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— Hunter S. Thompson,
Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas



Through the Ebon Gate

A D²⁰ adventure for Geist: the Sin-Eaters using the Storytelling Adventure System

Written by Christopher Lee Simmons Developed by Eddy Webb
Edited by Genevieve Podleski Layout by Craig S Grant
Art: Joel Biske, Coz Koniotis, Justin Norman, Richard Pellegrino,
Matt Smith, John Wigley

STORYTELLING ADVENTURE SYSTEM

SCENES
10

MENTAL
PHYSICAL
SOCIAL



XP LEVEL
0-34

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Sin-Eaters know that their strange existence is a complicated one. They stand at the crossroads between life and death and endure all the complications of both. But there are others, desperate for something to believe in, who believe that a Sin-Eater's bond with her *geist* is a blessed state of unification and a triumph over the limitations of the human form.

These souls make up the brethren of the Glorious Church of the Unified Spirit. They have been told that their path lies not in life or death, but in a divine state somewhere in between. Those who have only experienced one life cannot achieve true enlightenment. The sacred symbiosis of spirit and flesh must be achieved to take the next step. Sin-Eaters are their saints, their bodhisattvas. The brethren are told that they must step through the black gate to reach their potential. They are told that this is humanity's next step – humanity's destiny.

They are misled.

I ntroduction

Through the Ebon Gate is a Storytelling Adventure System story for **Geist: the Sin-Eaters**. It's essentially a kit to running this story for your troupe, which means only you, as the Storyteller, should read it. Like a kit, **Through the Ebon Gate** contains all the parts to build a story. The tools you use to build it are the **World of Darkness Rulebook** and **Geist: the Sin-Eaters**, as well as the usual pencils, paper and dice. When you get your troupe together, you'll use these parts and tools to build a story, but how you put everything together is up to you. It depends on what you're trying to do, whether it's a stand-alone scenario designed for an evening or two of entertainment or a story in an ongoing **Geist** chronicle. The only right way is whatever ends up being fun for you and your troupe.

Treatment

Through the Ebon Gate opens at a carnival gathering. Sin-Eaters mingle and carouse, make deals, stoke rivalries and build bonds between krewes. In the midst of the festivities, a passenger train derails, flung off the rails by an explosion in the engine. The cars slide into the gathering, loosing chaos and death on the Sin-Eaters' celebration of life. As the krewe investigates, they find a strange inverted sigil that means "shattering" in a vulgar corruption of the Old Tongue.

The train's destruction was caused by a member of the Black Gate cult who died on the train, trying to become a Sin-Eater and impress those in attendance at the carnival. Mateo, the suicide bomber, is distraught over his failure and wracked with guilt over what he's done. He was misled. As the krewe begins to search for the rest of the cult, they run across Marci, another member of the church who has been deftly manipulated into killing herself to find Mateo, whom she loves. She's wearing an

extremely unstable vest of explosives, putting herself, the krewe, and innocent bystanders at risk. After the krewe deals with her, whether they save her or not, they approach the church's meeting place, an antique bookstore in a strip mall storefront. Agents of the Lost Minister, the shade who is using the Seekers for his own ends, ambush the characters along the way.

Once there, the leader of the cult, Uriah Long, tries to explain the cult's beliefs. The characters have to convince him to take them to see the Minister, which he does by divining the nearest Averian Gate. The gate he leads the characters to requires them to board the spirit of the train that crashed in the beginning, leading them onto a train ride into the underworld, where they are attacked by a swarm of the minister's guardians before they finally get to confront the Lost Minister in a chapel made of bone and iron.

Theme: A Shattered Reflection

Sin-Eaters didn't ask to become what they are. The Bound had no way of knowing what lay ahead when Death's cold hand brushed them. The Event was, in nearly every case, unintentional. Geists are not summoned. And yet, the brethren of the Glorious Church of the Unified Spirit dream of becoming essentially the same thing. They even try, in their own warped way, to help *others* become like the Bound. Worse, they worship Sin-Eaters because of their symbiotic relationship, their "divine" transcendence over life and death. The horrific acts they commit are done for what they consider to be the right reasons, but they don't really understand the essence of being a Sin-Eater. So why do they act as such a temptation for Sin-Eaters? Worship, adoration and admiration are hard things to shake off. More than one of the Bound has found herself surrounded by sycophants who expect great things from their unwitting leader. Remember, though, nothing is more dangerous than a disillusioned follower.

ABOUT THE STORYTELLING ADVENTURE SYSTEM

If this is your first Storytelling Adventure System (SAS) product, you've chosen a fine place to start. To keep this story kit lean and focused, though, we haven't included a lot of the core premises and Storyteller suggestions that are at the heart of the SAS. Whether you're a new Storyteller or an old hand, be sure to read the free SAS Guide, found at the SAS website:

www.white-wolf.com/sas

Here are some of the features available in *Through the Ebon Gate*:

- **Interactive links.** Clicking on anything in blue will take you directly to the section referenced, or to an appropriate character sheet or prop. It may also take you to an external website that could be useful.
- **Scenes.** Clicking on a scene name in the scene flowchart or the page number in the scene card will take you to the full write-up of the scene.
- **Bookmarks.** This PDF is fully bookmarked, so you can jump to major sections at any time when the file is open.

Mood: Thriller

The ghostly world of **Geist** is a mix of many moods. **Through the Ebon Gate** is designed to be a thriller. The characters are trying to follow a trail of death back to its source, a cult of misled humans who worship ghosts and see Sin-Eaters as the spiritual culmination of mankind's divine potential. Over the course of the story, the krewe will have to negotiate with a suicidal girl who holds the fate of hundreds of people in her grief-stricken hands. They'll have to fight guardians of the Underworld on a train of the dead, and they'll confront a maddened ghost in his inner sanctum, a twisted and shifting chapel of bones. All the while, the mood should remain tense and urgent. The clock is ticking, and there's no telling what will happen or who these deluded and desperate people will kill next.

A Chapter in Your Chronicle

Through the Ebon Gate is perfectly suited as a chapter in an ongoing chronicle. Existing inter-krewe relationships can be augmented or transformed, depending on the characters' actions throughout this story. The Black Gate cultists can be set up here as recurring foils for your troupe's characters, or they can be a small group that is cleaned up and never heard from again, depending on your needs. For that matter, depending on how your troupe handles the story, Uriah Long might himself become a Sin-Eater. If he escapes, whether it be by becoming Bound, sheer luck, or mercy on the part of the troupe, he could become a dangerous and possibly powerful long-term foe or an erstwhile ally seeking redemption.

A Story By Itself

Conversely, **Through the Ebon Gate** can easily work as a one-shot. By starting in medias res, with the characters already together and at the carnival, you neatly sidestep the awkward "origin of the krewe" portion of the story. The carnival itself is a good chance for the players to slip into the skin of their characters before the action starts moving. When the local, active cultists are defeated and the characters have won, you can fade to the closing credits with a clean ending.

B Backstory and Set-up

The Old Laws may forbid congress between the living and the dead, but that does not mean it doesn't happen with frightening regularity. Shades intrude upon the living to pass on dire warnings, to protect their loved ones, to execute vicious and convoluted plans of vengeance upon those who have wronged them or simply to alleviate boredom.

Sin-Eaters are popular among the dead because they have the potential to act as agents among the living. To these ghosts, who either don't have the skills to pierce the veil or exist in fear of the Kerberoi, Sin-Eaters are a kind of grey-market beacon of hope, a weird and wonderful loophole. Among the other ghosts, those who have forsaken the archaic laws of the Underworld in favor of directly possessing or otherwise communicating with the living, Sin-Eaters are generally more of a nuisance. They step in where they aren't wanted and interfere with vengeful plots and mischief alike.

Among the living, Sin-Eaters are largely unknown. There are those whose lives have been touched by a Sin-Eater – the widow who received a final message from her husband via an enigmatic medium, the grateful homeowner who is no longer haunted by vicious poltergeists, or a curious cop who knows she saw a perp die, only to see him alive and well weeks later. Most of the time, these incidents are isolated and quickly forgotten, swept under the carpet or just ignored. Sometimes though, there's a brush with the underworld – just enough to sweep the cobwebs from her eyes. Watching a Sin-Eater at work or simply being haunted by a ghost can leave someone forever changed in subtle, insidious ways. It is not enough to attract a geist when the time comes, but the knowledge that something lies on the other side – that the world is bigger than the box modern society tries to fit it into – is enough to nudge someone onto the path.

And always, when someone is lost and alone in an unknown place, someone else is waiting to prey upon them. Shades who whisper sweet and opportunistic lies, ghosts who build cults of willing vessels and agents from the broken detritus of humanity.

The Black Gate

Nobody in the cult calls it the Black Gate. Followers are "Seekers" of the Glorious Church of the Unified Spirit. The Black Gate is a symbol to them, the doorway we pass through when we step from this life into the next. Once the Gate is opened, the brethren of the church believe that the soul is diminished by its transformation into the spiritual realm. One spirit, one soul, is not capable of returning to physical existence. To return, once you have crossed the threshold of the Black Gate, one must find equilibrium with another spirit, unifying and forming a stronger whole from the two parts. Once the spirits have melded and the person has returned, he is enhanced, augmented, better than he once was. This is the next step of human existence, the Seekers teach.

In a way, this portion of the religion reflects the Orphic traditions. Orpheans revered the mythical Orpheus, who travelled into the underworld and returned to write a series of hymns teaching humans how to overcome the travails of the dead and transcend the underworld. Devotees carved these instructions onto golden leaves, which they had buried with them, to remind their forgetful spirits of the loopholes and rules they could exploit in the afterlife. The Seekers of the Unified Spirit may have similarities to the Orphic Circle, and may even trace their roots to a radical splinter sect of the Orphean path, but they are no longer ideologically related.



A Seeker believes that he is at a spiritual dead end as long as there is only one soul inhabiting his body. To move on, to move forward, he must die and find his literal soul mate. Seekers often begin by opening themselves up to possession, allowing shades to take control. To some, this takes on an addictive quality. The abdication of responsibility is liberating, and they have an excuse for their lack of control. After a while, though, the temporary “bond” they create with the possessing spirit isn’t enough. Suicide among the inner circles of the church is not only common; it’s expected. But suicide is a selfish act. To move on and leave so many others trapped in this life is just wrong. Many members of the church choose to help others along to the next path, those who would be too frightened to do so themselves. So many Seekers try to take as many of the unenlightened along with them as they can. It’s the only way to show them, to make them believe.

Once they have been initiated as Seekers, members are taught about the Bound as if they are the ultimate expression of what they may become. To them, a Sin-Eater is a nearly perfect expression of their goals: a seamless, symbiotic relationship between a ghost and a physical host. Many members spend their lives trying to become Sin-Eaters. Most of them are missing a few key ingredients, however. They are not mediums or psychics, nor are they infused by deathly energy. They just don’t have what it takes to attract a geist. It’s not their fault, of course: most Sin-Eaters don’t even know how they attracted their partner.

But that doesn’t stop the cultists of the Black Gate from trying to transform themselves by bargaining with ghosts, giving themselves up for possession and worse, or (for those with the most dangerous kind of incomplete knowledge) even trying to orchestrate elaborate near-death experiences to attract a ghost at the critical moment. Worse, their belief system is such that they often try to help others free themselves from their limited mortal state at the same time, with or without their cooperation. A Black Gate cultist may cause a large pile-up on the freeway. Another may gather his friends or family and “free” them, one by one, before killing himself. Another cultist may hide a bomb in the bag under his chair in a mall food court, blowing himself and everyone near him into oblivion. Each of them leaves a sigil, reversed as in Tarot symbolism, burned into a piece of paper. The symbol means “shattering” in the Old Tongue, and is usually accompanied by a rambling note filled with death imagery.

There’s something darkly tempting about the idea that the Seekers worship Sin-Eaters. It’s an ego trip to know that someone thinks you’re special, and all too easy to fall into the trap of letting it go to your head. But when atrocities are done in your name – to please you – how do you extricate yourself? The sorts of people who advance into the upper echelons of the Black Gate are not the type to take it lightly when their “angel” isn’t having fun anymore. A Sin-Eater may be the object of their adoration, but that can quickly turn into a prison (or worse) when the Sin-Eater doesn’t live up to the cult’s expectations. When normal people who ignore the existence of ghosts and ignorantly prefer to live are reviled, how much worse is the Sin-Eater who values life over death and squanders the gifts they’ve been given by the “Shining Ones?”

PORTRAYING THE SEEKERS

There’s a difficult line here. We’re talking about domestic terrorists and, what’s more, we’re talking about them as if they’re flawed but ultimately misled and pathetic souls. This adventure does not exist to glorify or apologize for the actions of the few to hurt and drive fear into the hearts of the many.

Mainstream media has a tendency to make our villains shallow. We’re not comfortable seeing ourselves in the bad guys. But this is the World of Darkness, and here we’re allowed to look deeper, to find the squirming human soul at the heart of darkness. If you absolutely cannot stomach the idea of portraying the brethren of the Glorious Church of the Unified Spirit as normal people who have made a mistake, feel free to portray them as unrepentant murderers, or submerge their personalities and choices beneath a malicious possessing shade. The Seekers have a habit of allowing ghosts to possess them, similar to the vodoun cheval. It’s always possible that one of the Lost Minister’s agents is literally driving Mateo or Marci to murder.

Nobody’s going to tell you you’re doing it wrong. The ultimate goal here is for you and your friends to have a good time for a few nights.

The Cast

Mateo Ortiz, the Train Bomber

Quotes: "I was supposed to become like you!"

"No, this can't be right. Why did I fail?"

"I didn't hurt them, I gave them a chance."

Virtue: Justice. Mateo believes that we all reap our just rewards.

Vice: Sloth. Mateo tends to wait for things to come to him.

Background: Mateo has never known where he belonged. A talented athlete, he loved playing soccer, but lacked the drive and determination to turn pro. A handsome man, he was too shy and socially awkward to approach anyone he was attracted to. He worked one dead-end job at a sporting goods store and another at a gas station near his apartment. Mateo watched his life become a mediocre, tepid thing. He spent all his time working, just barely making ends meet. He had his own apartment, but he worked so much that he only was only really there when he was asleep.

Then, the insomnia came. He couldn't sleep, no matter what he tried. He tried pills, roots and homeopathic remedies - nothing worked. Every time he closed his eyes, he saw her standing there. The hag haunted him



for months. Her breath was like blood sloshing over rocks. Her cruel and wrinkled lips dripped with black, cancerous discharge. Mateo knew she wasn't a dream or a hallucination. Eventually he moved, but he still thought of her.

Then he met Marci, a girl who led him to the Glorious Church of the Unified Spirit. She introduced him to Uriah and the others, and Mateo finally found others who would listen and believe his story of the hag. In time, Mateo moved up through the ranks. Uriah told him about Sin-Eaters as the Lost Minister had told him, and eventually he was trusted with liberating the souls on the 815-passenger train by order of the Minister himself.

Description: In life, Mateo was a handsome young man, with tightly curled black hair and a soccer player's physique. In death, the force of the explosion that killed him twists his features. Gouges and burns have turned Mateo's face into a map of failed intent.

Storytelling Hints: You are in shock. Everything was supposed to change - you had a sense of purpose for the first time in your life, and yet you failed. It doesn't even occur to you that you might have been manipulated, or that the church might have the wrong answers. You failed the church. You are at fault. Now you torture yourself and wonder how things might have gone wrong. You're not worthy of unification, and you're definitely not worthy to speak to the player characters or other Sin-Eaters.

Marci Palmer

Quotes: "This wasn't supposed to happen."

"I'll find him. I'll bring him back."

"I won't look back."

Virtue: Hope. Though she has none currently, she prefers to see the light of hope in the world.

Vice: Envy. Marci has always secretly wished that she was more like the normal girls.

Background: Marci grew up in a pretty standard household: She lives with a stay-at-home mom, older sister and younger brother, both of whom got more attention from her mother than she did. Her father, though, taught political science at the local university, and doted on his middle child. She spent a lot of her formative years prowling the stacks at the university and listening to the college rock that she heard on the quad while her peers were shopping and obsessing over boy bands. When she actually got to college herself, she majored in English and worked as a barista in the campus coffee shop.

She was a grad student teaching Composition 101 in a classroom a floor above her father's when he had his heart attack. After his funeral, she bottled up, ignoring her family and becoming defensively snarky, afraid of getting close to someone else and losing them, too. She began spending her free time during the day at the university in her father's old office. The room, even stripped of his pictures and books, felt right to her in a way that her mother's house didn't. She felt like he was there for her, even though he was gone. Other members of the faculty didn't have the heart to kick her out, so she began to decorate the vacant



office with photos of her father and reminders of their relationship, and his office became hers. One afternoon, she felt his hand on her head, an echo of his affection. She kept going back, hoping to feel it again, and even began to sleep there sometimes.

Then she met Uriah, and he made her a believer. She listened to his stories, and tried to reach her father's ghost. After a time, she brought Mateo into the church. The two of them spent a lot of time together, each of them carrying a torch for the other but both too shy to say anything. And now, she's just looking for a way to tell him how she felt.

Description: Marci's a cute girl, in that nerdy college girl way. She has a round face, framed by dark hair cut into a bob. She's the kind of girl who wears a pair of thick-framed glasses for the look, even though she has perfectly serviceable contacts. She tends to wear clothes that don't match in a quirky way, and ironic t-shirts with the logos of forgotten (or hideous) 80s or indie bands.

Storytelling Hints: You're a sarcastically funny girl at the best of times. When the characters meet you, though, you're lost in the depths of a vast grief. There is no hope or solace except doing what the Lost Minister has promised you if you carry out his wishes. You just have to do this one thing, and you can pass through the Black Gate and get your message to the two people who mean anything to you. You give lip service to the idea of coming back as a Sin-Eater (though you call them "Shining Ones," like the rest of the Seekers), but really, when it comes down to it, you don't care as long as you're with Mateo and your father.

Uriah Long, the Conduit

Quotes: "You have been touched by divinity. Why would you keep others from having the same chance?"

"I'm only trying to help them find what they are looking for."

"I'm afraid you don't understand."

Virtue: Faith. Uriah believes that this life and the next are connected by faith and belief.

Vice: Lust. Uriah has always lusted after forbidden knowledge.

Background: Uriah Long was born in the backwoods of southern Florida, where the Everglades touch the sinuous lines of the highway known as Alligator Alley. There, his batty, broken great-aunt Mary Constance raised him in a rotten, cluttered shotgun house after his parents died. He was home-schooled by the strange woman and taught her warped version of the Gospel.

Deep in the swamps, she showed him the old trees, and the remnants of things forgotten and dying. She told him that they were weak because heathens no longer worshipped them. Mary whispered this in front of the spirits of the swamp, disgusted by them. Uriah whispered back, awed. You must recognize in

URIAH'S DEATHLY ABILITIES

Gateseeker (••• Mediumist Merit)

Prerequisites: Death Sight

Similar to Dowsing (see p. 38 of *Second Sight*), a Gateseeker is a medium who, by concentrating, may be drawn to an Avernian Gate. Once it is found, the character does not necessarily have any idea how to actually open the gate unless they have previously researched it or have been told how to do so by a Sin-Eater or ghost. The procedure is similar to dowsing. The medium must concentrate and enter a trance, wherein they wander blindly, drawn to the Gate. Some mediums use props, such as a dowsing rod made of bone, while others simply roll their eyes back in their head and lose themselves in the trance.

Cost: 1 Willpower

Dice Pool: Wits + Occult

Action: Extended. The Storyteller determines the number of successes required, based on how well-hidden or distant the Avernian Gate is. A Gate hidden in a cemetery might require three successes, while one hidden in the boiler room of an old mall might require 10 or more. Each roll represents 30 minutes of seeking.

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The medium is led on a wild goose chase far from his desired goal. He also loses all accumulated successes.

Failure: The current seeking attempt is unsuccessful, but more rolls may be made.

Success: When the player has accumulated the number of successes required, the attempt succeeds.

Exceptional Success: The medium might gain some insight into how to open the Avernian Gate.

Death Sight (•••• Mediumist Merit)

(This merit is identical to the one found on p. 44 of *Second Sight*)

Effect: Your medium can see dead people. The psychic may perceive and communicate with any ghost she encounters. The power allows only perception of and communication with ghosts in Twilight — ghosts tied to the material world and not to any otherworldly spirit world. The power affords no ability to contact spirits from the Shadow Realm that have entered the material world and that exist in Twilight. This Merit does not permit the psychic to aid ghosts in manifesting in the physical world. Most ghosts instinctively realize when a mortal can perceive them, and psychics who possess this power are often inundated by requests from desperate beings seeking help to resolve their earthly affairs.

Cost: None to sense the presence of ghosts. One Willpower to initiate communication with them.

Dice Pool: Wits + Composure

Action: Reflexive

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The Medium is unable to use this Merit for the rest of the scene. Alternately, she may suffer horrific visions of some hellish underworld, inflicting a -2 penalty on all actions for the remainder of the scene.

Failure: The attempt to activate Death Sight is unsuccessful.

Success: Your character can perceive and communicate with any ghost in her vicinity for the remainder of the scene. Such ghosts remain intangible to her, however.

Exceptional Success: The medium may gain a +2 bonus on all rolls made in dealing with ghosts during the scene.

Option [Permanent Death Sight]: The medium's ability to see the dead is always active. The stress of constantly being surrounded by spectral beings inflicts a mild derangement such as Depression, Phobia, Irrationality or Avoidance. The player must still roll Wits + Composure in order to communicate with ghosts, but with this option, such rolls gain a +3 bonus.

these things the dangers you will face in life, she said. But Uriah saw only the beauty of the ephemeral shades.

When Mary wasn't watching, Uriah returned to the deep places, wading through the stinking water past cypress knees taller than he was, looking for the spirits she had shown him. He found a lightning-struck tree, its bark charred and blackened, its center hollowed out by animals and erosion. The boy waded in, looking up at the dead tree as he walked through the natural arch of its corpse. Once through, he saw the swamp for what it was, a sodden graveyard. He had passed through the Black Gate, into the Underworld. The spirits slipped from one world to the next, forgotten by their descendants, giving up.

Uriah called them back. He begged them to stay, to tell him their stories, and they did. The months went by and the sheltered boy learned more from the shades than he did from his great-aunt. Mary watched him suspiciously, and followed him as he snuck back to the dead tree and crossed over through the charred Avernian Gate. There she waited, gripping a cypress branch in her shaking hands, afraid to pass through the tree as he had. Mary Constance knew that no good came of treading where the dead passed their pale existences. When Uriah emerged, she confronted him there, on the edge of the Underworld. In the shadow of the Black Gate, the shadow of the boy's sin, she began to beat the boy with the branch, trying to purge him of the taint of the shades.



The ghosts watched as she knocked him down. They saw the brilliant red of Uriah's blood bloom in the murky water, and one of them acted. The humid air went dry as the shade slipped into Uriah's body, possessing him. When he

stood, Mary knew that it wasn't her nephew looking out at her. The ghost tore the branch from Mary's grasp and turned her punishment back upon her.

When Uriah awakened, he was alone. He searched for Mary, but never found her. Eventually, he left the swamp. Even now, he doesn't know that his hands murdered his great-aunt. Now he wanders, teaching those he can about the only real friends he's ever had. Recently, he was brought under the wing of the Lost Minister, deep in the local Underworld. The Minister uses the earnest young man for his own ends, turning Uriah's faith and message into a twisted thing.

Description: Uriah doesn't have the traits one expects from a religious leader. He does not have perfect hair, a gleaming smile or practiced grace. He does not have the pulsing, apocalyptic passion of a fire and brimstone preacher on the pulpit. Uriah is neither a kindly old man nor a broad-shouldered could-be politician. He is a young, frail thing, unassuming except for the haunted glimmer in his eyes.

Storytelling Hints: You don't win your converts by shouting or coercing. You don't speak with an oiled tongue. The quiet, solemn intent of your voice has its own power. Your presence is a paradoxical thing. Your very lack of charisma and polish imparts a kind of strength and appeal that cannot be manufactured or packaged. Indeed, in a room of your followers, their deference towards you is often the only sign that you are anything more than simply another Seeker.

Your psyche is a bit broken. You believe in your heart of hearts that death is not simply the next step of existence, but that there comes a time where we cannot grow any further without sloughing our skin and passing through death's door. At the same time, you do not feel that you have reached that tipping point, and you do not judge when your followers are ready to make the step. When a Seeker decides that it is her time, she is taken to the Lost Minister (or at least, one of his ghostly agents), who "foretells" her death and teaches her how it will happen.

The Lost Minister

Quotes: "This is not hell, but I can show you the way."

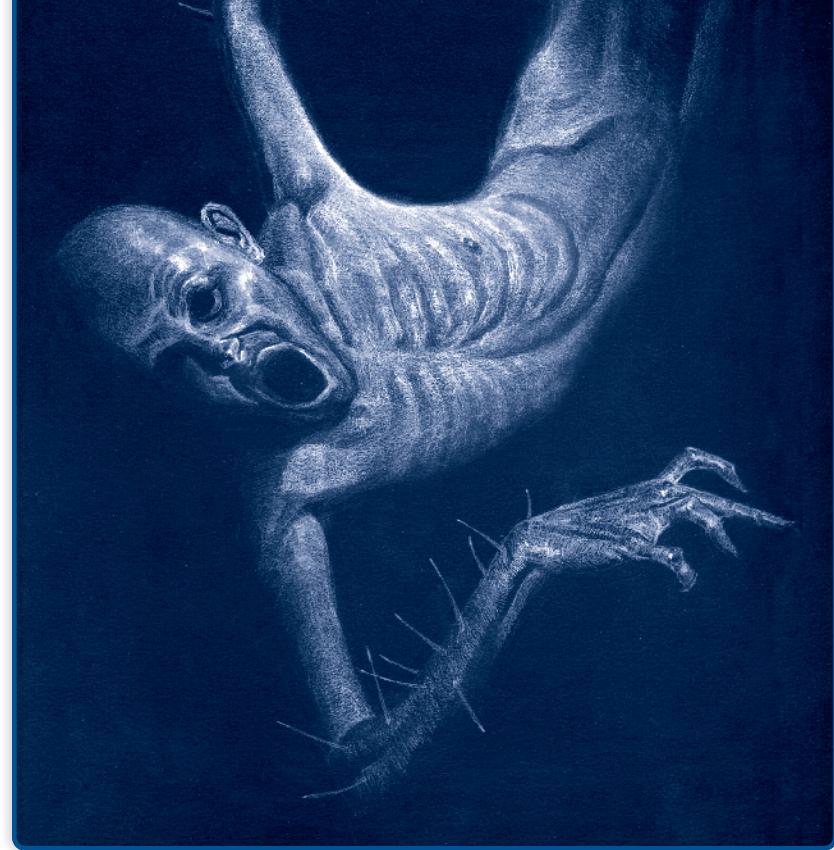
"I'm sorry you feel that way. Perhaps you should reconsider."

"I follow a path that you cannot see with your charlatan's eyes."

Virtue: Faith. The Lost Minister has utter faith that even this dark road is the path God wants him on.

Vice: Greed. The Minister has an appreciation for the finer things.

Background: He wasn't always this way. Once, though he can hardly remember it, the Lost Minister was a living, breathing human being. He doesn't remember his name, and even if he could recall where he was buried, the tombstone has long since worn smooth. When he lived, this bitter ghost was actual clergy. He ministered to the sick and the poor, but he was happiest—indeed, he felt closest to God—when he ministered to



the rich and decadent. The hidden face of the upper class called to the minister. He could not turn his back on those who so obviously needed the influence and presence of a man of God.

Temptation was everywhere, sliding past in silk and velvet, brushing against him in dim hallways, but still he maintained his discipline. He saved the lustful from sin, and he did not partake. The minister turned women away from their gluttony. He counseled men against vanity. And yet, he took the donations of the rich in order to build a larger monument to God. He secretly smiled at his own benevolence and persuasiveness. The church was never large enough. The trappings were never fine enough. Though he knew the path, the minister slowly, subtly, became lost. In time, he became as corrupt, in his way, as the lost sheep he tried to herd to salvation. There was no specific moment when he could point to as the moment his soul was lost, though he is sure that, were he a worthier man, he would have seen it coming.

Description: The Lost Minister cannot be mistaken for human. Taken feature by feature, there is nothing about him that is blatantly wrong, but somehow the sum of his appearance is utterly inhuman. He has the form of a short, stout man, but his demeanor gives the impression of vast height. He looks down

on even the tallest sinner, and everyone is guilty of sin. His fingers are incongruously long and graceful, and he often steeple them in front of his chin when he is deep in thought – or when he wishes to appear so. When he manifests, a chill flows from him like frigid vestments, leaving a cold and clammy trail where he walks.

Storytelling Hints: Do not simply respond. Think things through, regardless of how much time that takes. In fact, you like to use silence to unnerve and unbalance your enemies and allies alike. Everything you do is calculated to elicit a reaction from those around you. Never allow anyone to walk away unmarked. Hatred, love, devotion – you can find a use for any strong feeling – weaker, mediocre emotion is anathema to you.

The name “the Lost Minister” is not how your minions refer to you. They call you “father” or “sir” when they address you. “The minister” is acceptable. Only enemies and those who don’t know better use the full sobriquet. Lost implies that you do not know your way, and that is a very dangerous assumption to make.

Seeker of the Black Gate

Quotes: “We will become Shining Ones.”

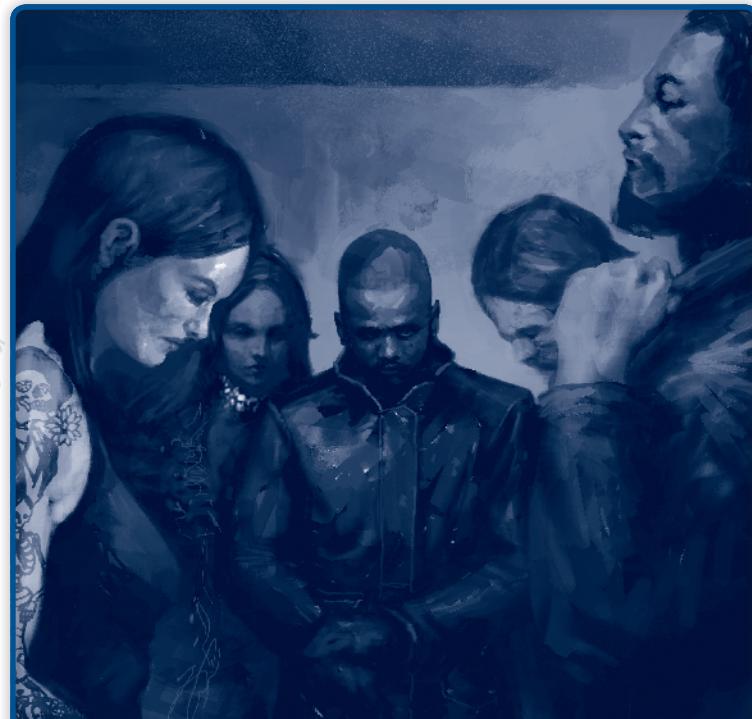
“The Gate will open soon and death and life will become one!”

“Death is not the end.”

Virtue: Faith. The Seekers find solace in their belief.

Vice: Envy. The Seekers covet the feeling of being whole.

Background: Most Seekers come from a lower to middle class background. They have enough time to think about the inevitability of death



and what comes after and they’re desperate enough for something to believe in that they fall into a strange fringe cult based on the words of a nearly homeless visionary. Rich folks in the same position tend to go for something a little grander and even more out there.

Like Sin-Eaters, every Seeker has a connection to death. Theirs is more tenuous, though – almost never enough to actually attract a geist when they die (or nearly do). It’s a matter of degrees. They don’t tend to have any inbuilt affinity for death. They are the haunted, the survivors of crashes that killed the rest of their families. They have seen glimpses of the other side, but only as if they were looking at an eclipse through a camera obscura. Somewhere between first-hand experience and second-hand knowledge drifts the Seeker.

Description: The Seekers in Uriah’s current flock run the gamut from the elderly, unassuming owner of the bookstore they meet in, to the stocky used car salesman who runs cover for Uriah among strangers. They don’t tend to stand out as eccentric or weird; they’re just like everyone else.

Storytelling Hints: Seekers tend to be a little on the quiet side. They go unnoticed by the living, and can’t talk to the dead. By definition, a Seeker tends to be overzealous when discussing her religious beliefs. The Unified Spirit is a strange amalgam of old religion and modern meme. It spreads virally, from one person to another, without an obvious central authority. Uriah treats the other Seekers as equals in nearly every way. They defer to him because he’s the only one who can open the gateway and communicate directly with the Lost Minister, but the church doesn’t need either of them. The Seekers have internalized their own interpretations of Uriah’s teachings mixed with the tainted message of the Lost Minister, and they are perfectly capable of building the cult on their own now.

The Lost Minister’s Guardians

Quotes: (stares at you)

Virtue: Fortitude. Only the strongest are worthy.

Vice: Wrath. Sinners must be punished.

Background: The guardians come from all sorts of backgrounds. Each of them somehow came under the sway of the Lost Minister. Like a mob boss in prison, the minister uses shades trapped in the Underworld with him to get messages up to the ghosts on the “outside” who do his bidding in the living world.

Description: There’s no such thing as an average guardian. Each one is unique, befitting the way he died. One might stand on awkward, broken legs that belie an inhuman strength, while another grins at his prey, his tongue flexing through a slit in his throat. Yet another may stand in a cloud of greasy black smoke lit from within by fires stoked in his torso. Ghosts don’t wear uniforms unless they died in them.

Storytelling Hints: You’re a true believer in your own way. The minister has pounded his message into your head and you’ve become exactly what he’s sculpted you into: a tool of his brand of salvation. You have no fear of Sin-Eaters, or rather, you have more fear of the Lost Minister.

8 Scenes

Scenes are the main building blocks for your story. All the material thus far sets the foundation and provides the mortar, but you and your troupe will decide how to put these blocks together.

Plotting

The foundation of *Through the Ebon Gate* is like a funnel. The farther the krewe goes, the harder it is for them to extricate themselves from the situation. Once they start digging, there's really no going back without being haunted by the horrible acts they could have prevented. That means that the story is set out in a fairly linear fashion, with one scene necessarily pushing the characters toward the next, in large part due to the style of the thrillers this SAS is inspired by. This isn't written as a sedate drama that the characters can walk in and out of as it suits them, though you can tweak the timeline a bit if you want to give the characters more room to breathe or if you want to change the tone of the story a more oppressive feel.

Integrating this story into your chronicle's setting could introduce a number of variables and ways for you to control the pacing or create a previously existing reason for the characters to get involved. You could begin slipping in hints about the Glorious Church of the Unified Spirit a few sessions (or arcs) before you run this SAS. You could introduce certain members of the church as recurring background characters to give the characters a more visceral connection to the story. Marci is the ideal candidate for this role; she works at a coffee shop as a barista, which puts her in a prime position to have a shallow but consistent relationship with characters from almost every background. Her big scene will have to be handled from a slightly different tack if the characters are already familiar with her, but it might even have more weight if they saw her before she became so distraught and desperate.

If you'd rather slow down the pacing, Marci could be kept in the dark for longer before she finds out that it was Mateo who blew up the train, giving the characters more time to investigate leads on the street. You

can always create more "conversion attempts" using other members of the cult to lengthen the number of steps between Mateo and the Lost Minister, if you don't mind the enormous body count that would entail. Part of the strength of the Storytelling Adventure System is that scenes and other story elements can be moved around and revised based on your needs. If you need to get things moving more quickly, move up the scene with Marci at the overpass. To slow things down, simply throw more obstacles at the players.

Ultimately, it's about what your players have fun with. If they enjoy hours meeting various Storyteller characters in a variety of locations to deal with the events of this story, feel free to let them do so. If, however, they're sick of doing dry research or having long conversations about strange belief systems, toss in a few more of the Lost Minister's inhuman goons to raise the physical stakes a bit.

TWEAKING THE STORY: RIVAL KREWES

One way to expand the urgency of the story and introduce a personal element into the equation is to use an existing rivalry with another krewe. If the troupe's krewe has an ongoing turf dispute or just a friendly competition with another krewe, using it to push the players' characters to try harder and do better is a good way to get players involved. It's amazing what someone will do just to piss another person off or to win a bet.

It makes sense that the characters aren't the only krewe involved in the investigation. After all, the train wrecked in front of an inter-krewe gathering. Pretty much every Sin-Eater in the tri-county area was on hand to watch the bloody beginning of the story. It might be stranger if there wasn't another krewe racing the troupe to the finish line.

On the other hand, if the krewe doesn't have rivals, this might be a good time to introduce some. The social aspect of Geist is similar in many ways to modern gang culture. Rival sets create all kinds of drama just by dint of being rivals. Chasing the same girl, fighting for the same corner, wearing the wrong colors in someone else's neighborhood or just running into each other in the mall can get someone into real trouble. Krewes fly their own colors and keep their own turf, and even allied groups can have a little competitive friction that introduces a beneficial continuity to a chronicle.

CHARACTER RELATIONSHIP CHART

Mateo Ortiz

Uriah Long: Salvation. Mentor.

Marci Palmer: Beautiful and brilliant, but needs guidance.

The Lost Minister: Incomprehensible father, unto a god.

Uriah Long

Mateo Ortiz: A nice boy. Tragic.

Marci Palmer: Promising and smart. A guiding light.

The Lost Minister: A font of knowledge and guidance.

Marci Palmer

Uriah Long: Soothing. Speaker of the truth.

Mateo Ortiz: Awkward and shy, but lovable.

The Lost Minister: A tool to reach Mateo.

The Lost Minister

Uriah Long: So eager. So deluded.

Marci Palmer: Irrelevant.

The Lost Minister: Irrelevant.

SCENE FLOWCHART

The Carnival

The Train

In the Aftermath

The Second Soul

Marci's Sacrifice

Turning the Stones

Tea with the
Enemy

The Minister
Says "Hi"

Optional Vignette, may
be used any time after
"In the Aftermath" up
until "On the 815."

On the 815

The Lost Minister

THE CARNIVAL

MENTAL •• PHYSICAL – SOCIAL ••

Overview

The krewe is blowing off steam at a carnival. They gather in a tent away from the rest of the mortal crowd, a refuge among their own kind. Unbeknownst to the characters, a cultist of the Black Gate prepares to sacrifice himself – and everyone else on the train with him – in hopes of becoming a Sin-Eater himself.

Description

You arrive at the carnival early, but the air is already thick with the smell of sweat and sugared pastries. The crowd is thick, but over the heads of the people you see the roiling, flashing lights of the tilt-a-whirl, hurling its passengers around as they scream in mock fear. The rough map on your invitations lead you past the tilt-a-whirl and the gravitron, through the press of people and the gaudy sideshow paintings, and towards a nondescript tent.

The tent itself is surrounded by the strange sigils of the Old Tongue, ensuring that the mundane masses ignore the gathering within. As you push aside the flap, a riot of new smells overtakes the midway's familiar patina. Incense, spice and the sticky-sweet smell of sugar skulls wafts out in a cloud before you pull the flap closed behind you and the outside carnival fades away, in favor of the altogether different one within. Krewes from three counties are gathered here to strengthen ties, reconnect with their friends and cut loose among the only people who truly understand them.

Makeshift games and scattered tables fill up much of the space inside the tent. At one table, two Sin-Eaters haggle over a guitar pick hung from a chewed and blackened strip of leather. At another, an oracle stares into space while her companion waits patiently. In one corner of the room, a mariachi plays, and a young woman hands out sugar skulls to the small audience gathered in front of him.

The characters are free to wander the gathering of the krewes, and you may want to improvise some conversations with members of other krewes. This scene is perfect for introducing or updating plot threads in an ongoing chronicle. If you have a krewe that already has a rivalry with the troupe's characters, having them around could ignite some sparks and make for a dynamic scene even before the train goes off the track in "The Train."

Rumors

You can use this time to spread a few rumors about the Glorious Church of the Unified Spirit, too. Feel free to tweak things to fit your chronicle's

city; more precision is always better when trying to create a feeling of authenticity. It's a good idea to spread some other unrelated rumors too, as red herrings or even as seeds that will grow into later stories in your chronicle.

- *"I've been seeing a lot of skinriders down on the strip lately. Craziest part is, I ran one off, right? And the ridden girl yelled at me. What's that all about?"* The Seekers who have moved beyond the initiation phase view possession as a kind of sacrament. Giving a shade the means to feel something is an act of great charity. Each time a Seeker is possessed, a little part of her hopes that this time she will bond with the shade and become something better.
- *"All the time, man. My sister is a pain in my ass all the time. Last month, she was hanging with some weird UFO thing, and now she's always talking about expanding my consciousness and some preacher she thinks could 'help' me."* Members of the church truly believe that theirs is the right answer. Seeking fulfills them in a way that nothing else has, and they want to share that fulfillment with their loved ones.
- *"You see that shit at the mall last week? Some lady in the food court poisoned a bunch of customers, then herself! Town's getting crazy, man. For real."* Many Seekers work at a smaller, less splashy scale than Mateo, the man on the train. Some are driven to kill their families, while others take their employees or customers along.



Storyteller Goals

This scene is all about setting the mood and getting the players into character. If this were a television show, this scene and the next would be the hook before the credits. This scene can take as much or as little time as you need. If this is the first time the players have played these characters, this scene can be stretched out to give the characters a chance to interact and introduce themselves around to the other krewes in your chronicle's city. Keep the characters involved in the carnival only as long as they are enjoying themselves, though. When things start to drag, move on to the next scene.

Character Goals

The characters' only goal is to do their part establishing the scene. If this is the first time the troupe has played these characters, give them some time to get into their roles and work out a bit of the inter-krewe dynamic before pushing forward, whether to apply pressure to the krewe by introducing them to a rival krewe or moving straight on to the next scene.

Actions

Playing Games

There are a number of games available during the celebrations. Playing games has no real effect on the adventure, but it's a way to introduce players to the mechanics if this is their first time playing, as well as a method

to get the troupe into the mood for gaming. Few things focus a troupe better than rolling the dice. You can use the systems below to model any number of carnival-style games: ring toss, balloon darts, magnet fishing and so on.

Dice Pool: Dexterity + Athletics

Action: Extended (target of 10). The character has as many rolls as he has darts, balls, rings, etc.

Hindrances: Standing at the line (-1); bad eyesight (-2); drunk (-2).

Help: None. Carnival games are designed to increase your chances of losing, not winning.

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The character misses entirely, losing all of the successes he has accrued.

Failure: The character fails to make any progress toward winning the game.

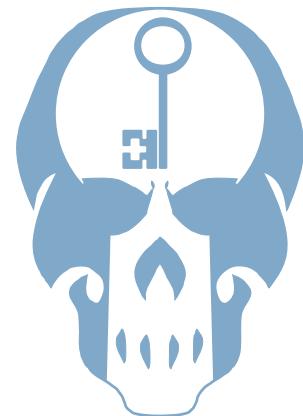
Success: The character makes progress toward winning the game.

Exceptional Success: The character makes extraordinary progress toward winning the game.

Consequences

This scene is largely flavor, intended to give the characters a chance to live in the moment, so most of the consequences of this scene will be player-introduced or at the very least highly character-centric. It might be a good idea to keep a piece of scratch paper handy to write down snippets of character dialogue or action between the players' characters and Storyteller characters from other krewes that you might like to revisit later, particularly if this is part of an ongoing chronicle.

When the characters are ready to leave the party, move on to "The Train."



THE TRAIN

MENTAL ••• PHYSICAL ••• SOCIAL •

Overview

The characters leave the midway just in time to witness a tragic disaster. A train derails and collides with the carnival, killing and injuring a large number of innocents.

Description

As you move back into the open air, you see that the carnival has become more crowded. You can just barely hear a country band playing on a nearby stage over the voices of the crowd, and a passing passenger train is almost drowned out entirely by the cacophony. Another krewe of Sin-Eaters comes out of the tent laughing and jostling one another when the carnival erupts. You hear a massive explosion followed by the tortured shriek of metal on metal. You watch as the car just behind the passenger train's engine erupts into a ball of flame. The train bucks and rolls like a frightened animal, the cars tumbling off the tracks and sliding through the crowd.

Directly towards you.

Storyteller Goals

The explosion and ensuing destruction should come as a shock to the players. It should come out of left field. One moment the characters are enjoying themselves, the next they're trying to get out of the way of tons of twisted metal and fire. Because you know what's coming, it's easy to get excited and, in anticipation of the event, telegraph that something big is about to happen. If you feel like the players are picking up that signal

A WORD ABOUT MEMENTOS

If characters are callous and quick-thinking enough, it's possible that certain items—a crushed and abandoned kewpie doll, or a bloody keychain taken from the corpse of a victim—might work well as the foundation for a new Memento. Characters should be careful collecting such trophies, though, as people get oddly sensitive about vultures picking at the dead at the best of times. When a person is confronted with this much destruction, he feels helpless, and that helpless fury is difficult to handle. A scavenger is a much smaller thing than the mass of death around him. It's something that fits into his worldview, something he knows how to deal with.

despite your best efforts to the contrary, your best bet is misdirection. Intentionally draw their attention to a drunken fight on the midway or an obnoxious barker trying to get one of the characters to play ring toss (Hey, mister! Five'll get ya ten rings! We're giving away a Nintendo! You look like a man with an arm! Five'll get ya ten!) Of course, if one of the characters has the Danger Sense Merit (*World of Darkness Rulebook*, p. 108) or some other method of precognition, the train itself can become a bleak harbinger of doom. Even then, you can leave things vague enough that the character might interpret the train as symbolic or possibly the carrier, rather than the instrument of doom itself.

Character Goals

This scene's pretty straightforward from the point of view of the characters: survive. There's very little time for conscious thought, and indecision will really only result in serious injuries or death. Even if the Sin-Eater argues over every decision he makes with his geist, this is one time when both entities should be in complete agreement – get out of the way!

Actions

Disappointed Girl

When the train tumbles into the carnival, chaos ensues. The crowds explode into panic, with one common element: Left, right, direction doesn't matter – they all run away from the train. Everyone that is, except one lone girl. During the chaos, ask the characters to roll to notice this action, and read the following to them, should they succeed:

As people scramble for safety, the crowd surges away from the train like a living thing. Only one person stands apart. A dark-haired girl watches the scene with a mixture of awe and horror on her face. It might be shock, but something tells you it's more. Somehow, she seems... expectant.

Dice Pool: Wits + Composure

Action: Instant

Hindrances: Currently running for your life (-2)

Help: Actively scanning the crowds (+1)

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The Sin-Eater doesn't see Marci, but he also finds himself disoriented by the chaos. He loses five seconds worth of time from the attempt to run from the train's tumbling wreckage (see below).

Failure: The character doesn't see Marci in the panic.

Success: The Sin-Eater notices Marci, though he probably couldn't pick her out of a lineup. If he sees her again, he'll have to roll Intelligence + Composure to recognize her.

Exceptional Success: The character sees Marci and takes enough notice of the details that he would recognize her again later without a roll.

Saving an Innocent

Over the course of the destruction, you can inject more drama into the situation by putting someone (a character's loved one or a random and helpless innocent) in harm's way, pushing the Sin-Eater's buttons and forcing them to confront whether they have a heroic nature, or if their own previous close call with death causes them to seize up.

Dice Pool: Dexterity + Athletics. The character must achieve a number of successes equal to the number of yards she is away from the victim she is trying to save.

Action: Instant.

Hindrances: Slippery or inappropriate shoes, such as high heels (-2)

Help: Running shoes or hiking boots (+1)

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The character falls in the chaos, twisting her ankle and suffering 1 point of bashing damage.

Failure: The character is caught in the flood of running people and makes no progress towards the fallen victim.

Success: The character makes progress towards the victim she is trying to save.

Exceptional Success: The character makes extraordinary progress towards the character she is trying to save.

RUN!

When a giant train car is skidding along the pavement in your general direction, getting out of its way is usually the immediate choice.

Dice Pool: Dexterity + Athletics. The character must achieve 5 successes to get free of the train's path of destruction.

Action: Extended. Each roll takes 5 seconds. The character has 20 seconds to get fully out of the way.

Hindrances: Slippery or inappropriate shoes, such as high heels (-2)

Help: Running shoes or hiking boots (+1)

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The character gets hit by flying debris from the train, and suffers 3 points of lethal damage.

Failure: The character gets clipped by a piece of wreckage or flying debris, taking 3 bashing damage.

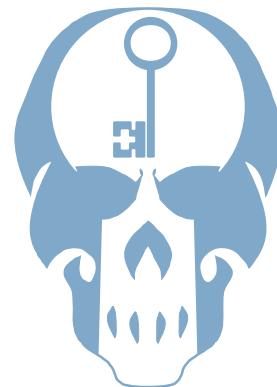
Success: The character makes progress toward getting the hell out of the way of the train.

Exceptional Success: The character handily avoids the train.

Consequences

This scene can have consequences that linger long after this story is done. An attack that is essentially domestic terrorism can completely change the way that security is handled on the local mass transit systems. At least for the near term, there will be an increase in "security theatre," enhanced measures that will make life more difficult for many of the supernatural denizens of the city, sometimes even more so than for the mortal population: x-ray machines, metal detectors, searches, guards who pull anyone aside who looks remotely suspicious or eccentric. There are any number of ways you can make life more interesting for the troupe's characters in the aftermath of Mateo's suicide.

The train's wreckage leaves behind a ragged trail of wounded and questions. Whether the krewe chooses to help the wounded and investigate the wreckage or they decide to run away, go to "In the Aftermath."



IN THE AFTERMATH

MENTAL ••• PHYSICAL •• SOCIAL ••

Overview

The characters pick through the wreckage of the train, giving them a chance to investigate the cause of the “accident,” assist in triage of the surviving victims or put those without hope to rest, depending on the characters’ inclination.

Description

The characters may experience this scene in two ways: Immediately after the accident or later that evening, after the urgency of the emergency has been resolved.

Immediately Following

Amid the wreckage, you can hear the moans and cries of the injured and the lost. People wander the fairground in shock, looking for loved ones they were standing with only moments before. The wreckage of the train itself is strewn across the carnival. The chorus of moans underlies everything, a counterpoint to the crackling of fire and the bumps and pops of cooling metal. A woman lies on the ground nearby, bleeding from a head wound. Her hands clench and unclench around the fabric of her blouse, and she stares into space, repeating the name “John” over and over again.

The carnival’s first aid staff is trying to help the survivors, but they’re overwhelmed, and it’s going to take time for paramedics to arrive.

Any characters with medical training have their work cut out for them. Between the passengers of the train and the carnival-goers, hundreds of people were injured or killed. A Reaper might take it upon himself to wander the wreckage as an “angel of mercy,” helping those who won’t survive find a peaceful end.

The train is scattered across the fairground. The only car still on the tracks is the engine. Next to the door, there is a strangely familiar mark spray-painted in messy graffiti.

Around you, the first ghosts begin to fade into being. Some of them cry out, trying to answer the calls of the survivors, while others begin to wander as if nothing has happened. Near the train, one shade screams, his face ruptured and twisted by the explosion.

The ghost with the tattered face is what remains of Mateo, the Seeker who detonated the bomb. He is distraught – this isn’t the effect he hoped

for. He truly believed he was liberating the people he killed. Keep in mind that Mateo (and the rest of the human members of the Black Gate cult) are not knowingly evil. They are desperate and their actions have consequences that are, in the final balance, evil, but they aren’t sitting around twirling their moustaches and cackling madly.

If the krewe decides to investigate Mateo, he is horrified at what he’s done, but he doesn’t want his failure to reflect on the rest of the church. To him, this is a personal failing.

As you approach, the charred shade looks up at you, and you can tell he recognizes you for what you are. He falls to his knees.

“I’m sorry! I’m so sorry,” he says. “So sorry! I crossed through Black Gate, but I wasn’t worthy. I’m sorry... I’m sorry...”

Later That Evening

In the blue light of the moon, the train seems to glow a dull silver, where the metal hasn’t been blackened or scratched to a flat, matte grey. Every fair leaves a wasteland when the gathered masses leave; a barren plain of concrete dotted with the flimsy structures of attractions stripped bare and left lonely without the mystique of the carnival. Tonight, though, a different sort of magic holds sway. Only the living desert the fairgrounds. The lost and wandering dead still mill about, searching for loved ones who survived or mindlessly repeating the same carnival actions over and over again. One ghost throws phantom rings at bottles hidden behind a tarpaulin for the night. Another wanders by holding hands with someone who isn’t there, pointing to the shadowy bulk of the Ferris wheel that blots out the stars.

Ahead, by the ruined hulk of the second car, the epicenter of the explosion, you see a charred shade sitting on a pile of debris with his face in his hands. As you approach, he looks up. His face is torn and burnt by the force of the explosion that rent the train asunder. You can tell he recognizes you for what you are. He scrambles off the debris and falls to his knees.

“I’m sorry! I’m so sorry,” he says. “So sorry! I crossed through Black Gate, but I wasn’t worthy. I’m sorry... I’m sorry...”

Storyteller Goals

This scene is all about giving the preliminary clues to the players. The biggest one, of course, is the inverted Old Tongue sigil for “shattering,” the symbol used by the inner circle of the Glorious Church of the Unified Spirit, spray-painted on the side of the half-destroyed engine. Of course, Mateo can provide some clues, but he won’t mention the church itself by name.

If the characters avoided the immediate aftermath of the wreck, they miss out on immediate clues. Keeping the characters involved when they are intentionally keeping themselves on the periphery is a difficult task. In this case, your goal is to encourage the krewe to get involved despite their apathy and avoidance. Keep in mind that character avoidance may not be the same thing as player disinterest. If the character is a convict on the run, the wreckage is the last place he wants to be. Likewise if a character is presumed dead, she might have difficulties when

giving a statement or worse, when her grieving mother sees her on television and starts looking for her. You need to give such characters a feasible way around, an avenue into the story.

This is exactly the kind of thing that sets the world aflame. Cell phone footage is making its way onto video sites, while people are sending live updates to social networking sites like Facebook or Twitter. The krewe will be awash in the media's tragic theater, humanity's need to vicariously experience the darker things. This is, after all, literally a train wreck.

If the players are disinterested, you have a larger problem, but not an insurmountable one. One method of increasing the player's investment is to make the consequences of the wreckage more personal for his character. Maybe a friend or a contact (or an ally's friend or loved one) was on the train, and it becomes apparent in the aftermath.

Character Goals

Depending on the characters' archetypes, the aftermath of a large disaster can elicit a variety of responses. A Reaper may choose to send souls along, while a Pilgrim might comfort the survivors, encouraging them to bid the dead farewell and let go.

Actions

Questioning Mateo

Mateo will cooperate to a certain extent. He doesn't know as much as he thinks he does, and he's not willing to betray his friends in the church – he's afraid that the Sin-Eaters will punish them for his failure. However, he does repeat certain doctrines of the church as rote. He is nervous

MATEO'S ANSWERS

Why did you do it? "I was trying to touch the divine. To be like you! I hoped to call upon a spirit to join with me and help me return from the darkened lands, perfected."

What about the others on the train? "I was trying to help them to pass through too! 'We must all cross through the Black Gate and return if we are to be whole.'"

Where did you get the idea to become like us? "The minister told us. He sends word from the other side, trying to help us find our way."

Who is "the minister?" "That's the only name we – I – know."

Where you trying to merge with a specific ghost? "No... Is that where I went wrong? Oh, my God, I'm such a failure!"

Are there others like you? "I can't tell you. I'm sorry, they shouldn't pay for my mistake."

and awed by the Sin-Eaters, so he falls back on quotes from the scripture Uriah created with the help of the Lost Minister. Mateo will answer any question as honestly as he can unless he feels it would lead the Sin-Eaters to Uriah and the church. Then he'll clam up and politely refuse. If pressed, he will allow himself to be destroyed – he'd prefer it right now, actually – before he'll talk. Keep in mind that there are hundreds of innocent people around, so this interrogation has to be done discreetly.

Mateo saw Marci at the site, either afterward before she ran away, or later, when she came back hoping for his return. Either way, he's worried about her and, if the Sin-Eaters are at all diplomatic, he might eventually become desperate enough to tell the characters about Marci and that he feels she's in danger. He will not tell them that she's a member of the church, but he's afraid she's going to hurt herself, and his faith in the Black Gate is a bit shaken. He'll send the characters to her office at the university – he knows she goes there when she's depressed.

Dice Pool: Manipulation + Persuasion vs. Mateo's Finesse + Resistance (dice pool 3)

Action: Instant and contested

Hindrances: None.

Help: The characters approach Mateo in a calming manner (+1).

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: If the player of the speaker rolls a dramatic failure, the characters alienate Mateo and send him into a panicked spiral; he won't interact with them any further. If the Storyteller rolls a dramatic failure, Mateo not only answers, but he volunteers answers to questions that weren't asked.

Failure: Mateo remains too preoccupied with his own failure to be of any use.

Success: Mateo is willing to answer a number of the character's questions equal to the successes rolled.

Exceptional Success: If the player of the speaker rolls an exceptional success, Mateo is not only willing to answer the character's questions, he volunteers answers to questions the characters didn't ask. He still won't betray the Seekers, however. If the Storyteller rolls an exceptional success, Mateo won't interact with them any further.

Performing Triage

Characters with medical training are welcomed by the first aid crews and immediately put to work. Even characters without medical training can volunteer as runners or just help make those who cannot be saved more comfortable in their last moments. Simply holding the hand of a frightened and dying casualty can be invaluable in a situation such as this.

Dice Pool: Dexterity + Medicine

Action: Extended. Each roll represents one minute of work. The character must achieve a number of successes equal to the number of Health points you determine each patient to have lost due to the destruction, in order to stabilize that patient before disaster relief arrives and sets up a field station or transfers the patient to the hospital.

Hindrances: Lack of tools (-2), distraction from noise (-1)
Help: Field kit (+1)

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The character's efforts make the patient's condition worse instead of better. The subject is moved prematurely or incorrectly, or their wounds are treated improperly. The patient loses one Health point of bashing damage and all the character's accumulated successes are lost. He must start from scratch if he's to help the patient. If the subject is bleeding to death, an extra wound turns from lethal to aggravated, in addition to the one lost for the minute that's wasted.

Failure: The character makes no progress in alleviating the patient's injuries. If the subject is bleeding to death, a wound turns from lethal to aggravated over the course of the wasted minute.

Success: The character makes progress in alleviating the patient's injuries. Until you acquire the total number of successes required to stop a patient from bleeding to death, one more of his wounds turns from lethal to aggravated per minute.

Exceptional Success: The character makes significant progress toward alleviating the patient's injuries.

Recognizing the Sigil

The sigil spray painted on the side of the train has been battered by the explosion and is partially covered by the soot and grime or scraped away by the concrete. It is still recognizable by those who are well versed in the Old Tongue, with a little creativity. The Glorious Church of the Unified Spirit uses the symbol for "shattering," but inverted, to denote a unification of that which was once disparate. The Old Tongue does have a word for "unification," or "to unify," but this symbol has been adopted to indicate that it is not the natural order of things, and because the normal word does not bear the connotations that the Seekers have placed upon their own symbolism.

Dice Pool: Intelligence + Occult

Action: Instant

Hindrances: The sigil is partially obscured by soot and damage (-1).

Help: The character attempting to decipher the obscured and inverted symbol is fluent in the Old Tongue (+2).

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The character misinterprets the sigil, providing the krewe with false information.

Failure: The character fails to recognize the sigil.

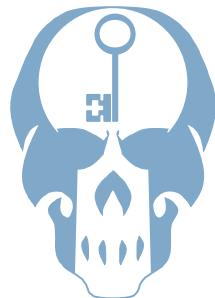
Success: The character recognizes the sigil as the Old Tongue symbol for "shattering," but upside down.

Exceptional Success: The character recognizes the symbol and makes the connection that if it is inverted, the symbol might be intended to signify unification or repair.

Consequences

Depending on the character's actions in this scene, a number of wrinkles can be introduced. If any of the characters performed triage on the wounded survivors, they may be singled out for media attention for their heroism, which, while satisfying, may make their day-to-day life a little difficult for a while and also hinder the krewe's investigation into Mateo's associates. If a character decided to act as an "angel of mercy" and he was seen, the witness may tell the police or take it upon herself to enact her own form of justice.

Given the information they gathered, the characters may choose to do a little asking around in "Turning the Stones," they may follow Mateo's desperate plea and visit Marci's office in "The Second Soul," or they may go their own way, picking up the thread again in "Marci's Sacrifice." If the characters didn't question Mateo, or did but didn't completely alienate him, his spirit is anchored to the fairgrounds now, haunting the location of his failure.



TURNING THE STONES

MENTAL ••• PHYSICAL — SOCIAL •••

Overview

The characters put their skills and contacts to work, looking for information based on what they already know. This is less a scene than it is a good old-fashioned “research montage.”

Description

You got what you could from the wreck site. The streets are buzzing with rumors; people worry at every scrap of news, and every source is full to the brim. Every channel is playing regular updates, with the same footage of the smoking wreck as seen by helicopter. Twitter and the other social media sites are slammed with eyewitness accounts and digital rubbernecks, living vicariously at a safe, disconnected distance. The media is awash in conjecture, but there must be more to know...

Spreading the Net (Police)

Your friend in the department is hard to reach. He finally answers his cell phone. “What?” he says. Even in that one word, you can hear the tension in his voice. He’s had better days.

Spreading the Net (Journalists)

You can hear the shouting of crews and the chaos of the clean-up behind his voice. Over the phone it becomes a wall of noise.

“Tell me you’ve got something on this.”

Researching Online

It’s a flood. “815crash” is a trending topic on Twitter, and digging through the mess is almost impossible. Other sites are just as bad. This is going to take a while to comb through.

Storyteller Goals

This scene is actually a series of short vignettes you can pick and choose from, intersperse where needed, or drop in the players’ laps if they’re too lost. Information should be personalized based on the characters’ relationship with their contacts. When preparing for the

game, you might want to create a few scene cards of your own using either index cards or the free [SAS support kit](#), with responses customized for each character in the krewe.

Character Goals

It’s all about the characters. Their talents and networks are the fuel that drives this scene.

Actions

Hitting Up Contacts

The characters may have contacts in all manner of venues that could be helpful. Religious contacts may be able to provide the characters with a bit of insight into the Glorious Church of the Unified Spirit. One of them might even have a copy of the flyer for the church (see p. 36). Journalism and Police contacts can provide a bit more information into the wreck than the public has access to, though possibly not as much as the characters were able to glean from interrogating Mateo.

Journalism And Police Contacts

- *“The train derailed there on purpose. Definitely a bomb. You didn’t hear this from me, but it was homemade stuff. Chemical.”* The train was definitely bombed using a homemade chemical explosive. The police are running down suppliers of the materials used in its construction, but that will take time. The media still hasn’t released the news that it was a bombing.
- *“Ain’t heard nothin’ from no one. Nobody but nutjobs, at any rate.”* Nobody credible has taken credit for the attack. Any number of crackpots have already called to confess their involvement, but there’s nothing concrete.
- *“We’ve got a suspect, or at least what’s left of one. Found a few bits in the car that went boom.”* The police have recovered parts of Mateo, but there’s not enough for quick identification. Mateo didn’t have a criminal record, so without a lead, they don’t have his DNA to test against.

Ghostly Contacts

- *“There’s a lot of exorcist shit going on lately. People running around with spooks on their backs, like the Old Laws just don’t apply.”* The Seekers who have moved beyond simple initiation tend to open themselves up to possession, allowing ghosts to take control of their bodies in a kind of transhumanist abdication of responsibility.
- *“Been seeing some spooks I’m not used to hanging around by that old bookstore... Sorry, don’t remember the name of it. I might be able to find out, if you could do me a favor...”* Dealing with ghosts is never a one-way affair. They always want something in return.

Dice Pool: Manipulation + Persuasion (or Socialize, depending on the Con-

tact)

Action: Instant

Hindrances: Frequent and recent requests (-1 to -2), obscure information (-2 to -3)

Help: Gift (+1), small bribe (+1), an outstanding favor (+1 to +3)

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The contact doesn't tell the character the full extent of what he knows, or provides misleading information. Perhaps he's holding out for money or favors, or simply makes an honest mistake.

Failure: The contact doesn't have the information the character needs.

Success: The contact is able to provide some information that's helpful to the character.

Exceptional Success: The contact is able to provide a wealth of information to the character, providing answers to questions that aren't even asked.

Researching Online

We live in an increasingly voyeuristic, privacy-challenged society. The absolute best way to get information on a rapidly evolving current event is through online channels. Blogs and news sites update faster than the newspapers and television stations can produce content, yet it and get it edited and laid out for publication or present it live. Tools like Twitter are changing the way we communicate and interface with one another. The democratization of media extends even to the Black Gate cultists. Sin-Eaters looking online for information may run across the flyer for the church (see p. 36), but when they strike paydirt, it is in the form of a new video on YouTube.

On one of the video sites, you find an entry that was just uploaded and, from the looks of it, just recorded. In it, a thin girl with a round face stares into the camera as rush hour traffic rushes down the interstate behind her.

“This is my graveyard,” she says. “These are the people I have chosen to

save.”

She turns and pans the camera (maybe it’s a cell phone?) over the interstate traffic. The landmarks around the overpass she’s standing on look familiar, and you see painted on the rail the same sigil that adorned the engine of the train.

“I miss Mateo. Maybe I can bring him back through the Black Gate.”

The video ends.

Dice Pool: Intelligence + Computer

Action: Extended (4 successes; each roll represents 30 minutes of research)

Hindrances: Unusual topic (-1), limited library or proxied Internet connection (-2)

Help: High-speed Internet (+1)

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The character obtains flawed or inaccurate information that leads him to draw incorrect conclusions about the subject.

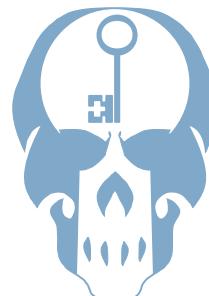
Failure: The character makes no progress in locating the information he’s after.

Success: The character makes progress in his search for information.

Exceptional Success: The character is well on his way to discovering the information he’s after. If the roll provides enough successes to push the total well above the amount necessary to complete the task (by five or more), he gains additional information pertinent to his research, providing greater detail and insight into the subject.

Consequences

Depending on the information the characters uncover, they may be able to move directly to “Tea With the Enemy,” using the address on the flyer. Even if they don’t find Marci’s video on YouTube, you might want them to happen upon her suicide attempt in “Marci’s Sacrifice” to string things out a bit and get a little more mileage out of the story.



THE SECOND SOUL

MENTAL •• PHYSICAL – SOCIAL –

Overview

The characters visit Marci's office.

Description

The door says "Palmer," and stands just slightly ajar. The office is cluttered, every flat surface stacked with papers and books, except for the obviously well-used futon. The desk has a bulky old monitor on it, the beige gone yellow with age. Photos of a round-faced girl with an older man are hung on the walls and stand on the shelves. Taped to the monitor is a picture of Mateo alive, his arm over Marci's shoulder.

Storyteller Goals

Marci's plight is more likely to elicit a sympathetic reaction if the characters see her as a person, rather than just another Storyteller character. This scene, as well as "Marci's Sacrifice," work best if you evoke Marci's life beyond her involvement in this story. Given that she is as much a victim of the Lost Minister as anyone else, creating sympathy for her can be beneficial to the endgame of the story: the fight with the Lost Minister. If you are using the Seekers as directly evil, she can still be saved from their clutches. If you are portraying them as deluded and lost, she is a symbol for the entire church. Either way, her grief and desperation can be used to create a sense of outrage in the krewe, giving them fire and determination that can carry them through the rest of the story.

Character Goals

The characters are looking for clues to where she might be as well as information about the Seekers.

Actions

Searching the Office

There are a few clues that may be found in the office. A flyer for the Church (see p. 36) is in a desk drawer, Google Maps is still open on her web browser (pin-pointing the intersection she's been sent to), and her email has a notification from YouTube that her farewell video (see p. 21) has been posted. There's also an email from Mateo, telling her to stay away from the carnival the day of the accident. Over the course of searching her office, the krewe may learn other things about their quarry: a note from her father, perhaps, or her schedule, showing the composition and creative writing classes she teaches. On her shelf are a few copies of *The Second Soul*, a small-press science fiction novel she wrote wherein the protagonist joins his soul with another to create a bipartite being who is stronger and better than he was alone.

Dice Pool: Wits + Investigation

Action: Extended (5 successes required to find everything; one roll represents 10 minutes of activity)

Hindrances: Attempting to be subtle (-2)

Help: Unrestricted access to the scene (late, guards are neutralized; +2)

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The Sin-Eater draws incorrect conclusions from the information she gathers.

Failure: The character uncovers no useful information.

Success: The Sin-Eater uncovers useful information, but is that all there is to learn?

Exceptional Success: The character gains a wealth of useful information from a few minutes' careful study.

Consequences

With the information gathered, the characters have a choice. If they discovered the map and the video, they can proceed to "Marci's Sacrifice." If they discovered the flyer, they can also choose to move on to "Tea With the Enemy," leaving Marci to her fate (although depending on the characters' Synergy rating, that might lead to a degeneration roll). If you need to stir things up and slow the krewe down, you can always ambush them with "The Minister Says 'Hi.'"

MARCI'S SACRIFICE

MENTAL ••• PHYSICAL •• SOCIAL •••

Overview

Marci plans to sacrifice herself by jumping off of an overpass wearing a vest of homemade dynamite. She'll cause a massive pileup and many deaths, if the krewe can't stop her.

Description

If the characters discovered Marci's video online, or discovered her location because Mateo sent them to her office, read the following:

Marci is ahead, looking over the rail of the bridge. Below, the main artery of the interstate flows thick with rush hour traffic. She looks up and sees you. She shouts and scrambles carelessly up onto the rail, the rubber soles of her shoes slipping on the pitted concrete.

"Stay back," she shouts, pulling a pistol from the inner pocket of her jacket. Tears wet her cheeks, but she looks determined to jump. Under her jacket, you see the edges of what looks like some kind of explosive.

If they just happened upon her suicide attempt, read the following:

Ahead, you see a girl in a bulky jacket looking over the rail of the bridge. Below, the main artery of the interstate flows thick with rush hour traffic. She reaches up and begins to pull herself onto the rail, and you see a flash of what looks like explosives under the hem of her jacket as it rides up. Under her, on the pitted concrete, you see the same sigil that was on the train.

Marci's wearing a wrap of explosives that are just about as unstable as she is right now. One good hit or spark could set the whole thing off. Mateo didn't return, and she blames herself. Now she thinks she can be the one to go into the Underworld and save him. She wants to be his Orpheus. Uriah doesn't know that she's doing this. The Lost Minister reached out to her through another intermediary almost immediately after Mateo died, manipulating her in her weakest moment.

If one of the characters tries to nudge her or blatantly control her via a Manifestation, keep in mind that the explosives are extremely volatile. Every move Marci makes is subject to a Dexterity + Composure roll. Success means she doesn't go kaboom. For more information on explosives, see p. 179 in the *World of Darkness Rulebook*.

Type	Blast Area	Damage	Size	Cost
Marci's explosive jacket	12	6	2	••••

Storyteller Goals

This is a tense situation. She's packing a lot of firepower for a distraught girl with a dead boyfriend. Marci's trying to do the best thing she can think of under the circumstances, but nobody's under any impression that she's thinking straight right now. The characters are running on a clock. When Marci climbed up onto the rails, it went from "there's a girl watching traffic" to "that girl's about to jump!" and someone is sure to have called the police from their cell phone as they passed. The other factor to keep in mind is that, sooner or later, Marci herself is going to jump or move wrong and set off the unstable explosives she's strapped to herself.

Your goal here is really to amp up the suspense of the moment. Sin-Eaters have a number of abilities that allow them to control someone else's body. Marci's got a decent resistance against them, but the danger is really in the explosives. Any wrong move could turn the overpass into an explosive addition to the news. It's even completely possible that she could calm down, agree to help the characters and still blow herself up trying to crawl off the rail.

Character Goals

The characters have two main goals here: save Marci and however many innocent lives she would take with her, and find out more about the cult. Calming Marci down is the best way to accomplish both goals, and the characters have the best chance of doing that. They can act as intermediaries to allow her to have her final moment with Mateo. If she survives thanks to the characters, she might become a useful resource for them in the future if they choose to cultivate her. Marci could become a solid symbol to remind the characters of the good they have done after she completes her journey back to stability.

Actions

Assessing the Explosives

Marci's no explosives expert. The Lost Minister has contacts with a man (the same man who approached her on his behalf, and the man who gave Mateo his explosives) who provides his cultists with the proper tools. In this case, he gave her homemade and extremely volatile dynamite. The specific locations of the attacks don't matter to the Lost Minister—he uses the symbol and the location to make his pawns feel like they are fulfilling a prophecy or some other meaningful task. Once Marci had the explosives, he didn't really care where she went off, as long as a lot of people were around.

Dice Pool: Intelligence + Crafts or Science

Action: Instant

Hindrances: Marci pulls her jacket closed before the character can get a clear look (-2)

Help: Character gets a clear look (+1)

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: Not only do the characters not convince Marci, but they drive her to jump into traffic below, detonating the dynamite and causing quite a lot of damage.

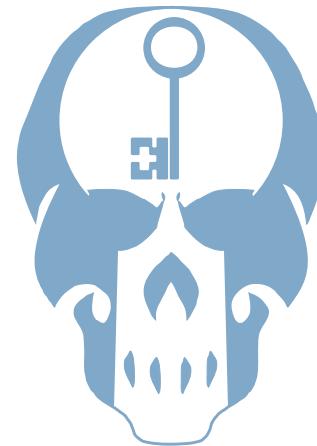
Failure: Marci is unconvinced, but does not jump (though she will with the slightest provocation).

Success: Marci is calmed for the moment. She still stands the chance of slipping or moving wrong and detonating the explosives until they are (carefully) removed and secured.

Exceptional Success: There is no further reward above and beyond achieving a regular success.

Consequences

There's only one thing to really do at this point: it's time to visit the Glorious Church of the Unified Spirit. If the characters have been really slamming ahead and you want to slow them down a bit, you could slip in an ambush with "The Minister Says 'Hi,'" or you can move directly ahead to "Tea With the Enemy."



Dramatic Failure: The character misidentifies the explosives and determines that they are safe.

Failure: The character can't identify the explosives.

Success: The character identifies the explosives successfully and recognizes that they are extremely unstable.

Exceptional Success: There is no reward beyond successful recognition of the danger the characters are in.

Negotiating with Marci

Marci's an emotional wreck. If the characters try to talk her off the ledge, they need to find a way to help her find some kind of hope for the future. One angle they might exploit is their ability to reach Mateo and talk to him. She regrets never telling him she was in love with him.

Dice Pool: Manipulation + Persuasion vs. Composure + Empathy (in Marci's case, the pool is 5)

Action: Instant and contested.

Hindrances: The characters are aggressive (-2).

Help: The speaker mentions being able to contact Mateo's ghost (+1).

THE MINISTER SAYS "HI"

MENTAL •• PHYSICAL ••• SOCIAL •

Overview

The characters are ambushed by a group of the Minister's agents and forced to fight.

Description

Each player may reflexively roll to see if their character successfully detects the agents using their Numina. If even one succeeds, read the following, directing the descriptions of the cramps at the characters who succeeded. If any character achieves an exceptional success, the agent manifesting is ahead and to the right.

As you walk, a churning pain twists in your stomach. Somewhere very close nearby, a shade is manifesting. Before you can investigate, more ghosts appear all around you. To your left, one opens its wolflike maw, and ectoplasm drips to the ground in long, green strands. On the right, another stands folded over sticklike legs. Dark, bloody stains obscure its mouth in a ragged slash. Its talons twitch on its branchy arms like twigs shaking in the wind.

From ahead, a thick, elephantine giant of a shade lumbers forth from the darkness. His tattered coveralls barely cover mangled and sinewy flesh. His tiny eyes glitter beneath the squalid folds of his face.

"You should walk away," he says.

The ghosts attack almost immediately. They're not really good at talking, and it's definitely not what they're here for. You should think carefully about where you set the ambush. A location that fits into your setting and gives the characters a chance to use their powers is best. Keep in mind that each of the shades' anchors must be fairly close by. Inventive players will seek them out and use them to destroy or blackmail the agents. We're leaving the specifics of the agents' anchors up to you, so you can personalize them to your setting and the location you choose for the ambush. Use as many of the guardians as you think the characters can handle. One per character is a good rule of thumb, unless the characters are a particularly combat-weak (or very physical) krewe.

The agents are loyal to the Lost Minister to a fault. They will fight until they are destroyed, because the consequences of losing or running are worse than simply ceasing to exist or being banished to the Underworld.

There's very little the characters can do to the shades that will match the horrors they imagine the Lost Minister inflicting on them.

Storyteller Goals

This is a straight-up slugfest. Your main goal here is to make the combat into something that evokes drama and illustrates that the Lost Minister knows that the characters are investigating and he's not happy about it. Of course, just like in the movies, these sorts of "warnings" are usually ineffective. From your point of view, this scene succeeds if the ambush does just enough damage that it strengthens the characters' resolve rather than actually frustrating their advance or driving them off.

Character Goals

Of course, the characters' goal here is to win the fight, or at least get away. With a little planning on your part, you can give each character a moment to shine in the fight, where they get to do something awesome. Perhaps you could set the ambush in a construction site, so the Sin-Eater with Industrial Boneyard can use the crane to take one ghost out, while another dives into the mound of moved earth and pulls up the Grave Dirt Shroud to go toe to toe with the agents' leader. Keeping track of the krewe's abilities and planning ways to enable the characters or counter them is even more important than keeping track of your own Storyteller characters.

Actions

Most of this scene is combat. The main action the characters can take outside of combat is the reflexive detection of the lead shade's manifestation at the beginning of the scene. The guardians know how to work together, and they chose the location of the ambush for a reason. They'll choose a location like a construction yard for their own reasons too. In a fight with the guardians, the environment is as important as the shades themselves. Rebar and heavy machinery become weapons in the hands of a poltergeist. Use the rules for improvised weapons on p. 136 of the **World of Darkness** rulebook for the items the guardians turn into killing tools.

Detecting Numina Use

Each Sin-Eater gets a chance to reflexively detect the agents' use of Numina at the beginning of the scene. This is their early warning chance to avoid being completely ambushed.

Dice Pool: Wits + Occult + Psyche. You should ask each player to make this roll when you are ready to move on from this scene.

Action: Instant

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The Sin-Eater not only fails to notice the ghost's use of Numina, he also automatically fails to detect the next use of Numina from the same ghost.

Failure: The Sin-Eater doesn't notice anything unusual.

Success: The Sin-Eater notices the use of Numina.

Exceptional Success: As above, and the Sin-Eater knows exactly where the sensation originated (ahead and to the right).

Consequences

If the characters all survive the fight with the Lost Minister's agents, there are very few consequences that reverberate. If any of the shades were banished to the Underworld, using them as the attackers on the train or the guardians in front of the chapel later will provide a nice sense of consistency to the story, and create a bit of personal investment on the part of both the characters and the antagonist.



TEA WITH THE ENEMY

MENTAL ••• PHYSICAL •• SOCIAL •••

Overview

The characters track down the address on the flyer, and discover a small church in the back of an antique bookstore. One of the Seekers keeps them from talking to Uriah initially, but they have a chance to talk to him after a brief run-around.

Description

The address on the flyer is in the middle of a rundown strip mall, under a sign that says "Harold Charger's Antique Bookstore and Tea Lounge." The small storefront has a display of used antique books in the window. A piece of worn and faded paper is taped in the lower corner of one window, with the upside-down "shattering" symbol drawn in faded marker.

A beaten metal bell clatters as you open the door, announcing your presence. The interior looks less like a store and more like a living room. A pair of couches face each other with a coffee table in between. Seated at the couches, two twenty-something girls stop conversing and look at you as if you just walked into their apartment. An older man sits on a stool behind a counter with a run-down cash register on it, the only nod to commerce in evidence. A shy looking young man goes into the back through a moth-eaten green velvet curtain as a more robust man in shirtsleeves and a tie emerges. He smiles a car salesman's smile and approaches, extending his hand.

"Come in, come in! We don't bite. Is there anything we can help you with?"

If the characters present the flyer or ask about the church, Ed introduces himself a little more formally.

"Welcome to the Glorious Church of the Unified Spirit. My name is Edmund, but you can call me Ed."

If the characters go in civilly, they'll be welcomed by Ed, who is covering for Uriah. For his part, Uriah knows what the Sin-Eaters are on sight, and has decided to essentially screen their call. Depending on how rough the characters look after their interactions with Marci and the Lost Minister's agents, Ed may be a little more suspicious (though he'll act no less solicitous) of the characters.

Ed is nobody special. He's just a Seeker running interference for Uriah, trying to work out who the krewe is and whether they're trouble. The

church is in a state of paranoid lockdown right now, due to Mateo's actions. They don't know about Marci yet. Ed will be glad to answer questions about the church, but he specifically avoids the topic of suicide and definitely the kind of suicide bombing that Mateo (and potentially Marci) committed. The girls on the couch, Tina and Jessica, are initiate Seekers. They haven't been drawn into the inner circle, and don't know about the church's stance on suicide.

The old man behind the counter is Harry, the owner of the repurposed bookstore. He donated the back of the shop for the church's use, but the shop itself is so often empty that the Seekers spend much of their time lounging around in the front. Harry doesn't mind; it makes the shop look more active.

If the characters seem curious, Ed will elaborate a bit on the information in the flyer ([see p. 36](#)).

"It's simple, really. We've all seen little things, stuff we can't explain. You know, like, you know you turned that light off, but HEY! It's on again. Or the rocking chair in your living room starts to rock for no reason. It's not a bad thing. I know, I know... It can be scary. But everything we don't understand is scary. The first person to see a plane was terrified.

"I'm talking about ghosts. Sounds silly when you just say it like that, doesn't it? It's not silly, and it's not a joke. We're not all sitting here having you on, my friends! We've all seen things, and we all know that the spirits of the dead are trying to reach us, to pass on their wisdom. We'd like to help you learn from them, too."

If the characters are blatantly hostile, Uriah escapes out the back, but Jessica stupidly yells "Uriah, run!" giving the characters a chance to go after him. If the characters are respectful and diplomatic with Ed, eventually Uriah returns from the back and introduces himself. He can see the characters for what they are; it's part of the gift that makes him different from the other members of the church.

"Ed, may I have a word with your new friends?" the shy looking young man says from the curtain. He gestures into the back, inviting you in. "I've been waiting to meet you."

In the back, a collection of dining room chairs is arranged in a configuration roughly reminiscent of a church or a support group, facing a worn lectern. The young man smiles softly as you enter the room.

"I'm sorry, you must forgive me. This is very exciting. The Minister has told us so much about you, but we've never actually met someone like you before." He brushes his limp blonde hair out of his eyes, "Oh! Sorry, my name is Uriah. I'm a Seeker here. I guess you could call me the pastor of the church. Would you like some tea?"

If Uriah is convinced, he will take the characters to see the Lost Minister, whom he assures them will explain everything. But he insists they go "his way," which involves his talent at divining the location of Averian Gates ([see p. 27](#)).

"Wherever I go, follow me." Uriah closes his eyes and prays for a moment, and then stands. Nothing happens for a few moments, but then his eyes roll back in his head, and he begins to sway and stagger. He leads you down the street, stumbling along oblivious to the world around him. Time has passed, and it's dark now. He turns and tries to go forward, but a gateway stops him. Uriah blinks and looks around. You're at the train station. "The gateway lays beyond here."

8 Storyteller Goals

This is one of those scenes you can use to push the krewe out of their element, creating drama through the awkwardness of the situation. What do you do when a man identifies himself as the leader of a group of domestic terrorists and then offers you tea?

If your chronicle leans to the darkly comic, this is a good scene to use to play up the surrealism of things: powerful and strange characters, their geists whispering to them and their deathly, otherworldly powers crackling just below the surface, sitting in cheap folding chairs in a makeshift church having tea with a man who unwittingly conspired with an ancient, mad ghost to enable mass murder.

In a more traditional horror-based game, the same elements can lend an unsettling creepiness if you stretch out the moment and emphasize the silence of the room, broken only by the tinkling of silverware on china, and the tick of the grandfather clock. Discomfort can create different reactions in different people. Where one character might get nervous and act rashly, another might fight the giggles, while another might try to turn the tables on Uriah and out-wait and out-stare him.

This is also a good time to actually tempt the characters with the idea of being worshipped by the Seekers. Uriah is a good person to use to “preach” the faith to the characters and make it clear that they are considered a sort of angel by the brethren, but Ed can work almost as well.

C Character Goals

The characters are trying to get Uriah to give them the information they need to stop the killings. How they get it will vary from krewe to krewe. Uriah is most amenable to a convincing argument. He’s not built for combat, but the other members of the church will defend him the best they can while he tries to escape if that’s the route the krewe takes. He’s not unreasonable; just deluded and a little naïve.

A Actions

Convincing Uriah

Uriah is a strange young man with strange convictions. He has unusual values, but they don’t extend to the indiscriminate murder of hundreds of

people. His faith leads him to believe in what the Minister tells him; he venerates ghosts, and naively believes that they are somehow more honest than the throngs of humanity. However, the krewe are Sin-Eaters, the very thing he’s been taught to aspire to become. If the krewe presents a compelling argument, Uriah will help them by leading them to the Lost Minister. If they fail to convince him, they may try other, more physical methods. Uriah’s not a particularly solid young man, so the biggest issue the krewe will have in a combat situation will be Ed and, more importantly, the shotgun Harry keeps under the counter. If there is a fight, Tina and Jessica disappear, most likely calling the police once they’re safely out.

Dice Pool: Manipulation + Persuasion vs. Composure + Empathy (in Uriah’s case, the pool is 7)

Action: Instant and contested.

Hindrances: The characters are aggressive (-1).

Help: The speaker is a Necromancer or Advocate (+1)

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: Not only do the characters not convince Uriah, but he refuses to speak to them any further. He calls for Harry and Ed, if they approach him any more.

Failure: Uriah doesn’t believe the krewe. He remains faithful to the Lost Minister.

Success: Uriah is willing to listen, but carefully watches the krewe for signs that they are the ones playing him, not the Lost Minister.

Exceptional Success: Uriah believes the krewe completely, and relaxes his guard around them.

C Consequences

This scene leads to “On the 815.” Either the characters are lead there willingly by a convinced and helpful Uriah or they beat directions to the chapel out of him. A slim chance exists that the characters will be able to find the Lost Minister’s home on their own, but the Underworld is a very strange place, with constantly shifting geography. Uriah has ties to the minister that essentially acts like a homing device. His cooperation makes the krewe’s lives much, much easier.

If, for some reason, the krewe chooses combat and attacks Uriah, he will look for a chance to double cross the characters later, in the Underworld. If they kill him, he’s largely out of commission for the rest of the story. You may choose to resurrect him as a Sin-Eater or not, depending on the needs of your future stories. The climactic scenes assume that he is cooperating with the krewe, so you’ll need to tweak things slightly if that’s not the case.

ON THE 815

MENTAL ••• PHYSICAL ••• SOCIAL •

Overview

Whether the krewe used force or charm, Uriah shows them the way to the Lost Minister.

Description

You stand in the deserted station, near the beginnings of a spontaneously accreted memorial to the lives lost in the wreck Mateo caused. The pictures are organically stacked and pinned haphazardly, unruly and somehow more beautiful than a precisely designed tribute would have been. You see the names scribbled on the bottom of each picture, and you know that this memorial is not complete. It will continue to expand. Uriah touches each picture in turn, whispering a prayer for the dead.

The memorial itself doesn't actually exist as a conduit for the deathly energy surrounding this horrific incident, so the characters can't use the bits and baubles left here to make new Mementos. It's possible that the memorial may take on those properties given time, if the players are patient. It should be said, however, that staking out a memorial in hopes that it could become fodder for a Memento is less than admirable behavior.

No trains are running this late, but you still feel a thrumming vibration rising from the platform. Cold green arcs of phantom electricity run along the tracks, and the hair on your arms stands on end. The blackened, battered engine of the train from the fairgrounds comes into view and rolls to a slow stop, displaying all the scars and tears caused by the wreck. The doors open, and blood drizzles over the edge into the lowered bank below, hissing and boiling as it hits the gravel. Uriah steps on board, ignoring the pooled blood and looks back.

"This is the best way to reach the chapel. Are you coming?"

Once you climb onboard, you see the shades of many of the passengers, bloody and crushed, but staring straight ahead through cloudy cataracts. They take no notice of you. The train shudders and moans as it prepares to leave the station. The doors hiss and close, and the light of the station dims and fades. The train lurches into motion, causing the blood pooling on the floor to slosh and gurgle.

The characters can always use Plasm to inject a little coherence into one of the passengers, but they don't know where they're going any more than the krewe does.

The train enters a tunnel, the noise of its riding the rails beginning to echo like some kind of hollow metal heartbeat. Outside the scratched and spider-webbed windows, the walls are changing from the uniform concrete of a manmade tunnel into roughhewn, almost organic structures, broken up by irregular supports that

appear to be enormous rib bones. You have passed into the Underworld. Here and there, strange creatures scramble along the walls, staring in at you with heads turned the wrong way on their withered bodies. Too many fingers grasp at the pits and peaks of the wall, and one jumps free, catching at the side of the train. As the train picks up speed, more and more of the creatures swarm over the outside, leering in the windows, and heading for the doors on either end of the car.

The creatures are servants of the Lost Minister, use the stats for the Lost Minister's Guardians for them. This time though, use more of them. They're trying to get into the train, and the characters just have to defend the points of entry. You can keep throwing guardians at the krewe as long as you'd like. Be careful not to step over the line from "exciting" to "annoying."

Storyteller Goals

This is the descent, and there's no going back now. Like the characters, you're devoted to the endgame. Thus far, most of the setting of *Through the Ebon Gate* has been mundane, with an overlay of the ghostly world Sin-Eaters experience. Now we're leaving reality behind, moving into the surreal landscape of the dead. The visual vocabulary of the Underworld is influenced by the cultures prevalent in your setting. The Underworld of Costa Rica is not the same as that of Chicago or Paris. If your game is set in New York City, for example, the Underworld is a maze of subway tunnels and sewers, festooned in the desiccated finery of many cultures. Pipes of bone or intestine are wrapped in gaudy Christmas lights while walls are plastered over with playbills for forgotten shows. It's up to you to bring the "local" element to the Underworld as presented here. Ratchet up the creepiness; the Sin-Eaters may have a lot of commerce with the dead, but few of them like spending time in the Underworld. Especially since the place is designed to entice you into breaking the rules.

Character Goals

The krewe is on the right path, and aside from defeating the Lost Ministers' guardians on the train, there's not much else they can do to move things along until the train reaches the station.

Actions

Breaking the Lock

The gate blocking the characters from entering the train station is locked with a chain and padlock. The characters may destroy it if they cannot pick the lock. The door itself has a Durability of 3, Size of 5 and a Structure of 8, while the chain has a Durability of 2 and a Structure of 5. The lock itself is the easiest target, with a Durability of 2 and a Structure of 2. The characters definitely feel deathly energies emanating from below; Uriah's not leading them astray.



Dice Pool: Dexterity + Larceny + Equipment

Action: Extended (5 successes required; one roll represents one turn of work).

Hindrances: Lack of tools (-3), darkness (-3), someone approaching (-2)

Help: Prybar (+1), basic lockpicks (+1), lockpick gun (+2)

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: Not only has the character failed to make any progress with the lock, a mishap causes him to break one or more tools. Any previous successes earned are lost. He may start again from scratch.

Failure: The character makes no headway against the lock.

Success: The character makes progress toward picking the lock.

Exceptional Success: The character has successfully picked the lock.

Knocking a Guardian Free

The guardians are swarming around the outside of the train, trying to crawl in the windows and the doors. The characters need to fight the ones that actually make it in normally, but they can knock the guardians crawling along the windows free of the car, taking them out of the fight.

Dice Pool: Strength + Brawl (target is 3 successes)

Action: Extended. Each roll is one attack.

Hindrances: The guardian is already halfway through the window (-2), the guardian is on the roof (-3)

Help: The guardian is trying to move from the side of the car to the back or front (+2)

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The character slams into the window, jolted by the moving train, taking 1 point of bashing damage.

Failure: The character misses the guardian.

Success: The character successfully damages the guardian, and loosens its hold on the train.

Exceptional Success: The guardian falls from the train, howling in pain.

Consequences

This scene moves directly into “the Lost Minister.” If the characters made it through the train ride in good shape, they shouldn’t have any problems with the two guardians outside the chapel in the next scene. If there are any casualties, the characters will have more difficulty when they confront the Lost Minister.

THE LOST MINISTER

MENTAL •• PHYSICAL •••• SOCIAL —

Overview

The characters confront the Lost Minister in his place of power, a bone and stone chapel deep in the Underworld. Uriah is the first target of his displeasure as the scene devolves into combat almost immediately.

Description

The train finally comes to a halt. You don't see any sign of the creatures that were so recently attacking, aside from the spectral bodies on the floor. The passengers of the train remain in their seats, still looking forward. They never moved, even during the height of the fight.

You step off the train onto a platform that recedes from the car even as you walk. Behind you, the train continues its journey with a scraping rattle.

This is a good place to throw in a temptation. If for example, the Old Laws in the local Underworld forbids drinking the water or eating the food of the dead, you could present some that the characters know will restore their Plasm or act as salve for their wounds. Or if the living are forbidden from addressing the dead, forget Uriah's confidence in his directions and let the characters get lost in the shifting tunnels of the depths, then present them with a shade who knows the way.

Remember always that nothing happens in the Underworld without a price. The Kerberoi rise to punish transgressors and rarely leave a krewe unscathed. The guardians themselves vary based on the domain, and should be designed with your setting in mind. See pp. 250-255 in **Geist: the Sin-Eaters** for a few examples.

The tunnels switch and turn and fold back upon themselves, but Uriah seems to know the way. Up ahead, you see a chapel, carved out of the rocks themselves. It has all the grandeur of a gothic cathedral, but on a smaller scale. In front of the chapel, two specters stand guard.

"You are not welcome here," the bigger one says, his glittering eyes seeping with dark effluent.

The guardians will not allow the krewe to pass without a fight. Given the obstacles the characters have already faced, the combat will likely go pretty quickly.

The chapel is an ossuary, built from bones picked clean of even the memory of flesh. Dark iron wraps around the bone, here and there, to hold it together. Di-

aphanous red drapes hang along the walls, the only color in the room. The altar dominates the room, a gigantic rendering of the virginal mother constructed out of a vast amalgam of bone, holding a Christ-child the size of a full-grown human being. The ceiling is reminiscent of the Sistine Chapel, but constructed of skeletons, sunk into the stone of the dome. Angels with wings formed of arm and leg bones stand guard at regular intervals along the walls. Their hollow-orbed sockets stare at you as you approach the altar.

The angels are nothing more than statues. As far as the krewe can tell, nothing in the Ossuary is anything more than art. There's not even any sign of the Lost Minister: the place could be abandoned, or even a trap.

You feel the shifting warp of the Underworld shudder through everything. The room shifts with the metamorphosis of this untrustworthy land. Behind you, the huge double doors rearrange themselves, turning into a mural of Thomas investigating the yellowed ribcage of a skeletal Christ. The angels also rearrange, losing their guardian stance to take on the aspect of the avenger, their long bone spears held aloft.

"Amazing, aren't they?" a stocky ghost says from the altar. The long fingers of his left hand brush the pulpit as he steps down. "Every day is unpredictable here. What new story will God teach us?" He points to the mural of Thomas in the back of the room and turns simmering eyes on Uriah. "Uriah, you know the story of doubting Thomas, yes? He could not accept that Jesus Christ had returned from the dead after his descent into the Underworld. He required physical proof of the Lord's power before he would believe. And now, you bring these people to me, with their sins riding them like horses. Shall I show you my power? Will you then believe?"

Storyteller Goals

This is it. Your goal here is simply to make a big, badass climax for the players to enjoy. The Lost Minister is a formidable foe, but you can feel free to tweak his abilities up or down the power gamut depending on the capabilities of your troupe's characters.

Character Goals

The troupe is aiming to stop the Lost Minister, survive and perhaps ensure Uriah's survival, not necessarily in that order. If this is a one-shot, don't be surprised if a character decides to sacrifice himself in order to go out in a blaze of glory and save the day.

Actions

The Lost Minister may use his manifestations to manipulate any of the skeletal statues in the room. His first action will be to cause one of the angels to throw a spear at Uriah. The chapel actually rearranges itself to mirror his mood, so you can use it to mirror his current status. If he is close to defeat, the skeletons may start to crack and fall apart. If he has the upper hand, the skeletons may rearrange into triumphant poses. He must use his manifestations to enact changes that would actually mechanically affect the outcome of the game (for example, to cause

damage to a character or create cover for himself), but the dynamism of the shifting ossuary can be used to add dramatic flavor to the scene and create a more cinematic climax for the players.

Conclusion

This is the end of this particular story, but that doesn't mean its effects can't be felt rippling through your setting if you continue the chronicle. You can allow the krewe to make their way back to the living world with a minimum of fuss, or you can dramatize their bruised and bloody escape from the Underworld, weary from their confrontation.

A ftermath

If the characters stop the Minister, there may still be other deceived cultists out there with "duties" assigned to them before the krewe became involved. If the characters fail to stop him, the Minister takes a more direct hand in growing the cult and turning them into his personal servants and vessels. Even without Uriah leading the local Seekers, they've reached critical mass. It's completely possible that various members will spread the gospel and create their own schismatic factions within the cult. Seeds planted in the fertile soil of faith are not so easily rooted up. Uriah's legacy, twisted by the Lost Minister, has the potential to vex the krewe for quite a while. If Uriah died, he is the only member of the cult to actually have the potential to attract a geist and become a Sin-Eater himself. If you prefer, he may become a powerful antagonist or even a useful ally, depending on his treatment at the characters' hands and the needs of your story. If the

Lost Minister was not destroyed, he will continue to look for ways of escaping the Underworld, and he won't forget the krewe when he finally does. His agents may harry the characters and make their existence more difficult than it already is, and he will cultivate new branches of the Glorious Church of the Unified Spirit. He's quite fond of what Uriah gave him to play with.

E xperience

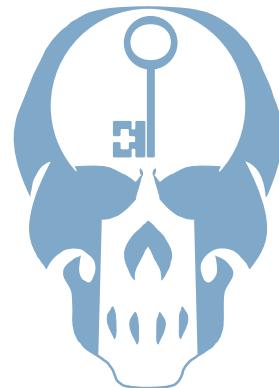
Through the Ebon Gate can take anywhere from one to five chapters to complete, depending on how thoroughly the characters investigate the Seekers and how long you choose to draw out or compress the various encounters with the Minister's minions (unsuspecting or otherwise). At the end of each session, players should be rewarded an experience point simply for participating in the adventure. In addition, see p. 216 of the **World of Darkness Rulebook** for other possible in-game reasons to dole out more experience to those players who earn them.

When the adventure is complete, you may consider giving more experience based on the following levels of participation and success:

+1 Survival. The Minister is a dangerous foe. Some characters may not make it out of the Underworld in one piece. Returning intact is definitely an experience.

+1 Confronting Temptation. The Seekers are a source of incredible temptation to the right Sin-Eater. Those characters who felt that temptation and resisted – or failed to resist, but later experienced a change of heart and grew because of it while remaining true to their characters – deserve a point of experience.

+1 Salvation. Uriah is not a bad soul. He has been misled and had his misunderstandings twisted into an insidious, terrible thing. If the characters save him despite his creation, and give him the chance to redeem himself, they might learn something.



SCENE: The Carnival

11

MENTAL • •

PHYSICAL —

SOCIAL • • •

HINDRANCES

HELP

OTHER

Standing at the line -1
Bad eyesight -2
Drunk -2

None

None

Set the mood, immerse the players.

Get into character, work out their relationship.

SCENE: In the Aftermath

15

MENTAL • • •

PHYSICAL • •

SOCIAL • • •

HINDRANCES

HELP

OTHER

Performing Triage:
Lack of Tools -2, distracted
by noise -1

Recognizing the Sigil:
Obscured by soot and
smoke -1

Questioning Mateo:
Soothing +1

Performing Triage:
Field kit +1

Recognizing the Sigil:
Fluent in Old Tongue +2

Provide preliminary clues. Get characters hooked.

Help survivors and casualties alike. Question Mateo.

SCENE: The Train

13

MENTAL • • •

PHYSICAL • • •

SOCIAL •

HINDRANCES

HELP

OTHER

A Disappointed Girl:
Running for their lives -2

Saving an Innocent:
Inappropriate shoes -2

Run:
Inappropriate shoes -2

A Disappointed Girl:
Scanning Crowd +1

Saving an Innocent:
Sneakers or hiking boots +1

Run:
Sneakers or hiking boots +1

None

Shock the characters. Create a sense of danger.

Survive. Help others survive.

SCENE: Turning the Stones

18

MENTAL • • •

PHYSICAL —

SOCIAL • • •

HINDRANCES

HELP

OTHER

Hitting Up Contacts:
Frequent/recent requests
-1/-2, obscure info -2/-3

Researching Online:
Unusual topic -1, proxied
connection -2

Hitting Up Contacts:
Gift +1, bribe +1, favor
owed +1/+3

Researching Online:
Broadband connection +1

None

Provide the characters with clues.

Use their resources to find information.

SCENE: The Second Soul

20

MENTAL • •

PHYSICAL —

SOCIAL —

HINDRANCES

Trying to be subtle -2

HELP

Unrestricted access +2

OTHER

None

Humanize Marci, give characters clues.

Search for info leading to Marci and the church.

SCENE: The Minister Says "Hi."

23

MENTAL • •

PHYSICAL • • •

SOCIAL •

HINDRANCES

None

HELP

None

OTHER

None

Create a dramatic fight; give characters time to shine.

Win or escape.

SCENE: Marci's Sacrifice

21

MENTAL • • •

PHYSICAL • •

SOCIAL • • •

HINDRANCES

Assessing the Explosives:
Marci conceals them -2

Negotiating:
Aggressive -2

Assessing the Explosives:
Clear look +1

Negotiating:
Evoke Mateo +1

OTHER

None

Create suspense/tension.

Save Marci/innocents, learn more about the cult.

SCENE: Tea With the Enemy

25

MENTAL • • •

PHYSICAL • •

SOCIAL • • •

HINDRANCES

Aggressive Negotiator -1

Necromancer/Advocate +1

OTHER

None

Unsettle the characters, tempt them with worship.

Convince Uriah to lead them to the Lost Minister.



Name: The Lost Minister

Concept:

Virtue: Faith

Vice: Pride

Power  Finesse  Resistance 

Notes:



Name: The Lost Minister's Guardians **Virtue:** Fortitude

Concepts

ns **Virtue:** Fortitude

Vice: Wrath

Power 000000000 Finesse 000000000 Resistance 000000000

Notes

