Shadows pressed farther in, Leranna met with the leader of the Chasseurs, establishing an alliance in order to beat back the darkness of a mutual threat. Empowered by recovered artifacts from the Seaside Fortress of Eleusis, Leranna enacts a ritual that creates a ward of energy around her section of the city. Miraculously, any of Vile Shadows or their possessed that encountered it were immediately disintegrated. Seeing this, shamans from the Chasseurs contributed their power to the wards, further expanding the barrier. Another strange cloaked figure, claiming to have hailed from the Mountain Tribes, emerges to aid Leranna in strengthening the ward. Humans, facing either death or worse in the Beyond, had little choice but indentured servitude.

Sensing that the power of the wards will eventually fail, Leranna preemptively established the Council of the Beasts. In a ritual that lasts nearly six months, a several leaders are chosen and

given the title Beast, and given responsibility over a portion of the power of the barrier. Though none are human, many appear to be on the surface, though only rumors speak of their origins. At the ward's maximum size, covering all land east of the mountain range and Blackmetal Pass, six Beasts were created. With the barrier holding, the Beasts divided the physical terrain among themselves, allotting a certain amount of human survivors from Leranna to each district. She names the remains of Farcoast the city of Dominancy.

Human Society

As a human, you owe your life to the Beasts, and know that there is no real upward mobility. Humans in Dominancy tend to be naturally perceptive, keeping one eye open in the streets, and the other eye trained on their craft or tinkering. Finding someone Attuned or knowledgeable in the Occult is exceedingly rare, as most were hunted and executed in mass during the Night of Orphic Eradication. Any remaining are hunted; killed or sent to the Athenaeum.

Family

Family is the single most important ambition for humans in Dominancy outside of food and shelter. Most families are large, and often live in the same area for much of their lives. Immediate family mingle with extended regularly, and it is not uncommon for parent and child to work the same type of profession. As most humans do not live naturally past 50, these familial connections are important in passing down tradition and lore.

Community is also extremely important to the humans. Permitted social gathers generally only come in the form of a funeral or evening meal. Taverns are the most common and public locations of human social gatherings, though some may find themselves just getting by, many are powdering their hair through the third shift, lost in a mug of Black Mold Ale. Despite frequent labour "trades" between districts, migrant humans easily find new social circles with those sympathetic to their loss.

Quislings

Any humans prized or personally selected by the bestial races and then ritualistically "blessed" by one of the Beasts are known as "Quislings." Once the pact has been made, an outward disfiguration occurs, marking the Beast's new property. Many Quislings go on to exemplify strange abilities which can only be attributed to their new-found patrons. Often the only way to improve one's means, some embrace damnation while others are cursed. Known to collaborate sometimes directly with a Beast, humans and heretics alike are exceedingly wary in their presence.

Heretics

Publically referred to as heretics, humans that strive against the machinations of the established society exist throughout Dominancy. Mostly underground and quiet tavern corners, small groups of rebels seek to free themselves from the tyrannical segregation of the Beasts. Where some choose to bend the knee, a heretic's longing for freedom outweighs their fear of what lies in the Beneath and the Beyond. Heretics take all forms: thieving from the Seaside Fortress of Eleusis, gardeners producing contraband alchemicals, smuggling information and resources between districts, conjuring new life into old creations, or simply shielding their families from workplace hostility and abuse. Most commonly found as eccentric underground alchemists, and most notoriously the Gallowgate Street Gang, most heretics eventually find their way to The Manor for proper re-education. In fact, it is said that to be a heretic is to seek an early death...if you're lucky.

Currency

A currency system, established and maintained by The Beast of Knives, Lord Gulliston, deals primarily in small, circular coins, called weights. There are quarter, half, and full weights, each marked by Gulliston's personal press (though counterfeits do exist). Amongst the humans, the availability of the coinage is mostly limited to the Quislings, merchants, performers, and expert craftsman. However, both humans and monsters often choose to rely on barter and trade as well.

Festivals & Culture

Food

While food is not scarce around Dominancy, it is also not abundant, as most humans work long hours just enough to be sufficiently fed. The largest export of meats (cow, chicken, and boar) from the Farmlands to other districts is carefully regulated and controlled. Crops such as corn, wheat, and potatoes are also grown in the Farmlands. Scavengers in the Untamed Woods harvest fungi for Black Mold Ale, a universally imbibed liquor. Though various wines and other drinks exist scattered across the districts, the Lavish Display produces the largest assortment of alchemical reagents. The Commerce District imports many of these, scheduled for redistribution amongst the rest of the city.

Alchemists

Of all the types of specialties, Alchemy sees the broadest and most common practice among humans. From the variety of sumptuous distillations partaken in the Lavish Display, the more practical fire breathers of the Refining District, to the esoteric vials housed in the Athenaeum, society as a whole benefits from the prolific availability of consumables. Each district provides unique opportunities for cultivation and creation, and thus alchemists from similar districts boast similar specialties. Modest herb gardens can be found all across Dominancy: on rooftops, fungi cellars, and window boxes. Alchemicals are also a commonplace supplement for healing

and treatments, as it is far more practical to carry a vial than locate a physician throughout the city. Alchemists see their craft first and allegiance second. As such, they come from all walks of life: humans, Quislings, or Heretics. They aren't afraid to experiment with new ingredients or potions; and constant exposure to such often drives them mad.

Contraband items such as Smog, Muddy Cwtch, and Argy-bargy are policed regularly, but not prioritized as some of the Beasts see addiction as just another means of control, while others are darkly amused by their eventual side effects. Using the right turn of phrase with a barkeep or beggar might amount to a completely different type of transaction. Most contraband items take the form of hallucinogens, with varying side effects.

Superstitions

Nearly every child knows the stories of the hungry shadows, and nearly every adult has a personal ritual to keep them away. While no official theology exists, superstitions and daily practices of safety, home, and hearth circumvent any wide religious beliefs. These traditions of good habits for keeping one's self alive in a dangerous world continue to be passed down through the generations, some originating from before the first Flight. If you make a cup of hazel leaves and twigs, and wear it, it is possible to obtain any wish. A robin flying over a mine pit is an omen of disaster. If a dead person's linen is not washed immediately after death, the dead will not rest in the grave (or worse, their ashes will seep into your lungs). In Dominancy, many of these practices assimilate into their neighborhoods and Districts, and thus traditions will vary between social classes. Even Quislings, while embracing a newer lifestyle, will still lean heavily onto these practices, even modifying them to pay further homage. Every citizen of Dominancy has a respect for these superstitions, and to mock or discredit someone else's would be a dire insult.

Death

Bestial races are buried ceremoniously in mausoleums and crypts below the city in the Upper Catacombs, just above the Beneath. Little is known of their funerary rites.

Death is not a mournful event for humans in Dominancy, quite the opposite. Though families and friends are sad to see the loved one depart this life, death being so common that they have become desensitized to its prospect. Rather, funerals are chances to drink, sing, and remember the (often exaggerated) life of the one that was lost, and herald their release from this life's pain. Though these processions can often spill out into the streets, the Beasts generally do not interfere.

After a night of revelry has been made, the body is taken to the Incinerator, and the ashes delivered to the next of kin. While this is done mostly for efficiency, superstitions abound that the recently dead are prime targets for a Vile Shadow infestation. As such, traditional burials, even contained within Mausoleums, have been suspended in favour of this practice.

Holidays

This is all not to say there is no joy in Dominancy, just that it comes in small, fleeting moments; to be cherished and held tightly. Mill workers and refiners alike gather to drink and sing on a weeknight, clinking their mugs of Black Mold Ale against each other as their voices tell tales of a brighter place. Children run and play through the cobblestone streets until curfew, safe in the knowledge that the Beasts forbid injury of any human under the age of puberty, due to breeding quotas necessary to maintain the livestock populations (though this law is less enforced in some areas of Dominancy). Though the meager food rations are more sustenance than presentation, feasts are held on holidays to remember the trials that brought humanity to their new home.

The Burgeoning Dawn Festival marks the turn of the new calendar year. New life, new ambition, new plans are made, new tradeskills to master. Traditionally, bonecatcher eggs are served at dawn following a night of fasting and taverns open early, if they even closed the night before. Songs are sung, dances are danced, and a mug of ale is poured into the streets to toast the Beasts to bless the upcoming harvest. Some say that the more gregarious besial races encourage this celebration, and for one night, place themselves as equals to their human stock, but to suggest this to the wrong person could easily result in a torn throat.

The Amber Moon Festival is a feast in of itself, marked with a roasted wild boar and the one meal of the year with pastries. Everyone gathers around the table and dinner is served. But before they eat, the humans will then take a portion of their favourite entree, and toss it into the fire. This tradition gives homage to the Beasts for their protection, an offering thus secured for the upcoming year.

In between the planting and harvest celebrations, the Council of Beasts convenes publically for the Ritual of the Barrier. Most Quislings are publically in attendance. The Ritual itself is grueling and tragic; most humans choose the shelter of home and hearth over the screams. Once the Beasts are in attendance and the Ritual begins, six Quislings are brought forth from the audience and offered up to the Ritual as sacrifices to the six. Their clothing is obliterated in white fire as magical runes sear the flesh, marking each for the Beast they serve. From there, the sacrifices perform the Procession of Penance, walking down the first street in Farcoast, now littered with bones, to the massive Gates of Dominancy, and the barrier itself. The Ritual ends when all six victims disintegrate into the magical wall, their souls screaming into the night.

Districts of the City

The Untamed Woods

The third largest District of the Dominancy, once commonly referred to as the Great Forest, but is officially recorded as the Untamed Woods. The land here is mostly overgrown with dark, twisting trees, wrapped in black thorns. Thick vines descend from the canopies strangling the life from the undergrowth and any unwary traveller. A few human settlements have carved out a section of the western forest to exist on, building low single room huts and high, sharp walls. Additionally, there are those lone few still who embrace a feral way of living among the creatures and beasts of the forest. Though, after living like that for some time, it is a wonder they can be distinguished from the feral animals and occasional bonecatchers that inhabit the forest. Whispers circulate that the Chasseurs (“shu-s-air”) hunt these humans as sport for special occasions, and some even claim that there is a small group of humans deep in the woods that have bested their hunters multiple times.

For the more practical folk, the meager protection provided by the small encampments is made more bearable by the abundance of the Black Fungi, a thick, porous type of mold that grows only on the damp floor of the Untamed Woods. Though the fungi itself is mostly inedible, it has immense medicinal applications when distilled properly. Further, a skilled gardener or crafter can cultivate the Fungi into a variety of materials, even reinforcing hide and cloth with sinew that is said to relieve the pain of injury. As the Fungi is valuable to every other district of Dominancy, those brave enough to live and harvest it in the Forest are compensated well in the marketplace. Of course, no riches come easy, and the mortality rate of fungi scavengers is quite high. While the Black Fungi can be utilized for many alchemicals and curatives, it has its limits. Known as the Barghest’s Curse, this disease first manifests on the skin as patches of fur around the neck and a powerful hunger. Said to originate from a plagued Beastman, the disease is highly contagious amongst humans. Those who contract the virus are exiled from their villages, and their home burnt to the ground.

Lord Farys (“Fer-rees”), The Beast of Teeth

Lord Farys himself is a dark, small man ornamented in the furs, trophies, bones, and feathers he has collected from decades of hunting. Those few that claim to have seen his True Form say that he is humanoid, but with an extended lower jaw and large, glowing yellow eyes. Some say his fingers end in sharp quills, others claim they are more like massive talons of a bonecatcher. Named The Beast of Teeth, he was granted control of the Untamed Woods for two reasons: the chaotic nature of a living forest fit his wild, unpredictable quirks, and his unpleasant attitude and violent stench excludes him from most social events. Farys is prone to fits of careless violence, and many fireside tales end in several bodies lynched for the simple crime of

misremembering a song lyric, or improper dress of furs. It is this threat that has made the humans of the Untamed Woods very superstitious and ritualistic in their traditions.

The Refining District

The most industrial district of the city is a large, expansive wasteland at the edge of the Blackmetal Mountains. Packed tightly with grey stone buildings full of jagged accents of black metal, the architecture stands for utility. Officially called the Refining District, were it not for the hundreds of twinkling lanterns bathing the streetlights and windows in a sickly orange glow, the land itself would be swallowed by darkness. From a distance, this part of the city appears as a grouping of large, ugly rocks drowning in a charcoal haze. Jutting out from these buildings are disorganized grey pipes, churning a thick smog and cinders into the air, fueled by the furnaces of industry. The smoke is constant; the humans and heretics refer to it as the Endless Dusk behind tightly closed doors. The Beasts don't take kindly though to such a slanderous nickname.

Humans stationed here dedicate their time to the refining and processing of all sorts of raw materials, from wood to Black Fungi to the gray stone foundations and their twisted metal garnishes. Despite long hours at mills, plants, and tinkered workshops, the humans toiling in this district enjoy a falsely perceived sense of security from the outside world. Threats of the Nightmen, Lord Guarin's personal Quisling retinue of thugs, remain the largest concern. One need only look to the crippled beggar on the corner or the blinded housewife to see the truth behind these threats. Otherwise, no natural predators venture here from the Beyond or the Beneath, and the backstabbing and politics of the other regions seem to stop at their ash-covered gates. Thus the humans that live here tend to be exceedingly practical, logical, and dedicated, having little time for flourishes and luxuries while simultaneously enjoying fewer "accidental" death and dismemberment incidents. Nightmead is the one exception. Produced in the Farmlands, it is heavily imported and stocked in the local taverns to which the workers are known to enjoy in excess.

Goods are transported across the city to the Commerce District by caravans and horses, carefully guarded and moderated by the Beast himself. The slightest deviation in weights or payments can bring about a visit from the Nightmen. While skilled crafters and tinkerers are plentiful at the Refining District, every few years an exchange of labour is orchestrated between Lord Guarin and Lady Ultima to find and 'uplift' several of the most promising artists and crafters. The views on this practice are mixed among the human populace of this district, needless to say.

Lord Guarin ("Guah-rin"), The Beast of Smoke

Lord Guarin prowls the streets regularly, always appearing dressed in fine evening wear, though his boots and black gloves bear the darkened stains of a monster willing to do their own 'convincing' to keep the workforce in line. His outward appearance is that of a gargantuan hulking humanoid. Time spent under the ash and smoke have stained his skin grey, now

covered in tough, calloused scales. Razor sharp teeth gleam brightly in his smile, though his eyes show no remorse. There have been no other Beasts or monsters that match Guarin's physical characteristics, a fact he takes joy in boasting. Any further investigation into his being is often met with a visit from the Nightmen, or worse, Guarin himself.

The Lavish Display

Tall, white marble towers adorned in gorgeous baroque silk cloth pierce the skies of the Lavish Display, the district dominated with artistry, performance, influence, and indulgence. Mostly populated by Mimétisme (“mee-meh-tees-m”) and their humans, the denizens of this part of the city spend their days either developing or critiquing the newest forms of art, fashion, and culture. In fact, most of the residents see this as their primary function to the Dominancy, treating new trends with the same importance as crops or shelter. Thus, the humans patronized by various Mimétisme often find themselves caught up in espionage, theft, or worse. The few humans who are allowed to produce art on behalf of the Mimétisme are driven mad to create, yet many see this as a far better life than other districts of the city.

The Lavish Display prominently features extraordinary works of art, clothing, music, and theatre. Several galleries and theatres are home to Mimétisme and humans alike. They act out all manner of stories day and night, obviously not on the same stage. The popular trends of storytelling change quickly, and curtain-raisers that used to sell out may be old news within a few months. While the theatres are open to all districts, productions are too expensive to be attended by the working class. Some manage to produce a final 'bare bones' production at the end of theatrical runs, designed for the poorer humans to travel across the city to bear witness. These productions are obviously devoid of their Mimétisme stars, relying instead on understudies, or in some cases of extreme narcissism, just parts being cut.

Aspiring artists of all types risk much to attempt to rise to the top. Virtuosos inching their way closer to fame fear notice of their fellows as well as the Beast who rules the Lavish Display. The Gallowgate Street Gang is known to beguile and mutilate locals who get too close to their monstrous overlords. Surviving that, human servants who meet special requirements are “invited” to become Quisling Bloodsworne, essentially trading off years of their life for relative comfort during their short career. Though this audition is secret, to be a Bloodsworne is to enjoy a life of luxury and art...until Lady Última summons for you. The Bloodsworne do not return from this call, inciting all manner of rumors from secret bloodletting rooms to all-out physical consumption.

Lady Última (“Ull-teem-ah”), The Beast of Mirrors

Lady Última rarely leaves her tower, positioned in the centre of the Lavish Display, taller than any other building in the Dominancy. When she does grace the public with her presence, she is always clad in flowing silk robes, abundantly adorned with priceless jewelry, a mirrored mask concealing her face, and encompassed by a grouping of Bloodsworne humans. She rarely

walks, instead ferried atop a baroque red throne draped in purple fabric. Her beauty is stunning to onlookers, as only the more willful humans are able to resist simply falling to their knees in her presence.

The Athenaeum

Consisting of several low, domed buildings encircled by slender towers, the Athenaeum is a district that few witness let alone visit without a distinct purpose. Most of this reason is because Lady Merle, and the rest of the Mimétisme that live here, are not known for idle conversation, or even social niceties. Instead, they spend days locked away in laboratories of varying sizes and functions, analyzing everything from the artifacts of the Seaside Fortress of Eleusis to samples of the Vile Darkness. There are, of course, rumors of far more sinister experiments in the deeper levels of the Athenaeum, and nosey humans are served well to remember their place as servants and workers, lest they end up on a table as well.

Research produced from the Athenaeum benefits the rest of the Dominancy, though many of the humans living there may not realize it. Minor advances in medical practices have spread to each of the sections of the city, and the technological tinkering has brought forth comforts such as electrical lighting and ventilation. Scientists also perfected the railcaster here, though it is still viewed as an object of luxury and wealth, limited for the upper marketplace and only the best of tinkerers. Particularly skilled human servants may have their status elevated to Quislings and be granted servants of their own. However, they live knowing that at any point, Lady Merle may challenge their findings, and to be found incorrect is to be quickly done away with.

Skulking horrors are manufactured here in secret and dispersed about the city as enforcers for the Beasts or cannon fodder for the defenses against the Beneath and the Beyond. These abominations have never been seen in the light of day or moon of night; those who had a glimpse do not live to tell the tale. Additionally, all of the artifacts recovered from the Seaside Fortress of Eleusis are brought here for study, as are many of the relics recovered from the Catacombs. While every team of explorers contains someone from the Athenaeum, it's rare for any discovery to reach the city without first being catalogued, tested, and recorded.

Lady Merle (“Maerl”), The Beast of Eyes

Lady Merle is a tall, slender woman with greenish skin, wild black hair that seems to move and shift on its own, and a green orb set into her collar bone flesh. She is known by her Quislings as a extremely strict, and only slightly mad. Indeed, compared to the violent whims of some of the other Beasts, many would prefer servitude to Merle's logic, choosing severe regulations over chaos. She prefers her Adherents to have a bent for research, the occult, medicine, or tinkering, seeing all other pursuits as wastes of time. Lady Merle claims to be the last remaining member of a race called the Sekthis, an extraordinarily long lived reptilian people. She is sometimes referred to as ‘The Watcher’, a name she claims was once her’s from another time.

The Commerce District

A small, densely packed district filled with fog and stone buildings separating the Refining District and the Lavish Display, the Commerce District is, as one could imagine, the central location for all buyers and sellers in the Dominancy. This division is separated into two sections: The Upper Markets, an organization of shops and displays run by the Red Hands, Gulliston's personal retainers, and the Lower Half: a collection of carts and stalls only barely policed and maintained. These two sections are bisected by a street, bordered on both sides by an open waterway. Visitors to either market are generally not known to cross between them, save for permission from the Beasts themselves.

The Upper Markets are areas where the bestial races venture for commerce, accompanied by their Quislings, come to peruse the wares and finds of the other sections of the city. There are many delicacies to be had here, from exotic oils and spices distilled from Black Fungi, to the unique and mysterious tinkered contraptions of the Refining District, to the latest fashions created in the Lavish Display. Even the occasional rare relic or artifact from the Seaside Fortress of Eleusis has been known to appear here, though only after it has been approved by Lady Merle. The Red Hands enforce trade agreements and remove hostilities from the streets; a decree from a Red Hand marked on the flesh of his right arm is a decree from Gulliston himself. Capable of concealing their presence even in daylight, a wary thief, alchemist, or heretic may easily vanish without a trace.

Lord Gulliston (“Gu-lee-sto-n”), The Beast of Knives

Lord Gulliston is a large, imposing hooded figure, who never appears without an avid assortment of knives and throwing blades across his belt, nor a ring on each hand. He is rumored to be the final judge for any thieves of his markets, and Dominancy itself, naturally excluding the Red Hands he employs. Though he appears outwardly human, rumors of mixed blood with the Chasseurs and Mimétisme give Gulliston an air of brutal ferocity and chilling dread. No human has seen his face and lived to tell of it.

The Farmlands District

Spanning the second largest area, the Farmlands District extend to the north and south of Dominancy, connected by a thin strip of land that stretches to the east of the city. It is here that all of the crops and animal livestock that feed the citizens of Dominancy originate, as well as plants grown for textiles, alchemy, and other uses. The few farms that are dedicated solely to spices and alchemicals are heavily regulated. Spirits of the dead inhabit are said to inhabit Scarecrows, and watch over fields and family members once gone. Humans are often seen talking to the scarecrows during the Amber Moon Festival. Nevertheless, the humans of the

farmlands are hearty and stubborn, and thus Lady Cahier rules not primarily by force, but by controlling the supply of resources. Her Keep is located in the southern area of the District, and furthest from the Gates to the Beyond. She employs the mysterious skulking horrors and a guard of warriors, the Sons of Rakdul, to do her bidding. Like her, they are no longer human, but aside from their slightly pointed noses and quick grey eyes, still able to pass unnoticed through the lesser race.

Work in the Farmlands is back-breaking, but relatively safe, as long sight-lines and open spaces prevent many of the wild animals of the Untamed Woods from preying on the humans. Occasionally a bonecatcher will swoop down and pluck a farmer from the fields, carrying them back to its nest to be devoured by its young. Nightly raids by Fiskerton Phantoms will target a calf or lamb. It is rare to find anything more than a bloody chunk of fur remaining from these abductions. Those working the Farmlands grow corn, spinach, potatoes, and several varieties of roots. Though the ground is tough, the moors are surprisingly fertile, and even the worst harvest still produces a bounty of food. Most is shipped directly to the Commerce District, though a special allotment is made for The Manor. Inhabitants of the Farmlands rarely venture to the city proper, and as such they tend to view those within the inner city as weaker of will and body than themselves. Of course, this viewpoint is somewhat mirrored by the denizens of the other areas, referring to the hermits and farmers as simple and naïve.

Lady Cahier (“Kai-yeh”), The Beast of Bones

Lady Cahier retreats from the sanctuary of her plantation only at night. She is said to possess poison-coated claws and have the ability to paralyze cattle and children alike with her gaze. The punishment for slighting one of her Sons, involves mutilating and serving his remains to the family as dinner. She and her cabal live in dark keep in the south of the district, where farmers insist screams can be heard on clear nights.

The Manor

The Manor is a massive, multi-room gothic mansion that sits at the top of a steep plateau overlooking much of the city. The building itself is grey and blackmetal, with large arches reaching up into the darkness and twisted iron gates augment its architectural permanence. Though an outside observer could attempt to count the vast number of windows and doors, they shift night and day, without disclosure. The expansive grounds surrounding the Manor are enclosed by high stone walls with unmoving obsidian sentries ever watching the chillingly still and silent premises. None of the Beasts or monster races claim responsibility for its sudden apparition, but nonetheless use it to their own corrupt means. Rumors say its presence and power is what genuinely administers Day and Night within the barrier. Humans, most commonly Heretics, are stolen away by the abominable skulking horrors to the grounds, intending to punish and “rehabilitate” those who disobey the Beasts or their chosen.

The Butler

Inside the Manor, “visitors” are greeted by a small elderly human known only as the Butler. Those with empathic abilities claim he is wispy and translucent. Though initially pleasant, if somewhat cantankerous, his demeanor changes as soon as the visitors are escorted in from the outside. The Butler takes great joy in pushing the physical endurance and mental torture of his prisoners, misleading them through twisting rooms, endless staircases, and identical hallways. Many humans believe him to be the manifested will of the Manor itself, and to somehow feed off of the insanity and anguish it causes. Whether through respect of his methods, or fear of an expansion of his power, the Butler was given voting right, and a seat at the Council of Beasts. In return, the Manor is used to rehabilitate those who break laws or disobey the Beasts. Though several visitors to the Manor have taken their own life after being discharged, no human has ever returned from within it's walls unscathed...but they have all emerged alive.

The Beneath and the Beyond

The Beneath

Below the city sprawls the expansive Upper and Lower Catacombs. The Catacombs are the largest section of Dominancy, reaching several layers deep and almost as wide as the above ground buildings. Despite their size, only three main entrances to the depths exist, and each are well guarded by abominations. This is done to protect the surface just as much as it is to keep unwanted visitors out, as many a foolish human has snuck past the guards, only to die alone and trapped in the endless halls of the Beneath itself. An endless labyrinth of stone, the catacombs were once home to the Mimétisme (“mee-meh-tees-m”), but now the lower levels have fallen to darkness. Very little is known of the history of the Catacombs, but rumors swirl that one could eventually find their way anywhere in the world through them.

The Upper Catacombs

For all it's dangers, there are sections of the Catacombs that were once well secured and comfortable. Home to the Mimétisme, the Upper Catacombs still show remnants of the world Leranna left behind for the surface world.

Though not an official Beast or district, traditionally a bestial leader is given the charge of managing this area, and dispatching teams of humans to explore it in attempts to recover lost area. For many years, this job fell upon Lady Harmonía, known as the Beast of Scars for her intense ‘motivational’ tactics with her human charges. However, Harmonía disappeared many years ago, and any attempts to locate her have turned up nothing.

In her absence, Lord Tirol was gifted the Catacombs. Tirol appears as a Humanoid figure with an almost stone-like texture to his skin. He wears lavish blue robes, adorned with gold and white

symbols that seem to shift constantly. Black tattoos cover most of his visible skin, save for his face, and are said to glow when he is performing magic. Though he shares the belief that Humans are expendable and a resource, he has been known to grant rewards to those that show merit, and has almost developed what some would refer to as a friendship with several of the adventurers he employs.

The Lower Catacombs

Skulking horrors are fed to its depths in attempt to drive back the hobgoblins, barghests, wights, sooterkins, grundylows, and other alien horrors that emerge from the darkest areas of the Beneath. Nothing is known as to the origin of these mindless beasts, and how they survive so deep underground.

Mimétisme

Ethereal and otherworldly in appearance, Mimétisme (“mee-meh-tees-m”) are the closest bestial races resembling “humanoid.” Graceful and hauntingly beautiful, porcelain-skinned, they clad themselves in blue and purple robes and wield long, slender blades. Their presence alone is said to force humans to bend the knee. Many guardsmen drop their weapons and cower at the mental fear these creatures project. Mimétisme are said to have crawled from the sinking earth itself, and lure those who are unaware back into its endless depths.

The Beyond

Outside of the massive Gates of Dominancy lies the Beyond, birthplace of humanity now devoid of known life, consumed by darkness.

Virulent Briarwood Forest

Shrouding most of the central and western expanse of the continent, the Virulent Briarwood Forest extends its grasp to the edge of the Blackmetal Mountains, and bleeds into the city as the Untamed Woods. Chasseurs from the north now occupy several former human settlements in the Forest, fleeing a horde of Vile Shadow infected bonecatchers and Fiskerton Phantoms. While they attack any humans that approach their buildings, they do not attempt to go further into Farcoast.

The Boundless Run

This immense river finds its source in the largest mountain range at the centre of the continent. Dividing the land, the river snakes across the hills and plains to end its journey in the Ancient Sea, birthplace of the Huji.

Chasseurs of the Virulent Briarwood Forest

Wild and savage, hermit-like and nomadic, these monsters emerge from the forest, decorated in trophies of animal furs and bones. Claiming to be the direct descendants of the first humans, but

evolved to peak performance and a level surpassing humanity, they hunt and prowl in the night. While they retain some humanoid features, the light in their eyes has been replaced purely with instinct and malice. Only the threat of retribution from the other bestial races keeps them well behaved.

Sekthis of the Wellspring of Resplendent Celestium

Serpentine, quick, and of sound mind, this bestial race is all but finished. By her own chronicle, Lady Merle is the last remaining Sekthis in the known world. Said to have traversed a sea of sand after falling from the stars themselves, nothing but legend and hearsay remain of the Sekthis. It is rumored that Lady Merle may be the most powerful Beast of all, even surpassing Leranna, but this is thankfully unproven.

Bonecatchers

Vulture-like creatures known as Bonecatchers build their nests atop the tallest trees and steepest cliffs. They vary in size with age from that of a normal vulture to a monster that towers over a horse, with many bonecatchers preying upon their own. Common throughout the continent, inhabitants of Dominancy encounter these creatures often in the Farmlands, Refining District, and Untamed Woods. In the open fields, farmers can easily be caught unaware when a sudden flock of gigantic birds erupt from the forest nearby, dragging them into the air and releasing them to die, impaled on their own buildings. A keen archer may observe that the birds are not always hunting, but prove highly territorial. Drunken songs from local taverns tell of Avian Lords, riders atop a Bonecatcher matriarch living free in the skies. Scavenged from the outskirts of Dominancy, their hollow bones are commonly sent to the Refining District for trade.

Fiskerton Phantoms

Eyewitness testimony has produced a number of different descriptions. Most accounts report the animal as being a large cat either resembling a puma or large panther. Some descriptions attribute it the features of both a puma and a spotted lion. It is recollected as being somewhere between four and twenty feet from nose to tail, standing very low to the ground, and as having the ability to leap over 30-foot-tall fences with ease. Descriptions of its colouration range from black to tan or dark purple. Officially, the Athenaeum rejects such claims because of the improbably large numbers necessary to maintain a breeding population and because climate and food supply issues would make such preposterous creatures' survival in reported habitats unlikely.

Vile Shadows

An unexplained and terrifying host of beings that infest or corrupt any soul they can find. Their origins and intent unknown, the Vile Shadows infest the sentient beings around them and swallow the surface of the world in darkness.

Witnesses tell tales of visions of shadows lifting corpses from the ground like marionettes, dancing with them outside the city as the bodies quickly decompose into rotting flesh. Others

claim to hear the Vile Shadows calling to them, mimicking the voices of lost children, missing loved ones, or friends in danger. Though humans or any creature with a soul can technically pass through the barrier with ease, to do so unprepared would be a violently gruesome suicide. It appears that the Vile Shadows know this, as they have stacked piles of treasure, clothing, and food along the Wall, hoping to entice the foolish mortals inside. Though humans will claim to be strong enough of will to resist these lures, the appearance of new corpses tell us a different story.

Notable People and Places

Leranna (“Leh-ra-na”)

Known as the First Beast, Leranna and the Mimétisme are the first of the monster races to enslave humans. After establishing the City of Dominancy, Leranna disappears, leaving little trace behind besides her remaining daughters and sons in the Upper Catacombs. There is rumor of foul play, but Dominancy is continuously searched for years, and Leranna is never found.

Lady Harmonía (“Arr-moh-nee-ah”)

Lady Harmonía is of the Mimétisme and widely known for her exceptional divinatory abilities. Working closely with Lady Merle, The Great Tome of Divined History is her signature work, though lost to the Lower Catacombs and the horrors that claim it. Shortly after the appearance of The Manor, Lady Harmonía suddenly disappeared without a trace. She is suspected to have been abducted by some force she encountered in her visions, though none of her attendants are able to determine what the visions were about. Occultists and the Attuned are hunted and executed in mass during the Night of Orphic Eradication, the Beasts claiming to be responsible. Her assistant, Lord Tirol, assumes command of the Catacombs and continues her search.

The Seaside Fortress of Eleusis

Sitting at the farthest border inside the Barrier, a gigantic fortress of mossy stone grows out of the cliffside. Seemingly abandoned for centuries and weathered by time and salty ocean air, it watches over the sea. Though it’s wooden gates are long since shattered, the fortress still holds many secrets in it’s winding catacombs, secret passages, and seemingly bottomless pits. Areas of the fortress have been mapped out by dedicated parties, but much of the crumbling stone has yet to be explored. Heretics, seeking an escape from the toil of normal life, strike out to uncover fortune, artifacts, and whatever else they can drag back. Documented relics include strange armor and weapons, as well as tablets and artwork created with an unknown language. The Beasts, curious as to the contents of the fortress but unwilling to risk their own, allow these

expeditions to continue, though it is without a doubt that anything interesting brought back will be delivered to the Beasts or their servants.

Initial research by Lady Merle and Lady Harmonía determined that the ruins were perhaps several hundred years old, though no group claimed responsibility or ownership of them. Even more interestingly, there are documents, scrolls, paintings, and signs that contain an unknown language within the walls. Scrolls feature drawings of various monsters and fantastic concepts, much of their meaning is left to pure guesswork.

Inside the fortress, various monsters roam the shadows and tunnels, eager to snatch a human away from their group and drag them into the depths of the dungeons. Those that survive can spend days on one wing of the building, slowly uncovering dusty rooms in hopes of a worthy find. Occasionally, hidden among strange currency and bizarre artwork, a team will find an artifact that activates some hidden power. These artifacts are often cursed, but their power is difficult for even the Beasts to ignore.

Notable Artifacts Located as Documented by Lady Merle

Broken Gloves of the Apex

Both gloves are covered in worn, golden thread designs featuring a Lion attacking a horse. On one, the design of a man can be seen beside the horse, running himself through with a sword. Said to give the wearer immense physical strength, but also drains them of free will. Gloves tested twice, then stored securely.

The Blackened Blade

A slightly-curved short sword, made of an unknown jet-black material. The blade is dulled and dented with age and use. No magical effects observed, but the material used in crafting the blade remains unknown. No further samples have been discovered.

A Madman's Eye

This strange, technomatic device attaches itself to an empty eye-socket with ease, providing the wearer with intense visions and predictions. These predictions continue for under a day, at which point the device ejects a scalding hot steam into the skull of the wearer, killing them in a brutal and painful fashion. The eye may then be removed as normal. The origin of this steam is yet undetermined, but is hypothesized to be moisture collected from the user's tear ducts.

Amulet of Zoq

A thin golden chain, at the end of which is a crudely carved piece of marble that vaguely resembles a human head, however the features are greatly exaggerated. Wearing this amulet does nothing initially, but the bearer will find themselves increasingly given to games of chance and risk, even in cases where winning is almost impossible.

Corpsefinger

This wide, grey ring is carved with barely-visible line work depicting several skeletons in what appears to be a dance. When worn, the wearer's finger will immediately begin to rot painfully, reducing itself to bone within five minutes; however the hand and other fingers will remain undamaged. The ring tightens itself to adhere securely to the newly exposed bone. While worn, the wearer finds themselves warded against accursed beings, and any attempts by the accursed to strike at them are turned away by a white light.

An Out of Play Discussion of the Nightmare Dominancy

Victorian, not Steampunk

As a human, you know that you owe your life to the Beasts, even if you are a heretic and don't appreciate their dismissive and abusive treatment of you. The fact is, you ARE expendable, and may have to be at any time for the "greater good." You know there is no real upward mobility, except for a few very special cases, but that doesn't generally concern you, as keeping your nose down and basic survival take up most of your time. That is not to say you do not have ambition, rather, you simply view the world pragmatically as a terrifying and deadly place.

Younger and more desperate humans might take to harassment, general thievery, and venture underground to join the small heretical rebels. The Beasts will permit certain acts of insurrection within reason, especially if the illegal act is self serving. Humans aren't aware of this lenience. Minor illegal acts fuel human ambitions, which lead to higher productivity within the working class. Once the line has been crossed, it is not much a mystery on how your entrails outline your door the following morning.

Players may either start as a Quisling or a Human. While Humans can become Quislings, this is a difficult process, especially when removed from the gifts of the Beasts. The path from Quisling to Human is nigh impossible.

If a player decides to start as a Quisling, they must pick a Beast to be their handler. Their makeup requirement stems from this selection.

Makeup

Quislings must bear an outer marking from their Beast, which must be phys-repped at all times. The marking must exemplify the Beast that the pact was made with, and must be detailed in the Character Background. It does not have to be visible at all times, but should be of a decent size, and is subject to Plot review. Ritualistic scarring, body modifications, or visible tattoos are all appropriate for this. This requirement cannot be filled by taking a spell from The Weirding Words and Hermetic Superstitions with a makeup requirement, but can be of a similar notion.

Humans do not have Makeup Requirements.

Advantages:

As a mostly trade-driven class, humans from the Nightmare Dominancy are trained craftsmen. They are also taught from a young age to be aware of their surroundings, lest their surroundings catch them unaware. Should they be attacked, however, range is always a much better defense than melee against the creatures of the night.

1st level of Craft is 0 CP for Humans, however the first specialty chosen MUST be alchemy, otherwise this skill's cost is only reduced to 5 for level 1.

Quislings may purchase the the Weirding Words at 5 CP for level one, but they MUST first purchase the spell associated with their handler.

1st level of Thrown is 5 CP.

If chosen as a fourth trait, Perception costs only 15 CP instead of 20. It still can not be bought past level one, however.

Human Names and Fashion

While technology does exist, Steampunk itemized fashion would be more appropriate in a different world setting. Muted colours and flourished patterns of the Victorian and Edwardian area are the fashion style, even for the working underclass. Garments would contain any number of layers, buttons, ruffles, and textures. It is said that a human's station and profession could be determined merely by their cuff and collar adornments.

Names from this setting should sound vaguely western European, with a good dose of British. They can be historical or fantastic but not simpleton. Names can also be shortened for casual speech between friends. The Beasts and the monster races all have French inspired names and pronunciations. Playing a Quisling can certainly draw upon these cultural aspects to mimic the Beasts they serve, and in fact, many prominent or long-lived Quislings may title themselves something appropriate to reflect their devotion.

Examples:

Male: Edward, Thomas, Joshua, William, Danie, Matthew, James, Joseph, Harry, Samuel

Female: Amelia, Olivia, Emily, Jessica, Ava, Isla, Poppy, Isabella, Sophie, Mia, Lily

Surnames: Allen, Davis, Jackson, Morris, Thompson, Clarke, Harris, Shaw, Taylor, Wood, Wright

Slang

Back slang it - Thieves used this term to indicate that they wanted "to go out the back way."

Bang up to the Bonecatcher- This phrase means “perfect, complete, unapproachable.”

Chuckaboo - A nickname given to a close friend.

Daddles - A delightful way to refer to your rather boring hands.

Kruger-spoofing - Lying

Mafficking - An excellent word that means getting rowdy in the streets.

Podsnappery - a person with a “wilful determination to ignore the objectionable or inconvenient, at the same time assuming airs of superior virtue and noble resignation.”

Shake a flannin - Why say you're going to fight when you could say you're going to shake a flannin instead?

Arriving in the Fracture

As foolish humans are warned by both their mothers and their brothers, humans arrive in the Fracture through getting lost in the Beneath, attempting to get through the Barrier into the Beyond, or through the maddening horrors of The Manor itself.

Five things every human knows:

Every human knows...

...that the Beasts must always number in Six or the wards surrounding the City will fail and crumble, inviting the horrors of the Beneath and the Beyond to pour through, Ultimately destroying humanity.

The wards that hold the barrier and prevent the Vile Shadows from invading the last bastion of Humanity must always be maintained by the Ritual of the Barrier. To lose the protections of the Barrier is to lose your life and your soul.

...though each District may be diverse, every human is linked.

Your community and even moreso your family is just as important as your next meal. While the line between life and death is often defined by a potion, humans, Quislings, and Heretics alike seek comfort and rest in the sanctuary of their kin.

...to take great personal pride in their work.

Keep your head down and your spirits up: hard work, dedication, patience, and loyalty. While it isn't common to outwardly boast about your accomplishments, your inherent talent is considered to be part of your nature.

... to be aware: there is always something lurking. Daydreaming equals death.

There are assassins in the shadows, carnivorous animals prowling at night, and murderous gangs in the streets. In fact, do not go out into the Night at all. Nothing is valuable enough that it can't wait for Day.

...to engage into a physical fight with a monster or Beast means you already lost.

The best course of action is to keep your head down and always have an escape plan.

Five things every Quisling knows:

Every Quisling knows...

...they need us as much as we need them.

While the monster races may be more capable of dealing with the Vile Shadows, the Darkness comes for us all.

...that once chosen, there is no turning back.

You can't choose this path lightly. To survive the ritual of the Beast is to be marked by their power and never be truly human again.

...to be human is to be a resource; you may have clout among your own circles, but the Beasts determine all.

All humans are subjugated by the Beasts and other monster races, trading their freedom and will for protection from the Beneath and the Beyond, and we enforce this balance.

...to bend the knee grants me influence and power.

It doesn't take away my freedom, but gives me more; power over the other humans, special privileges, and the work I always wanted.

...the heretics and their gangs are playing with fire.

So we will watch them burn.

Five things every Heretic knows:

Every heretic knows...

...to give into the Darkness is to willingly choose to become the monsters you serve.

There are always worse fates than death.

...that your family and your wits are all you truly have.

Use every bit of it to protect you and yours.

...while there is greater evil outside, it is only a matter of time before the barrier will fail.

How long will humanity last before the monsters fight amongst themselves, resources dwindle, or the barrier fails? We cannot live without contingency.

...to bend the knee is to give up your will and freedom.

There is no liberty or honor in captivity.

...the Beasts and their lackeys don't fight fair.

So neither will we.

Setting Inspirations

Warhammer: End Times (specifically the Empire and Freeguilds)

Magic the Gathering: Innistrad Block

Dracula by Bram Stoker

Frankenstein by Mary Shelley

Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde by Robert Louis Stevenson

Castlevania Series developed by Konami

Vampire Hunter D by Hideyuki Kikuchi

British and Welsh Mythology

The Weirding Words and Hermetic Superstitions

Though magic exists in Dominancy, the abundance of “natural gifts” among monsters are often mistaken for more occult abilities. Magic in a traditional sense is a mostly lost art at this point, with wild stories originating from old nomadic culture of the First Humans before the Human Flight. In the same vein, what some may view as “spells” Heretics consider merely superstitions, rituals, potions, and good habits for keeping one’s self alive. Quislings, however, once their pact with the Beast they serve is formed, these fanatics hone their magical abilities and marr themselves physically with the Weirding; their physique and abilities reflecting the Beast that “chose” them. Most humans are not Attuned nor familiar in ways of the Occult after the Night of Orphic Eradication. Those who naturally fall even further into the study and practice of magic find themselves shunned by a more practical human society, and many become Heretics and flee to the relative isolation of the Untamed Woods or disappear into the inner sanctums of the Beasts. Specific tomes no longer exist, but the Athenaeum officially documents these “abilities” as “The Weirding Words and Hermetic Superstitions”, though many humans simply refer to it as The Weirding.

Quislings may purchase the the Weirding Words at 5 CP for level one, but they **MUST** first purchase the spell associated with their handler.

Humans may purchase the the Weirding Words at 15 CP for level one, and may take spells in any order.

Spells

| | | |
|------------------------------|---------------------------|------------------|
| Farys's Wild Cruelty | Instant | Beast of Teeth |
| Guarin's Shameless Excess | Instant | Beast of Smoke |
| Ultima's Absolute Contempt | Ward | Beast of Mirrors |
| Merle's Withering Gaze | Readied (Touch) | Beast of Eyes |
| Gulliston's Dreadful Verdict | Readied (Packet) | Beast of Knives |
| Cahier's Poisonous Regard | Instant (Touch or Caster) | Beast of Bones |
| A Light to Bear Me Home | Instant (Touch) | - |
| The Ticking of Mortality | Instant (Touch) | - |
| Brawler's Brew | Readied (Special) | - |
| A Spanner in the Works | Readied (Packet) | - |
| Humble Pauper's Rags | Instant (Touch) | - |
| Emboldened by the Night | Instant (Touch) | - |

Spells

Farys's Wild Cruelty (“**Fer-rees**”)

Type

Instant (caster)

Requirements

The caster must be wearing fur of some type, be it an article of clothing or part of their armor or costume, and at a minimum of 2”x6” in total. As well, they must adorn themselves with a toothy necklace or bracelet, of (tagged) rustic quality or better.

Casting Verbal

“I exalt you, Lord Farys, The Beast of Teeth, prowler of the Untamed Woods. Mark me in (Mastery)-fold ways, becoming wild and cruel as savage night, fearful of nothing save yourself.”
(1 minute concentration)

While under the effects of this enchantment, which lasts their Mastery in hours, the caster may expend any natural physical, mental, or spiritual feat as if it were a basic Feat of Will. In addition, they may expend a feat of Will (the above included) to resist any Cage/Paralysis effect

on the caster, called as “Wild Cruelty.” Finally, the caster may call “Revocation!” under this enchantment, ending it to instantly cast any other WWHS spell that they know, as per a Feat of Attunement.

Guarin’s Shameless Excess (“**Guah-rin**”)

Type

Instant (caster)

Requirements

In order to cast and maintain this spell, the caster must wear lavish robes or other extravagant costuming, and at least one ostentatious piece jewelry (as a tagged item of Fine Quality or better).

Casting Verbal

“I beg of you, Lord Gaurin, Beast of Smoke; grant me the (Mastery)-fold trappings of your shameless excess, so that those beneath me live in nothing but squalor.”

(1 minute of concentration)

This spell immediately enchants the caster such that they are granted 2 points of Magical Protection for a number of hours equal to their Mastery. If, during this time, the points are lost, the caster may meditate for 1 minute to restore the protection to full.

Ultima’s Absolute Contempt (“**Ull-teem-ah**”)

Type

Ward

Requirements

The caster must have six or more of small, yet prominent, mirrors as part of their costuming, and/or dress in fine silken robes.

Casting Verbal

“I sing to you, Lady Ultima, Beast of Mirrors and holder of a beauty beyond all mortal absolutes. Let me cast my eyes from my lessers, feeling nothing but contempt.”

(5 minutes of concentration)

With this spell up, a caster may “burn” a WWHS charge to resist the effects of any single packet-delivered magical effect. Such a resist is called as “Ward” when activated. The caster may also “burn” the ward for a free instance of such an effect, or to call a free Feat of Charisma.

Merle's Withering Gaze ("Maerl")

Type

Readied (touch)

Requirements

The caster must have a "humanoid" eyes applied with makeup of several colors covering both arms and the backs of both hands in prominent fashion. The recipient, similarly, must be marked on their arms with a number of stylized eyes equal to the caster's Mastery as an explicit requirement to receive this spell.

Casting Verbal

"I beseech you, Merle, Beast of Eyes and all things Unbeheld. Grant us your (Mastery)-Fold incisive gaze, that we might see the inadequacies arrayed before us in this blighted world."
(after 5 minutes of concentration)

This spell enchants the target such that they gain a free Greater Feat of Perception usable only on their next investigation, or until X hours pass, where X is equal to the caster's Mastery.

Gulliston's Dreadful Verdict ("Gu-lee-sto-n")

Type

Readied (packet)

Requirements:

The caster must hold a dagger or shortsword in their offhand, or this spell may not be cast or activated.

Casting Verbal

"I whisper to you, Lord Gulliston, Beast of Knives. Grant me your razored smile, that I might deliver a (Mastery)-fold verdict against the weak, who will know nothing more."

Activation Verbal

"I invoke Gulliston's Dreadful Verdict!"

The caster manifests their Mastery in packets. Targets struck by this spell anywhere take a single point of magical damage.

Cahier's Poisonous Regard (“Kai-yeh”)

Type

Instant (Touch) or (Caster)

Requirements:

The caster must bear a conspicuous scar of visible injury, such as a blade mark over the eye or cheek, a visible burn, or other mark of violence, which must be openly displayed at all times.

Casting Verbal (Touch or Caster)

“I adjure you, Lady Cahier, Beast of Bones and Mother of fell bounty. Anoint this meager vessel with your (Mastery)-fold poison, that I might regard those before me as worthy of nothing but their final agonies.”

(1 minute of concentration)

When the touch version of this spell is cast after 1 minute of concentration upon a melee weapon, and the weapon marked with a verdant green rune, it gains the caster's Mastery in activations. The wielder of the enchanted weapon can, at will, expend an activation to call Poison Strike 2 for one melee attack, which is lost regardless of whether it hits or not. Any normal defense can be used against this attack as if it were a Power Strike. As with all enchantments, this spell will not stack with itself, and it instead simply replaces a duplicate effect. This spell remains on an item until the Poison Strikes are used or for one full event, whichever comes first. Note that the rune must bear a number of accent marks equal to the Mastery of the caster at time of casting.

The caster version of this spell creates an enchantment which provides a single Poison Resist. This version lasts for the caster's Mastery in hours, or until used, whichever comes first.

A Light to Bear Me Home

Type

Instant (Touch)

Requirements:

A lantern, torch, or other Victorian-style light source. This phys-rep must be appropriate and is subject to plot approval. After intoning the verbal, the caster must audibly sing a song of home and comfort for at least 1 minute, or the spell fails.

Casting Verbal:

“It is said that all a traveller needs are a good pair of shoes, a cloak, and a light to bear them home. All these and a song, just like this...”

This spell does not require a charge in order to be cast.

The caster must reside in darkness to cast this spell. When cast, this spell allows the caster to manifest a glow stick inside an old fashioned lantern, a (false) flame torch, or another appropriate representation approved by plot, of orange, white, or yellow color that lasts a number of hours equal to the caster's Mastery. While this light is held, the caster adds 1 to the Mastery of any other WWHS spell they cast, and they are expressly immune to Blindness and Stillness.

The Ticking of Mortality

Type

Instant (touch)

Requirements:

This spell must be cast on a timepiece, which is a tagged Tinkered item.

Casting Verbal

"As the hour, so our allotted years. As the minute, the sun's appointed span. As the second, the beating of our mortal hearts, ticking away..."

(5 minute concentration)

This spell does not require a charge in order to be cast.

When cast, this spell enchants a timepiece for a number of hours equal to the caster's Mastery such that the person holding the device now has the time it takes for their Soul to leave the body increased by 5 minutes. If their soul passes on regardless, they then gain a Boon: a 'gift' of sorts that a death entity can use in a positive fashion. Boons are powerful sources for Beasts as well as death entities, and accepting one will undoubtedly create a favorable outcome for the recently dead. Metaphysically, the timepiece will accompany the departed on their spiritual journey, thus it may not be used on another person while the original bearer deals with their passing. As with anything that bridges the realm of Death and Life, there might also be other strange effects, at plot's discretion.

Brawler's Brew

Type

Readied (special)

Requirements:

The caster must hold onto a vessel of drinkable liquid, traditionally Black Mold Ale; If the drink runs out or the caster lets go of the vessel, all remaining uses are lost. Only one instance of it

may be cast per intoxicant consumed, and casting this spell immediately intoxicates the caster, though they do not gain the additional benefits unless they also drink one of the uses.

Casting Verbal

*"Grundyflows, wights, and shadows abound,
There is little courage to be found,
In a Brawler's Brew these dark things drowned
We'll shake a flannin 'fore we meet the ground."
(1 minute concentration)*

Activation Verbal

"Drink deep of the brawler's Brew"
(while taking a drink)

This spell does not require a charge in order to be cast.

The caster gains their Mastery in uses of this spell. The caster gives the target a sip or pours them a draught of drinkable "wine" (a beverage such as juice or water) only saying the activation verbal as they take a drink. The target then gains two points to their maximum Vitality for one hour, during which time they are intoxicated. As this adds to maximum vitality, it can be regained as normal during that hour through rest or other means, though if they become sober by any effect, the vitality is lost. This spell has no effect on characters already under its effect or on characters who are Critical or Dead.

Intoxicated characters are technically under no mechanical penalties, but they must act quite drunk; in particular, the kind of intoxication this spell creates leads to boisterous laughter and jesting or other shows of bravado and strength. They need not be suicidal, but recklessness is appropriate.

As many alchemical brews hailing from Dominancy contain more than one effect, this spell will function with any that include the 'intoxicant' keyword. However, the magic will essentially 'cancel out' the other properties of the alchemical, reducing them to a base intoxicant.

Spanner in the Works

Type

Readied (packet)

Requirements:

The caster must hold a vial of liquid or goo, else all remaining uses are lost.

Casting Verbal

“They say nothing does more violence to the bolt than the spanner. When hammer strikes anvil, the hammer suffers most. Nothing sticks like grease, but the machine won’t work without it.”
(5 minutes concentration)

Activation Verbal

"I trip you up like a spanner in the works!"

This spell does not require a charge in order to be cast.

The caster manifests their Mastery in packets. Targets struck by this spell are inflicted with a Knockdown effect. The caster may, at any time, end the spell to resist any bind, shackle, slow, or knockdown effect inflicted upon themselves. (called as “Resist”).

Humble Pauper’s Rags

Type

Instant (Touch)

Requirements:

The caster must wear a cloak or other covering clothing that is torn, dirty, patched, and altogether unkempt. This garment need not be tagged, but must be large (no hats or belts, though they can be added for extra effect) and must be in disrepair. If this garment is removed, the spell instantly drops.

Casting Verbal

"You may mistake me for a man of wealth,
But I've no weight, and barely have my health!"
(5 minutes of concentration)

This spell does not require a charge in order to be cast.

After five minutes of concentration and intoning the verbal, the caster manifests the aura of a pauper, assuming a humbled and downtrodden attitude. While the spell is active and the garment worn, the caster has Affinity for Humans as long as the caster does not draw attention to themselves (hostile actions, or interfering with the actions of the hostile creatures, will break this effect).

As an additional effect, the caster may declare 'Pauper's Rags' when encountering humans. This may provide unknown advantages in dealing with or avoiding them, at a Marshal's discretion.

Emboldened by the Night

Type

Instant (Touch)

Requirements:

A small, black necklace worn around the caster's neck. This item does not have to be tagged.

Casting Verbal

"What prowls and creeps from leering, garish light,
In shadow lies, emboldened by the night "

This spell does not require a charge in order to be cast.

This spell may only be cast while the caster is somewhat hidden in shadow, or mundanely attempting to hide as per the concealment ability. They instantly assume a Concealed state. If they are revealed for any reason by a hostile force--assuming they were concealed for at least 3 seconds--they may instantly activate a free use of the Haste ability, gaining a number of extra dodges equal to their Mastery. This Haste must be used within reason to escape the being that revealed them.

After casting this spell, it may not be cast again for 1 hour.

RITUALS

Note: the first six spells in this school of magic are explicitly tied to the ritual that bears that Beast's name. Each requires 5 minutes of conspicuously intoning the virtues (and vices) of that figure in a public area. These must be done in an area with witnesses, or if none are around, loudly enough to be obvious. Attempting this ritual improperly (including other effects or items such as Maulk's Cooling Pillow) will result in the caster losing ALL charges, regardless of source. A Feat of Learning may be used to reduce this time to one minute, but they still must perform the ritual. Additionally, you can activate this ritual in conjunction with a long performance, as long as the performance meets the requirement of the ritual in its entirety.

For Quislings, this penalty is more severe. If a Quisling attempts to circumvent this ritual requirement, each ritual they possess (including those from other schools of magic) is instantly fouled. There will likely be other, very violent reactions, as the Beasts do not take lightly of those who would steal their gifts without proper reverence.

The remaining six spells in this school, when taken, do not give a caster a ritual slot at all. Instead, those spells are cast for no charge, though they have significant limitations in that regard. Having these spells does not generate a charge as well; however, they can be cast as often as desired, with no charge or need to reset with a ritual.

Rituals

| | |
|---|-----------|
| Entreat The Beast: (Name and Title) x 6 | 5 minutes |
|---|-----------|