

[The pivotal scene was from a dream before 730am on 1/12/18. I did not watch Carrie or anything resembling this story's atmosphere recently before the dream]

The atmosphere is similar to the original Carrie. Like many fantasy stories, it involves a school of magic, but this story is very solemn and dark. The school's style is a mix of a deeply religious pagan community and a strict Catholic community. Set in a world that resembles 15<sup>th</sup> century Western Europe, the story takes place in a fictional country and town. A pagan/Catholic-like religion dominates the land, and magic is worshipped everywhere. The style is like an old painting of a garden. The focus is on school that separates girl and boys. At first, everyone is happy. The girls must practice to be perfect witch maidens, wearing solemn dresses and nun-like clothes, but during 'supervised days' that come once a week, they get to talk to the boys while being overlooked by statue-like guardians and teachers who glare forebodingly at them. The boys are training to be warlocks. Many are rowdy but are under extremely strict discipline too. They are considered the lifeblood of the country as they must train to be its rulers.

The pivotal scene comes when this rival nation or some cult attacks the school. A group of opposing witches begins taunting, laughing and firing spells at the students. However, their spells are limited and can be used up if a ritual is performed. The school, in ancient tradition, has told their own girls that they must be the maiden sacrifices to let the boys escape to a tomb that begins their "journey" in these dire times. In this ritual, the girls must run into the graveyard and hide. This occurs in several waves. Every girl in the first wave is dressed the same. They run into the graveyard, each one hiding behind a different tombstone or sculpture, and on the beat of the music, they must walk out, converging into 2 lines one after the other, and be hit by the spells. They would die. This would drain the witches of their spells (they MUST fire at the girls because in their banshee-like state, they continue firing no matter what) and while they are firing, the boys must run past them as the spells are redirected into the girls. Then, there's a period where complete silence happens. This is when the next wave of girls, wearing different dresses than the previous wave but all wearing the same thing, run in and fearfully hide. Due to how the ritual works, these are the rules that MUST work for the boys to have protection from the spells. There must be sacrifices. Obviously, it's not perfect and some boys are still killed before they run into the "aura shield" (not visible). But no girl is killed as they run into the graveyard, as no spells are fired during this time. The boys CANNOT run in the graveyard during this period, as they become frozen if they set foot on the cobblestone pathway into the graveyard during this period.

The main character is a girl who traditionally likes to follow the rules, but begins to be introduced to more and more changes. When the pivotal scene comes, she and her friends in her designated wave run to the tombstones, as was practiced every day, and begin to wait until the firing begins (though they don't hear the firing; they must wait for the music to begin. This music is like in the final scene of Carrie). As she and her friends look at one another and begin walking step by step on beat, she sees the girls crying and shaking. In front of her are statues of angel-like creatures and caricature-like deformed humanoids, and many, MANY flowers (after all, the whole school is like a garden). They approach a stone arc with roses and vines hanging off it, and this is where the girls exit to die as the boys pour in.

The girl whispers to her best friend, a tall, gangly and quiet girl with frizzy brown hair. Her best friend is not much of a standout; she is somewhat duller than the main character, and just likes to smile and obey the rules all the time, not having much of her own opinion. She likes traditional feminine things and is not much of a rebel. However, she goes along with what the main character tells her to (at least, at the start of the story). The main character, Aritha, tells her best friend, Mary, that they were taught spells by the school to fight back too. She can't stand how they have to walk to their deaths just because this was the traditional ritual chosen. Aritha convinces Mary and a couple of her other classmates to conceal their wands before they walk out, then suddenly pull them out and start firing at the witches in their banshee-like laughing trance. It's not shown what the school's reaction is. The teachers do not have total control; rather, it is some religious organization (akin to bishops or cardinals) that run the school, but their faces are never seen. Their notifications and moods are communicated by bells and choruses. So after the girls attack the banshees and save themselves, stunning a few but not all, a silence occurs. Then, a loud and angry bell rings and hurts the girls' ears. An angry chorus bellows out and the girls know they are in dire trouble. They watch the next wave of girls start ominously running towards them in the far distance, but something is off now- there is a dark presence just behind them. In fear, not knowing what the punishment is, the girls run off into the graveyard, going into a different tomb than the boys. This tomb has a tunnel that leads them into a forest.

Not everyone becomes a witch or warlock; the magic users are held in high admiration, as they are considered to have a sacred duty to protect the lands. The town has a gothic architecture design, with timber-framed buildings everywhere.

This is the story of a girl who eventually starts a cult and becomes deformed into this agonizing, orange tall imp-like caricature of a human, tragically through punishment by the school. This creature seems to be stretched into this deformity. It has one big eye, elongated limbs, a hook nose, and a perpetual frown, always seemingly in pain. Later, a time skip occurs. Her descendant is a powerful witch who attends another school ("modern" is very different than ours since this is an alternative universe and the gothic architecture, etc. is still all there, and technology does not exist. But social laws have changed and there seems to be more freedom, but the world is still very state-run. "Modern" means more like a mix of the gothic architecture, roman architecture and WWII Europe. There is more freedom in a way like how Dionysus has taken over modern life. Nations are still fighting, but the youth is decadent and tries to escape it in hedonistic lifestyles.) Her descendant uses spells to make herself very fast as she steps. In this second arc, her descendant discovers the pain that Aritha has been subjected to, and frees her from her suffering by ending her life. She then vows to take revenge against the school by communicating with the ghosts of the girls who have died, and investigating the cult/clues that Aritha left behind. She enters Aritha's school that retains these horrifying rituals and sets out to make it right; the old cardinals have maintained the rituals just like 4 centuries ago. This second arc is NOT the start of the story; the first arc must be about Aritha. In the second arc, it's not clear who this new main character is related to, until she discovers the buried truths. The second arc is shorter than the first arc.

Before the pivotal event, Aritha has a crush on several of the boys, and after she runs away, she becomes entangled with one of them, but does not truly fall in love with him. This boy is a captain of one of the sports teams. It's implied she gets along better with the other captain of the team, the boy's best friend, but they cannot be together and never admit their feelings. Her descendant, in the second arc, does not get into any romances as she doesn't have time. She's too invested in the horrifying buried truths that she has to uncover, and too preoccupied with how it is related to the ongoing war outside of the "safety borders" of her town and province. Her descendant's name is Agatha.

Aritha is 16 at the start of these events, and is 19 when it ends. She starts the cult at 17. She becomes pregnant when she is 18, during which she has already started the cult that protects her. Aritha learns to become a powerful witch and to craft spells that inspire many to follow her, but is betrayed by one of her friends.

The pagan/Catholic like cult worships magic and the creatures surrounding it. There are several gods that are prayed to. There is a strict hierarchy in which everyone answers to the Supreme Figure, who is like the Pope. The cult is very puritan-like, playing down pleasures like delicious food (though they are not completely strict about it) and practicing chastity until consummation. Happiness is still encouraged, especially by the teachers, but it is severely kept in check. The students are unaware of this strictness as they are used to it, and they are not being tortured daily, except they must have strict devotion to their duties, as they are aware how important they are to ensure the survival of their nation against the other religious powerhouse nations and cults. The students live typical, happy lives and usually, there are rarely any dire events. The "March of the Sisters" has not occurred in over a century, so it was thought to be something that will never actually happen; it was just a boring old drill that the girls used to mock as they were doing it every day. However, they did hear about some horrifying events that senior girls had to go through, but most of the horror was told in unfounded rumors and whispers. Only a few girls died in these events, and their sacrifices were commemorated in great praise and worship. The girls remembered standing for 7 hours just saying prayers for these deceased girls.

The story is not as simple as "rebellious against traditional values". There are far deeper histories and reasons behind why the religion runs the way it does. The religion of Aritha's nation is called the Basilica of the Sacrecation; in short, it is referred to as Basilica, and the followers are called the Devoted (change these names later). It is deeply devoted to understanding the creatures of the gardens, which live in ghostly, grey/faint/foggy locations full of gardens, white dresses, stone sculptures, and more.

[???

The Basilica teaches that long ago, humans were always in fear of the demons that would capture humans and torture them. Magic was always there, but it was not organized. Both adults and children would always talk to the creatures of the gardens, who have strong magic prowess. While adults would consult and negotiate with spirits for matters such as daily harvests, the children befriended them.

Sometimes they were benevolent, but other times, adults feared that their children were being led astray by a creature who had also befriended a demon. Humans had one type of magic, while other creatures had other types of magic, and they would bargain and help one another. Magic allowed gardens to grow, and it built cottages and villages. It was the source of life, food, and happiness. Villages would dance to its songs and natural flow. Nearby these gardens were huge grassy plains (like those in Switzerland) and Mountains.

[ignore this paragraph below for now; it's just an idea that doesn't seem to fit in. Describe more of the puritan-like worship of magic, then develop the backstory]

But the creatures became slowly more and more corrupted. Before, humans were just another creature of the gardens. It was unknown who built it all, even the sculptures in the gardens. Over time, these proto-humans shed their previous form to become more like the sculptures, though not exactly. This was in response to creatures becoming more and more corrupted to demons lurking in the shadows. Realizing they could not just simply negotiate with the creatures anymore, who would cheat the humans, they needed a way to [end paragraph]

Worldly geography is unknown; only local borders are discussed in the story. Everything stays within this small scope.

A Devoted would offer themselves to negotiate with the creatures of the gardens. The Basilica is not obsessed with Sin; rather, it is obsessed with performing the rituals just as ordered, as horrible things happen if they are not performed. The clergy is a society of warlocks and witches who have chosen to devote their entire life to magic. Rituals consisted of practicing what was seen as "protection of the greater good" where certain groups were ordered to protect other groups as it decided by the Will of the Charity. This clergy is not corrupt, but has fully understood what needs to be done to protect against the Dread and the Unspeakable. The Unspeakable is an actual danger that is faced if the rituals are not performed. Different religious nations were created as they interpreted fighting against the Unspeakable in different ways; they believe their own way is the only way to protect against it, and if other nations have their own way, then the Unspeakable will be let in and horror will reign. No one except high members of the clergy know what this Unspeakable is; it is best not to discuss it. Besides countering the Unspeakable, rituals are also used for warfare and self-protection.

Warlocks and witches behave more like monks and nuns than evil figures. Tradition and unquestionable devotion are supreme in all societies. The theme is not about breaking free from hierarchy and tradition, but about asking questions about different interpretations of magic. The main focus is on the duty of witches that Aritha breaks away from. She is not depicted as the "utmost free thinker"; rather, she just doesn't want to die, and wants to understand why these rituals have to happen to protect against the Unspeakable.

Magic is prevalent throughout the world, though not everyone is adept at it. Those who have shown strong promises beyond casting a few everyday simple spells are considered gifted and may be selected by the clergy to fulfill certain duties. The magic schools are all run in monasteries by clergy members, although most teachers are not part of the clergy, as the clergy is highly selective.

There is a scene where Aritha and her friends revisit the graveyard, but now have their backs firmly against the walls with their wand in hand, taking cover and scattered while fighting another force. They have their dresses with white frills and other traditional attire on.

The rituals are shown to be necessary to keep the Unspeakable away, but it may not be the only way. Society keeps on guiltting her that it's her fault for the horrors that are unleashed. But Aritha searches for a different way.

When Aritha and her friends exit the tomb, they see a vast grassy plain and garden, like a Monet painting. But unlike the gardens they frequented before, there was no sign of humans or civilization anywhere. It was just a garden by itself, with empty cottages and paths. There was a forest, but with no life- no animals, no insects, only plants.

People live in fear of the Unspeakable. The Unspeakable is what causes deformities and plagues. One time, the girls approach a sleeping figure, only to discover she is dead and plants have sprouted through her, though her body is not decayed and she looks at peace. This is one of the works of the Unspeakable. The Devoted also fear that they will lose the trust and mercy of the six gods, who are the ones protecting people from the Unspeakable. No gods are ever seen, which makes their existence more mysterious. They are never referred to as gods, but rather as Givers, Mothers and Fathers. In the "March of the Sisters", the reason the girls must be sacrificed is because it is by the divine grace of Mother Seleth that the people are given a fighting chance- only if they demonstrate they are worthy of it, and devoted enough. No one lives in luxury- the high clergy are especially in constant pain and torment. The boys were spared at the moment as they had "another role" to play, which would involve their sacrifice. The girls were assigned to be mere servants and stepping stones for the boys to reach the warface stage of one of the overarching rituals.

Aritha is led to discover a small cult that worships the Cardinal Mother, one of the Forbidden whom the girls were not permitted to speak of. They were never taught why these entities were the Forbidden.

The greatest Giver does not have a name. The Most Divine is gender neutral and is said to be the supreme figure whom all the Givers answer under. Magic is said to be a gift from the Givers, and should never be used lightly or disrespected. Though the rituals actually work, the clergy does not understand its inner workings, and as such many are driven into mental instability, which shows as the students interact with some of the clergy in the school.

Early on, a theory that the reader likely formulates and believes in is it seems the Givers are the ones causing the Unspeakable, and are falsely proclaiming to be the saviors of the Children, which is what humans call themselves in this universe. However, this is false, as revealed later on that the Unspeakable is a real threat. It's revealed it's not just a threat to humans and mortal beings, but to the Givers as well. But the story hints at it, and characters hypothesize it.

One of the teachers who supports the girls is a milquetoast, gay teacher named Sir Tobias. He gets to know the girls and becomes understanding of them, and though he fears the Basilica and the ecclesiastics, he does his best to communicate with the girls and help them avoid the school that is hunting them. Another aide is the girls' gardening teacher, Madame Rudolph, a stern but friendly teacher who is distrustful of the clergy and has her own secret beliefs of how magic should work. After Sir Tobias, the other closest teacher is Madame Lumia, who wants to be praised and sees a lot of potential in Aritha for joining her team of hexers. Though it seems like she just wants to use Aritha, she also forms a bond with her and screams in fear when Aritha rebels and the bells ring; she has to be held back by the other teachers as she struggles against them and collapses.

The style resembles the last 20 minutes of *Suspiria*, the last scenes of *Carrie*, and the 1968 *Romeo/Juliet* film. I did not watch or know of *Suspiria*'s plot until after I dreamed of the story's pivotal event. There is constant silence, which is only broken by chorus or classical orchestra music. One of the few joyous music pieces are played by the lute, similar to stuff from *Romeo/Juliet*. This land takes a mixture from all different time periods from the real world. There are no typical modern horror movie atmosphere music pieces.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bzmc4ixiMww>

Aritha is drawn to a more direct and aggressive approach of attacking the threats against her nation, *Pristina*. The Basilica shun these methods as they claim they were tried before and do not work; they favor the more organized, guaranteed methods of offering their servitude to the Givers. Indeed, some of the girls and boys find they have trouble leaving their routine lifestyle, and continue their prayers even after they left. Immediately after the girls escape into the garden, they perform their daily ritual, as they still cling to the Givers. They mock the school's drills, but still believe in the ritual's powers to protect them, as many see the Unspeakable's aftermath first hand. Once Aritha is influenced deeply by the Cardinal mother, however, she slowly begins to wean off and starts performing the Cardinal Mother's rituals and dances instead. She goes from unsure to deeply devoted, and upon her death, she becomes a martyr figure for the Cardinal Mother cult (though this history is quickly buried once the cult is taken over and their books are burned).

While the Givers have solemn and beautiful displays where everyone walks in line and on beat, the Cardinal Mother is more flowing and aggressive. It is not totally freeform and wild and fast- it is just aggressive and full of movement, and is performed by one individual. There is a lot of spinning. The story does not take a side on what is right universally.

The Cardinal Mother is depicted as statues that have a red, hooked nose appearance. When Aritha finds herself deep in prayer, she sees the statue come to life and talk to her in a trance, teaching her new powers. Only she can see this happening.

REVISION: The Devoted do not worship creatures of the garden. They only worship the Givers and the magic that is said to be a gift from them. The Devoted shun all other 'forbidden magic', which is practiced by various creatures of the garden, by cults, and by the bordering nations. All the bordering nations are as strict as Pristina; the difference is they choose to follow different gods (also called Givers. All gods are called Givers). The bordering nations race to win over or take over cults by force, as the cults contain powerful magic that the Givers believe can help them.

No one can communicate directly with the Givers except the highest of monks and nuns. The highest official, the Vicar, is the only one able to speak to the Givers. The next lowest officials can only stay in the same room and listen to their conversation; if they dare speak up and interrupt, they are punished. These officials pass down the word to messengers, who spread it to lower officials and the common people.

All dresses and clothes are like in a Monet painting. Monks, nuns, witches and warlocks wear robes, but also have ceremonial dresses, such as during the March of the Sisters.

Potential characters:

- Aritha: deeply devout and said to be a decent student by the teachers, occasionally winning the praise of several, but not standing out. Overall just an 'average' student, so many are surprised when she disobeys protocol despite being selected into one of the most honorable waves during the March of the Sisters. But because she is so deeply devout, she is always obsessed with trying to do what she thinks is best for magic. Her troubles mirror Martin Luther's struggle to be as best as he can, though not much else is similar. Aritha begins questioning if certain methods are right, but is quickly shut down by teachers, to which she shuts up and doesn't take it any further. It isn't until a life or death situation that she reveals her true feelings, and does things her own way (which she always wanted to do). Some more understanding teachers like Sir Tobias are much nicer to her and try to get her to change her ways, which she says 'yes' but secretly doesn't agree or restarts her spark. Sir Tobias always has to deal with Aritha's repeat sparks, and gets tired by it but never angry at her. She was not a Chosen One or a vessel for the Cardinal Mother, but just becomes so good and aligned with its philosophies that she becomes the most powerful witch in the cult, and is elevated to saint-like status

upon her early, gruesome “death” (imprisonment). Though she fits in well, rumors of her questions spread and make it seem like she’s a troublemaker, which is meant to make her stop her questions. She hates herself whenever she disobeys protocol a little because of this slight ostracization. She doesn’t want to end up like some of the students outcasts, who rebelled so much that everyone hates them now and they’re not trusted to partake in any rituals, and instead must take up janitorial and other servitude duties (they’re suspended from learning for at least a year, and have to go to ‘rehabilitation’, in which it’s unknown what happens to them).

- Mary: unsure of herself, she’s not a good student and is more of a follower. She’s very humble though not too bright. However, she is a good friend to Aritha who is there for her when no one else is. Not like Barbara from Stranger Things. She won’t drag Aritha out of things just because it’s ‘not right’, she just does whatever she thinks will make people happy. She doesn’t care about being loved as much as she likes to keep things peaceful. Tall, brown frizzy hair, but no glasses like other frumpy sidekicks. She spends more time gardening than studying.
- Sir Tobias: not a great warlock, but good at counseling people. He devoted himself to becoming a monk because he wanted to help out for the greater good, and wanted to serve the Divine as best as he could. He continues to be deeply religious and never helps out the girls with their rituals directly (at first) though he provides support such as food and shelter. He doesn’t aggressively try to sway the girls but hopes they will discover their way on their own, like he did.
- Beth: Though she fears the Givers like all the girls, she is more lazy and lenient with her rituals, thinking in the short term instead of the long term. She prefers to mock the rituals, make jokes and prank people because she doesn’t think about the consequences. She’s a huge sloth and zones out a lot, and doesn’t have a lot of motivation in life, unless there’s something enticing in the short term. Spends most of her time sleeping or engaging in gossip. She, like the other 4 girls, don’t get to know Aritha and Mary well until they escape together.
- Catherine: A young girl deeply devoted to the Givers who will not abandon what she has been taught. She accompanies a group that is sent to hunt the rebel girls, though she has sympathy for them. She trains as an gifted exorcist, and during one assignment, she chooses to take a handicapped young child’s demon into herself despite Aritha’s protests about how there is “another way”. But the demon is rapidly taking over the child, and there’s no guarantee it is reversible after the few minutes pass. Once the demon goes inside of her, she still fails to save the child and dies in the arms of one of the monks who raised her, saying “She only wanted to help.” Catherine was seen as many as the Chosen One, as she was the most gifted and seemed to be able to communicate with higher powers. She was always friendly to Aritha and Mary.

The teachers try to guilt the students when they disobey, saying they are making Mother Seletth sad. They teach them that Mother Seletth has given much of her life to aiding her Children, and if they do not return the favor, they are wasting the magic.

As Aritha is transformed into a hideous creature in constant pain, she is fearful but still thanks the Cardinal Mother for the short time she had in feeling her love. The Cardinal Mother is not seen as a ‘good benevolent being’. Rather, it is vengeful and worshipped by those who have been outcasted for rebellion. Those who worship the Cardinal Mother also worship her siblings.

Angels are seen as servants of the Givers. When rituals occur, angels are often seen alongside helping.



Cherubs are annoying angels that people tolerate; cherubs lecture humans over and over again.

The Givers are not omnipresent or omniscient. The Givers also claim they do not directly interfere with human lives because humans are nothing to them- instead, they test the humans to see if they are worthy enough. Also, the Givers can't do everything; you can't bypass a ritual to get its effects, you HAVE to do the ritual itself. The ritual isn't some sort of gift to the Givers in exchange for something; it's a mechanistic procedure, like how one can't get well done meat unless it's actually cooked. The Givers can't just will the meat to be well done just because.

However, the Givers are powerful because their magic surpasses all. They can grant people power, etc. They have no need for rituals because they do not result in anything which benefits them. However, they cannot mind control humans, so their influence against other Givers depends on which humans follow them. The Givers are in constant war against one another, and because they realize they have things (magic) that humans want, they use the humans to attack the kingdoms built by other Givers. Givers are obsessed with building more powerful kingdoms, as it gives them great happiness and fulfillment. Without kingdoms, they are unhappy and become wretched spirits. Perhaps the unspeakable are fallen Givers whom the 'living' Givers must protect both themselves and humans against?

Magic is not JUST something bestowed by Givers. It's present in all living things. However, Givers have access to certain spells that are inaccessible to common beings. Many of these spells protect against the Unspeakable. This is why they are worshipped.

In Pristina and most of the neighboring kindoms, the girls fulfill a support role because the boys are meant to become leaders and soldiers. As such, they are used as human shields. This is the main issue that troubles Aritha, as she feels all her hard work in learning spells has been wasted in these rituals where she can't demonstrate what she's learned. Thus, her act of rebellion is also an ego driven act, where she tries to show off. When she attacks the cultist witches, she is fearful as it's the first time she's been in actual combat, but the adrenaline rush carries her along. Though the Cardinal Mother also advocates for rigid roles and lifestyles (there is never complete freedom like in our real world- doing so would just let in the Unspeakable), it is one that is more suited to Aritha.

Every once in a while, people would rebel against their roles. Because this causes the Unspeakable to attack, they're quickly shunned, and are often killed by angry mobs.

Obvious influences are Harry Potter and LWA. The performance episode of LWA seems to have subconsciously influenced the pivotal event. The passing of the torch midway is like in Fire Emblem 4, where Sigurd dies after being betrayed.

Aritha sees the consequences of her actions. Because the ritual was broken, many (over 50) boys ended up dying as a result, including a shy, nice boy that Mary has a crush on. She sees either their dead bodies or their graves. But the last wave of 20 girls (Aritha's was the second wave) survives as the ritual was broken, so there was no use in continuing it. This causes mixed feelings within Aritha, but much later on, she becomes open to the idea that it may be the system that caused bad planning, which never planned for alternative solutions. She never fully accepts that she did nothing wrong and carries this guilt in her, knowing that despite being devoted to the Cardinal Mother, her choices cannot always save all or work, and she expects sacrifices that she feels guilty about.

Possible alternative names to Cardinal: Red, Scarlet, Fuschia, Crimson, Carmine, Amaranth, Cerise. All these adjectives are used to describe things associated with the Cardinal Mother.

Aritha does not accompany Agatha in any way. After being transformed, there are no moments for happiness for her until her merciful death. This is not an anime, so many tropes from anime are not present.

Monks and nuns have to take a vow of celibacy; it does not matter if they were not celibate before the vow. Homosexuality is not persecuted by most of the religions, except for a few fringe cults and one of the nations.

The Unspeakable being fallen givers is never confirmed, but it is never disproven, and it is suggested/hinted at alongside other plausible theories. On the other hand, the unspeakable being done by the living givers is disproven.

Three types of spells include: prophetic, trance, and ritualistic. Pointing wands/hands and incantations are only meant to aid the user in performing the spell, as it gives them more control, like how one can use a scope to shoot a gun. But if a caster is very skilled in a spell, they can bypass their aids. Just because a caster is skilled in one spell does not mean they can bypass aids in all spells, though the most powerful casters can do this with most of the spells in their repertoire. In the story, the school mentions several types of spells, but only prophetic is elaborated upon first. The other types of spells are revealed as the story goes on.

Note that this spell system is similar to many other stories I write, such as in *Simulacrum Exodus*. These worlds are not connected. However, there are other stories use these exact same spell systems, and focuses more on them being part of the plot than this story does.

Prophetic

Prophetic spells are ones in which the user has a clear sense of how something will occur in the world. For example, if someone is knocked down, the user should be able to imagine not just that person falling down, but all the immediate consequences of it. The stronger the user's prediction to what actually will happen, the stronger the spell actually happens. If the user only has a weak, approximate prediction, then only some of the user's prediction will occur.

The reason prophetic spells is user controlled is because there is not just one fate, but multiple- possibly millions- of branching fates. Thus, prophetic spells allow users to grab hold of one of these strings of fate and pull the entire world and everyone's soul into it. Meanwhile, thousands of other prophetic spells are cast at once, and many could interact with one another. The casters with the strongest powers will have their version of events win over others, or sometimes a mixture occurs if one caster is stronger in one way but not another, or they are around equal strength. Casters usually try to see only a few seconds ahead before they cast. This is because if they try to wish for something to happen too far ahead, there will be too many interactions, and thus this introduces too much noise in their predictions, meaning their predictions will not likely go the way they think (the more noise there is, the more likely a Monkey's paw scenario will occur. Monkey's paw accidents occur because prophetic wishes are so vague, that they become twisted. When there are too many interactions, the caster's specific scenario cannot be satisfied along with everyone else's, only a very vague version can. Thus, the vague version is inputted as a wish, meaning it's subject to misinterpretations). However, those who are incredibly well versed can see many seconds ahead, being aware of all the interacting spells going on and all the events around them. They do not consciously know this and thus cannot use it for logical planning, but during their quick spell casting intuition, they can feel it. Those who fly through the events in their mind faster and make decisions faster have a speed advantage.

### Trance

Trance spells are abstract, more general spells in which the user does not desire to have exact control over events. Prophetic spells are like a user driving a car- each movement is performed exactly as the user wants it to happen. Trance spells are like a self driving car: the user just tells the spell what it wants it to do, and the spells gets to the goal, though the in between details are left out of user control.

But this is where the comparison stops; unlike choosing self driving cars as an alternative to manual driving, trance spells are not an alternative way of casting spells. Certain spells are only prophetic, while others are only trance. It is possible for a prophetic and a trance spell to have similar end results, but they are still two different spells.

In a trance spells, the user enters a dream inside their own mind. These spells can be cast when a user is awake or asleep. In this dream, the user confronts a world that symbolically represents the actual world outside. If they are able to solve the puzzle, the effect ripples back and translates into the real world, where the spell effect occurs. Trance spells are ones that reveal the hidden forces at work behind an

event. For instance, if two users are fighting, the dream world can reveal that the cause is because of a dispute over money, and the greed is represented in some form in the dream world (similar to Persona). When the caster confronts and deals with the greed, it can translate into the casters realizing what they are fighting against. Or, it can even summon the entity of greed into the world, and the casters must either stop their fighting to stop the beast that only they can stop, or let the creature consume them both and then sleep, as its task has been done. Trances can explore both forces surrounding events external to the caster, or the caster's own subconsciousness. Trance is most prominent when it directly summons dreamlike objects from the trance world into the actual world.

Trance can be practiced like prophetic spells- the user repetitively goes through the same type (not necessarily the exact same) dream over and over again, until they can map out its events and solutions like the back of her hand. The caster can become so familiar with the setting that they run through it in mere milliseconds- in a trance, the caster does not need to do things in actual world time, and can run through it like it's fast forwarding a VHS tape. A journey that took the user several days can be skipped over (as the user can predict the sparknotes of it and just jump to them immediately) and be done in 1 second if the user knows it well. Thus, it appears that all time slows down around the user during the trance. If a user is awake in a trance, their eyes turn a bright, glowing color. If they are asleep, one can open their eyes to reveal this glow.

Trance spells are categorized by their types. For example, the scenario where a greed monster appears is a very general trope and theme that can appear in multiple instances. If the user senses they can map a current scenario to this spell, they can try. If a map cannot occur, the spells dissolves. If a user tries to force certain mapping constraints to occur, it can result in grotesque contradictions. Usually, contradictions dissolve, but certain forbidden ways allow casters to bypass this (this is considered a grave sin for most religions). The user does not choose every mapping; magic does it for them. However, they can choose certain mappings as constraints, and then let magic perform the rest.

How are spells created? All kinds of spells reside in a public library in a dream-like world that can living being can access, though certain spells require permission, or are just inaccessible because the user does not understand how to use them. Thus, spells are stored like in a Github hosting service, and changes to spells are organized in a repository-like fashion. The user clones their own version of the spell into their own mind, where they can choose to edit it as they wish. They can propose to change the original spell, and it's up to the owner if they want to accept the changes into the canon version, or create a separate version of the spell. The names of spells are distinguished by Latin names, and they can get quite long due to many sub-species/sub-versions of spells. No technology terms are used in this story; only organization is similar. Users can create their own spells, but often times they use spells that already crafted. This hosting service looks like an actual castle of libraries that users can visit in trances. However, it is run by guards who will kick casters out if they are loitering. Casters cannot create their own 'chatrooms' in the dream-like world to communicate over long distance. Do not write this like the internet!

The castle of libraries is run by neutral Givers who are more powerful than all Givers, but choose to remain completely neutral; their own job is to maintain the castle. Some worship them and follow their neutral ways.

Casters store all kinds of spells as emotions in their memories. When a caster accesses a spell, they access a memory key (or sequence/cluster of memories, for key distinction purposes) they have that's associated with the spell. This memory key is like a hash key. However, the memory key HAS to have something to do with how the caster perceives the spell. For example, the greed monster trance can be associated with a memory key of 'a golden, laughing, sneering face' with the emotions of greed and aggression. Each memory key differs according to a caster's own experiences in life, and how they encountered/learned that spell. Memory keys can change over time, sometimes out of the caster's control. If the caster wants to change a memory key, she must forcefully try to do it by suppressing the old memory and exchanging it with new ones.

The threads of fate and dreams imply that magic is not just something bestowed upon from the Givers, but runs throughout all of nature.

Much of the story is told through the characters learning different spells, though the focus is only on the witches in Aritha's group (and ones like Catherine). This is because the spells reveal how the casters see the world in their own view, and also reveals subconscious forces at play.

### Ritualistic

Rituals are mysterious procedures that somehow produce desired responses. All rituals were taught to humans by Givers. It is said that ritual mechanics are not understood because they are so incomprehensible to humans- only Givers can understand their inner workings. All rituals share the same theme of having rhythm, though not all require music. Thus, rituals must be done on a time beat. As a result, music often accompanies them, which is why a 'happy' marriage-like classical piece plays during March of the Sisters, which sharply contrasts with the crying girls marching to their deaths.

March of the Sisters is so mind breaking for the young witches because it had been treated like a trivial pledge of allegiance type of daily routine for their entire lives. Though it was incredibly boring, it became embedded with how they viewed their connection to their classmates and the school. Girls would often treat it as a joke out of boredom and start giggling while having to stay in place, trying to gamify it into avoid teachers noticing them. This routine becomes corrupted when its real purpose is shown: as a death sacrifice. The teachers never go into this in detail, claiming it's just how it originated and now it just a custom that students re-enact, but will likely never implement for its true purpose. This is also like how urban legend says 'ring around the rosy' was originally used to describe plague and death.

Throughout the story, one by one, these rituals become deconstructed for the girls. The witches feel safe when doing the rituals, singing along to themselves when there's no bard/lyrist nearby. All the students have their own rituals, which are sharply separated into ones for girls and ones for boys. The girls discover the true origin of the rituals they were taught, and how rituals that were taught to them as children's nursery rhymes have a more sinister, hidden purpose that they are unaware of. They realize they are like ignorant livestock that are now heading into the slaughterhouse. The girls learn to find rituals that benefit them, instead of using them for the rest of society, and thus they go their separate ways due to their differences. They were united before by the school's rituals that they all shared, but split up when they realize they are more different than alike. Only one or two girls stick with Aritha until the end (though one of them betrays her).

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Aritha is a studious student who has crafted many of her own spells, in accordance to the guidelines set by the school. She vows to herself that she will one day show them off, especially before her death. This is what drives her and a few other witches to rebel against the protocol. They don't see it as rebellion at first, because one story circulates that one time, the point of one ritual WAS to rebel, and this is what the Givers wanted- it was a test. And once the test was solved, the one who solved it was granted immense power, enough to stop the invading threat instead of just running away (which is what the ritual was originally claimed to do). This 'urban legend' is what cements in Aritha's mind that if she becomes the one to discover the true goal of a ritual test, then she can complete the ritual and save everyone. The teachers keep on telling her that it's fake, and that she should let go of it instead of wasting all the potential she's built up. When she sees how horrifying the March of the Sisters is, Aritha wants to believe that March of the Sisters could be one of the 'tests', and she tells that to the other witches in her wave, but she turns out to be wrong- in fact, that story was a complete fabricated lie, spread amongst people to give hope that they can escape the rigid orders given by the Basilica and the Givers. Aritha becomes depressed upon learning this. However, she finds another meaning to strive for- one that does not have to do with impressing the Givers.

While offensive spells are cast in one hand, the caster can also hold an object called the "shieldmaiden's pendant" (shortened to shieldmaiden) in the other hand. This allows the caster to simultaneously perform defensive spells (such as forming a shield in front of them) by rotating or manipulating the pendant, which changes form like it's a rubix cube/abacus/3D puzzle. Thus, defense requires acute dexterity, moreso than offense. This is because a shield is like a building structure- it must be structurally sound and protect against many threats at once. However, those who are adept at certain defensive spells can manipulate these puzzles in their mind and solve them without the use of the shieldmaiden; the shieldmaiden is just like an abacus, as it only aids in computation/calculation but is not required for it. Students practice using the shieldmaidens and wands so much so that it can eventually become ingrained in their minds for their most fundamental and frequently used spells.

Other objects include spell cards, which students can collect and flip out to draw out a quick spell or change. These spell cards must be drawn without the user knowing what she drew, or else it would backfire on them for 'looking without permission'. Thus, the caster can only hope it that luck is on their side when they draw it. The advantage is that the card can be a blue shell (ala mario kart) in the face of danger, though it can also heavily backfire on the caster and make things worse. The spell cards are different from, but are derived from the same source as, tarot cards.

The boys play a sport that is meant to resemble warfare, as it prepares them for battle when they are older. Everyone is aware of the purpose of this game; unlike March of the Sisters, this game's purpose is direct, as warfare on a designated battlefield is something that currently occurs, whereas a surprise Banshee invasion on the school has not happened in centuries. Aritha wonders what it's like to go to war, though she does not wish to do it. However, she says that she would rather die fighting out of her own will than to be just a living shield that does nothing, when she can clearly do more than just be a shield. Aritha does not break formation because she chooses her life over the boys'; she believes that far better results can be achieved if the girls do more than just stand there as shields. However, she misunderstands what warfare is like (having never been taught it in class) and later learns that most boys are just pawns in warfare too, having to follow what their commander tells them to do rather than do their own thing. This is necessary for survival, but it is not the only way, and she wishes to change it. Unfortunately, she is destined to never be able to carry out orders herself- no Children are allowed to do it, only Givers can command humans on how to perform rituals. Society is run by the Givers, and the inner workings of their rituals are not understood by any human (those who have tried have went insane).

There are non-magical soldiers like night guards (who still use a bit of magic, though no wands), and then there are two types of magical soldiers: warlocks (pure magic) and warlords (magic and physical). Warlords are elite soldiers who can conjure shadow weapons. The sport that the boys play has them in team battles. There is no warlock main character on the same level as Aritha or Mary; they are side characters. This is because the focus is more on Aritha than anyone else. This story is not pro or anti war; war is just something that happens, as conflict on any scale is seen to have to occur when resources are limited (IE which Giver to follow).

There are no, or very little, quirky elements on this magical world. It is more solemn, reminiscent of 70s horror movies, though it is not a horror story. Scenes play out like an old VHS wedding tape, with nostalgic and calm classical music that is accompanied by grotesque scenes of death and sorrow. The library is not a happy safe space; it's more like the save rooms in Resident Evil 4.

Classes for girls are divided up into (note there are many sub-classes):

Discipline and Routine Marches (2 hours)

Chores (3 hours)

Prophetic spells (2 hours)

Trance spells (2 hours)

Dancing and music (2 hours) (for boys, it's replaced with mock warfare)

Rituals and prayer/worship (4 hours)

Recess/Lunch (1 hour per day) (once a week, joined by boys)

One day per week is a day of Gratitude and Rest. Worship is still required, but chores are lessened, and there are no classes. There is no discipline, but there are still marches. Students often take this time to make a journey through gardens to shrines.

Girls who are selected for special roles must take up extra classes like Exorcism, History, Politik, Healing, or Divination. Students not selected for special roles are discouraged from learning these subjects, as it is considered a waste of time. Students are not encouraged to be knowledgeable scholars. Rather, they are taught how to serve the Givers and the Basilica. The school provides them with the facts, histories and rules that they need to do this. Flying and alchemy are not taught are subjects. They are hobbies that one is supposed to learn by themselves. Traditional European witch imagery is prominent, though witches are far more ghostly and also wear white dresses, to support the foggy, VHS-like, Monet dream atmosphere.

Discipline for both genders includes self-flagellation, because the Basilica sees it as a great tribute. Some higher ups are cruel and twisted. But this is not just for the sake of sadism for the Givers; it is a necessary part of the rituals which the Givers use to ward off the Unspeakable. The Givers of the Basilica are revealed to be neither kind nor sadistic; they are like merchants who only care about getting what they need. However, since they are not kind, they will not allow followers to leave them for something that suits them better- they are greedy and want as many followers as possible, even if it's detrimental to their followers. They hate those who leave their religion to worship other Givers.

During the time of Agatha's more modern school, 3 of the Basilica have split from the others and started their own branch. This was not done in the name of justice or care for the humans, but was a power struggle to try to get more followers, after they saw all the rebellions going on and realizing the old way was causing the rebellions (in exchange for preventing rebellions, the new branch would be weaker against the Unspeakable than the old branch, but they would cover up these flaws in an attempt to keep more followers). Thus, a civil war occurs in Pristina, leading to two different ideologies that have learned to live in peace after a brutal conflict. Pristina becomes divided into New Pristina and Old Pristina; the borders are not cleanly split by one divider, as there are many holes in the nation (like how Berlin was a donut hole during the cold war). However, Agatha reopens this wound when she finds all the suffering occurring in her ancestor's old school.



Social injustices are often justified by people by claiming “This is what the Givers want, so this is how things should naturally be.” This is a misunderstanding of how rituals work- they don’t work because what occurs in these rituals is universally, morally just, but they’re just mechanisms that somehow keep the Unspeakable away, in a way humans can’t comprehend. The Givers do not try to address these misunderstandings, as it plays in their favor- the more the followers cling dogmatically to these rituals, socially pressuring people into doing them, the stronger their influence becomes.

In the pivotal scene, the entrance and exit are in separate locations. So the girls don’t know what horrors occur until after they exit. They can’t see what it’s like in the exit until they go out of the graveyard. The story’s scenes also mimic another feeling of ‘unjust sacrifice’, which is the one in the original Wicker Man’s end scene.

No cult worships the Unspeakable; those who do worship it are loners and outcasts, treated like lepers. The cults attack the mainstream because they believe the mainstream organizations like the Basilica are leading the world down the wrong path. This is the same reason for the nations’ wars. Though all religions seem to have Givers who can temporarily protect against the Unspeakable, some religions have been shown to be more effective than others in different areas. People, in their obsessive fear, want to search for the Givers who can protect them against all the Unspeakable. Each religion believes their deities will be able to counteract each of the 12 Events, which are times when the Unspeakable is granted great power. These events do not occur in this story. Because each religion has its pros/cons, some suit others better. But each citizen born in a nation is required to follow that nation’s religion, as there is strength in numbers. Cultists are considered criminals who can be reasoned with and be assimilated into a nation’s religion. Nations wage war not just on each other, but to win over cultists by pulling them away from other nations, even if it turns the cults neutral again. If a cult stubbornly refuses, or poses too much of a threat, then it can be conquered or destroyed.

A cult sought to kill the school’s students, as they were ordered by their Givers. The school decided their males students were more important to warfare overall, since they were gearing up to fight another nation in just another month. When March of the Sisters backfires, the stability holding back the Unspeakable was temporarily lost and it seeped in, leading Aritha to see the horrifying aftermath.

A wistful choir.

Clarinets and flutes.

The bittersweet lamentings of violins.

And finally, the voices of organs, stiling a joyous tune.

An ominous shadow descended upon the solemn Kingdom; The March of the Sisters had begun.

Girls in frilled white dresses shivered as they stepped in formation past gardens haunted by disquietude; trapped within a ceremonious melody, they dared not break its cadence. Though their march was to the sounds of a jubilant aria, the night was dark, and the fogged mist was cold.

Once again, the girls worried about their clothes. White dresses with frills, covered with patterns of roses and marigolds. Each one was sewn beautifully, yet hid the labors of tired, worn hands. It was, as they all believed, the pinnacle of devotion to spend nights resisting the temptation of sleep, to stitch every single thread into perfection. They had to, lest they usher in the Unspeakable.

Suddenly, a wailing cried into the night sky. A few of the girls could not help but dart their eyes all around. Did the headmasters notice? The loosened thread on one of their dresses, dangling ever so delicately, that not even an astute owl could see? Their imaginations ran frantic. The girls trembled in place.

A curt, authoritative voice of a woman snapped at the girls: "Where is she? Which one of you witches has seen Cassandra?"

A tall witch, bound in a tight corset and a long, pale white dress, angrily stepped through the crowd, towards a girl with raven hair. But when she got close, she saw it was not a girl at all- it was a life-like doll. She grabbed onto the doll's dress and ripped it apart, and its head fell to the ground as if it was beheaded.

"She's gotten craftier this time," the tall witch muttered to herself, "I should have known."

Worry traveled through each and every one of the young witches. Most could not hide their fear within themselves any longer. Not a single one knew where the missing girl had gone.

THROUGH a forest ran a girl with raven hair, in an unkempt, frilled white dress. Her green eyes glistened when she passed through the moonlight. A brown satchel bounced against her hip as she sprinted forth. Suddenly, she winced as a terrible thought struck her.

'Darn, I totally forgot!' Cassandra thought to herself, 'I made the mannequin's eyes too far apart. Why didn't I remember that before?'

Still, it was only a routine rehearsal; she knew that her punishment would not be too severe. Perhaps a few lashings, but nothing she wasn't used to. Right now, what she was about to do was far more important. Its life depended on her.

Kassandra departed from the trees and entered a darkened, empty town. Just then, she heard a familiar voice. The girl stopped in her tracks. It was that boy again.

"Hey, Kassandra!"

She turned to the voice and saw a warlock boy from her class trotting towards her. For a moment, she could only see his purple eyes staring straight at her; when she broke out of her fleeting trance, she saw him greet her with an inviting grin. He was tall, lean, muscular, and sported a rugged beard. The girls and the boys were forbidden by the academy to talk to one another except during designated times of 'bevy'- for an hour, once every few days. It was then that the two would sometimes converse; he was always friendly, and had offered her to join him in the Bonfires, but she had always declined. It wasn't because they were prohibited- Kassandra was willing to skirt around a few rules, if needed- but something about those gatherings, that she just couldn't put into words, didn't seem right to her. 'Besides', Kassandra thought to herself, 'He's so popular and well-liked that he probably invites everyone to these events. No loss to him if I don't go.'

She peered behind him. In the distance was a group of witches and warlocks from the academy, with the girls wearing dresses and the boys wearing black coats with vests. They were huddled over a flickering flame, waiting for the main event to start.

"Wish I could, Marcus," Kassandra answered with a sly smile, trying to keep her cool, "But I've got something else to do."

"You sure? You don't have to stay long. Just enough to get a hint of what I've been telling you about."

Kassandra tilted her head away from him and let out a little laugh. She pouted, and thought for a moment. Her fingers were now prattling against one another, and she fidgeted a bit, the balls of her feet digging into the ground back and forth. She had been deadset in her answer from the start, but for just a few seconds, she enjoyed playing around with the alternatives.

"Sorry. Maybe next time," Kassandra leisurely replied.

Just as she finished, another boy strutted towards them. He was gaunt with ragged bags under his eyes. As he got nearer to the two, Cassandra saw his scruffy, dirty blonde facial hair all around his mischievous, toothy grin. She rolled her eyes. Antony. Marcus's lapdog.

"Bonfire's about to start," Antony said to Marcus. He then turned his sights on Cassandra, looking her up and down, his smile unwavering. She stared back at him with deadpan eyes.

"Gotta go, Kass," Marcus shouted out to her as he walked away backwards. "Just let me know when." Soon, he turned his back to her, and she was left with only Antony.

"So," the blonde boy spoke, "You coming along too?"

"I already said no," Kassndra brusquely told him.

"Come on. It'd be fun."

Immediately, Antony bolted his hand out and grabbed onto Cassandra's wrist. His grip was tight, binding, and painful. Kassndra looked down at her wrist for a second, her expression vacant as she was trying to process what was happening, and then wrung herself out of Antony's grasp.

"I'm not going," Cassandra asserted for a final time. This must've been the fifth time she'd told him off. It was getting annoying by now.

Antony scoffed and shook his head. As he walked away with his back facing the girl, he muttered, "Your loss. You stupid whore."

"Go fuck yourself, Antony," Cassandra called out back to him. He ignored her completely, only laughing as he rejoined the group around the growing flame. Cassandra huffed, but got a hold of herself as she re-focused on her task. 'What a damn distraction', she thought, and took off running again.

AS she delved further into the town, its streets became emptier and emptier. Eventually, she reached a part so desolate, not even the lonely shuffling of an unconscious drunk's sprawled-out feet could be

heard. Before her lay a foreboding alleyway. Kassndra took one long, deep breath, and ventured in. She was met with one fork after the other, but she'd seen them all by now; even with her eyes closed, she could navigate to where she wanted to go. Soon, she found just the right spot. There were slabs of old stone stacked on top of one another all throughout, and it led deeper into a pitch black passageway that the girl was itching to just walk into.

From the shadows, someone grinned. His fangs gleamed white. When the shadows passed, Cassandra saw grey-silver hair shining in the moonlight. Soon the rest of his visage was revealed- he was a short warlock dressed in dark green rags, sitting on a pile of stone slabs, relaxed and confident, and showing off his fangs. He noticed the irritated look etched upon her face, and knew what had just transpired.

"Antony giving you a hard time?" the grey haired warlock, Jeremi, asked the witch.

"He's always trying to push me to go see the bonfires," Cassandra muttered back, "What for?"

"I heard they were fun. Won't hurt to check one out."

"As if I wanted to. I'd take this over the bonfires any day."

Jeremi lept down from the pile of stones, and said, "Just what I wanted to hear. It's been waiting."

Kassandra turned to stare into the pitch black darkness of the alleyway. She bit her lip, her heart pounding. Was it out of excitement? For the longest time, she had been wanting to see it again. But her heart was not pounding just out of excitement. It was pounding out of a quiet fear.

The witch reached her hand towards the skin of her satchel, caressing the thick outline of an object inside. She took a deep breath, and stepped into the foreboding alleyway. Jeremi followed. The two walked into complete blackness where nothing could be seen. Faint light shone from both of their hands, just enough for them to see each other's faces, but not enough to reveal what was ahead.

"You got it with you?" Jeremi asked.

“Yeah,” Cassandra replied. She unbuckled her satchel, then reached in and took out a warm slab of red meat. “I can’t imagine just how hungry it is. It can’t get much nourishment from eating those tunnel scraps.”

Jeremi took one glance at the slab and chuckled to himself as he shook his head.

Kassandra scoffed, “What, the food not up to your standards? It’s not for you.”

“No one can eat that. It’s diseased; I can feel its aura. You didn’t use a showcasing spell on it, I’m guessing?”

“Well, I didn’t need to. I plucked it straight out of- hey, I just said it’s safe!”

Before she could finish, Jeremi waved one of his hands over the slab of meat, and a green light illuminated from it, revealing a colony of blue worm-like creatures crawling over it.

Kassandra yelped and immediately dropped the slab. “WHAT? Ugh, it’s so gross!” She scrubbed her hands together, and a whitish-pink light illuminated forth, cleansing whatever had gotten in between her fingers. Then, she sighed. “I guess I messed up this time. What are we going to do now?”

“Don’t worry, I got you.” Jeremi reached into one of his satchel and took out another slab of meat. He waved his hand over it and a green light surrounded it- but this time, it was clean.

Kassandra raised her brow at her friend. “You had that with you the whole time? Then what’d you need me to take that slab for?”

“I didn’t want to use this one; I’ve got some more creatures to feed. But I figured it can be used as back up too, just in case.”

Kassandra was still annoyed, but let out a sly smile. “Well, next time I’ll definitely learn how to get that showcasing spell down to pat. But you know I wouldn’t have gone through all that trouble if you were there.” She paused for a second, then continued, “You know, you can always come back to the academy. They could use a warlock like you.”

"It's just not my thing. I like thieving a whole lot more."

"One day, they're gonna catch you, and who knows what they'd do to you," Cassandra retorted with a lighthearted jostle.

Just then, tremors in the ground below pounded below the duo's feet. They came from the rumbling of large footsteps, yet were so delicate that neither one of the two had noticed them approaching. Cassandra's eyes widened when she stared at the shadows before her, and saw the outline of a large figure. The alleyway was so dark that she could not make out even just one of its features. But it was trembling- as if it was afraid.

"We found it," Jeremi whispered. Without a word, he quietly placed his slab into Cassandra's palm, and the witch took a few careful steps forward.

"Hey," Cassandra whispered to the creature. There was no response, but when she got closer, she could hear heavy breathing. She continued, "We got you some food." She stopped, then knelt down to place the meat on the ground's cold cobblestones. She waited for the creature to come out of the shadows and take it.

But it did not move at all.

"It doesn't want to come out," Jeremi whispered. "It doesn't want us to see it."

Kassandra sighed. "I thought we could get a closer look at it this time. But I guess not." With the wave of her fingers, she cast a spell to gently push the meat into the shadows, and watched it slowly disappear. The darkness lay still; with each passing moment, Cassandra's fingers gripped together tighter and tighter. But then, she heard a quiet sound. Something tearing. Something ripping. And then, she knew what it was- gruesome gnawing, as the creature used something sharp to devour the small slab of meat. Cassandra froze, and was lost in a haze, and before she could snap out of it, the outline in the shadows began to depart.

"Wait!" Cassandra shouted at the creature. But her shouts only made it move away faster.

“Kassandra!” Jeremi whispered back, “It doesn’t want to come out!”

The witch ignored her friend, and ran into the shadows, with light shining out of her hands. Then, for a moment, she saw a glimpse of its back. Bright red, and carrying a large saddle on its back. Kassandra thrust a hand forward to try to grab onto it with a spell, but it was so heavy, and she could not hold on any longer- she pulled her hand back, and when she did, the saddle shook off. Kassandra ran towards it, yet was too late. The creature had gone, and all that was left was this strange relic. The witch bent down and slowly caressed the saddle in her hands. Behind her, Jeremi had finally caught up.

“What’s that?” the warlock asked.

“It’s... a martingale. Whatever creature that was, someone must have rode it.”

Jeremi was astounded. “Who could it have belonged to?”

Kassandra took some time to look for an answer on the satchel, and suddenly gasped. She whispered fervently to herself, “It can’t be.”

Jeremi was perplexed. “What do you mean?”

Kassandra softly ran her fingers across the outlines of the saddle, through flowery patterns sewn onto it. She continued, “This sewing pattern. Madame Pastel said my mother had designed it herself.”

“Your mother? You’re saying this creature belonged to your mother?”

“Yes! I know of this pattern from a brush that Madame Pastel gave to me. It’s all I have left of my mother.” As she continued to run her fingers across the martingale, she noticed its torn straps and weathered scratchings. She whispered, “But how did it get so battered?”

“Maybe it’s just old,” Jeremi said.



“No. This isn’t just from overuse. Something awful must have happened to whoever was riding that creature. Something violent.”

[in the end, it’s revealed that some of the villagers mockingly gave her the martingale of her own pet]

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They had heard stories

Kassandra disobeys the march, and terrifying Unspeakable things happen.

“I hope that was enough.” A drip of sweat. This was the first time Kassandra has disobeyed  
Even if they did find out...

“The woman within the house’s walls”

Kassandra finds clothes and items that aren’t hers, including children’s clothes. She sees a figure humming to itself, wearing a red robe, as if washing someone. She turns away, and continues to hear its hums as she walks to her room, and covers its bedsheets over herself.

She fears it’s because of what she did wrong- the Unspeakable is out to get her.

She finds pages where the figure once was. They’re dated, but at the end, the last page is always torn in two. The next part starts, and it’s missing the chunk in between it and the last. This worries Kassandra.

Aritha brushes a cat-like creature in the alleyway as she’s walking back to the academy. It’s recess, and she sees her friend Mary alone on a wall. She slumps down next to her and talks.

“I’m sorry for being late”

“It’s alright, Aritha. I understand.”

Schedule

Aritha speaks to the boy she likes during the 'recess'. She diligently attends her classes, speaks to Madame Pastel, who tells her she has to reign in.

Questions, backs off. Thinks it's a test. She's only studious because she wants to become great. But she's apprehensive and nervous about taking risks.

Aritha schoolyard. Gratitude and worship. Aritha is a studious student who wants to please the Givers, but

Prophetic, ritual and trance

But soon, she notices strange banshee apparitions in the distance. They're surreal. the March of the Sisters begins.

<<<

Mary sighed. Aritha sat next to her along the wall, and placed her hand on her friend's.

"You don't have to be afraid. We can get through this together."

"But what if

<<<

"I do believe we've met."

"Your name is Aritha, right?"

<<<

"Do you remember the three types of charms?" Madame Pastel chided.

Aritha sighed.

“Prophetic, ritual, and trance.”

<<<

“Thank you, Catherine.”

They take a step forward. Aritha shut her eyes, bracing herself against the unknown.

When she opened them again, she found that she was safe. She had made it.

But then, cries rang out again. Aritha felt a lump in her throat; she was relieved to have crossed over, but felt guilt over being chosen over the other girls, for seemingly no reason at all.

<<<

Aritha held onto Mary’s hands and looked at her with frantic eyes.

“We have to do something, we can’t just stay here!”

<<<

Aritha brushed her hand over the bush, and gasped. Before the witches lay a quaint house, nested in the meadow. Then, something overcame the witch. It was as if her body was moving on its own.

The girls watched with frightened hearts as Aritha took the first step forward into the meadow ground.

<<<

She carefully stepped over the shadows, not daring to let her feet touch anything but the moonlight falling down onto the old wooden floors.

She did not know what lay in the darkness, but could sense that there was something sharp. As if something had been broken, and did not want anyone to touch it anymore.

1:

March, Cassandra, bonfires, creature

2:

Aritha brushes a cat-like creature in the alleyway as she's walking back to the academy. It's recess, and she sees her friend Mary alone on a wall. She slumps down next to her and talks.

"I'm sorry for being late"

"It's alright, Aritha. I understand."

Schedule

Aritha speaks to the boy she likes during the 'recess'. She diligently attends her classes, speaks to Madame Pastel, who tells her she has to reign in.

Questions, backs off. Thinks it's a test. She's only studious because she wants to become great. But she's apprehensive and nervous about taking risks.

Aritha schoolyard. Gratitude and worship. Aritha is a studious student who wants to please the Givers, but

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But soon, she notices strange banshee apparitions in the distance. They're surreal. the March of the Sisters begins.

3:

She uncovers a haunting painting in her attic when looking for something to mend the broken brush (Pastel tried to take it from her, and in their scuffle, it broke. Pastel tried to apologize but Cassandra runs off), and realizes it's of her mother. So she enters, and looks for answers there. Pages of a magical journal are found. It's been broken into 3 parts. Cassandra reaches into it and learns of her mother's past.

4:

#### March of the Sisters.

The banshees don't fire spells. Only a haunting group of laughing, shrieking girls (ghosts) are seen hanging above a bell tower, yelling, and then they disappear. This signifies one of the Unspeakable events- the one that only the March of the Sisters can prevent. In this event, children will randomly be struck by an illness, and bleed. They will start to wither into corpses. To ward it off, and protect the boys, the girls must enact the ritual. This is because they are always the 'living shields'. They must fake smile or else the curse comes.

As they march, blood seeps from the corners of some of their mouths, but they press on, devoting and selfless. Then, their eyes start bleeding, and it seeps into their white dresses. They collapse onto their knees, still clutching onto the bundle of flowers they were required to hold, shivering. Finally, they die. They are only safe once they reach the garden; on the stone bridge, they are susceptible to bleeding. A few boys laugh and rejoice when they reach the safety of the garden.

Rejoice! Salvation...

Aritha and her friends break formation to attack the laughing banshees, thinking that attacking the banshees would stop the attack.

Aritha runs away with her friends. They stumble through lonely gardens until they reach a field of red and yellow flowers. They are withering, and the grass is now sparse and yellow. They enter a quaint little house. The gardeners outside whisper for Aritha to go in. They nudge her inside, and she is treated well by its servants. She enters a dark, small cupboard, and sees a dimly lit hooked nosed statue before her. Mary pulls her out of it. She falls asleep on a bed, and dreams of that statue. When Aritha begs for the horrible image to go away, it takes on many forms, first of Pastel wearing a red hood, and then back to the statue.

Crimes are not justly punished in Basilica. Long ago, humans treated criminals unjustly, and as such, the Unspeakable retaliated. Instead of breaking the peace and prosecuting criminals, it was decided that since humans could not justly punish criminals and thus keep the Unspeakable away, they turned to the Givers to use rituals to seal the Unspeakable away. These rituals prevent the victims from wanting justice. The Unspeakable exist in response to humanity's vengeful bloodlust. When this bloodlust is not proportionate, the Unspeakable come about. The Unspeakable do not judge whether it's just or not. The Wardens do. The Wardens are somewhat against the Givers. They believe they have the job of keeping humanity's bloodlust in check. If it is not kept in check, then many are indiscriminantly punished. The Wardens' twisted belief is that keeping others' in check is the job of EVERYONE in society, so if crimes are not kept in check, everyone should be punished.

By destroying the victims' desire for revenge, the rituals ward this bloodlust away. The Unspeakable can only live if the victims' obsessive thoughts about revenge summon them. The Wardens believed that the bloodlust thoughts inflicted upon the criminal should be shared on everyone, so everyone can see just how terrible these vengeful thoughts are.

Forgiveness does not work. It is not the victim who causes it; it is an external force that acts upon injustice, regardless of what the victim thinks. It only utilizes the victim's buried beliefs as inspiration for its manifestation.

"So all those... were what Jane buried deep inside?"

Bulging big eyes, a wide smile, her nostrils flaring, her black hair in tatters. A giant hook nose. Red skin.

Aritha wakes up to see servants standing around the bed. Her friends stand behind them in the doorway, horrified.

5:

Kassandra is trembling. She continues reading.

Justice substitutes the ritual. Instead of wishing death upon the original sinners for bringing doom upon the world, Aritha backs off, but promises to bring justice. Then Aritha misses a daily ritual. All the girls look at her. And nothing happens. She heals someone using her trance spell by punishing the real long time rapist (and past murderer) of one of the girls who escaped with them, discovering what a fair punishment would be. The boy is killed. However, his accomplice, who only watched but did nothing, is not. Instead, he is ostracized by the academy, his greatest fear. This, Aritha claims, is 'fair'. The Wardens do not answer immediately, but soon, they agree.

In her trance vision, she walks into a room with dolls. She sees the rapist with the dolls. One has been broken on the ground. She sees one being held by him, and it has the face of her friend. She points her wand at the man and kills him. Then she has a vision on people find his cold body, and his exiled friend.

[Another one of Aritha's friends, the traitor, has a power within her that can only be shared with one person. This power gives its wielder much strength. Thus, many try to trick the traitor into being with them. She is always suffering under abusers and goes to Aritha for help, but there is little she can do. The girl envies Aritha's powers and wishes she has them. After suffering for years, she tricks Aritha into a trance in which Aritha doesn't see that the newest abuser was falsely accused, and she nearly kills him. She severely injures him, and this triggers the Unspeakable to kill a Giver. After laying her trap down, Aritha is captured and the Cardinal Mother is driven out. The traitor tries to take the power for herself, but the deity rejects her.]

Aritha manages to stop the Unspeakable, but not much is known. Then there is only one symbol: a painting of Aritha, with a being standing over her. The Cardinal Mother. Cassandra rushes to the bonfires to find answers.

“What did they do to you?” Cassandra whispered to the cat-like creature. It hid itself in the shadows, slinking behind the cages of the abandoned walls.

She finds the second chunk of the broken journal. The symbols she sees the saboteurs use is of it, too.

A few surviving acolytes, the lepers, are spoken to. They always come near the bonfires (inspired by Aritha) but never speak to the young ones, who avoid them yet pity them and let them near. They reveal secrets:

Aritha was worshipped as a saint, but no one speaks of her anymore, and no one dares talk of the Cardinal Mother cult. There are hints that she is still alive, and ran away. People have seen her. However, in the end this is revealed not to be her, but her traitor, who wanted her freedom to escape the rigidity herself. Agatha realizes that her caretaker has been hiding things from her. She finds the missing piece of the creature’s martingale, indicating the cat belonged to her mother.

Kassandra finds the withered trinkets and treasures leftover from the girls’ initial discover.

6:

One time, Aritha rushes out of hiding to heal someone, reaching into the trance to find the true perpetrator (the boy’s mother had been starving him so the boy becomes ‘feral’ and possessed, giving him the strength to hurt others), but the Givers won’t let her come near. The Unspeakable have plagued a wooden barn and destroyed it. It is the middle of a barren farm, and the parents wish for their son to be healed. Catherine tries, but fails because the Unspeakable is stronger than anything known before, and is forced to seal it within herself. Aritha screams that she has to deal with the ‘true perpetrator’ and not harm the boy, and Catherine takes her words to heart. She tries to exorcise the boy by making him see the error of his ways, but she fails; his hate is too strong.

People wonder why Catherine dies- she was Chosen to destroy the Unspeakable once and for all, and now she’s gone. They think Aritha was the one who caused the prophecy to become unfulfilled by ushering in chaos and disobedience.

Catherine, the kind Chosen One who tries to stick up for Aritha. On orders, she goes to hunt her down. When she reaches her, she finds Aritha is near the charred barn, and decides to save the boy instead of capturing Aritha, as he’s dying from being possessed. When the Unspeakable came, no one knows what went wrong. Was it Aritha? There is no evidence. Aritha, however, feels guilty. Catherine dies trying to exorcise the Unspeakable out of a young, handicapped boy. Instead, the Unspeakable goes inside of her. Catherine did not realize this would happen, and dies thinking she failed. Aritha realized what actually happened- the only way is to make him feel sorrowful by sacrificing herself- upon her sacrifice, with the demon sealed within herself, the boy cries out for her, apologizing, but it’s too late. Thus, Catherine enacted the Giver’s ultimate ritual.

“I... I only wanted to help...”

Everyone blames Aritha for the death of Catherine and the boys (during the march). She goes into hiding for another year. Leo visits her. He becomes enshrouded and curious about the cult of the Cardinal Mother. He looks for answers, and Aritha tries to beg him to stay, since she wants to know that in the outside world, at least there is someone who doesn't see her as a monster. They end up kissing, and have sex. But later, once he realizes what he's done, there is fear and regret. Pregnancy. Book ends.

7:

Kassandra rushes to find more chunks. However, all she comes across is tatters. She panics as she realizes they're all that's left. The tatters say her mother has come to terms, but how? There's so many missing pieces. The last chunk ends with her mother coming to terms, saying she must reach far off lands with her message. This is what the surviving 'lepers' know. Kassandra searches frantically for more.

Aritha wants to establish a new moral system; the humans in the land are bloodthirsty due to the lack of trust. They want to intimidate so that no one can hurt them again. Aritha wants to establish balance. But her friend believes Aritha's methods are not the right way, though her friend has no answer at all. Her friend leaves, like the other disciples who were too afraid of being caught (but her reason is different than theirs), and says she wants to look for a different way.

“We're still playing by the Warden's rules.”

“You're leaving me, too?”

“I'm sorry, Aritha. But there has to be another way.”

Now Aritha feels more abandoned, and attaches herself unhealthily to Leo.

But Kassandra realizes something is off, and pieces her mother's locket to reveal the final ending of what happened. Kassandra runs off, partially aided by the creature along the way, using clues from the journals to lead her to the original house. No one is there anymore. She lies on the bed, and falls asleep. She hears a voice, and in the dream, goes in the cupboard she saw but avoided. In the nightmare, the whole truth is revealed.

8:



Betrayed after a Giver dies, and the blame is shifted to Aritha. When Aritha is dragged out, she sees the giant corpse of a Giver, with flowers and other parasitic elements sprouting from it. They claim she committed the ultimate sin by being pregnant, and will usher in an era of destruction. First, they kill Cassandra's father in public.

The Wardens don't say a word, but leave Aritha. The deal is off.

The Cardinal Mother lets out a blood curdling scream. And then, silence.

Mary dies trying to protect Aritha, using her body to shield her. They shoot a stun spell onto her. To get her out of the way, they then shoot a killing spell at her.

As Aritha is transformed, she feels the Cardinal Mother leaving her.

Pastel thinks Aritha has ran away, not knowing (along with most of the kingdom) that she was transformed before several headmasters and villagers.

Agatha, after euthanizing her mother: "I will kill them for what they did to you."

(throughout the story, Agatha is slightly annoyed at things. She's annoyed by the boy's friends. She gets frustrated at having to do chores, and wishes that if the teacher died, there wouldn't be exams. But she thinks this is just a joke.

She clutches her shieldmaiden, squeezing it hard between her fingers.

"I'll kill them. I'll kill them all."

<<<

Never use the word 'rebellion'. It is only the spreading of a fanatic cult. The cult rejoices when Aritha accepts.

post 1-2 chapters every 4-7 days.

~10k-12k words. 20k-30k words is fine too. Horror/Fantasy. Suspense. M.

Signify change in scene by a new date. 782 Q is current year.

look at movies: grease, suspira, carrie, wicker man, romeo/juliet

themes: the trap of safety, the unquestionable rituals that somehow work, fear of leaving rigidity, OCD

Organs, religious chants (not during march of sisters)

during march: violins, clarinets, harps, classical music

Catherine helps pick up Aritha's books and helps brush her up and fix her hair. When she hunts her down, she says she doesn't want to hurt her, but just has to.

The saboteurs/vandals sit around in a circle and watch as others dance. These are the dances of chance. People rarely die, they are guided by learned techniques. Each dance is meant to be before a game of chance. These games fill the spectators with power and new insights to their life.

Aritha must gamble with a demon each time she sets a spell. She learns to get better at reading facial expressions, their fears, their desires, etc. Each spell provokes one demon. She teaches these spells to others, whom have lesser powers (they gamble with lesser demons).

The givers have OCD and need everything to be organized. Put in nice, little boxes. If even one thing is out of place, the Unspeakable come. A horrifying parasite-like disease sprouts from people. When Aritha disrupts this, the people fear her. She wants to use the cardinal Mother to find a solution, but the Givers do not let her.

Agatha is invited by boys to hang out, but refuses, as she spends time with this creature whose look she cannot see. She heard someone, somewhere, escaped and started a 'forbidden religion'. She thinks it's her mother, but it's not; someone betrayed her and left her and all the others to die.

Agatha feeds an unknown creature. She wonders "what happened to my mother?" In the past, Aritha is shown also encoutering an unknown creature. But this one is shown to be different than the creature Agatha interacts; the plot twist at the end is that the unknown creature is her mother. Agatha did not know

Creature looks like Belphegor

Cardinal mother is 'one who gambles', but offers a chance

Givers claim that without the rituals, there is no other way.

Agatha: cares for animals, sarcastic, but not dreary. Friendly and goofy. Has a goofy smile. Sometimes torn between wanting to go with others, but then quickly decides not to. May rename to Cassandra Agatha. Green eyes, black hair, olive skin.

Aritha's lover is a good, righteous fellow who wants to be a soldier. After Aritha becomes pregnant, he thinks he was 'wrongly seduced' by the religion and wants to cover it up. He goes back to being a soldier and leaves Aritha alone. He tries to hide his nervousness by being angry and threatening. But when he's discovered, he's executed for his disobedience.

Aritha was just curious, too. After it's done, she doesn't know what to do. She becomes nervous, unsure, and as such, paranoid. She wishes her old teacher, whom she wished to have listened to, can care for her. But soon, she learns to be at peace with the unpredictability of life. She seeks not to control what the child would be, but to observe and then react. She learns to accept the risks.

"I- I" Aritha clutches her chest. She can hardly breath.

Right after Agatha is born, Aritha is dragged out, and transformed.

Aritha's child is adopted by a witch of the school, who wants to cover it up too and wished Aritha had a normal, compliant life.

"Your mother was a good student. But she had too many questions."

The cardinal mother is a being that is curious and seductive- it is the 'what if' someone doesn't follow the rituals. There is a huge gamble. Sometimes, one dies. Other times, one does not. When Aritha reaches her, she takes a risk. Thus, when something goes wrong, no one knows what caused it. With the rituals in place, everyone knows. But with the Cardinal mother, it is impossible to tell.

The Givers, who are gods, are shown to be vulnerable to the Unspeakable, too. When one of them dies, the people panic. But the ritual tells them that they cannot scream. Instead, they all watch as, in public, Aritha is tortured and transformed painfully into the hideous hooked nose giant imp, a mockery of being the "Cardinal Mother". Aritha begs the people to help her. However, they blame her for the death of both Catherine and the Giver.

Not all of the gigantic giver is shown. Only a giant gray stone hand the size of a house, and half of a face with three eyes.

Aritha says “I don’t know what the solution is. But we can’t keep living like this. Every day, fearing to step out of line.”

Fear and anxiety permeate

The world is far from a utopia. The Unspeakable always attacks. But inside the school, the children want to forget. They like being in the boarding school, though they know outside of it, there is only war and the Unspeakable. Different religions have different rituals for dealing with the Unspeakable. Some rituals work all the time. Others do not.

The outside world, in this short story, is not explained. It is a mystery. They just ‘need’ to protect against it.

Unsettling: the anxiety of what will happen when one does not perform the rituals. Aritha is unsure of herself, but slowly, as she learns to gamble with the Cardinal Mother, she becomes more and more confident. She keeps on studying to craft more spells, to find ways to heal people. She becomes a figurehead. There is no guarantee what will happen. Agatha doesn’t know what Aritha found, if any. But Aritha took the risks to overcome the repeating thoughts and behaviors. The rituals are harmful and restrictive. Aritha learns to live free and not have to do rituals. Instead of rituals, she gambles. On pure faith.

The spells that she crafts are gambling spells. They involve playing games of chance with the Cardinal Mother. Dances to get her in the mood. Despite the increased risks, the people are more free. They do not have to sacrifice themselves unwillingly, they can eat whenever and whatever they want, they do not have to follow routines that have no explanations or reasoning, but ‘just work’. They do not have to be worried about missing something and compensating for it with sacrifice, and keep on being in debt.

“compulsions” No pleasure from doing them, only relief

At first, when Agatha finds a joyous memory, it is joyous to Aritha, too. But later, Agatha finds more memories that seem joyous, but she does not realize what actually happened to Aritha. These were tampered with by Agatha’s adoptive guardian. Agatha smiles, and is content, but the past is far more horrifying. A pivotal point comes with Agatha finds that something is off- something has been tampered with.

Aritha's friends: Most just have a few lines, but no characterization or appearance description. Eight escape with her.

Mary- dumb but loyal

Beth- sleeps all the time

Solstice- she is suffering, having had to be inflicted with the worst illnesses as part of daily rituals. Thanks Aritha for helping her. But it's not enough, as the illnesses are still there. When Aritha is gone, Solstice tries to take the power of the Cardinal Mother for herself. But it won't let her.

Catherine- ded

Characters:

Sir Tobias

Madame Lumia

Leo

boy 1

thief boy

The girls learn to find rituals that benefit them, instead of using them for the rest of society, and thus they go their separate ways due to their differences? One by one they leave, until only a few remain with Aritha near the end; one betrays her.

Main villain: the people who fear to step out of line of the Givers

Agatha speaks to the spinoff cult leaders, but they do not know a thing, and are filled with rumors and gossip. They claim Aritha went to a faraway land, and one day vowed to return. However, there are other things they say that they all disagree on. Agatha realizes she can't trust them, and sneaks in to find answers for herself.

Catherine is the Destined Maiden

OUTLINE:

He laughs. "Don't look there."

Agatha heads towards the creature as she has flashbacks of turning down the offer to go to the hang out. In the same alleyway, she sees her thief friend eating his catch of the day.

Agatha tells the boy that she can put it off some other time. Shows her friend, a scruffy warlock thief, the 'pet' that she's never seen but who comes to her, looking for food. Small features of the creature are seen and implied more and more during the story. Agatha's uncovering of the past is a solitary journey.

Agatha thinks the creature was a pet her mother had, too. Aritha sees a giant, cat-like creature that stays in the alleyways and she helps feed it. But it's revealed at the end that this cat-like creature was a human. And then, it dies, immediately foreshadowing what's about to happen.

Agatha uncovers a haunting painting, and realizes it's of her mother. The symbols she sees the saboteurs use is of it, too. So she enters, and looks for answers there. Aritha was worshipped as a saint, but no one speaks of her anymore, and no one dares talk of the Cardinal Mother cult. There are hints that she is still alive, and ran away. People have seen her. However, in the end this is revealed not to be her, but her traitor, who wanted her freedom to escape the rigidity herself. Agatha realizes that her caretaker has been hiding things from her. She finds a collar belonging to a giant cat her mother had.

Questions, backs off. Thinks it's a test. She's only studious because she wants to become great. But she's apprehensive and nervous about taking risks.

Aritha schoolyard. Gratitude and worship. Aritha is a studious student who wants to please the Givers, but

Prophetic, ritual and trance

The banshees don't fire spells. Only a haunting group of laughing, shrieking girls (ghosts) are seen hanging above a bell tower, yelling, and then they disappear. This signifies one of the Unspeakable events- the one that only the March of the Sisters can prevent. In this event, children will randomly be struck by an illness, and bleed. They will start to wither into corpses. To ward it off, and protect the boys, the girls must enact the ritual. This is because they are always the 'living shields'. They must fake smile or else.

Rejoice! Salvation...

Aritha rebels because she wants to try her own spell

Agatha finds the withered treasures leftover from the girls' initial discover; 16 years ago, Aritha finds the Cardinal Mother and is imbued with its power. Aritha misses a daily ritual. All the girls look at her. And nothing happens.

The Cardinal Mother offers another way to combat the Unspeakable- exploration, trying new things. Breaking rigidity. Aritha is shown to heal against the Unspeakable. The Cardinal Mother puts more emphasis on certain types of Trance spells called 'Gambles'.

Never use the word 'rebellion'. It is only the spreading of a cult. The cult rejoices when Aritha accepts.

One time, she rushes out of hiding to heal someone, but the Givers won't let her come near. Catherine tries, but fails too, and is forced to seal it within herself. People wonder why Catherine dies- she was Chosen to destroy the Unspeakable once and for all, and now she's gone. They think Aritha was the one who caused the prophecy to become unfulfilled by 'shaking things up'.

Catherine, the kind Chosen One who tries to stick up for Aritha. On orders, she goes to hunt down Aritha. When the Unspeakable come, no one knows what went wrong. Was it Aritha? There is no evidence. Aritha, however, feels guilty. Later, Catherine dies trying to exorcise the Unspeakable out of a young, handicapped girl. Instead, the Unspeakable goes inside of her.

Everyone blames Aritha for the death of Catherine and the boys. She goes into hiding for another year. Leo visits her. He becomes enshrouded and curious about the cult of the Cardinal Mother. He looks for answers, and Aritha tries to beg him to stay, since she wants to know that in the outside world, at least there is someone who doesn't see her as a monster. They end up kissing, and have sex. But later, once he realizes what he's done, there is fear and regret. Pregnancy, come to terms

Agatha realizes something is off, and learns the whole truth

Betrayed after a Giver dies, and the blame is shifted to Aritha. When Aritha is dragged out, she sees the giant corpse of a Giver, with flowers and other parasitic elements sprouting from it. They claim she committed the ultimate sin by being pregnant, and will usher in an era of destruction. First, they kill Agatha's father in public.

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As Aritha is transformed, she feels the Cardinal Mother leaving her.

Agatha, after euthanizing her mother: "I will kill them for what they did to you."

(throughout the story, Agatha is slightly annoyed at things. She's annoyed by the boy's friends. She gets frustrated at having to do chores, and wishes that if the teacher died, there wouldn't be exams. But she thinks this is just a joke. In the end, she doesn't use the word 'kill', but she says "They won't get away with this" or something.)

She clutches her shieldmaiden, squeezing it hard between her fingers.

<<<

REVISION: The uptight rituals require the girls to bless EVERY PERSON THEY'RE ASSIGNED TO without fail. Namely, Aritha is assigned to be a living shield for the male soldiers. There is absolutely no explanation for why. If they miss people, they get flogged. Cardinal Mother offers the girl the ability to be the judge about who to sacrifice, free from

The gamble comes into play because there is a lack of information on what will happen. What if I'm wrong, Aritha asks. What if I made the wrong choice? Just the possibility of screwing up makes her nervous and unable to break routine. She must stick to her routine prayers and orders given by the Givers. But the Cardinal Mother offers her the ability to make choices. Aritha becomes an inspiration to everyone else, but it is a monkey paw that generates in-fighting.

The Unspeakable is not just random flowers. It can be ANYTHING, but it must be morbid.

ALTERNATIVE:

Every moment, the Unspeakable must be kept out using nonsensical rituals. These represent the 'manners' in public that can transform into paranoid, compulsive thoughts. The students must count, wash, check, doubt, hoard. Whenever someone steps out of line, the Unspeakable will come, and to counter it, many must sacrifice themselves in a ritual. One day, someone makes the gravest mistake of stepping out of line, and the March of the Sisters must be enacted.

The Cardinal Mother offers an escape from this by revealing that the Unspeakable can be countered by not thinking about it. The more one thinks of it and worries and fears it, the more power it has. It offers ways to distract and lessen these fears. Many thoughts of the Unspeakable plague people, and by using Trance, Aritha is able to assuage these fears. She can tap in and find what people want to do, which can keep their mind off from those thoughts. She also teaches others spells to let go. But there is a gamble. Not everyone can live free. If someone steps out of line, the Unspeakable get stronger. Even if one person fears it, if that fear is strong enough, it will come in whatever form that person imagines.



The Givers rituals require giving in to fear of the Unspeakable, as to perform the Purifications/Cleansing, one must use fear to throw themselves in line and be determined enough to obey the Givers.

One soldier fears divine punishment for his crimes, and that manifests the Unspeakable too. This is what requires the March of the Sisters

“Stepping out of line” is punishment for this girl. However, the real culprit was someone who feared his crimes would be discovered.

Aritha’s duty is to assuage fears. However, she discovers that in order to do so, she must sacrifice others- by killing the predators. She is freaked out by this, as she can make it worse by targetting the wrong ones and giving them fear.

The Givers assuage fear by making people believe in them. There is a component to the rituals which somehow works, but it is a mystery why. Later, it is revealed that it is a way to treat fears by making people recall ‘safe’ memories? No- do not explain why they work. There is only silence when asked why. Questioning them will make others shout at the students, with their eyes trembling and hands shaking.

The traitor cannot let go, but believes that she needs the power Aritha has to do so. She blames Aritha for being unable to assuage her fears.

Usually, there is a constant level of fear. But occasionally, there are spikes of huge amounts of fear of the Unspeakable because one fears it will come for them in Divine Punishment. No one knows what the Unspeakable is, but it is heavily assumed by many to be Divine Punishment for mistakes they’ve done. When there is a Spike, that means someone has done or thought something wrong, according to the Givers.

USE OR NOT?: It is not JUST fear, but fear of punishment. Not any other kind of fear!

No; it is fear of the Unspeakable. FORGET ABOUT SACRIFICES.

The Cardinal Mother is risky because it puts too much trust in people’s thoughts, which are hard to control. However, instead of dealing with these fears of the Unspeakable, innocents are punished and killed. Thus, Aritha seeks to actually address the problem.

It is pretty stupid to control everyone’s thoughts. You can’t just get rid of fears. A normal level of fear of the Unspeakable is okay. But those that spiral out of control are the culprits. Thus, whenever a huge spiral occurs that snowballs into paranoid imagination, they must be stopped.

But why does someone fear the unspeakable? What is it? It's Divine Punishment. Someone fears it because they have done something wrong. There are many minor crimes that won't allow spiralling. But when someone is abused, they fear it.

It is IMPOSSIBLE for Aritha, by herself, to deal with everything. Instead, she needs disciples and priests, etc. But what's so special about her? Because she becomes the one to discover the solutions; she can access Trance in a way no one else can. Everyone else can only counsel or use minor spells. Aritha can reach into the worst cases, deep inside one's subconsciousness, which is a power only the Cardinal Mother can grant.

Types of fears of punishment that cause paranoid thoughts:

- someone actually deserves it (they committed a crime)
- someone doesn't deserve it

ALTERNATIVE:

The culprit cannot be found because the Unspeakable is undetectable, or very, very hard to detect. The Unspeakable is not JUST CRIMES- it causes deformities, suffering, plagues, etc. to many. The Unspeakable does not possess someone. Instead, it is able to invade when there is an argument, with neither side being righteous. Because these conflicts cannot be resolved, and would cause disorder when they do, innocents must

Aritha breaks formation when

With the Unspeakable, there must be sacrifices. Usually, the Givers will say who to sacrifice, even if those are innocents; sometimes, by luck, the culprits are sacrificed. These rituals will somehow stop the Unspeakable, but no one knows why. However, it is known that it is because someone is attacking the sacrifices. Thus, if one can sacrifice the right culprits, the Unspeakable can stop, too.

One soldier has raped an older headmistress

If the Givers decide how to do things, then the main culprits may not be caught/punished, but safety is guaranteed. Anxiety is relieved, but there is a constant feeling of needing to obey and not questioning. Uncontrollable, reoccurring orders from the Givers.

With the Cardinal Mother, there is a gamble. When there is an Unspeakable possessing a traitor, Aritha must act as a judge. However, she learns better to use the Trance to assess the true situation,

interpreting the other world, and reading body language/etc. If she catches the culprit, then the Unspeakable is stopped.

Others seek the power for themselves

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REVISION: USE THIS ONE!

The Givers do not entrust Children of the Garden (humans) with the responsibility of judging others not in accordance to the rules assigned by the Givers. All protocols must be followed, or else the Unspeakable will arrive. The Unspeakable has locked the world into a doll-like theatre act, in which the same play must be repeated over and over again or else the Unspeakable becomes dissatisfied. The Givers, ominous and mysterious creatures, have taken note of these rules and believe the Children of the Garden must follow them, too. It is a curse.

But instead of targeting only those who are responsible for letting the Unspeakable in, innocents must take the burden.

Not EVERY action must be controlled. However, due to mysterious, ancient Original Sin crimes which have not been justly dealt with, the Unspeakable exist every second of every day, and routine prayers must keep them away.

The Unspeakable is revealed to occur whenever a terrible gray area crime that is not discovered or judged is committed, and thoughts about the Divine Punishment from the Unspeakable spiral out of control. Whenever someone does something wrong and it is not known, they become paranoid about being discovered. Because Children of the Garden are not allowed to judge others due to their unjust punishments from the Unspeakable from centuries ago (in lost history), they are not allowed to judge any crimes anymore.

The Givers drill into people's heads that "The Pure must Carry the Burden of the Sins of the Guilty", and that the guilt will stop crimes. These must be 'gray area' crimes; the black/white crimes are punished accordingly. However, those

The Givers are unable to judge humans as they don't understand the concept of souls. They are unable to comprehend human morals, as they are creatures like trees who are on a completely different plane of existence. But since the Unspeakable also affect the Givers, and the only thing that decides whether they come or not are humans, the Givers must control the humans, who failed to keep the Unspeakable away centuries ago.

If 'unjust punishment' is dished out or the wrong person is punished, the Unspeakable will not be stopped. But if the right one is punished, the Unspeakable will. Aritha remarks that this is all subjective. However, the Unspeakable have their own moral system, thus Children of the Garden must find the correct answers to align their thinking with the Unspeakable. The Unspeakable are not absolutely, morally just.

The Cardinal Mother offers a way to stop the Unspeakable by giving Aritha the ability to peer into others' souls. Thus, she obtains a sight that others cannot see, and using this 'other world', she can decipher who is the criminal, if she makes the right choice. Aritha learns to interpret these worlds better over time, crafting new spells to realize worlds in different ways.

Must choose whom to sacrifice. One first gets lost in the dance to not think about the consequences

Aritha avoids dishing out unjust punishments, and tries to get ones that fit the crime. The Cardinal Mother tempts her to dish out harsh punishments, but she avoids this as best as she can. However, her daughter is implied to not be immune.

There is 'no one correct answer' from the Unspeakable. Whatever this force of nature is, it will decide if they agree with the Judge's decision. There are no hard, set rules. Thus, Aritha must use the power of the Cardinal Mother to try to persuade the Unspeakable that she has judged someone correctly. The CM tells Aritha that the Unspeakable

When Aritha decides on a fate, the Unspeakable will carry it out. But if they don't like what she does, they will randomly target many. The Givers have decided, instead, to use rituals to counter the Unspeakable in which innocents whom they choose, those who are 'less valuable', are attacked instead.

Aritha tries to use rehabilitation, etc on the criminals. She manages to persuade the Unspeakable that this works. However, she manages to get tricked a few times. When she is betrayed, she is tricked by her friend. Her friend falsely accused someone of hurting her, so Aritha finally caves in and greatly injures that innocent, but stops when she realizes she's about to kill him. The Unspeakable do not agree with her judgment and attack a Giver. The Givers become so outraged, that they transform Aritha, in public, into a hideous creature, and kill nearly all of her followers.

Crimes:

- self defense murder

- provoking, etc

- revenge murder?

- schizophrenic kidnapping of children

- schizophrenic abuse of an older woman (Aritha murders the man, but does not think of the consequences of leaving his children behind, whom no one can care for). Plea of insanity?

-muddled (not false, but biased) accusation of a crime

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Summary:

In a kingdom with facets characteristic of the Elizabethan era, Cassandra Agatha attends an academy of witches and warlocks who must adhere to strict routines of repentance and ritualistic punishment. Whenever these rules are not obeyed, horrifying events carried out by a morbid curse, marked as the 'Unspeakable', befall the kingdom. Cassandra never knew her mother, Aritha, but upon a chance encounter, she learns that her mother was a sacred figure revered by a forbidden faith. Forced against her will to act as a living shield for warlock soldiers, Aritha runs away from the academy and discovers the Cardinal Mother, who is worshipped by a dark cult that offers its acolytes the ability to judge the 'sins of ambivalence'. She uncovers the sinister history behind the Unspeakable's existence, and learns that the Cardinal Mother's gifts to her may hold the key to stopping the Unspeakable without requiring the sacrifice of innocents. As Cassandra delves deeper into the past, she unmask the truth of what really happened to Aritha on the night of her disappearance...

cult name: Apostles of the Cardinal Mother

fated day: they believe Aritha left to a nearby continent and will one day return, stronger than before

morbid and horrifying events carried out by a curse, marked as the 'Unspeakable', will occur; its choice of victims is unpredictable

<https://www.pexels.com/photo/close-up-of-red-rose-on-black-background-247122/>

hybrid of facets characteristic of the Elizabethan and Renaissance eras

The Cardinal Mother offers Aritha the ability to find the perpetrators, but with the monkey's paw catch of only peering into the darkest parts of one's soul, meaning one is more likely to deal harsh punishments. Aritha, when seeing this side, will become biased to the person.

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ALTERNATIVE:

Kassandra is selfish and doesn't stand for anyone's shit, though she is sometimes unsure and doubtful of herself.

Crimes are not justly punished in Basilica. Long ago, humans treated criminals unjustly, and as such, the Unspeakable retaliated. Instead of breaking the peace and prosecuting criminals, it was decided that since humans could not justly punish criminals and thus keep the Unspeakable away, they turned to the Givers to use rituals to seal the Unspeakable away. These rituals prevent the victims from wanting justice. The Unspeakable exist in response to humanity's vengeful bloodlust. When this bloodlust is not proportionate, the Unspeakable come about. The Unspeakable do not judge whether it's just or not. The Wardens do. The Wardens are somewhat against the Givers. They believe they have the job of keeping humanity's bloodlust in check. If it is not kept in check, then many are indiscriminantly punished. The Wardens' twisted belief is that keeping others' in check is the job of EVERYONE in society, so if crimes are not kept in check, everyone should be punished.

By destroying the victims' desire for revenge, the rituals ward this bloodlust away. The Unspeakable can only live if the victims' obsessive thoughts about revenge summon them. The Wardens believed that the bloodlust thoughts inflicted upon the criminal should be shared on everyone, so everyone can see just how terrible these vengeful thoughts are.

ALTERNATIVE, USE OR NOT?: Instead of targetting the people who harm the victims, the Unspeakable attacks people indiscriminantly, as the Unspeakable is NOT a guardian angel, but an entity that uses the victims as a means to manifest in the physical world. It does not protect the victims, but uses them as a portal.

The Givers found that by eliminating the victims, they could stop the Unspeakable. No one dares to stop because if they do, the Unspeakable always arrives. All the rituals done are to prevent the victims from speaking up against the Ancestral Sin, which is still unknown. If the students were to stop being submissive and stop showing that they're willing to punish themselves, then they are showing acts of defiance. The Unspeakable sense these acts of defiance and use them to seep in. The defiance may not be as strong as outright revenge, but it is enough. Even if someone just forgets, that is considered defiance as one does not care to be submissive to the criminals who enacted the Ancestral Sin. The Ancestral Sin affects everyone and was the creation of humans. The Wardens saw that humans all had sin inside themselves and thus needed to always be kept in check. If they were to overshoot justice, then they would need to be punished. The Givers do not even want to give humanity a chance at all, so they just make them all submissive. The Wardens do not like this, but prefer it to humanity's bloodlust. The Wardens are very lawful neutral.

The Wardens' belief is that humans need to be kept in check; they seek proportionate justice, but on their own subjective terms. The Givers want to avoid justice altogether; they only desire peace and order. The Cardinal Mother only seeks revenge.

The March of the Sisters was done in response to a girl speaking up against violence committed against her. To scare the girls into compliance, the March of the Sisters is enacted. Aritha thinks something is wrong and seeks to attack the real criminal, but accidentally causes collateral damage.

The Cardinal Mother is bloodlusted and loves death and pain. She feeds off it. Thus, she offers the power to Aritha so she can kill others. But Aritha will not be tempted as she wants justice, and wants to negotiate with the Unspeakable. When Aritha is tricked into nearly killing someone who is falsely accused (for the most part), the town mob sees just how out of control she is with her power, and pray to the Givers to take her away and punish her.

Aritha is a studious student yet constantly questions things, and wants justice.

Catherine seeks to offer herself, even shielding criminals away from their sins, to protect others. She doesn't let Aritha use her powers because Aritha seemed too bloodlusted and Catherine wants to avoid violence, so she offers to let the Unspeakable sprout inside herself, and dies. Catherine is an exorcist who has the power to exorcise Unspeakable demons away. Aritha is not blamed for Catherine's death. However, upon seeing Catherine die, Aritha is hellbent on destroying the system, which she wasn't hellbent on before (she just wanted to use the power for small crimes and then never deal with it again).

The Cardinal Mother offers Aritha powers to kill nearly anyone, and the mindset needed to do so. While the acolytes are offered the mindset to take revenge, they do not have these powers. Aritha pairs up these new weapons with her old spells which can look deep into people's souls and see why they committed crimes. She tries to avoid the temptation of outright killing people, but gives in once.

#### NEW SUMMARY:

In a kingdom with facets characteristic of the Elizabethan era, Cassandra Agatha attends an academy of witches and warlocks who must adhere to strict routines of repentance and ritualistic punishment. Instead of punishing those who harm others, the kingdom punishes the victims. Whenever rituals that punish the victims are not obeyed, horrifying events carried out by a morbid curse, marked as the 'Unspeakable', befall the kingdom. Cassandra never knew her mother, Aritha, but upon a chance encounter, she learns that her mother was a sacred figure revered by a forbidden faith. Forced against her will to act as a living shield for warlock soldiers, Aritha runs away from the academy and is granted gifts by the Cardinal Mother, a deity who is worshipped by a dark cult that offers its acolytes the means

to enact revenge, yet revels in inflicting death and pain, even to those who do not deserve it. After Aritha uncovers the sinister history behind the Unspeakable's existence, she becomes devoted to using the Cardinal Mother's powers to judge the sins of others as fairly as she can, believing that she can stop the Unspeakable without requiring the sacrifice of innocents. As Cassandra delves deeper into the past, she unmask the truth of what really happened to her mother on the night of her disappearance...

~10k-12k words. 20k-30k words is fine too. Horror/Fantasy. Suspense. M.

Start by writing dialogue, jumping around in scenes you can visualize better first, and write short descriptions to create a starting point. Then fill in the details and rearrange, revise, etc.

OUTLINE:

He laughs. "Don't look there."

Agatha heads towards the creature as she has flashbacks of turning down the offer to go to the hang out. In the same alleyway, she sees her thief friend eating his catch of the day.

Agatha tells the boy that she can put it off some other time. Shows her friend, a scruffy warlock thief, the 'pet' that she's never seen but who comes to her, looking for food. Small features of the creature are seen and implied more and more during the story. Agatha's uncovering of the past is a solitary journey.



Agatha thinks the creature was a pet her mother had, too. Aritha sees a giant, cat-like creature that stays in the alleyways and she helps feed it. But it's revealed at the end that this cat-like creature was a human. And then, it dies, immediately foreshadowing what's about to happen.

Agatha uncovers a haunting painting, and realizes it's of her mother. The symbols she sees the saboteurs use is of it, too. So she enters, and looks for answers there. Aritha was worshipped as a saint, but no one speaks of her anymore, and no one dares talk of the Cardinal Mother cult. There are hints that she is still alive, and ran away. People have seen her. However, in the end this is revealed not to be her, but her traitor, who wanted her freedom to escape the rigidity herself. Agatha realizes that her caretaker has been hiding things from her. She finds a collar belonging to a giant cat her mother had.

Questions, backs off. Thinks it's a test. She's only studious because she wants to become great. But she's apprehensive and nervous about taking risks.

Aritha schoolyard. Gratitude and worship. Aritha is a studious student who wants to please the Givers, but

Prophetic, ritual and trance

The banshees don't fire spells. Only a haunting group of laughing, shrieking girls (ghosts) are seen hanging above a bell tower, yelling, and then they disappear. This signifies one of the Unspeakable events- the one that only the March of the Sisters can prevent. In this event, children will randomly be struck by an illness, and bleed. They will start to wither into corpses. To ward it off, and protect the boys, the girls must enact the ritual. This is because they are always the 'living shields'. They must fake smile or else.

Rejoice! Salvation...

Aritha rebels because she wants to try her own spell

Agatha finds the withered treasures leftover from the girls' initial discover; 16 years ago, Aritha finds the Cardinal Mother and is imbued with its power. Aritha misses a daily ritual. All the girls look at her. And nothing happens.

Never use the word 'rebellion'. It is only the spreading of a cult. The cult rejoices when Aritha accepts.

One time, she rushes out of hiding to heal someone, but the Givers won't let her come near. Catherine tries, but fails too, and is forced to seal it within herself. People wonder why Catherine dies- she was

Chosen to destroy the Unspeakable once and for all, and now she's gone. They think Aritha was the one who caused the prophecy to become unfulfilled by 'shaking things up'.

Catherine, the kind Chosen One who tries to stick up for Aritha. On orders, she goes to hunt down Aritha. When the Unspeakable come, no one knows what went wrong. Was it Aritha? There is no evidence. Aritha, however, feels guilty. Later, Catherine dies trying to exorcise the Unspeakable out of a young, handicapped girl. Instead, the Unspeakable goes inside of her.

Everyone blames Aritha for the death of Catherine and the boys. She goes into hiding for another year. Leo visits her. He becomes enshrouded and curious about the cult of the Cardinal Mother. He looks for answers, and Aritha tries to beg him to stay, since she wants to know that in the outside world, at least there is someone who doesn't see her as a monster. They end up kissing, and have sex. But later, once he realizes what he's done, there is fear and regret. Pregnancy, come to terms

Agatha realizes something is off, and learns the whole truth

Betrayed after a Giver dies, and the blame is shifted to Aritha. When Aritha is dragged out, she sees the giant corpse of a Giver, with flowers and other parasitic elements sprouting from it. They claim she committed the ultimate sin by being pregnant, and will usher in an era of destruction. First, they kill Agatha's father in public.

Mary dies trying to protect Aritha, using her body to shield her. They shoot a stun spell onto her. To get her out of the way, they then shoot a killing spell at her.

As Aritha is transformed, she feels the Cardinal Mother leaving her.

Agatha, after euthanizing her mother: "I will kill them for what they did to you."

(throughout the story, Agatha is slightly annoyed at things. She's annoyed by the boy's friends. She gets frustrated at having to do chores, and wishes that if the teacher died, there wouldn't be exams. But she thinks this is just a joke. In the end, she doesn't use the word 'kill', but she says "They won't get away with this" or something.)

She clutches her shieldmaiden, squeezing it hard between her fingers.

Signify change in scene by a new date. 782 Q is current year.

look at movies: grease, suspira, carrie, wicker man, romeo/juliet

themes: the trap of safety, the unquestionable rituals that somehow work, fear of leaving rigidity, OCD

Organs, religious chants (not during march of sisters)

during march: violins, clarinets, harps, classical music

Catherine helps pick up Aritha's books and helps brush her up and fix her hair. When she hunts her down, she says she doesn't want to hurt her, but just has to.

The saboteurs/vandals sit around in a circle and watch as others dance. These are the dances of chance. People rarely die, they are guided by learned techniques. Each dance is meant to be before a game of chance. These games fill the spectators with power and new insights to their life.

Aritha must gamble with a demon each time she sets a spell. She learns to get better at reading facial expressions, their fears, their desires, etc. Each spell provokes one demon. She teaches these spells to others, whom have lesser powers (they gamble with lesser demons).

The givers have OCD and need everything to be organized. Put in nice, little boxes. If even one thing is out of place, the Unspeakable come. A horrifying parasite-like disease sprouts from people. When Aritha disrupts this, the people fear her. She wants to use the cardinal Mother to find a solution, but the Givers do not let her.

Agatha is invited by boys to hang out, but refuses, as she spends time with this creature whose look she cannot see. She heard someone, somewhere, escaped and started a 'forbidden religion'. She thinks it's her mother, but it's not; someone betrayed her and left her and all the others to die.

Agatha feeds an unknown creature. She wonders "what happened to my mother?" In the past, Aritha is shown also encoutnering an unknown creature. But this one is shown to be different than the creature Agatha interacts; the plot twist at the end is that the unknown creature is her mother. Agatha did not know

Creature looks like Belphegor

Cardinal mother is 'one who gambles', but offers a chance

Givers claim that without the rituals, there is no other way.

Agatha: cares for animals, sarcastic, but not dreary. Friendly and goofy. Has a goofy smile. Sometimes torn between wanting to go with others, but then quickly decides not to. May rename to Cassandra Agatha. Green eyes, black hair, olive skin.

Aritha's lover is a good, righteous fellow who wants to be a soldier. After Aritha becomes pregnant, he thinks he was 'wrongly seduced' by the religion and wants to cover it up. He goes back to being a soldier and leaves Aritha alone. He tries to hide his nervousness by being angry and threatening. But when he's discovered, he's executed for his disobedience.

Aritha was just curious, too. After it's done, she doesn't know what to do. She becomes nervous, unsure, and as such, paranoid. She wishes her old teacher, whom she wished to have listened to, can care for her. But soon, she learns to be at peace with the unpredictability of life. She seeks not to control what the child would be, but to observe and then react. She learns to accept the risks.

"I- I" Aritha clutches her chest. She can hardly breath.

Right after Agatha is born, Aritha is dragged out, and transformed.

Aritha's child is adopted by a witch of the school, who wants to cover it up too and wished Aritha had a normal, compliant life.

"Your mother was a good student. But she had too many questions."

The cardinal mother is a being that is curious and seductive- it is the 'what if' someone doesn't follow the rituals. There is a huge gamble. Sometimes, one dies. Other times, one does not. When Aritha reaches her, she takes a risk. Thus, when something goes wrong, no one knows what caused it. With the rituals in place, everyone knows. But with the Cardinal mother, it is impossible to tell.

The Givers, who are gods, are shown to be vulnerable to the Unspeakable, too. When one of them dies, the people panic. But the ritual tells them that they cannot scream. Instead, they all watch as, in public, Aritha is tortured and transformed painfully into the hideous hooked nose giant imp, a mockery of being

the “Cardinal Mother”. Aritha begs the people to help her. However, they blame her for the death of both Catherine and the Giver.

Not all of the gigantic giver is shown. Only a giant gray stone hand the size of a house, and half of a face with three eyes.

The world is far from a utopia. The Unspeakable always attacks. But inside the school, the children want to forget. They like being in the boarding school, though they know outside of it, there is only war and the Unspeakable. Different religions have different rituals for dealing with the Unspeakable. Some rituals work all the time. Others do not.

The outside world, in this short story, is not explained. It is a mystery. They just ‘need’ to protect against it.

Unsettling: the anxiety of what will happen when one does not perform the rituals. Aritha is unsure of herself, but slowly, as she learns to gamble with the Cardinal Mother, she becomes more and more confident. She keeps on studying to craft more spells, to find ways to heal people. She becomes a figurehead. There is no guarantee what will happen. Agatha doesn’t know what Aritha found, if any. But Aritha took the risks to overcome the repeating thoughts and behaviors. The rituals are harmful and restrictive. Aritha learns to live free and not have to do rituals. Instead of rituals, she gambles. On pure faith.

Dances to get her in the mood. Despite the increased risks, the people are more free. They do not have to sacrifice themselves unwillingly, they can eat whenever and whatever they want, they do not have to follow routines that have no explanations or reasoning, but ‘just work’. They do not have to be worried about missing something and compensating for it with sacrifice, and keep on being in debt.

“compulsions” No pleasure from doing them, only relief

At first, when Agatha finds a joyous memory, it is joyous to Aritha, too. But later, Agatha finds more memories that seem joyous, but she does not realize what actually happened to Aritha. These were tampered with by Agatha’s adoptive guardian. Agatha smiles, and is content, but the past is far more horrifying. A pivotal point comes with Agatha finds that something is off- something has been tampered with.

Aritha’s friends: Most just have a few lines, but no characterization or appearance description. Eight escape with her.

Mary- dumb but loyal

Beth- sleeps all the time

Solstice- she is suffering, having had to be inflicted with the worst illnesses as part of daily rituals. Thanks Aritha for helping her. But it's not enough, as the illnesses are still there. When Aritha is gone, Solstice tries to take the power of the Cardinal Mother for herself. But it won't let her.

Catherine- ded

Characters:

Sir Tobias

Madame Lumia

Leo

boy 1

thief boy

The girls learn to find rituals that benefit them, instead of using them for the rest of society, and thus they go their separate ways due to their differences? One by one they leave, until only a few remain with Aritha near the end; one betrays her.

Main villain: the people who fear to step out of line of the Givers

Agatha speaks to the spinoff cult leaders, but they do not know a thing, and are filled with rumors and gossip. They claim Aritha went to a faraway land, and one day vowed to return. However, there are other things they say that they all disagree on. Agatha realizes she can't trust them, and sneaks in to find answers for herself.

Catherine is the Destined Maiden, or Our Maiden

The gamble comes into play because there is a lack of information on what will happen. What if I'm wrong, Aritha asks. What if I made the wrong choice? Just the possibility of screwing up makes her nervous and unable to break routine. She must stick to her routine prayers and orders given by the Givers. But the Cardinal Mother offers her the ability to make choices.

Every moment, the Unspeakable must be kept out using nonsensical rituals. These represent the 'manners' in public that can transform into paranoid, compulsive thoughts. The students must count,

wash, check, doubt, hoard. Whenever someone steps out of line, the Unspeakable will come, and to counter it, many must sacrifice themselves in a ritual. One day, someone makes the gravest mistake of stepping out of line, and the March of the Sisters must be enacted.

The Cardinal Mother offers an escape from this by revealing that the Unspeakable can be countered by not thinking about it. The more one thinks of it and worries and fears it, the more power it has. It offers ways to distract and lessen these fears. Many thoughts of the Unspeakable plague people, and by using Trance, Aritha is able to assuage these fears. She can tap in and find what people want to do, which can keep their mind off from those thoughts. She also teaches others spells to let go. But there is a gamble. Not everyone can live free. If someone steps out of line, the Unspeakable get stronger. Even if one person fears it, if that fear is strong enough, it will come in whatever form that person imagines.

The Givers rituals require giving in to fear of the Unspeakable, as to perform the Purifications/Cleansing, one must use fear to throw themselves in line and be determined enough to obey the Givers.

One soldier fears divine punishment for his crimes, and that manifests the Unspeakable too. This is what requires the March of the Sisters

“Stepping out of line” is punishment for this girl. However, the real culprit was someone who feared his crimes would be discovered.

Aritha’s duty is to assuage fears. However, she discovers that in order to do so, she must sacrifice others- by killing the predators. She is freaked out by this, as she can make it worse by targetting the wrong ones and giving them fear.

The Givers assuage fear by making people believe in them. There is a component to the rituals which somehow works, but it is a mystery why. There is only silence when asked why. Questioning them will make others shout at the students, with their eyes tremebling and hands shaking.

The traitor cannot let go, but believes that she needs the power Aritha has to do so. She blames Aritha for being unable to assuage her fears.

Usually, there is a constant level of fear. But occassionally, there are spikes of huge amounts of fear of the Unspeakable because one fears it will come for them in Divine Punishment. No one knows what the Unspeakable is, but it is heavily assumed by many to be Divine Punishment for mistakes they’ve done. When there is a Spike, that means someone has done or thought something wrong, according to the Givers.

It is IMPOSSIBLE for Aritha, by herself, to deal with everything. Instead, she needs disciples and priests, etc. But what’s so special about her? Because she becomes the one to discover the solutions; she can access Trance in a way no one else can. Everyone else can only counsel or use minor spells. Aritha can

reach into the worst cases, deep inside one's subconsciousness, which is a power only the Cardinal Mother can grant.

One soldier has raped an older headmistress

If the Givers decide how to do things, then the main culprits may not be caught/punished, but safety is guaranteed. Anxiety is relieved, but there is a constant feeling of needing to obey and not questioning. Uncontrollable, reoccurring orders from the Givers.

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Others seek the power for themselves

The Givers do not entrust Children of the Garden (humans) with the responsibility of judging others not in accordance to the rules assigned by the Givers. All protocols must be followed, or else the Unspeakable will arrive. The Unspeakable has locked the world into a doll-like theatre act, in which the same play must be repeated over and over again or else the Unspeakable becomes dissatisfied. The Givers, ominous and mysterious creatures, have taken note of these rules and believe the Children of the Garden must follow them, too. It is a curse.

But instead of targeting only those who are responsible for letting the Unspeakable in, innocents must take the burden.

Not EVERY action must be controlled. However, due to mysterious, ancient Original Sin crimes which have not been justly dealt with, the Unspeakable exist every second of every day, and routine prayers must keep them away.

The Unspeakable is revealed to occur whenever a terrible gray area crime that is not discovered or judged is committed, and thoughts about the Divine Punishment from the Unspeakable spiral out of control. Whenever someone does something wrong and it is not known, they become paranoid about being discovered. Because Children of the Garden are not allowed to judge others due to their unjust punishments from the Unspeakable from centuries ago (in lost history), they are not allowed to judge any crimes anymore.

The Givers drill into people's heads that "The Pure must Carry the Burden of the Sins of the Guilty", and that the guilt will stop crimes. These must be 'gray area' crimes; the black/white crimes are punished accordingly. However, those



The Givers are unable to judge humans as they don't understand the concept of souls. They are unable to comprehend human morals, as they are creatures like trees who are on a completely different plane of existence. But since the Unspeakable also affect the Givers, and the only thing that decides whether they come or not are humans, the Givers must control the humans, who failed to keep the Unspeakable away centuries ago.

If 'unjust punishment' is dished out or the wrong person is punished, the Unspeakable will not be stopped. But if the right one is punished, the Unspeakable will. Aritha remarks that this is all subjective. However, the Unspeakable have their own moral system, thus Children of the Garden must find the correct answers to align their thinking with the Unspeakable. The Unspeakable are not absolutely, morally just.

The Cardinal Mother offers a way to stop the Unspeakable by giving Aritha the ability to peer into others' souls. Thus, she obtains a sight that others cannot see, and using this 'other world', she can decipher who is the criminal, if she makes the right choice. Aritha learns to interpret these worlds better over time, crafting new spells to realize worlds in different ways.

Must choose whom to sacrifice. One first gets lost in the dance to not think about the consequences

Aritha avoids dishing out unjust punishments, and tries to get ones that fit the crime. The Cardinal Mother tempts her to dish out harsh punishments, but she avoids this as best as she can. However, her daughter is implied to not be immune.

There is 'no one correct answer' from the Unspeakable. Whatever this force of nature is, it will decide if they agree with the Judge's decision. There are no hard, set rules. Thus, Aritha must use the power of the Cardinal Mother to try to persuade the Unspeakable that she has judged someone correctly. The CM tells Aritha that the Unspeakable

When Aritha decides on a fate, the Unspeakable will carry it out. But if they don't like what she does, they will randomly target many. The Givers have decided, instead, to use rituals to counter the Unspeakable in which innocents whom they choose, those who are 'less valuable', are attacked instead.

Aritha tries to use rehabilitation, etc on the criminals. She manages to persuade the Unspeakable that this works. However, she manages to get tricked a few times. When she is betrayed, she is tricked by her friend. Her friend falsely accused someone of hurting her, so Aritha finally caves in and greatly injures that innocent, but stops when she realizes she's about to kill him. The Unspeakable do not agree with her judgment and attack a Giver. The Givers become so outraged, that they transform Aritha, in public, into a hideous creature, and kill nearly all of her followers.

Crimes:

- self defense murder
- provoking, etc
- revenge murder?
- schizophrenic kidnapping of children
- schizophrenic abuse of an older woman (Aritha murders the man, but does not think of the consequences of leaving his children behind, whom no one can care for). Plea of insanity?
- muddled (not false, but biased) accusation of a crime

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#### Summary:

In a kingdom with facets characteristic of the Elizabethan era, Cassandra Agatha attends an academy of witches and warlocks who must adhere to strict routines of repentance and ritualistic punishment. Whenever these rules are not obeyed, horrifying events carried out by a morbid curse, marked as the 'Unspeakable', befall the kingdom. Cassandra never knew her mother, Aritha, but upon a chance encounter, she learns that her mother was a sacred figure revered by a forbidden faith. Forced against her will to act as a living shield for warlock soldiers, Aritha runs away from the academy and discovers the Cardinal Mother, who is worshipped by a dark cult that offers its acolytes the ability to judge the 'sins of ambivalence'. She uncovers the sinister history behind the Unspeakable's existence, and learns that the Cardinal Mother's gifts to her may hold the key to stopping the Unspeakable without requiring the sacrifice of innocents. As Cassandra delves deeper into the past, she unmask the truth of what really happened to Aritha on the night of her disappearance...

cult name: Apostles of the Cardinal Mother

fated day: they believe Aritha left to a nearby continent and will one day return, stronger than before

morbid and horrifying events carried out by a curse, marked as the 'Unspeakable', will occur; its choice of victims is unpredictable

<https://www.pexels.com/photo/close-up-of-red-rose-on-black-background-247122/>

hybrid of facets characteristic of the Elizabethan and Renaissance eras

The Cardinal Mother offers Aritha the ability to find the perpetrators, but with the monkey's paw catch of only peering into the darkest parts of one's soul, meaning one is more likely to deal harsh punishments. Aritha, when seeing this side, will become biased to the person.

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ALTERNATIVE:

Kassandra is selfish and doesn't stand for anyone's shit, though she is sometimes unsure and doubtful of herself.

Crimes are not justly punished in Basilica. Long ago, humans treated criminals unjustly, and as such, the Unspeakable retaliated. Instead of breaking the peace and prosecuting criminals, it was decided that since humans could not justly punish criminals and thus keep the Unspeakable away, they turned to the Givers to use rituals to seal the Unspeakable away. These rituals prevent the victims from wanting justice. The Unspeakable exist in response to humanity's vengeful bloodlust. When this bloodlust is not proportionate, the Unspeakable come about. The Unspeakable do not judge whether it's just or not. The Wardens do. The Wardens are somewhat against the Givers. They believe they have the job of keeping humanity's bloodlust in check. If it is not kept in check, then many are indiscriminantly punished. The Wardens' twisted belief is that keeping others' in check is the job of EVERYONE in society, so if crimes are not kept in check, everyone should be punished.

By destroying the victims' desire for revenge, the rituals ward this bloodlust away. The Unspeakable can only live if the victims' obsessive thoughts about revenge summon them. The Wardens believed that the bloodlust thoughts inflicted upon the criminal should be shared on everyone, so everyone can see just how terrible these vengeful thoughts are.

ALTERNATIVE, USE OR NOT?: Instead of targetting the people who harm the victims, the Unspeakable attacks people indiscriminantly, as the Unspeakable is NOT a guardian angel, but an entity that uses the victims as a means to manifest in the physical world. It does not protect the victims, but uses them as a portal.

The Givers found that by eliminating the victims, they could stop the Unspeakable. No one dares to stop because if they do, the Unspeakable always arrives. All the rituals done are to prevent the victims from speaking up against the Ancestral Sin, which is still unknown. If the students were to stop being submissive and stop showing that they're willing to punish themselves, then they are showing acts of defiance. The Unspeakable sense these acts of defiance and use them to seep in. The defiance may not be as strong as outright revenge, but it is enough. Even if someone just forgets, that is considered defiance as one does not care to be submissive to the criminals who enacted the Ancestral Sin. The Ancestral Sin affects everyone and was the creation of humans. The Wardens saw that humans all had

sin inside themselves and thus needed to always be kept in check. If they were to overshoot justice, then they would need to be punished. The Givers do not even want to give humanity a chance at all, so they just make them all submissive. The Wardens do not like this, but prefer it to humanity's bloodlust. The Wardens are very lawful neutral.

The Wardens' belief is that humans need to be kept in check; they seek proportionate justice, but on their own subjective terms. The Givers want to avoid justice altogether; they only desire peace and order. The Cardinal Mother only seeks revenge.

The March of the Sisters was done in response to a girl speaking up against violence committed against her. To scare the girls into compliance, the March of the Sisters is enacted. Aritha thinks something is wrong and seeks to attack the real criminal, but accidentally causes collateral damage.

The Cardinal Mother is bloodlusted and loves death and pain. She feeds off it. Thus, she offers the power to Aritha so she can kill others. But Aritha will not be tempted as she wants justice, and wants to negotiate with the Unspeakable. When Aritha is tricked into nearly killing someone who is falsely accused (for the most part), the town mob sees just how out of control she is with her power, and pray to the Givers to take her away and punish her.

Aritha is a studious student yet constantly questions things, and wants justice.

Catherine seeks to offer herself, even shielding criminals away from their sins, to protect others. She doesn't let Aritha use her powers because Aritha seemed too bloodlusted and Catherine wants to avoid violence, so she offers to let the Unspeakable sprout inside herself, and dies. Catherine is an exorcist who has the power to exorcise Unspeakable demons away. Aritha is not blamed for Catherine's death. However, upon seeing Catherine die, Aritha is hellbent on destroying the system, which she wasn't hellbent on before (she just wanted to use the power for small crimes and then never deal with it again).

The Cardinal Mother offers Aritha powers to kill nearly anyone, and the mindset needed to do so. While the acolytes are offered the mindset to take revenge, they do not have these powers. Aritha pairs up these new weapons with her old spells which can look deep into people's souls and see why they committed crimes. She tries to avoid the temptation of outright killing people, but gives in once.

#### NEW SUMMARY:

In a kingdom with facets characteristic of the Elizabethan era, Cassandra Agatha attends an academy of witches and warlocks who must adhere to strict routines of repentance and ritualistic punishment.

Instead of punishing those who harm others, the kingdom punishes the victims. Whenever rituals that punish the victims are not obeyed, horrifying events carried out by a morbid curse, marked as the 'Unspeakable', befall the kingdom. Cassandra never knew her mother, Aritha, but upon a chance encounter, she learns that her mother was a sacred figure revered by a forbidden faith. Forced against her will to act as a living shield for warlock soldiers, Aritha runs away from the academy and is granted gifts by the Cardinal Mother, a deity who is worshipped by a dark cult that offers its acolytes the means to enact revenge, yet revels in inflicting death and pain, even to those who do not deserve it. After Aritha uncovers the sinister history behind the Unspeakable's existence, she becomes devoted to using the Cardinal Mother's powers to judge the sins of others as fairly as she can, believing that she can stop the Unspeakable without requiring the sacrifice of innocents. As Cassandra delves deeper into the past, she unmask the truth of what really happened to her mother on the night of her disappearance...

**TIPS ON WRITING HORROR:** The clues had been there the whole time. It all seems okay at first, though something unsettling is underneath. With one line, there is a sudden realization about the truth, and after the realization, it is too late- there is no escape.

[illegible]

[introduce Aritha and Mary in the academy]

“

Aritha rolled her eyes and sighed. "Yeah, I know, I know. 'For there is no greater love than a guardian's sacrifice and protection.' We say it every single day, how could I ever forget?"

<<<

"Who really gave everything to you?" Madame Rufus said curly.

"Madame Pastel."

"She took a vow a celibacy to take you in! She swore an oath to protect you her entire life! The least you can do is thank her."

<<<

"We have all fought for you to become liberated. And this is how you repay us?"

<<<

"I'm scared. Maybe they were right all along. How could I ever betray their love?"

"Just because she sacrificed everything for me, doesn't make her right. It doesn't matter what they all say."

<<<

"Where's the rest of the pages? I have to know!"

Kassandra can't find the missing pages. But eventually she learns Aritha somehow changed. She finds one piece that says:

"I'll prove them wrong," Aritha said with determination.

"But who will raise her?"

"The Apostles will help."

<<<

“Don’t leave,” Cassandra pleaded, “I have to know more!”

<<<

“It’s not right ,” Beth said. “Who do the Wardens think they are?”

“We don’t have any other choice.”

“There has to be one! I’m sorry Aritha, but I just can’t do this.”

<<<

“Please,” Solstice begged, “He’s hurting me. You have to help me.”

<<<

Aritha dabbed the wet cloth onto her face.

“My, my,” the Cardinal Mother smiled, “You look beautiful.”

<<<

“It looks like it has a martingale. I wonder who it belonged to?”

[in the end, it’s revealed that some of the villagers mockingly gave her the martingale of her own pet]

The Cardinal Mother

In a solemn Kingdom, girls in frilled white dresses shiver as they march past gardens haunted by disquietude; trapped within a blithe choir, they dare not break its cadence. Cassandra Agatha attends an academy of witches and warlocks who must adhere to such strict, painful routines of repentance and rituals. Instead of punishing criminals, the Kingdom disciplines their victims, who fearfully know that whenever they do not comply, horrific events carried out by an Unspeakable Curse befall their home. Cassandra never knew her mother Aritha, but upon a chance encounter with a mysterious boy, it is revealed to the witch that she was a sacred figure revered by a forbidden faith.

Forced against her will to act as a living shield for warlock soldiers, Aritha ran away from the academy, and in her sleep, fell into a nightmare. Upon awakening, the lost girl felt a sinister aura harbored within. She had discovered the Cardinal Mother, a deity who was worshipped by a dark cult that granted its acolytes the means to enact revenge, yet reveled in inflicting death and pain... even to those who did not deserve it. Aritha became devoted to using the Cardinal Mother's gifts to judge the sins of others as fairly as she could, believing that it was her destiny to persuade the Kingdom to relinquish their practice of sacrificing innocents, for she had foreseen another way to stop the Unspeakable.

But as Cassandra delves deeper into the past, she begins to unravel the truth of what really happened to her mother on the night of her disappearance...

WARNING: This story contains grotesque and violent descriptions. Includes strong profanity. Reader discretion is advised.

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First Chapter will be out around Fall 2018, with periodic updates afterwards

No sex scenes, only unease and grotesque horror, implicit mentions of sexual acts. However, according to wattpads rules this MUST be marked as Mature.

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alternatives:

possessing haunting gardens of white and purple flowers,

Victorian Era dresses with frills

choir



In a solemn Kingdom visually possessing Victorian Era characteristics

In a solemn Kingdom, shuddering white dresses with frills march past haunting gardens; they are worn by girls, carried along by a blithe choir, who dare not break its cadence.

In a solemn Kingdom, shuddering white dresses with frills ferry girls forced to march past haunting gardens; trapped within a blithe choir, they dare not break its cadence.

After uncovering the sinister history behind the Unspeakable's existence, she became devoted to using the Cardinal Mother's gifts to judge the sins of others as fairly as she could, believing that she harbored gifts destined to stop the Unspeakable without requiring the Kingdom's innocent sacrifices.