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# **SITUATIONS**

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FOR TABLETOP ROLEPLAYING

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# **SECOND SET**

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# WHAT THIS IS

SITUATIONS IS a compilation of five articles – methods for building situations for tabletop roleplaying. Each of the methods is a simple procedure; by working through one of these procedures, you'll generate the core 'stuff' needed for a session or two of play. This is the second set of five such articles available.

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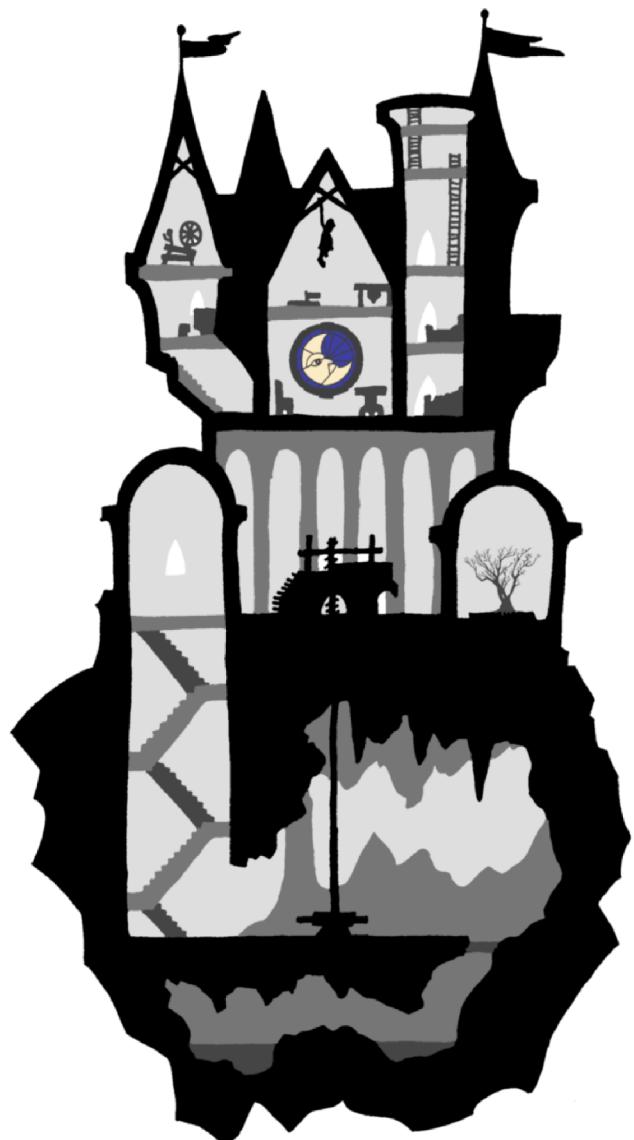
**24** FUTURITY is for covering situations where something new has been invented.



THIS IS A LIVING DOCUMENT. It might be updated every week for a month at some point; it might sit dormant for a few years.

THERE'S MORE THAN THIS. Searching for Levi Kornelsen (that's me) on DriveThruRPG will yield other game work, much of which is influenced by or connected to this in different ways. If you're interested in keeping up with me as I make things, search for me on Google+; that's my main channel.

# THE ESTATE



THE CHARACTERS ARE SUDDENLY THE OWNERS or the lead personnel in some new place, after the former heads of that site are taken out of the picture. Sudden inheritances, military conquests, and other reversals of fortune are often the cause behind this – though, in some cases, these are only the apparent cause behind the transfer.

FIRST, GRAB THE SITUATION SHEET. The title section there is where you'll lay down the basic concept. When filling out the title box, the name should give a basic idea of what kind of functions it might have and be made to serve. If the title of the estate was "The Night Fortress", that gives a differing impression from "Tavail Hunting Lodge" or "Gravis Trade Station"

Immediately following this should be the reason the *player characters* will value it. This is a guiding point to the whole - if the troubles given overmatch the value, then believing the characters would push through them is harder. If the value wildly outmatches the troubles (and is the kind of value the system focuses on), it may be off-balancing in some systems.

The estate is: Eldwood Castle

And is desirable as: A Fortified base in the Elder Wood.

YOU MAY WANT A MAP, either of the estate itself or of the surrounding area. If you'll be using some form of resource management system for maintaining and building up the estate later, then having this information available to be presented up front is handy as well.

# OTHER CLAIMANTS

THE PLAYER CHARACTERS WON'T BE ALONE in having some kind of potential claim to the estate (whether or not they act on it). Claims can include "I have an army nearby", or chains of inheritance, or almost anything else.

Deciding who else is potentially around with a claim and laying down a few colourful figures can give you a list of people that might be killers hoping to inherit, or just people present who could be used by the characters or their enemies, or pure red herrings and colour.

Some of these claimants might be secret or unknown to the others if you feel like a revelation of a claim can be fun. Some might also be staff, for whatever reason. Some will likely be central to the history of the place you'll be writing next, while others won't.



## Other Claimants

NAME	DEMEANOR
CLAIM	
1. Gunnar	Stoic
	Brother of Dana's PC.
2. Selvia	Bookish
	Estate owes her money.
3. Betrane	Sneering
	Local noble; title reverts if...
4.	
5.	
6.	

# THE HISTORY

MOVING ON TO THE HISTORY SECTION, the group or person who previously held the estate is next up, followed by how they lost it. "Mysterious uncle nobody, who died" is the direct trope here, but "The evil alien space empire, who were driven out by spacefleet" is equally valid (especially if the player characters are spacefleet officers).

The executor is the person or groups that contacts the characters and puts the estate into their hands. This could actually be the executor of a will. It could be someone hiring the characters to get involved. It might be a commanding officer sending them to this new posting. Whatever the case, this is often the first mouthpiece character; you'll want an idea of who they are.

The reason for the transfer answers "Why are the player characters getting this estate"? For an inheritance, this answer is pretty easy: Transfer is because you're the next of kin, or named in the will. For a grant of land from a queen, it might be because the characters are the only ones the queen trusts to get the place back in order... Or it might be as a gambit to get these troublesome adventurers out into the back country and away from other affairs. If you'd like to have the actual reason be nefarious, just fill in the reason the characters will be told, and come back to this later.

Finally, the entailment is a basic condition of management that must be agreed to before the transfer is complete, a requirement of the inheritance, posting, grant, or whatever form the acquisition comes in. Classically, this is the "To inherit the house, you must live there for a year" component, but may include any other notes. "Maintain an embassy and good relations with the local aliens on behalf of spacefleet" is an entailment; so is "As lords of Larfell, you must supply troops to the Queen".



## The History

It was held by Dame Vanchell

Who lost it by Dying fighting the Beast of Eldwood.

The executor is Lord Betrane

Transfer is because Dame Vanchell named Dana's PC

As her heir, though they met only once.

The entailment is paying tax to Betrane, old debts,

Fighting the monsters of the Eldwood.

# PRIZE AND LOYALTIES

ALMOST EVERY ESTATE WORTH DESCRIBING either is, or contains, a significant prize - something others will be taking the opportunity of the moment to try and get hold of. If an estate is the home of a billionaire, for example, then the home and grounds may be the prize - and an inheriting player character might need to dodge one or more attempts to kill them. Often, though, the estate contains some prize beyond that. The manor may be collateral on a dozen bad loans, but the horses in the stables are worth millions? Then the horses are the prize. Decide on whether the whole estate or something in it is the prize, and name it.

THE PREVIOUS KEEPERS of the estate no doubt had some agenda for both the estate as a whole and for the prize in particular. Some who remain on the estate may well remain true to that agenda. These characters are typically not allies to the player characters, though they may pretend to be - or they may be perfect allies, but not expect to be (allowing a reversal in either case). Their loyalty is to the *departed*.

THE ESTATE ITSELF was built to serve some purpose – often the thing the characters value it for. Many characters on the estate will that purpose specifically; the mechanic who really mainly cares that things work properly is one of the faithful. The faithful are likely aware of the remnant and seekers, and know what the prize of the estate is... But aren't necessarily loyal to the characters. Their loyalty is to the *estate*.

WHERE THERE'S A PRIZE, THERE ARE CLAIMANTS. The next in line to inherit, with murder on their minds. The thieves hiding in the confusion. The fraudulent and false, and very possibly among those responsible for deposing or disposing of the last keepers of the estate. The loyalty of these characters is to their own *greed*.

## Prize And Loyalties

The prize is the enchanted defences and armoury.

Those loyal to the departed want revenge on the beast.

Organized hunts for it, etc.

Those loyal to the estate want to keep holding the Line and holding the Eldwood at bay.

Those loyal to their own greed want to sell armament

From the keep to various nobles.

# STAFF AND STATEMENTS

EVERY ESTATE HAS STAFF, ranging from housekeepers to chefs to mechanics to spacedock officers. Of these, a number will have strong positions as regards their loyalty, will interact with the characters, *and* have some clout in whatever institution the estate represents. This section of the sheet is for those people.

To fill this section out, you'll likely want to make a general list of the kinds of positions exist within the estate; this might be a very simple or very complex affair depending on the estate itself. Then, choose from among those to decide which might be able to best pursue the prize of the estate, commit actions against the official heads of the estate, and otherwise be a major problem. Pick a few of those and assign loyalties to them, and give them names.

As you do this, don't limit yourself to officially recognized positions. The Majordomo of a fortress has a strong position, but so does the spouse or lover of the Majordomo. Equally, a well-entrenched power broker might have *any* official job; tinker tailor, soldier, whatever.

NOW THAT YOU HAVE THESE PEOPLE, imagine what kinds of things they might be planning in order to take action toward their end – and especially how that action involves the player characters. This doesn't need noting down; you can detail it and have it happen in play or ignore it as needed. What you should have polished, however, is what they'll say to the player characters. How will they present themselves, and what will they bring forward? Most critically, will they lie or tell the truth? Try to sum up what they'll try to get across as a statement they'll make. Then, in play, you have material posed to throw at the player characters immediately; people can present their views and try to make impressions, even as they go about serving their loyalties and creating trouble offstage.

## Staff And Statements

NAME	POSITION	LOYALTY
STATEMENT THEY'LL MAKE		
Aschor	Falconer	Dame Vanchell
<i>We must get out there and kill that beast!</i>		
Dunstan	Chatelaine	Greed
<i>Too many debts, no support. Sell it all, abandon it.</i>		
Bela	Squire	Estate
<i>I think Dunstan is stealing from the estate.</i>		
Fulmont	Hedge Mage	Greed
<i>My pay is three months late. Pay me.</i>		
Rai	Housekeeper	Estate
<i>(Whatever Aschor says; I'm in love with her.)</i>		
Fulmont	Cooper	Greed/Vanchell
<i>Burn the beasts out, tame the Eldwood for lumber.</i>		

# ESTATE

The estate is: \_\_\_\_\_

And is desirable as: \_\_\_\_\_

## Other Claimants

NAME	Demeanor
------	----------

CLAIM
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1.	_____
----	-------

2.	_____
----	-------

3.	_____
----	-------

4.	_____
----	-------

5.	_____
----	-------

6.	_____
----	-------

## The History

It was held by \_\_\_\_\_

Who lost it by \_\_\_\_\_

The executor is \_\_\_\_\_

Giving it over because \_\_\_\_\_

The entailment is \_\_\_\_\_

## Prize And Loyalities

The prize is \_\_\_\_\_

Those loyal to the departed want \_\_\_\_\_

Those loyal to the estate want \_\_\_\_\_

Those loyal to their own greed want \_\_\_\_\_

## Staff And Statements

NAME	POSITION	LOYALTY
------	----------	---------

STATEMENT THEY'LL MAKE
------------------------

_____	_____	_____
-------	-------	-------

_____	_____	_____
-------	-------	-------

_____	_____	_____
-------	-------	-------

_____	_____	_____
-------	-------	-------

_____	_____	_____
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_____	_____	_____
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# THE DEVILS WE KNOW



THE NIGHTMARE is the first component of this scenario; the terrible being or scenario that (the villains believe) must be prevented at all costs. Give it a name, and describe what it wants to do; if it's not a conscious thing, then it 'wants' this the way water wants to flow downhill, and that's all right. Then, fill in what it is capable of doing; what kind of power it would possess or represent if it were loose in the world. Finally, name the thing that holds it back – the dam that restrains it, the magical seal that contains it, the lullaby that keeps it asleep, whatever the case may be.

SOME VILLAINS THINK OF THEMSELVES AS HEROES or at least as a terrible necessity, because their actions prevent a greater evil. Sometimes, they're right – or at least, their belief has strong justification. This situation builder is about designing villainous groups like that which will end up tangling with the player characters.

THIS SITUATION BUILDER AIMS to create situations where a group of villains exist largely to hold back something even worse, whether in secret or very much out in the open. This setup is then prepared to be destabilized in a few different ways, so that even if the player characters would choose to turn a blind eye to the whole thing, they won't be easily able to do so in the long run.

For a couple of media references, think of the film "The Cabin in the Woods" for a secret organization doing this, or the long song in the Doctor Who episode "The Rings Of Akhaten" for an example of the action taking place in public. Both of these treat the terrible nightmare as semi-mystical, but a broken starship sending suicide missions into radioactive asteroid belts to gather fuel could potentially exist along the same lines (the 'nightmare' in such a case isn't conscious, of course, but that's not actually a strict necessity).

The nightmare is...

*A fiery intelligence living in the roots of the world.*

*It wants to awaken volcanoes, spread to the surface.*

*And it can influence massed pools of magical energy.*

*But it is held back by magic energy being dispersed.*

# THE VILLAINS

WHATEVER THE NIGHTMARE SCENARIO IS, and whatever it is that's holding it at bay, some kind of action or maintenance is required to keep things stable. That action or maintenance itself involves doing bad things; people need to be sacrificed or displaced or held to hard labour.

Here, you'll fill in the name of the group who does those bad things, the thing they do to keep the nightmare scenario at bay and what that action requires... and how the group obtains that.

Then, fill out a few details on that organization. Who leads it, who works for them, and what do they have in the way of serious resources (temples, ships, guns, armies, whatever).

AS YOU DEFINE THE VILLAINS, consider which parts of this operation exist openly and which parts operate in secret. The villains and the terrible work may very well be public and sanctified as ritual – but backed up with secret police and agents that deal with dissent against the necessity. Or the actual work may be secret, but recruitment may be taking place openly under false pretences.

It's often handy to have at least a few pieces out in the open where they can be easily interacted with, and a few others kept as secrets so that they can be revealed later. Decide on the mix you want, and build for that.



The nightmare is kept held back by villains...

*The Desparan Heresy, a widespread cult.*

Who maintain the seal by stopping organized magic.

Which requires terror and brutality.

Obtained by sabotage, lynchings, heads on pikes.

## LEADERS:

Rico

Desparan

## FOLLOWERS:

A mob, some  
occult scholars.

## RESOURCE

Alto

Brewery.

Tumpile

Printers

## USED TO

Hide the traffic of  
meetings in taverns.

Print leaflets and  
Heresy literature.

# MAKING IT WORSE

## Complications

The nightmare still has some sway, sending dreams of  
Energy pools and 'batteries' to magicians.

There's a group of would-be liberators, the Vulcanoi,  
Who believe the mind below is benevolent.

Some of the villains are truly corrupt, agitating  
For all magicians to be killed, "to be sure".



IF IT WERE JUST A TERRIBLE NECESSITY, the scenario as given might be acceptable to the player characters, prompting no action. To ensure that this isn't the case, there are three easy complications to throw into the mix – and it's recommended you fill out *all* of them, even though you won't necessarily use them all.

THE NIGHTMARE HAVING SOME POWER means that the act of keeping it at bay is imperfect. If it's an evil entity sealed away, it still has the power to tempt or touch the world in small ways. If it's a severe shortage, then having there be small outages is likely. Having this complication around gives the villains something to point at to prove that they're needed, proves that they're not entirely effective, and means that the villains might want the player character to help *them* deal with such incidents.

WOULD-BE LIBERATORS may be people who don't know about or believe in the nightmare scenario (or at least that it's not bad enough to justify what the villains do)... or they might be people who are faithful to the nightmare itself. They might just want to see the current system burn down, to build something else or not. Decide who they are, and how they hope to bring the villains down. Naturally, they may also hope to gain the help of the player characters.

TRULY CORRUPT VILLAINS are people among the villains that are either on the side of letting loose the nightmare or who have found some way to personally benefit from the presence of the nightmare or the process by which it is kept at bay. Profiteers on supposedly nobly-motivated forced labour, priests doubling the number of human sacrifices that keep the sun from going out so they can use half of those to fuel their own magic...

# MAKING IT MOVE

THIS SITUATION IS LIKELY SEMI-STABLE, or only beginning to spiral out of control into chaos, with the three complications given causing regular incidents that need to be dealt with in some way. Creating some incident that impacts the characters is the easiest way to drag them into the action.

START THIS BY DECIDING WHAT HAPPENED out of sight of the player characters. This will usually be one of those complications acting out, leading to some problem. Having someone close to the player characters vanish, or join one of the various sides of the scenario, is an easy start.

DETERMINE WHO WILL CARRY THE NEWS of this to the player characters – someone who has at least some idea of what has happened, and who may have some kind of next step that they could take.

FINALLY, DECIDE ON A NEXT STEP, a thing that will happen to more forcefully bring the player characters into events if they're moving slowly. Having people come to deal with the bearer of the news is an easy method, whether by wanting to have a frank discussion, to arrest them all, to assassinate everyone involved, or whatever suits. Having another incident take place even closer to 'home' for the player characters is also possible; they might even be present for and involved in it directly. These steps can be weak or strong – the first incident and the news of it can be used purely as foreshadowing to an incident that catches up the characters, or the first incident can be a serious blow to the characters, which they will want to act on immediately.

## A Recent Incident

What already happened: *A mob of extreme Desparani Burned Geoff's PC's tutor (the Witch Una) alive.*

The bearer of the news: *Una's other apprentice, who Barely escaped alive, will bring the news.*

What happens next: *Some extremists are pursuing; Desparan is engaging in internal disciplinings.*

## YOUR GOAL AS GUIDE

ONCE THE CHARACTERS ARE ACTING, the goal is to regularly present them with more information, having each group present their side of affairs in the hopes of turning the characters to their side. Doing so often requires a fair bit of improvising; you may want to prepare a pool of characters representing the various groups (or just a list of names you can assign to whoever you need as you go). In the end, you'll want to push the characters to make and refine a final and informed stand on the situation – and then to try make it stick. *Which* stance they take isn't for you to decide.

# THE DEVILS WE KNOW

The nightmare is...

It wants to \_\_\_\_\_

And it can \_\_\_\_\_

But it is held back by \_\_\_\_\_

The nightmare is kept held back by villains...

Who maintain the seal by \_\_\_\_\_

Which requires \_\_\_\_\_

Obtained by \_\_\_\_\_



RESOURCE	USED TO
_____	{ _____ }
_____	{ _____ }

## Complications

The nightmare still has some sway,

There's a group of would-be liberators,

Some of the villains are truly corrupt,

## A Recent Incident

What happened:

The evidence left behind:

Rumour says:

# EXPEDITIONS

LOST CITIES AND TOMBS TO RAID are often the subject of a fairly common format of expedition, and one that differs from a plain quest in a number of details. This situation builder follows that format and lays it out for your use.

## The Journey To Find

*The Lost Sanctum of the Archmage*

Will take you into *The Forest of Kirthain*

To seek the old Fallen city of Elves

It was once held by *The Archmage Oaina*

And guarded by *Her elemental legion.*

The guide there is *An ancient map of Kirthain.*

Which we can find *In storage in the city prisons.*

The guide surfaced recently *When it was taken from  
a thieving intruder into the wizard's guild.*



THE GOAL for the player characters is typically to find a very specific site or artifact, found within a larger place. If this stumps you at all, try putting everything in the same theme: The book of the afterlife is found within the city of the dead, where the necromancer kings once lived with their immortal nobles.

THE GUIDE to this site can be an item or a person, something or someone that's been to the region in question. Decide where that guide is now, and how it is that this guide only recently came to be available (or only recently decoded, if you like). You may want to place this guide somewhere that presents an obstacle in itself, putting the Guide in prison, or on display in a private and secure collection, or in the hands of the enemies of the characters

# THE DESTINATION

DETAIL THE DESTINATION BEFORE THE JOURNEY; this allows you to use the journey to foreshadow what will be found at the end.

The area around the destination will always be held by something. This something is most often an active agent – a population, a villain, a horde of monstrosities. Decide who this is, and why this agent wants the area. If the occupying power isn't a thinking agent that wants things, give another reason why it's there instead of somewhere else. Additionally, give some note on what opposed the occupiers; what troubles or enemies do they face? Doing this leaves open the option for the player characters to try and deal with the occupiers by some means other than strict stealth or main force; there's something to negotiate over, or some other side to take.

Finally for the destination, determine what became of the original guardians of the site, and how they still act to uphold their old duties. They may have been transformed or transcended, have gone underground as a secret society, or any number of other options – but this exists as a further obstacle if it feels to you like the player characters deal with the main occupiers too quickly for your pace, an ally if the occupiers are especially awful, or some other kind of twist when and as you feel the need to bring one in.



## On Arrival

The area is held by Ghanrana, the bandit queen, and her army of bandits and scum.

Who want it for The sanctum, and as a great secret base – a whole ruined city!

They're opposed by the elementals and wilderness.

The original guardians became settled into the area, but are waking up more and more.

Who still guard the site as natural disasters when outside; they incarnate in the sanctum.

# THE JOURNEY

THE JOURNEY ITSELF is fairly simple; split the travel into three sections, each of which goes over differing terrain, and determine the best way to travel each of them.

This may be fairly simple, in some settings; trains are naturally limited, for example. For characters that have access to flying vehicles, including a segment of underground travel can break things up – or even just denying them places to land in the ending zone. Swampy regions can break up what would otherwise be a lot of horseback riding, and travel to caves and cities deep under the ocean dictate similar courses of travel.

Once you have your three sets of terrain, and know the means of travel, determine how the characters will go about acquiring those methods of getting around (if such an acquisition is needed). These may be fun places to insert small scenes.

Lastly, decide what will threaten the travellers on each leg of the journey, linking these to the destination and the point of origin wherever possible. If the landscape grows thorny and barren in the second leg, and filled with undying things in the third as the group enters the city of the dead, the players will be well-tuned to the theme by the time they arrive.

## The Journey

The first leg is to The forest edge

Best travelled by Horseback

Acquired from The city stables.

The threat this leg is City thieves.

The second leg is to The fallen city.

Best travelled by Hiking with packs.

Acquired from -

The threat this leg is forest dangers.



The third leg is to The sanctum.

Best travelled by more hiking.

Acquired from -

The threat this leg is Bandits!

# EXPEDITIONS

## On Arrival

### The Journey To Find

Will take you into \_\_\_\_\_

To seek the old \_\_\_\_\_

It was once held by \_\_\_\_\_

And guarded by \_\_\_\_\_

The area is held by \_\_\_\_\_

Who want it for \_\_\_\_\_

They're opposed by \_\_\_\_\_

The guide there is \_\_\_\_\_

Which we can find \_\_\_\_\_

The guide surfaced recently \_\_\_\_\_

The original guardians became \_\_\_\_\_

Who still guard the site as \_\_\_\_\_

## The Journey

The first leg is to \_\_\_\_\_

Best travelled by \_\_\_\_\_

Acquired from \_\_\_\_\_

The threat this leg is \_\_\_\_\_

The second leg is to \_\_\_\_\_

Best travelled by \_\_\_\_\_

Acquired from \_\_\_\_\_

The threat this leg is \_\_\_\_\_

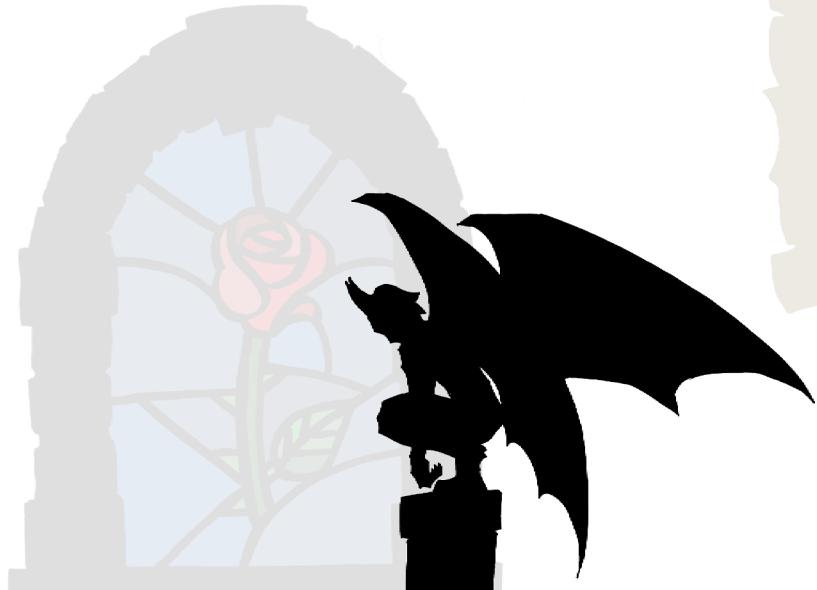
The third leg is to \_\_\_\_\_

Best travelled by \_\_\_\_\_

Acquired from \_\_\_\_\_

The threat this leg is \_\_\_\_\_

# ONE OF US



There is a group of vampires  
Who are organized in covens serving their makers  
And recruit among the powerful and capable.  
They change others by feeding them maker's blood.

A character may be changed when  
Visiting an inn or other place vampires control.

MONSTROUS INFECTIONS like lycanthropy and vampirism are a staple of fantasy and horror movies, and even more extreme transformations are often explored on the horror side of that equation. In many of these stories, a community of transformed individuals exists and attempts to pressure those they've infected into joining them, while those infected also struggle with the seemingly-inevitable decline into their new condition. This situation builder exists to put those pieces and pressures into a game with relative ease, for whatever condition you decide to dream up.

If you already have a transformative condition in mind, start this situation builder with the group that's spreading it. The example to the left gives quick notes on a setup using vampires, which is easy enough to handle. If you need to design a new condition from the ground up, skip to the bits on defining the condition and do that first, then come back to this.

To define the group, you'll need to give the name for your type of altered people, a line on how they're organized (a churche, covens, families, a secret society?), the kind of people that they try to recruit from (street people, strong ones, nobility, elves?), how they infect others, and how this might happen to a player character.

Some of these entries might not match their titles perfectly! If gargoyle attacks always work to petrify those subjected to them, but only a few survive long enough to start being changed into gargoyles themselves, that's not exactly 'recruitment'. Still, it goes in the spot; don't feel like your notes need to match the prompts perfectly.

The changed will know them by *the lack of heartbeat.*  
And will offer them *the blood ritual that controls Stigma.*

But they must accept *the authority of their maker.*

If they refuse, *their maker is expected to kill them.*

The supposed cure is *to kill your maker.*

Trying it will require *a fight, betrayal, etc.*

And may result in *becoming a 'maker' instead.*

THE CURE for this condition should almost always be a chancy, badly-understood story; something the afflicted can attempt but which requires action, components, ingredients, and risk. Additionally, the cure should not be certain; it should be possible for taking the cure to result in transforming the condition rather than actually lifting it.

CONTINUING TO DEVELOP THE CHANGED, you'll need to determine how the already-altered will detect those that they have infected, what they'll offer those being changed, what they demand, and how they punish those who refuse to agree to their demands.

THE SYMPTOMS of the condition being inflicted are the most common means of detecting those altered, but it's possible that whatever sensory abilities given by the condition will play a part. In the example, vampires will detect the changed by their lack of a heartbeat, since I've already decided that vampires can feel or hear heartbeats at range.

THE OFFER that the altered will make is most generally some means of controlling the condition – since, if uncontrolled, it leads to becoming 'lost' in some way. How can the condition be kept from progressing, or kept under control, and how does the group keep some degree of control over it?

ACCEPTANCE of whatever price the group places on their help is most often some form of joining the society of the changed. This might be swearing an oath, accepting an apprenticeship, claiming and maintaining territory according to some set of strictures, and so on. Whatever the case, this should be a heavy price – something serious enough that characters will chafe under it constantly, leading to either attempts to get out from under it, seek a cure, or end up in regular conflicts with the group.

REFUSAL should also entail some significant punishment, and is often a straight description of the procedure by which the group kills those who refuse to join it.

## THE COMPELSION STARTS AT **1** STIGMA

You become constantly pale; the heart stops, sun hurts.  
And whenever you smell someone bleeding  
...You are compelled to feed on and kill the source.  
...In which state you deal +3 biting damage.  
...Resist for the scene by making a willpower check.  
...Mark +1 stigma if you succumb to the compulsion.

## THE BENEFIT STARTS AT **2** STIGMA

You become constantly red-eyed.  
And whenever you drink blood from a person.  
...You gain strength +2 (all day.), heal any one injury.  
...And mark +1 stigma.

## THE CONNECTION STARTS AT **5** STIGMA

You can always sense heartbeats within 20 feet.  
If you focus on the one who changed you.  
...You feel the direction to them, and be felt in return.  
...And can learn what their emotional state is.  
...Mark +1 Stigma when you do this      Nah, it's free.

## YOU ARE LOST AT **20** STIGMA

## DESCRIBING THE CONDITION

BUILDING A CONDITION that slowly escalates and transforms the character can be done using the right-hand side of the situation sheet. The basic mechanic here is “stigma”. When the character is infected, they gain a point of stigma; as the condition progresses, they gain more and more stigma points until they are eventually lost.

There are four tiers of stigma; these are compulsion, benefit, connection, and becoming lost.

COMPELSION AFFECTS the character so long as they have any points of stigma. Anything that removes all stigma cures the condition; actions that only control it should never reduce the stigma to less than one point.

A character at this stage has some symptoms, written in after the “you become constantly”. Is the afflicted character pale? Black-eyed? Constantly hungry?

A character at this stage of affliction also has some form of trigger, and when faced with it is pushed to take some form of action for a time. A gargoyle-cursed character might want to curl up in bright sunlight, while a lycanthrope might feel the urge to tear at their own crawling flesh under the light of the full moon.

When a character gives into their compulsion, they are effectively thrown into a different state. They might be feeding madly, be transformed into stone for the day or into a beast for the night, or whatever fits the condition.

It is also possible to resist the compulsion, at least for a time. This might be a single check to block out the incident, or the compulsion may escalate and require constant and harder resistance to maintain over time, forcing the character to get out of the scene, the sunlight, away from the temptation, or into a cage before they are overtaken.

## DESCRIBING THE CONDITION, 2

THE SECOND TIER of the condition will start at some level of stigma you choose. Decide how many points are needed for this to occur based on how quickly you want it to happen and how common the compulsion trigger is likely to be presented to the character. While affected by this tier of the condition, all the effects of the first tier remain, and more appear.

At this tier, you've got room to add an additional symptom or group of symptoms, showing the progression of the condition.

Also at this tier, those with the condition have the ability to gain some benefit from it. Doing this requires taking some kind of action (which is often, but not always, strongly related to the trigger for their compulsion), and generates a point of stigma.

If stigma can be strongly controlled, then the benefit here should be relatively light and the action triggering it can be commensurately simple. If stigma can't be controlled by going along with the society of the altered, and progresses as a one-way trip into nastiness if it's not cured, then the benefit here should be deeply impressive in order to present an actual temptation.

AT SOME POINT, THE CHARACTER WILL BE LOST. This typically means that the character is locked into compelled action, turned permanently to stone, or otherwise effectively out of action. It might be possible to retrieve a lost character and bring them to recovery by reducing their stigma, or to effect the cure on them even in this state; decide how this works and set the amount of stigma where this event takes place.

THE CONNECTION tier will also have some level of stigma where it kicks in, adding further to the condition the character is operating under. The point at which it comes into play can actually be a lower number than that of the benefit, if desired (it can also be set at one stigma, and be part of the initial package).

At this tier, the character gains some additional sensory information of some kind. This might be very specific; an incipient gargoyle might always intuitively know how long it is to sunrise. Or it might be a much broader extension of a sense, such as a lycanthrope gaining a permanently improved sense of smell.

Additionally, at this tier, the character gains some kind of new sensory ability that they can focus on to gain further information. A character that has been infused with a diabolical presence might be able to tap into that presence to sense the goodness or evil or know the sins of those they meet, while someone that has been injected with troll blood might be able to sense the meaning behind anything a troll expresses, regardless of language. Doing this always come with some strange sensation – vertigo, a chill rushing through the character, the internal movement of an angry beast... And doing so normally increases the number of stigma points the character has (though, as in the example, this can be struck out as desired).

## IN THE COMPANY OF THE CHANGED

IF THE OFFER IS ACCEPTED, you'll need at one Guide character prepared to represent the already-changed to the player character or characters that have been afflicted. If this is a villain or mastermind of some sort, and the others with the condition are merely their underlings, then they're likely all you need. If there's a more complex society of those with the condition, however, you may well need to prepare an entire second situation to describe what's happening among them, potentially using another situation generator to do that.

For that second situation, consider the type of beings involved and the opportunity you want to be presenting to the character – are they getting tipped headlong into intrigue (Long Knives), brought in on the losing side of a power struggle (Broken Places), or something else yet?

## SITUATIONS FOR THE CURE

A SECOND SITUATION might also need to be prepared for the cure, depending on just what it is. If it's a rare and powerful thing, then an expedition of dungeon might stand between the afflicted and acquiring that cure. If it's in the hands of some specific person, they might demand that some problem be taken care of before they're willing to do what's needed to lift the problem.

Additionally, being cured might lead into further situations; those leading the afflicted might want everyone involved in the cure to vanish, while others might also hope to be cured. If a side effect or transformation of the cure includes immunity or resistance to the source of the affliction, the cured may suddenly be in a position to troubleshoot issues related to that condition – if those who have been cleansed by exorcism are the best warriors against the diabolical, say...



# ONE OF US

There is a group of  
Who are organized in  
And recruit among  
They change others by

A character may be changed when

The changed will know them by  
And will offer them  
  
But they must accept  
  
If they refuse

The supposed cure is  
Trying it will require  
  
And may result in

## THE COMPULSION STARTS AT 1 STIGMA

You become constantly  
And whenever you  
...You are compelled to  
...In which state  
...Resist for the scene by  
...Mark +1 stigma if you succumb to the compulsion.

## THE BENEFIT STARTS AT 1 STIGMA

You become constantly  
And whenever you  
...You gain  
...And mark +1 stigma.

## THE CONNECTION STARTS AT 1 STIGMA

You can always sense  
If you  
...You feel  
...And can learn  
...Mark +1 Stigma when you do this

## YOU ARE LOST AT 1 STIGMA

# FUTURITY



HOOK IN THE PLAYER CHARACTERS IMMEDIATELY, if they're not already the instigators. Have one of them be related to the inventor of gunpowder, or have the inventor be a close associate of one of their direst and strongest enemies. Positive, negative, or just plain weird, give them a stake right from the start of the setup, so you know what their role is in things to come.

GRAND SCIENCE, NEW MAGIC, STRANGE ANACRONISMS. These are all familiar abilities and activities at many gaming tables. However, the follow-up to the creation of the impressive new technology or arcana is often a little too simple and one-sided, simply because the creation and its implications are not given centre stage. This situation generator aims to shift that.

TO GET STARTED, FILL IN THE CREATION. Whatever new thing has been created goes right up top.

Follow that up with whoever is producing it, and who they're distributing it to. If the new creation is a service or action (such as a spell), then fill in who is performing it and who benefits from or is subjected to it. If one of the characters is crafting alchemical grenades, which are new to the setting, but only handing them out to the other player characters, that's a pretty small loop, but it's a production and distribution group even so. It won't expand until the group leaves some witnesses who have the presence of mind and ability to collect some of the residue and take it to another alchemist, but that's fine.

Someone has recently created

*An arcane crystal matrix allowing long-range telepathy.*

*It is currently produced by the mountain elf Magisters.*

*And distributed to mountain elf fastnesses and holds.*

*The player characters are mages that trade lore with the Magisters; a matrix is delivered as a gift early on.*

## A MOTIVATED CAST

A NUMBER OF PARTIES WILL BE AFFECTED by any significant invention. This section is for breaking that down and naming them.

It is also understood by all the Magisters, basically.

And can be understood by the PCs, any archmage.

It empowers magicians of all sorts.

Who will use that power to coordinate; fight the Desparans.

This will supplant courier crows.

Which is made by are locally trained; no guilds.

Making and using it requires lots of quartz.

Which comes from dwarven mines.

Heavy use of it also creates pools & currents in ambient magic.

Which affects the nightmare of the Desparan heresy.

Who is capable of duplicating the invention immediately, and who could potentially become capable if they had the right information, plans, ingredients, or other materials to work from?

Who would the invention help, and what would it help them do if delivered into their hands? This may be people who would use it directly, or those with a lot of users working for them – a queen, for example, might not use a new weapon, but has an army...

What older technology or arcana is the invention enough of an improvement on that it will lose a lot of business, and who runs that business? If the Schola trains all the scribes and is paid a tithe of their wages, they may have opinions on the printing press.

What kind of supplies, especially rare ones, are involved in making and using the invention? If the supply is limited or expanding it would involve exploiting resources the holders don't want to exploit, that's something. If the munitions use charcoal, which is made by the poor, that's something too.

What side effects can be expected if the invention is used heavily? Is there an environmental, magical, or other small effect that taken cumulatively may become a significant issue (or benefit) that people will care about? Who?

## FACING THE WORLD

An attempt to isolate it for specific use will be made by:

*The Overlords of the Mountain Elves*

Their want it to be solely for *Mountain Elf* use.

And for the current producers to be conscripted.

They will attempt to *seize the Magisterium, ending its*

*Independence; seize any 'loose' matrices.*

An attempt to duplicate production will be made by:

*The Dwarven Runethanes*

They will try to entice *the player characters to join them.*

An attempt to halt all production will be made by:

*The Desparan Heresy*

They want to *destroy this new arcana completely.*

And for the current producers to *die, as a warning.*

They will do this by *rabble rousing in taverns, sending both*

*Mobs and mercenaries to do the job.*

It will be put to some surprising use by:

*The Vulcanoi*

They'll use it for *contacting their god and relaying its words.*

Which will meet broadly with *fear and disbelief.*

WHILE THE CHARACTERS PURSUE THEIR PLANS for the invention, whatever those may be, and you adjudicate their success, the world will also react to the existence of any serious invention in at least a few of the ways given. For the most part, the cast created in the last step will become the instigators of these actions.

Attempts to isolate production include things like trying to federalize a technology, reserve it for military use, absorb it into a secure monopoly or guild, and so on. Such plans may well include conscripting everyone involved in production; they may even be presented as good offers, though they always limit the freedom of the current producers to do as they like.

Attempts to duplicate production are just what they sound like. If the characters are keeping production and the results a closed affair, word of their feats may still get out. If so, such an attempt may begin with them being followed around, stopped and searched, stolen from, and evidence gathered up behind them.

Attempts to halt production are often intended to destroy the technology entirely, including all existing examples if possible and either locking up or killing everyone able to produce it. This kind of action is normally only taken by the extremely powerful or extremely desperate, and requires significant resources to pull off — assassins, government influence or private military power, and so on.

Finally, at least one wild card will likely occur at some point, where an expanded, excellent, or heinous use for the invention is found. This may be some adaptation of it, or simply a larger-scale use than the player characters would have considered. Inventing a new weapon and intending to use it to fight evil can still lead to an atrocity being committed with one's work, once it has gotten loose into the world.

# FUTURITY

Someone has recently created \_\_\_\_\_

It is currently produced by \_\_\_\_\_

And distributed to \_\_\_\_\_

The player characters are \_\_\_\_\_

It is also understood by \_\_\_\_\_

And *can* be understood by \_\_\_\_\_

It empowers \_\_\_\_\_

Who will use that power to \_\_\_\_\_

This will supplant \_\_\_\_\_

Which is made by \_\_\_\_\_

Making and using it requires \_\_\_\_\_

Which comes from \_\_\_\_\_

Heavy use of it also \_\_\_\_\_

Which affects \_\_\_\_\_

An attempt to isolate it for specific use will be made by:

Their want it to be solely for \_\_\_\_\_

And for the current producers to \_\_\_\_\_

They will attempt to \_\_\_\_\_

An attempt to duplicate production will be made by:

They will try to entice \_\_\_\_\_

An attempt to halt all production will be made by:

They want \_\_\_\_\_

And for the current producers to \_\_\_\_\_

They will do this by \_\_\_\_\_

It will be put to some surprising use by:

They'll use it for \_\_\_\_\_

Which will meet broadly with \_\_\_\_\_