

The Crimson Ledger of Ecktoria

A Fate's Edge One-Shot Adventure

The Pitch

In the marble forums of Ecktoria, where the Utaran Empire's ghosts still echo through colonnaded halls, the city's greatest scandal isn't political—it's literary. The **Crimson Codex**, a legendary book of forbidden knowledge said to contain every secret, every lie, and every truth that could destroy the city's elite, has been stolen from the Library of Keys.

But this isn't just any theft. The Codex was bound in oaths—literally. Each page was a magically enforced secret, kept by the weight of sworn vows. Now those oaths are breaking, and as they do, Ecktoria's power structure is crumbling. Senators confess to treason in their sleep, merchants reveal the locations of their hidden vaults, and the High Priest of the Everflame begins preaching heretical sermons about the “true” history of the Empire.

The Hook

The PCs are hired by **Livaea, the Crimson Courtier** herself (appearing as a patron to a desperate Runekeeper PC, or through a powerful NPC contact) to recover the Codex before the city tears itself apart. But Livaea has her own agenda—the Codex contains the location of the **Red Branch**, a splinter faction of the old Utaran nobility who vanished centuries ago but may hold the key to restoring the Empire.

The twist? The theft was orchestrated by **Inaea, Angel of the Spider**, working through a network of blackmail victims who finally found the courage to fight back. The breaking oaths aren't a bug—they're a feature. And the Codex is writing itself as it's read, with each secret revealed adding new pages of devastating truths.

What Makes It Cool

Social Chaos as Adventure Hook

Instead of monsters or armies, the threat is cascading social collapse. Noble houses turn on each other, merchant guilds expose each other's illegal dealings, and the city's famous bureaucracy begins processing absurd requests (like citizenship for statues, or marriage licenses for long-dead couples).

Living MacGuffin

The Codex isn't just a book—it's actively rewriting itself, creating new secrets even as old ones are revealed. Players might find that reading certain passages changes their own character sheets or

creates new complications.

Patron Theater

Livaea and Inaea's conflict plays out through the PCs. Livaea wants order restored through manipulation and seduction of power, while Inaea wants the web of lies to collapse so new connections can form. Players must choose sides or forge their own path.

Genre Mashup

High political intrigue meets magical mystery. Think “House of Cards” meets “The Name of the Wind” in a setting where words have weight and secrets are currency.

Ecktoria as Character

The city itself becomes a reactive NPC. As oaths break, districts change personality—military quarters become paranoid, merchant districts turn anarchic, religious areas become fanatical.

Session Structure

1. **The Confessions** - Arrive to find the city's elite involuntarily spilling secrets, hired to investigate.
2. **Threads of Power** - Follow the web of blackmail and counter-blackmail as alliances shift.
3. **The Red Branch** - Discover the exiled nobles are trying to return through the chaos.
4. **Patron's Gambit** - Livaea and Inaea make their final moves for control.
5. **The New Ecktoria** - Decide what kind of city rises from the ashes of broken oaths.

Cool Set Pieces

- A dinner party where everyone reveals their darkest secrets in turn.
- The Forum of Keys where magical contracts are being nullified mid-signature.
- A chase through the city's bureaucratic maze as players try to stop a marriage between political rivals that would unite the city's factions.
- The final confrontation in the Library where the Codex is rewriting itself with each revelation.

GM Guidance

The Crimson Codex as a Dynamic Element

Treat the Codex like a character or a force of nature. It should feel alive. Use clocks to track its influence:

- **Secrets Unbound [6/8]:** Advances as oaths break and secrets are revealed. When it fills, trigger a major social upheaval (e.g., a noble house disowns its heir publicly, a major trade deal collapses, a statue in the Forum starts speaking prophecies).
- **Codex Rewriting [4/6]:** Advances when significant truths are learned or major characters

interact with it. When it fills, the Codex gains a new, dangerous property or reveals a previously unknown, game-changing secret.

Players reading from it should face risks (Backlash, SB generation, or triggering a Complication Clock).

Patron Interaction

- **Livaea (Seduction & Social Binding):** Offers elegant solutions, social manipulation, and the promise of restoring order (her way). Her Rites (like *Binding Vow*, *Sovereign Glamour*) are powerful tools for the PCs, but come with the risk of becoming entangled in her web of bargains. She might task them with *reinforcing* key oaths to stabilize factions she favors.
- **Inaea (Glamour & Bargain):** Offers empowerment through breaking bonds and revealing truths. Her Rites (like *Snaring Filament*, *Strand of Inevitability*) help players manipulate the connections between NPCs. She might task them with *exposing* corruption or helping victims break free from blackmail.

Present both Patrons' offers as tempting and logical within their frameworks. Let the players' choices drive the narrative consequences.

Ecktoria Reacts

Make the city feel alive by changing the atmosphere and available actions in districts based on the **Secrets Unbound** clock or specific events.

- **The Grand Forum (Law & Order):** Starts formal and bureaucratic. As oaths break, it becomes chaotic—contracts failing, magistrates arguing, public trials turning into farces. Later, it might become a place of zealous purges or desperate reconciliations.
- **The Coin-House Floor (Commerce):** Initially a place of sealed ledgers and careful negotiations. As secrets spill, it becomes a place of frantic deals, bankruptcies, and wild speculation. Offers might be made openly, or via frantic whispers.
- **The Basilica of the Everflame (Religion):** Begins with rigid doctrine. As the High Priest's sermons become heretical, it splits into factions—orthodox defenders, ecstatic truth-seekers, and fearful doubters. Rituals might become unpredictable.

Adjust Position and DV for social rolls based on the district's current state and the PC's alignment with it.

Investigation and Social Challenges

- **Following the Threads:** Use the **Deck of Consequences** liberally for social interactions. Hearts (Social/Emotional fallout) and Diamonds (Magical/Spiritual disturbance) are particularly relevant. A successful **Wits+Investigate** or **Presence+Sway** roll might reveal a connection, but the SB could expose the investigator's own secret or attract the attention of a rival faction.
- **The Web of Oaths:** Create a simple visual or mental map of key NPCs and their connections (political, financial, romantic, blackmail). As oaths break, lines snap or change color. Players can use skills or magic to trace these lines, sever them, or tie new ones (Inaea's influence) or reinforce them (Livaea's influence).

- **Runekeeper Magic:** Oath-based Rites are incredibly potent here. A *Binding Vow* could stabilize a crumbling alliance. A *Mark of Antlers* (Grimmir) might grant authority to command respect in the chaos. A *Revelation* Rite could pierce an illusion, but might also unleash an unwanted truth. The *Cantor's Path* (if a PC has it) could be used to “sing” truths or lies with potent social effect.

Potential Twists

- The **Red Branch** isn't returning to restore the Empire—they want to reclaim their lost artifacts and disappear again, using the chaos as cover. The Codex might be their key to finding these items.
- The **High Priest** isn't mad; she's been chosen by the Codex itself to be its voice, preaching the “truth” it contains.
- A PC's **own secret** is contained within the Codex. Reading it or being near it causes them to involuntarily reveal it, or grants the Patron (Livaea or Inaea) leverage over them.
- The **Codex is a trap**, designed by an ancient enemy of the Utarans. The “secrets” are half-truths meant to lead Ecktoria (or its successor state) to its doom.

Conclusion

This one-shot leverages Fate's Edge's strengths in social dynamics, Patron interaction, and consequence-driven storytelling. The focus on a magical artifact that actively shapes the narrative, combined with the reactive city environment and the high-stakes Patron conflict, provides a rich and dynamic setting for player agency and dramatic outcomes. The collapsing social order ensures constant pressure and shifting alliances, making every interaction meaningful.