

# FEARFUL SYMMETRIES

Prague, 1620. The humanist ideals that first found expression during the Renaissance have entered the popular consciousness, spreading from the aristocracy to the rising middle class, and even down to the lower classes. The value of human life and expression has become an accepted idea, and those who have never questioned their place in the world before are beginning to do so.

And the world trembles.

For over 70 years, the Peace of Augsburg allowed Catholics and Lutherans to live side-by-side in the city-states of the Holy Roman Empire, with each local ruler choosing the religion for his lands. The rise of Calvinism, and the coronation of staunchly-Catholic Emperor Ferdinand II, changed that. Ferdinand, following the dictates of his faith and the pressure from his Spanish cousins, sought to reduce the spread of Protestantism in the Empire, and re-establish universal Catholicism. Among the other Protestant faiths, the Hussites of Prague took special exception to this plan and threw Ferdinand's representatives out a window, starting the Bohemian Revolt in 1618. By 1620, Bohemia had even entered an alliance with the Islamic Ottoman Empire, further earning the ire of the Catholics.

Now, the Holy Roman Empire is tearing itself apart, as various states and factions pick sides and take up arms. Mercenaries are in great demand, and make up large portions of all the armies, and the foraging (and looting) of the armies in the field have caused reports of famine and deprivation to begin filtering out. The Empire of Charlemagne is dying.

The world is about to change.

And Prague, whose name means Ford or Threshold, is where the first sparks of that change are struck.

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## THEMES

### CHAOS BETWEEN THE DEATH OF THE OLD WORLD ORDER AND THE BIRTH OF A NEW WORLD ORDER.

The accepted traditions of the past centuries have been eroded by the new ideas formed during the Renaissance. The old structures, ideas, and forms of government are no longer sufficient to the task of fulfilling the lives of the population, and are being torn down. But no single new vision is replacing them; instead, a multitude of different ideas and movements are competing to fill the vacuum, spreading war, chaos, and fear across the face of Europe.

**Aspect:** Change Born of Blood

### MAGIC IS BEING FORCED BACK INTO THE SHADOWS.

Two decades ago, it was acceptable – even fashionable, in some places – to take an interest in the occult. Rudolf II played host to philosophers and mystics, from Tycho Brahe and Giordano Bruno to John Dee and Rabbi Loew. After his death, the rising power of the Catholic Church in Bohemia is making it dangerous for those who inquire into the supernatural arts, and doubly-so for those who actually practice them. Even the Faerie Courts have withdrawn from the land, leaving behind scattered wyldfae and outcasts, and the magi and alchemists of Rudolf's court have fled the city or gone into hiding.

**Aspect:** Rage Against the Dying of the Light

### SUPERNATURAL AND RELIGIOUS GANG WARFARE.

With the chaos descending on Prague during the revolt, people have turned inward, toward those of their own kind. Factions – religious, regional, supernatural – have formed, and each group seeks to defend itself and its own piece of territory from others. Catholics vie with Lutherans, Hussites distrust both of them, as well as the Calvinists, the Jews have retreated to their ghettos surrounding Gold Lane. Wizards are closing ranks against vampires, the abandoned wyldfae have formed their own coalition, the Petrunas cult is rising again, necromancers contend with gypsies over the mausoleums and graveyards, and bands of feral shapechangers and ghouls roam the countryside, hunting freely amid the carnage of war. Everyone is a threat to everyone else, and everyone is doing what they can to defend their own.

**Aspect:** Turf Wars

## THREATS

### THE EMPEROR'S SPIES ARE EVERYWHERE.

Many of the citizens and nobility of Bohemia are Protestant only because it is currently expedient of them to be so. Catholic sympathies are present at all levels of society, and rumours of such sympathy can spell ruin. In addition, the Emperor and Church have sent their own agents into the city, seeking to stir up unrest and learn what they can of the plans and sympathies of those in power. Everywhere, people play a careful game, trying to figure out who they can trust without giving away too much.

**Aspect:** Words Are Weapons

### INFLUX OF RED AND BLACK COURT VAMPIRES DRIVEN NORTH AND WEST BY THE OTTOMANS.

The Ottoman Turks had long experience combating vampires of the Red and Black courts in the Balkans, and have added to the unrest in the Holy Roman Empire by having specially trained warriors, the Olanlar ("Doomed Ones"), drive vampires from their hiding places in the villages and castles of the mountains down into Bohemia. Many of them have taken up residence in the tunnels and sewers beneath Prague's Old Town, in a loose community governed by Valentinus, a lord of the Black Court. Black and Red Courts share the twisting, cramped tunnels, under strict control so as not to draw the attention of the surface dwellers.

**Aspect:** An Uneasy Peace

## STATUS QUO

### MUNDANE

Bohemia is in open revolt against the Holy Roman Empire. The Bohemian nobility is in turmoil, facing the combined might of the Catholic nations, and not knowing who they can trust. Emissaries from the Turks have made promises of alliance with Bohemia, but everyone fears that may just be a ploy to make inroads into Western Europe. The Catholic League is marching to suppress the revolt, despite problems of bankruptcy and unrest in many of the member nations, and religious intolerance and violence is the order of the day.

### SUPERNATURAL

Magic is being pushed back into the shadows after the openness and acceptance of the reign of Rudolf II. Some supernatural power groups have decided to fight back, unwilling to retreat from the freedom they have known, and some are taking the opportunity presented by the chaos of war to settle old scores and claim new territory. The Queens of Faerie have taken their Courts away from the mortal world, closing many of the Ways through their realms, to prevent the chaos from spreading to the Mittlemarch. The more feral creatures, including werewolves, ghouls, and the forces of Muspelheim, glory in the destruction in the countryside, giving vent to their basest natures. The White Council is wracked with dissension, and cannot come to a consensus on any unified action to take to keep mortals safe; indeed, the religious intolerance extends to the Council, and many members secretly pursue their own agendas in the strife that grips the mortal world.



## MOVERS AND SHAKERS

### BOHEMIAN GOVERNMENT

Backed into a corner after their revolt, the Bohemian government is starting to see the tide turn and their early victories crumbling before the advance of the Catholic coalition. They seek to hold onto their power and their freedom, and to maintain their independence from the Empire. Given that many of the people in Bohemia are Protestant only because of the law, the foundation of the government is seriously undermined. Desperate for support, the government has promised the kingship to no fewer than four different Protestant leaders in return for aid in their plight.

### CATHOLIC CHURCH

No longer welcome in Bohemia, there are still Catholic priests and faithful here. With their centuries of tradition, some of the Catholics even have an inkling of the supernatural dangers of the world, and the ways to combat them. Indeed, some members of the Church – not a large number, and not any organized body – have associations with the White Council and other supernatural entities.

### FAERIE COURTS

It may not be fear of chaos that has caused the Faerie Courts to close their borders and withdraw to the Mittlemarch; it may just be an aesthetic dislike for the squalor and grubbiness that this war is bringing about. Or it may be the death of Elizabeth – Gloriana – finally driving the fey away from Europe. Whatever the case, the Ladies and their Courts have abandoned the mortal realm, and closed the doors behind them. Passages into the Mittlemarch no longer reach Faerie, and none can find their way to those far realms. Only wyldfae, outcasts, and ferals remain in this world.

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### THE WYLDFAE AND OUTCASTS

Many of the minor faeries were abandoned in this realm, either neglected or forgotten. Brownies, pixies, knockers, kobolds, and goblins all still lurk in the lonely places, dark forests, dark forests, and deep caverns, unwilling to go with the Courts or too unimportant to be invited. Along with these are some few higher fey, cast out deliberately by their Court for one transgression or another. Most of these live as expatriates always have, seeking happiness and acceptance in a new land after their homelands have rejected them.

## FERAL PILLAGERS

The chaos of the war throughout the Empire is a rich hunting ground for the more savage, bloodthirsty denizens of the supernatural world. With atrocities and massacres being committed by human soldiers on all sides, the predations of more exceptional creatures pass with little comment, though rumours of dark things stalking battlefields and isolated villages have spread far and wide.

## GHOULS

Many ghoul clans have gravitated to the battlefields, coming from the great necropolises of Europe to feast on fresher meat. They tend to travel in small bands, seeking isolated villages or units of soldiers to slake their dreadful appetites. Some of them are starting to look at the stronger cities, knowing the wonderful opportunities available during sieges.

## SHAPECHANGERS

The vast forests of Europe resound with the howls of wolves and the snorts of bears. Not all these sounds are of natural creatures; werewolves and werebears and other, stranger shapeshifters now haunt the countryside, bringing the fairytales to life as they stalk and kill without opposition.

## MUSPELHEIM

More disciplined, but no less brutal, than the other creatures taking advantage of the war to indulge their excesses, units of mercenaries from Muspelheim have joined armies on all sides of the battle, honing their skills in anticipation of Ragnarok. Giants, dwarves, and other, grimmer creatures glory in the bloodshed of war, learning the weapons of this new world.

## GYPSY CLANS

Caught, as always, in the crossfire of the battles between great powers, the Gypsies are scattered and fleeing for their lives. The exceptions are a small group of clans who remember their Egyptian roots, and the mysteries of Isis and Osiris, and the rites of Anubis. They seek to reclaim the places of power in this war-torn land from those who would corrupt and compel the very dead.

## HOUSE MALVORA

House Malvora has long been ensconced among the nobility of Bohemia, and are in their glory, enhancing and feeding on the fears of the people in Prague. They are careful with their feeding, and subtle in their manipulations, but the fear of the new Catholic Emperor which prompted the Hussites to throw his emissaries out a window may be traced back to Lucrezia Malvora, matron of the clan in Prague. The mysterious manure pile which saved the emissaries' lives bothers her somewhat.

## JEWS

Seeking the knowledge of the Qabbalists and the rumoured alchemists hidden among the Jews, Rudolf II lured many here to Prague – the wealthiest and most learned he could find. Here, they settled in Gold Lane, and here Rudolf trapped them, forcing them to use their arts to aid him in his quest for immortality. Now that Rudolf is gone, his mystical trap remains, and the Jews in Gold Lane are unable to flee the conflagration they know is approaching. A few among them have some power to protect them, but too few, they fear, to stem the coming tide.

## NECROMANCERS

Solitary, secretive, and generally powerful, the necromancers of this time have banded together to take the Sedlec Ossuary on the outskirts of Prague. There, they conduct bizarre rites, powered by the vast amounts of death in the area, to pierce the veil between life and death. Only the Gypsies seek to oppose them and reclaim the Ossuary.

## PETRUNAS CULT

Petrin Hill is home to a secret cult of Petrunas worshippers, devotees of an ancient storm-god cognate of Thor, who conducted human sacrifices here in ages past. The Church of St. Lawrence, situated on the Hill, is the front for the cult, mainly comprised of wealthy merchants who make their homes around the base of the Hill. The relaxation of religious persecution under Rudolf, and the chaos now, have caused some members to begin agitating to come out of the shadows.

## PROGRESSIVES

The Progressive faction sees the current climate as an opportunity to rebuild a pagan state in defiance of the oppression of the Christian churches. They advocate more open posture for the cult, with recruiting and public acknowledgment.

## CONSERVATIVES

The Conservative faction isn't ready to abandon the secrecy that has long defended their faith. Indeed, they feel that the cult is too exposed already, and should seriously consider deeper concealment of their activities. Many of this faction are wealthy, settled men, who are greatly troubled by the current unrest, and seek to put their influence behind whichever political group can secure a return to an orderly environment.

## PROTESTANT CHURCHES

The three main factions of Protestant faith in Bohemia have pulled together in the face of the overwhelming Catholic opposition. The hope for a Protestant state is strong among their congregations, and the Churches support the Protestant Bohemian government in their efforts to remain unconquered. Indeed, many of the clergy think that the government isn't being proactive enough, and advocate fiercer, more direct action against Catholics. They are, however, woefully focused on the mundane world, and have no real insight into the more mystical aspects of the current situation, nor any ability to combat the supernatural dangers.

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## SPIES FOR THE EMPEROR

Ferdinand II has spies everywhere. As the Bohemian government struggles to maintain control, word of their duplicitous dealings with other Protestant states has been made public. Indeed, it seems that every letter out of Prague for the past two years has made its way into the hands of the Austrians, and rumours on the street hint at whole battalions of Catholic spies within the walls of the city, from the poorest ghettos of Old Town to the halls of power in Hradcany. While not that many spies actually exist within the city, there are a fair number, and they are dedicated, skillful, and co-ordinated, doing whatever they can to undermine the faith of the people in their leaders.

## TURKS

The Ottoman Empire has promised aid to the beleaguered Bohemia, and is marching north with an army to render it. This has many people worried; the Turks have long wanted to establish a foothold in Western Europe, but have never made it farther in than their multiple sieges of Vienna. Now, this Islamic power is lending aid to a battle of Christian against Christian, on the very soil they have so long coveted. The Turkish emissaries to Prague are viewed with some suspicion, but the aid they represent is too valuable to risk offending them.

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## OLANLAR

A secret tradition, passed down within the Turkish army in an unbroken line from the Seljuq Empire, has trained a small body of men in the tactics and weaponry necessary to fight supernatural creatures. These Olanlar ("Doomed Ones") renounce family and name, and dedicate themselves to eradicating unclean spirits from Allah's earth. Lately, they have proven greatly effective against the Balkan enclaves of Red and Black Court Vampires, driving many of them into the Holy Roman Empire. A small contingent of them serve as bodyguards to the Ottoman embassy in Prague, mainly to ensure their safety in this dangerous climate of supernatural unrest.

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## VAMPIRE REFUGEES

Driven before the advancing Turkish army, the Vampires have left their strongholds in the Balkans for fear of their safety. Many have come to Prague, settling in the tunnels below Old Town, trying to form a mixed community of Red and Black Courts in the dangerously-crowded catacombs.

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## BLACK COURT

Valentinus leads the Black Court, and is said to be ancient beyond reckoning. He claims that he took the name in the early days of the Roman Republic, to hide from centuries of previous enemies. The fact that he was chased from his home by the Turks speaks either to the skill of the Olanlar or to the possibility that he is lying. Still, he is definitely a powerful and old Vampire, and exerts his will over both the small Black Court contingent and the larger Red Court through dint of his personal strength and mastery. The Black Court is content to be patient and wait for the opportunity to improve their lot with the siege and destruction they feel sure is coming to the city. Besides, they have the Red Court to run their errands for them.

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## RED COURT

Far more numerous, but individually far less powerful than the Black Court, the Red Court refugees are second-class citizens in the community Valentinus has built beneath the streets of Old Town. Lacking a strong leader, they are fractious and chafe at the restrictions Valentinus has placed upon their movements and their feeding. If they could unite behind one Red Court King, they could probably challenge the Black Court supremacy, but that doesn't seem likely, with all the squabbling between former petty Balkan nobles and warlords. For now, they must endure their treatment, and sneak what pleasures they may.

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## WHITE COUNCIL

The White Council had a strong presence in Prague under Rudolf II. Now, most of them have fled the unrest and persecution that have entered the city. The policy of the White Council is not to involve itself with mundane politics, so their official stance is that they are uninvolved with the troubles brewing in the Holy Roman Empire. The real story is that they are split on what should be done, whether the Catholics or the Protestants should be backed, and what to do about the numerous dangerous creatures now being drawn to the chaos of war. They take no unified or overt action, but many members do what they can to advance their personal agendas covertly.

## LOCATIONS

### CHARLES BRIDGE

The Charles Bridge is the only bridge across the Vltava within Prague, joining Old Town to Hradcany. It is a broad, solid stone bridge, with plenty of room for the market that sets up on its surface most days. Each end has a tall, imposing tower as fortification, and the bridge has served as a choke-point for assaults on the city before. The tower on the Hradcany end is the Judith Tower, and was once the local commanderie for the Knights of Malta. Since the break with the Catholic Church, however, the Knights have been sent packing, and the Judith Tower currently serves as barracks for mercenary troops tasked with defending Hradcany.

The tower on the Old Town end is the Old Town Tower, and is etched with arcane symbols, Latin palindromes, and other supernatural countermeasures. It is held as a sinecure post by a small order of lay monks, who have dedicated themselves to the maintenance of the tower. These monks, led by Brother Benedict, are secretly spies for the Emperor, one of the last troops of the hidden Templar order, defending the faithful against the predations of the supernatural.

**Threat:** Catholic spies controlling the supernatural defenses of the bridge.

**Aspect:** This Far and No Farther

**Face:** Brother Benedict, Secret Templar Bridgewarden

### GOBLIN'S BREWERY

The Goblin's Brewery has a reputation throughout Bohemia for the quality of its beer and ale. Stories say that an actual goblin brewmeister, Balthazar, oversees the brewing, and instills the product with some of his goblin magic. While the truth of this is open to debate, the influence of the brewery is profound within the city. No one can claim to have seen Balthazar themselves, but something offers powerful protection to the little brewery and taproom, whether the unseen brewmeister or his faithful and territorial customers.

It has become a neutral meeting ground for supernatural creatures within Prague, the home-away-from-home for the dispossessed fey left behind when the Courts withdrew. Others are welcome within, as long as they don't cause any trouble. Those who look like they're about to cause trouble are usually hustled out before things escalate. Those who don't are welcome to stay and enjoy their drinks and the company, and are not infrequently treated to rare experiences, such as one of the High Fey singing a lament for lost lands. The beer and ale don't seem to have any truly mystical properties, but they are both good, and many a hardened warrior has mellowed and become maudlin after a few pints.

**Theme:** Oasis of fey in an unwelcoming world.

**Aspect:** Drink to Remember, Drink to Forget

**Face:** Balthazar, Unseen Goblin Brewmeister

## GOLD LANE

Rudolf II, with his apparently lenient views on religion, attracted a large number of wealthy Jews to Prague. Many of them were goldsmiths, Qabbalists, and alchemists, whom he employed in seeking to find the Philosopher's Stone so that he might live forever. He even invited Rabbi Loew, the Maharal of Prague, to Court. Rudolf's acceptance of Jews was one of the things that weakened the support of his nobles. The actual truth of the matter is somewhat less rosy. Rudolf did indeed bring many Jews to Prague, and settled them in a small area in Hradcany called Gold Lane, allowing them to bring their families and friends to take up residence in the nearby streets.

However, it was a trap; Rudolf (possibly with the assistance of Edward Kelly, a thoroughly disreputable magician) worked an enchantment that prevented the residents of Gold Lane from sleeping anywhere but along the street. Those who tried to leave invariably made their way back to Gold Lane in a few days, exhausted and often delusional. Now, Rudolf is gone, but his trap remains. The Jews of Prague no longer have a powerful patron to keep them safe, and cannot leave, which means that Gold Lane and the surrounding neighbourhood has become a ghetto full of shunned, destitute people, easy targets for those who would prey upon them.

**Theme:** Jewish alchemists trapped in the ghetto, fallen on hard times.

**Aspect:** Trusted by None

**Face:** Isaac Cohen, Son-in-Law and Heir to the Maharal

## HRADCANY

Hradcany is the Castle District of Prague, including Prague Castle and grounds, many noble homes, some homes for wealthy merchants, and the Jewish ghetto of Gold Lane. The nobility of the city does their best to keep up a brave front, still hosting parties and balls, indulging in the social life that is their public duty, but the strain of the current situation is starting to show, and the fetes have taken on a desperate air.

Amid this tension, the House Malvora White Court Vampires wend through the drawing rooms and parlours, keeping the fear at just the right pitch, and feeding freely. The Malvoras are an old, established family in Prague – foreign nobility choosing to live in the city – a touch of the exotic, dangerous, and intriguing. The current matron of the family, Lucrezia Malvora, is deep in the council of the most powerful nobles in Prague, as she was in the Courts of Rudolf and Mattias. She has yet to truly try to exert power over the city, as she prefers the shadows, but is starting to feel that the time may come when it is expedient to take what the city has to offer in one big swallow, then take her family somewhere safer.

**Theme:** Nobility under siege.

**Aspect:** Backed Into a Corner

**Face:** Lucrezia Malvora, White Court Manipulator

## JELENI PRIKOP

Jeleni Prikop is the Stag Moat, a trench-like, wooded park on the grounds of Prague Castle, where once deer were raised. Over time, the kings of Bohemia brought in more exotic creatures to dwell there – tigers, bears, wolves, boars, and other fierce animals. Over the years, the park has taken on a sinister reputation, as the number of people – both in the park and nearby – savaged by the beasts has grown. In recent years, fewer mauled bodies have been found, but many disappearances in the area have occurred. This is thanks to the Clan Arkady, shapeshifters who dwell among and command the feral, savage animals of the Jeleni Prikop. Through Rostislav the Butcher, they have contacts with the shapeshifters prowling the battlefields, and are quite enjoying the opportunity to expand their hunting grounds.

**Threat:** Shapeshifters commanding fierce animals in the heart of the city.

**Aspect:** Centre of Many Disappearances

**Face:** Rostislav the Butcher, Front Man for Clan Arkady

## NEW TOWN

New Town is the section of Prague inhabited by the up-and-coming middle class: a neighbourhood of shopkeepers and craftsman, people who have risen above the lot of the common folk, but not achieved the real wealth of the great merchants or nobility. They are a proud, hardworking community, always looking to improve the lot of themselves and their neighbours. In a dark, dangerous time, New Town still has hope and the dedication to realize that hope.

Jan Zenkl is the Lord Mayor of Prague, and he dwells in New Town, doing his best to restore a semblance of normalcy to his city, even in these dark times. The folk of New Town, though they may grumble about the nobles and the poor, are staunchly behind their Lord Mayor, seeing him as the avenue through which change will come.

**Theme:** Perseverance and prosperity.

**Aspect:** Hope Springs Eternal

**Face:** His Honour, Jan Zenkl, Lord Mayor of Prague



## OLD TOWN

Old Town stands as a stark contrast to New Town. It is the poorest neighbourhood in Prague (excepting only Gold Lane), and populated by destitute, desperate people. The houses are old, dirty, and falling apart, the streets are winding mazes of darkness, and criminals prowl both the night and the day. The guard companies of Prague enter Old Town in squads if they have to go there at all.

Residents of Old Town do whatever it takes to survive and scrape together the money they need for food and other necessities. This can include theft, muggings, prostitution, smuggling, and selling information to the Emperor's spies. And over this nest of serpents presides the King of Thieves, Zuckerbastl, his fingers reaching into every pie, and his strings working all the puppets.

**Theme:** Poverty and decay.

**Aspect:** Acts of Desperation

**Face:** Zuckerbastl, King of Thieves

## OLD TOWN SQUARE

A jewel shining in the filth of Old Town, the Old Town Square is still the site of the city hall, the main courts, and a marvelous astrological clock. It is also the site of public whippings, pillories, and executions. The magnificent, well-preserved buildings look quite out-of-place amid Old Town's squalor, and many citizens point to this example of pride among the citizenry of Prague, that even in Old Town, the public buildings are not vandalized or marred in any way.

At least, that's what they say in the light of day. When the sun sets, they whisper a different tale, telling of the angry ghosts that haunt the place, executed criminals still forced to serve out a sentence in the netherworld, spirits glutted on the spilled blood, and the undying spectre of Hanus of Ruze, who built the astrological clock and was blinded by the town fathers. Perhaps the reason the buildings remain pristine is that none dare the angry spirits to deface them.

**Threat:** Spirit of justice and torment.

**Aspect:** Justice is Blind and Bloody

**Face:** Hanus of Ruze, Ghost of the Blind Clockmaker

## OLD TOWN TUNNELS

Beneath Old Town is an extensive network of tunnels, sewers, catacombs, and natural caves. On top of this network is a web of rooms created when the streets were raised 15 feet to stave off flooding, burying the first floors of many buildings. It is into these burrows that the exiled Vampires have crept, establishing their own refugee kingdom beneath the streets of Old Town. The tense peace between the Black and Red Courts has kept them mostly out of the sight of those in the city above, most of the prey in Old Town will never be missed. Still, Valentinus keeps tight control over both Courts with draconian laws and punishments. While the Red Court chafes under the dominance of the Black Court leadership, they are, so far, keeping to Valentinus's rules. Mostly.

**Threat:** Refugee vampires.

**Aspect:** Old, Dead Blood

**Face:** Valentinus, Black Court King in Exile

## PETRIN'S HILL

Looming over Hradcany, Petrin's Hill is an open parkland dominated by two structures: the Church of St. Lawrence and the Hunger Wall. In ancient times, blood sacrifices were offered here to the storm god Petrunas, and later the Hunger Wall was constructed by poor citizens forced to labour for a stipend. The worshippers of Petrunas, now in hiding, offered up the misery and death of the Hunger Wall's construction to their god, as well. These days, the hidden Petrunas Cult persists, headed by Father Nicola, ostensibly the priest of St. Lawrence, but secretly the high priest of Petrunas. The Cult is at a crossroads, with some members advocating for coming into the open, and others wanting to deepen the concealment. And whispers of new sacrifices under stormy skies have begun to make their way among the folk of Prague.

**Theme:** Preservation of the old faith.

**Aspect:** Blood Sanctifies

**Face:** Father Nicola, Secret High Priest of Petrunas

## SEDLEC OSSUARY

Just south of the city, the Sedlec Ossuary is a vast cathedral decorated with thousands upon thousands of bones. Indeed, in some places, it seems as if it is built entirely of human skeletons. The altar is flanked by two massive pyramids of skulls, a huge bone chandelier hangs over the main hall, and the wall is decorated with the Schwarzenberg coat of arms created entirely of human bones.

Not surprisingly, the site has attracted the attention of a small band of necromancers who are trying to unlock the secrets of death encoded in the bone sculptures. Opposing them is a small group of gypsy clans dedicated to the ancient rites of Anubis and Osiris, and led by the ancient Radu cel Frumos, brother to Vlad Tepes.

**Threat:** Necromancer stronghold

**Aspect:** The Dead are Among Us

**Face:** Radu cel Frumos, Penitent Brother of Dracula

## ST. VITUS CATHEDRAL

The largest and most important church in Bohemia, St. Vitus Cathedral is the resting place of several Bohemian kings and other notables. It is also the church of choice for the nobility of Prague, attached as it is to Prague Castle. A massive, gothic structure, it seems destined to never be completed: lack of funds have lately stopped the rebuilding of sections damaged by fire and war in previous centuries.

The reputation of St. Vitus in the city is that all are welcome there, and the clergy does its best to see that this is the case. Even supernatural creatures, as long as they do no harm, can find shelter and refuge inside its walls, thanks to the intercession of Brother Cyril. Rumours that Brother Cyril is in fact St. Cyril, eternally serving the country he helped convert from paganism, are laughed off by most inhabitants, and certainly by his superiors.

**Theme:** Neutral ground for all factions.

**Aspect:** Battered Soul of the City

**Face:** Brother Cyril, Humble Immortal Saint

## WHITE MOUNTAIN

Just outside the city is White Mountain, a high hill with a broad meadow. Local legends claim that it is riddled with the underground passages of the dwarf kingdom of King Goldemar, who guards his gates preventing mortals from passing through his halls into the Mittelmarch. Also stealing his treasure. These legends are true: though the Ways to the Faerie Courts are closed, not all realms of the Mittelmarch are so warded. King Goldemar guards a way into Utgard, the land of the Norse giants, though he has been known to grant safe passage to certain beings from either side who meet his price.

**Threat:** Passage to Utgard.

**Aspect:** Hall of the Mountain King

**Face:** Goldemar, King of the Dwarves

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**VLTAVA RIVER**

Vltava (“Wild Water”) runs through the heart of Prague, crossed only by the Charles Bridge – earlier bridges, weirs, and fords have all been washed away by the raging river. The waters of the Vltava are said to always remain wild, even when bottled, and are seen as powerful cure-alls by the peasantry if collected in the right way. What can be confirmed by the supernatural creatures of the area is that the water is even more antithetic to magic than running water usually is, and crossing the river anywhere but on a bridge is exceedingly dangerous. This is attributed to the spirit of Libuse, the legendary queen who prophesied the correct place for the founding of the city. Some claim that she was a daughter of the Vltava, and returned home to the river when she is thought to have died. Others claim that the blood of St. Methodius, spilled here, renders the river potent against sorcery.

**Theme:** Powerful magical threshold.

**Aspect:** Purifying Waters

**Face:** Libuse, Pagan Water Spirit and Ancient Queen

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**FACES****BALTHAZAR**

**High Concept:** Unseen Goblin Brewmeister

**Motivation:** Brew his beer and ale and keep his tavern safe amid the chaos.

Balthazar is a presence felt in Prague but never seen. He is said to be the owner and proprietor of the Goblin's Brewery, but there are few credible sightings of him. Many assume he is just a legend used to explain the good fortune and fine drink. However, none seem prone to test the theory, given the way that those who start trouble at the Brewery generally fare quite badly.

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**RELATIONSHIPS**

- Amadan, outcast Summer trickster bar patron

**BROTHER BENEDICT**

**High Concept:** Secret Templar Bridgewarden

**Motivation:** Maintain the sanctity of the defenses on the Charles Bridge, and protect Prague from supernatural threats.

Brother Benedict is a quiet, unassuming, tremendously deadly man who has devoted his adult life to the secret mysteries of the hidden Templar Order, and their charge to defend mortals against the threat of evil. He tends to operate behind the scenes as much as he can, not wanting to draw attention to himself, but is not afraid to take action when required.

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**RELATIONSHIPS**

- Johannes, Miguel, and Bertrand, secret Templar soldiers under his command
- Hamza Fakih, secretary in the Ottoman embassy, secret contact among the Turks
- Captain Hans Amiel, Swiss mercenary captain stationed in the Judith Tower

## BROTHER CYRIL

**High Concept:** Humble Immortal Saint

**Motivation:** Serve God's will in Prague.

Brother Cyril is a simple man, in many ways. He doesn't know why he didn't die after retiring to the monastery 750 years ago, but humbly assumes that it must be because God's work is not yet done. He has served as a minor functionary in the St. Vitus Cathedral for so long that he knows the workings of the churches in Prague better than anyone, and manages to avoid too many questions by being helpful and modest. He does all he can to aid the suffering people of Prague.

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### RELATIONSHIPS

- Isaac Cohen, friend and confidant
- Lucrezia Malvora, mortal enemy
- Libuse, one-time lover of Cyril's brother, Methodius

## CAPTAIN HANS AMIEL

**High Concept:** Honourable Mercenary Captain

**Motivation:** Fulfill his contract with the government of Bohemia.

Captain Amiel is the epitome of Swiss mercenary. He is competent, polite, intelligent, and willing to do his best as long as his employers honour their contract. He takes no sides in politics or religion, keeping his opinions firmly to himself, while using his men to best effect on behalf of his patrons. There are certain things he refuses to do, which is why he is on patrol duty in Prague rather than fighting at the front. He and his men are stationed in the Judith Tower of the Charles Bridge.

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### RELATIONSHIPS

- Izabela and Emeric, nodding acquaintances
- Brother Benedict, friendly conversation

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**FATHER NICOLA**

**High Concept:** Secret High Priest of Petrunas

**Motivation:** Return the worship of Petrunas to Bohemia.

Father Nicola serves as a priest at the chapel of St. Lawrence, while secretly leading the worship of Petrunas, a pagan storm god, in the woods on Petrin's Hill. He is currently trying to reconcile two different factions within the cult so that he has a solid powerbase from which to try and advance the worship of Petrunas, returning to the days of sacrifice to the god.

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**RELATIONSHIPS**

- Evzen, leader of the conservative cult faction
- Dusan, leader of the progressive cult faction

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**HANUS OF RUZE**

**High Concept:** Ghost of the Blind Clockmaker

**Motivation:** Punish the guilty – any guilty.

Hanus of Ruze was a master craftsman who constructed the beautiful and complex astrological clock in the Old Town square. Once the clock was finished, the town fathers had the clockmaker blinded so that he could never surpass this work. In his anger and despair, Hanus climbed the clocktower, broke the works, and swore that the next time the clock stopped, doom would come to Prague. He then leapt to his death. Once the clock was repaired, stories began to spread about the vengeful ghost of the clockmaker haunting the square, seeking to punish those who have done wrong.

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**RELATIONSHIPS**

- Serves a nameless dark spirit of vengeance

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**ISAAC COHEN**

**High Concept:** Son-in-Law and Heir to the Maharal

**Motivation:** Protect his people, and try to free them from Rudolf's trap.

Isaac studied all the lore his father-in-law, Rabbi Loew, could teach him before the Maharal's death. Since that time, he has devoted himself to freeing his people, though he feels that he is doomed to fail if the Maharal could not succeed. Lately, he's been toying with the idea of using the forbidden scrolls left to him by his father-in-law to create another golem to aid his people.

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**RELATIONSHIPS**

- Brother Cyril, friend and confidant.
- Ruth, wife

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**JAN ZENKL**

**High Concept:** Lord Mayor of Prague

**Motivation:** Build prosperity for the city.

Jan Zenkl is in a tough position, seeking to improve the lot of Prague's citizens in one of the most difficult times in its history. He has come to arrangements with Zuckerbastl and the nobles in Hradcany, keeping down taxes and limiting the worst crime to Old Town. He's not proud, but he's also not apologetic – New Town is thriving.

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**RELATIONSHIPS**

- Arrangement with Zuckerbastl to keep crime out of New Town and guards out of Old Town
- Lucrezia Malvora, patron among the nobles

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**KING GOLDEMAR**

**High Concept:** King of the Dwarves

**Motivation:** Amass power, treasure, and maintain the independence of his realm.

King Goldemar's realm stretches from the tunnels beneath White Mountain to the hills of Utgard, and is one of the most reliable Ways into and out of the Mittelmarch since the Faerie Courts retreated. Mindful of this, Goldemar has begun allowing limited passage through from either side in return for gold or favours, building a powerbase under the mountain. What he plans to do with this power is open to speculation.

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**RELATIONSHIPS**

- Utgarda-Loki, careful détente in Utgard
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**LIBUSE**

**High Concept:** Pagan Water Spirit and Ancient Queen

**Motivation:** Keep Vltava pure.

An ancient spirit of the river who once walked among mortals as a queen and founded Prague, Libuse fell in love with St. Methodius, despite his Christianity. She did her best to aid him in his trials, and in dedication to him has made it her work to keep the Vltava River a pure and holy flow of water. She has little to do with mortals anymore, except to react to those who seek to sully the waters she guards.

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**RELATIONSHIPS**

- Brother Cyril, brother of her lost lover

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**LUCREZIA MALVORA**

**High Concept:** White Court Manipulator

**Motivation:** Stoke the fear in Prague so that her clan may feed, then leave before it's too late.

House Malvora is a fixture of Prague society – a foreign noble family dwelling in the city, always at the centre of the social scene. Lucrezia is the matron of the family, and has been a quiet presence in the unofficial councils of the nobility for quite some time. She fears that it will soon cease to be safe in Prague for her family, though, and is doing what she can to make sure the White Court can have one last good feast before having to abandon the city.

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**RELATIONSHIPS**

- Noble patron to Jan Zenkl
- Likes taunting Brother Cyril
- Giacomo Malvora, younger brother and intemperate rake

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**RADU CEL FRUMOS**

**High Concept:** Penitent Brother of Dracula

**Motivation:** Reclaim the Sedlec Ossuary from the Necromancers and help expiate his brother's evil.

Radu the Handsome is Vlad the Impaler's brother. When they were both taken as hostage by the Turks, Radu converted to Islam, and stayed in the Empire after Vlad was returned. Traveling to Egypt, he learned the ancient secret rites of Isis and Osiris, and of Anubis, rites designed to protect the sanctity of the borders between life and death. These secrets were shared with a small number of gypsy clans, and when Radu's brother became the most feared Black Court Vampire in Wallachia, Radu swore an oath to his divine patrons that he would not rest until Vlad's evil was undone. Now, 150 years later, he is old, and frail, and very knowledgeable, and still bound to his promise.

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**RELATIONSHIPS**

- Valentinus, undying enmity
- Carel Javlek, necromancer leader and sworn enemy
- Hanzi, grandson and leader of the gypsies

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**ROSTISLAV THE BUTCHER**

**High Concept:** Front Man for Clan Arkady

**Motivation:** Serve the interests of his masters, keeping them safe and hidden from the world at large.

Rostislav is an actual butcher, with a large shop in Hradcany, and a license to take deer from Jeleni Prikop. He is known to always have the best fresh game in the city, and to be a rather blunt but fair-dealing man. In truth, he gets the game he sells from Clan Arkady, shapeshifters who dwell in Jeleni Prikop, and he does their bidding, as well. Not a shapeshifter himself, he is still completely under clan control, as they have threatened his life and his family should he betray them. He sees no real reason to betray them, however; their arrangement is profitable, and he doesn't mind the occasional dirty job they ask him to do.

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**RELATIONSHIPS**

- Constantin Arkady, Rostislav's handler
- Milos, Rostislav's apprentice and bully-boy

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**VALENTINUS**

**High Concept:** Black Court King in Exile

**Motivation:** Build a power base to be able to retake his homeland. In the meantime, keep the Red Court under control.

Valentinus is quite old and powerful, though no one knows exactly how old or how powerful. Rumours say that he before the founding of Athens, but none can confirm this. He is generally calm and even-tempered, but completely ruthless about getting what he wants, and willing to spend any assets necessary to achieve his ends. Right now, that means riding herd on the vampire refugees in the Old Town Tunnels until he can build enough of a force to return to Eastern Europe and retake his homeland.

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**RELATIONSHIPS**

- Radu cel Frumos, irritating meddler
- Erzsebet, Red Court would-be queen
- Fidelus, chief enforcer, thrall

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**ZUCKERBASTL**

**High Concept:** King of Thieves

**Motivation:** Maintain his position as the preeminent criminal in Prague.

Brutal and thuggish, with a thin patina of mock courtly graces, Zuckerbastl controls all the crime in Old Town, from the child pickpockets working the street to the smugglers and prostitutes. He likes to put on the airs of genteel nobility, but the best he can manage is a rude pretense of true manners. His penchant for candy and sweets have cost him most of his teeth, and swelled his gut, two things that wise folk don't comment on if they meet him. He is clever enough to have gained his position, and brutal enough to hold it.

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**RELATIONSHIPS**

- Jan Zenkl, the Lord Mayor, has an arrangement with Zuckerbastl to keep the guards out of Old Town if Zuckerbastl keeps the worst of the crime in.
- Mario, a mysterious and infamous thief supposedly on Zuckerbastl's payroll
- Kazimir, Milan, and Vavrinec, Zuckerbastl's chief enforcers

**MASTER ASPECT LIST****THEMES AND THREATS**

- Change Born Out of Blood
- Rage Against the Dying of the Light
- Turf Wars
- Words are Weapons
- An Uneasy Peace

**LOCATIONS**

- Old, Dead Blood
- Centre of Many Disappearances
- Blood Sanctifies
- The Dead are Among Us
- Drink to Remember, Drink to Forget
- Trusted by None
- Backed Into a Corner
- This Far and No Farther
- Battered Soul of the City
- Acts of Desperation
- Hope Springs Eternal
- Hall of the Mountain King
- Justice is Blind and Bloody
- Purifying Waters