

MAGISTER'S GUIDE



A SPIRE RPG
GM HANDBOOK



CREDITS

The Magister's Guide
A Spire Gamesmaster Sourcebook
Published by Rowan, Rook and Decard 2021

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First printing. Printed in Latvia by Livonia Print. ISBN:
978-1-913032-21-0





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INTRODUCTION

Welcome to *The Magister's Guide* – this is a collection of advanced, supplemental and/or optional rules that you can choose to slot into your game of *Spire*, as well as a collection of advice and general thoughts on how best to use the material presented in the book.

In the four years since release, we've done a lot of thinking about how the core rules can be adapted, expanded and changed to better tell stories set in the city of *Spire*. We've come along a long way as designers, too. We hope that we can take what we've learned in the development of our other titles and return to *Spire* with a more confident hand, giving you more options than ever, and making your games as good as they can be.

We've been continually amazed by the support and enthusiasm that our community has put behind *Spire* – we sketched out a strange and dangerous world, gave you the keys, and let you run wild. What you've built and the stories you've created have been wonderful to see. As we draw back further from *Spire* and increasingly trust other writers to expand the game, the project has gathered its own momentum. It's beautiful to watch something we built grow, change, and evolve outside of our control.

Now: here's a bunch of extra stuff to jam into your games. Go have fun with it.

– Grant & Chris





NEW SYSTEMS

LIBERTY

In the *Strata* sourcebook (and specifically the *Better The Devil* scenario), we introduced a new mechanic called **Control** which represented the ongoing efforts of the disgraced drow noble house Starys to cement themselves as the rulers of Spire – when player characters knowingly or unknowingly aided Starys, they marked stress to a shared resistance called **Control**. **Control** fallout, rolled for as normal, consisted of things such as cultural shifts, loss of freedoms, unfavourable marriages, and smear campaigns. This offered a different flavour of oppression from the usual aelfir oppression (which was also happening alongside it).

Liberty is an evolution and development of the **Control** mechanic, and – like all the rules in this book – are optional. It represents the efforts of the state to suppress and actively sabotage rebellion. Unlike **Shadow** resistance, which focuses on being investigated or punished by the authorities, **Liberty** is a broader measure of overall oppression – and because this is a game about the player characters, it will worsen or improve as a result of their actions. **Liberty** is a resistance shared between all players and kept track of by the GM.

When the player characters commit a crime and that crime is discovered (whether or not they are implicated), mark stress to **Liberty** – D3 for minor infractions, D6 for serious crimes, and D8 for truly grievous acts. Roll for fallout as normal.

The easiest way to determine whether a crime is serious enough to warrant marking stress to **Liberty** is to consider whether it makes aelfir citizens feel threatened. Stealing supplies from a drow-owned cafe doesn't bother the high elves, but breaking into an Amaranth conservatory and making off with the family jewels has dozens if not hundreds of powerful citizens calling for increased guard patrols and harsher punishments for thieves.

Some districts – Derelictus, Red Row, Perch, and so on – are considered “lawless” by the city as a whole, and crimes committed within their boundaries do not mark stress to **Liberty**. However, many of these places have their own way of keeping the peace, and reprisals can be quick and fierce – we suggest using **Reputation** stress and fallout instead.

If you wish to present the loss of **Liberty** as something which must be perpetually fought against – rather than a punishment for rebellious or criminal acts – then you can mark stress to **Liberty** whenever the characters Lay Low (*Spire*, p. 10). Similarly, if other crimes take place in the orbit of your characters (i.e. a named NPC performs obvious criminal acts) you can opt to mark stress, but taking control out of the players' hands can be frustrating if handled poorly, so be careful.

LIBERTY FALLOUT

MINOR

LIGHT IN DARK PLACES. The GM choose a district or neighbourhood to apply this fallout to. Loud overclocked magelights and smoking gas-lamps now illuminate the district throughout the night, making it hard to conceal your movements. All **Sneak** and **Steal** actions in this area have a minimum difficulty of 1.

NO CONGREGATION. Drow may now not gather in groups of 5 or more unless they are at church or work.

PAPERS, PLEASE. Drow moving between districts in Spire are required to provide documentation at checkpoints and have it stamped – unless they sneak in, which causes its own problems.

POUND THE PAVEMENT. City Guard patrols are increased throughout Spire, with vital resources hurriedly reallocated to arm and armour the agents of the Council. Once per session, should they desire, the GM can introduce a City Guard patrol into any situation.

UPPED STICKS. Rent hikes, brutal policing measures and unemployment spread through the city like wildfire. Choose an individual-level NPC bond connected to one of the player characters – they move away from the area, and are no longer accessible.

MODERATE

ARMED AND ARMOURED. Additional funds are devoted to militarising the city's law enforcement agencies. Any official Council agent (City Guards, Black Guards, Solar Paladins, etc) increase their Armour rating by 1 and carry pistols (D6, Ranged, Reload) unless they were already armed with something more impressive.

BAD INTEL. Infiltrating the Ministry, agents for the aelfir disseminate inaccurate or dangerous information throughout the organisation in an attempt to undermine their enemies. The GM should provide increased information on behalf of the Ministry, some of which is useful and some which isn't; the players will have no way of knowing what's true or not until they investigate themselves. Failing to follow orders due to suspicion will upset their Magister and the Ministry in general.

BOUNTY. The reward for actionable information on malcontents is significantly increased. When a player character marks stress to **Shadow**, they mark 1 additional stress.

BRANDING. In addition to fines and durances as punishment for crimes, the city now requires that all drow criminals are branded or tattooed on their hands, forearms, neck and face with symbols representing their transgressions. While some Red Row gangsters go to great lengths to fabricate impressive and intimidating brands, to the majority of the inhabitants of the city, this is dehumanising and cruel.

CLOSED THOROUGHFARES. After dark, travel between districts is forbidden to drow unless they are in the company of an aelfir. Moving between districts requires an **Evade** check – or a **Deceive** check for one of your number to successfully pose as an aelfir citizen.

EXAMPLE CRIMES

This is by no means an exhaustive list of crimes in Spire, but should act as a useful guide to determining stress. Remember: if a crime goes undiscovered, it doesn't count (for the purposes of marking stress) and if it doesn't bother an aelfir, it's unlikely to matter.

Infractions (D3 Stress): Being flippant or rude to an aelfir, touching an aelfir without their permission, carrying any gun or a blade longer than your palm, trespassing, possession of malak (or other illicit narcotics), theft from an aelfir-owned business, owning a horse, leading a public demonstration, printing or distributing seditious materials, casting occult spells

Serious Crimes (D6 Stress): Injuring an aelfir, theft from an aelfir's personal home/worship site/studio, murder, inciting a riot, arson, sale or production of illicit materials (narcotics, weaponry, explosives, forbidden texts), casting occult spells on an aelfir, manipulating or altering the mind or memories of an aelfir

Grievous Acts (D8 Stress): Killing an aelfir, masquerading as an aelfir, large-scale property damage, invoking the names of the Old Gods, practicing demonology, possession of demonological materials, providing shelter or aid to gnolls

CRACK DOWN. Gangs of malcontents, rebels and general ne'er-do-wells are rounded up and arrested, beaten into compliance or driven out of the city. Choose a street-level NPC bond connected to one of the player characters – the organisation is broken up, the bond is no longer accessible.

CURFEW. Drow may now no longer be out of their homes after sundown unless they are going to or coming from a place of work or performing official business on behalf of an aelfir noble. Documentation is required to prove they are allowed to be outside, and few lords or workplaces will be forthcoming in giving adequate documentation.

KICK IN THE DOOR. Drow houses, temples and businesses are frequently raided by the guard, ostensibly searching for illicit materials but really just looking to throw their weight around and show the dark elves who's boss. Every time the player cell makes use of a house, temple or business operated by drow, roll a D6. On a 2, they've recently been raided. On a 1, they're raided when the player characters are present.

PREVENTATIVE MEASURES. Patrols and raids for contraband are increased. If a character is in a public area and is carrying a long-bladed melee weapon or any type of firearm without adequately concealing it, it is confiscated by armed guards. Knights of the North Docks are permitted to carry long-bladed weapons, but only within the Docks.

PROPAGANDA CAMPAIGN. The aelfir begin a concerted effort in newspapers, pulp novels and popular theatre to remove the image of the noble, exciting revolutionary from the minds of the public – and reinforce the concept of Ministers as terrorist murderers who want to destroy the efforts of so many hard-working drow. When a player character marks stress to a Bond, they roll two dice and pick the highest.

QUALITY CONTROL. Drow require official permits and passes to perform even basic labour tasks; the official pitch is that the city is eager to educate the populace and ensure good quality work, but in reality, it just makes it harder to get work. When a character marks stress to **Silver**, they mark 1 additional stress.

SHOW OF FORCE. Durances to the City Guard are doubled this year, resulting in twice as many police officers trained half as well as usual. Double the number of City Guard in any encounter, but reduce any stress they inflict by 2 (to a minimum of 1).

SEVERE

ALL THE WAY TO THE TOP. Organisations who are suspected of collaborating with the Ministry are dismantled or destroyed to make an example to others. Choose a city-level NPC bond connected to one of the player characters – they are no longer accessible.

PLAINCLOTHES PALADINS. The Paladins of Brother Harvest begin to use underhanded tactics to track down their enemies. Anyone could be a Paladin in disguise carrying concealed weaponry and ready to strike down Ministers with specialist training, shock tactics and gory miracles.

SANCTIONED KILLERS. As **ARMED AND ARMoured** but: agents increase their Armour rating by 2, and they carry shotguns (D6, Point-Blank, Ranged). All City Guard are now masked, if they weren't before.

TURNED. The cell's Magister has been turned, and now works for the aelfir. As **BAD INTEL**, but the player characters are actively manoeuvred into an untenable situation, and may be targeted by Ministry Silence Operatives after being burned as rogue agents.

RECLAIMING LIBERTY

It's hard to remove **Liberty** fallout given the vast, institutional nature of the aelfir oppression in Spire – once changes have been made, navigating the multiple bureaucracies required to undo them properly is nightmarishly difficult. Players have a few options for more immediate and less structural solutions, however (many of which can be established as plotlines or Acquisitions – see p. 6 for more info):

BURN IT DOWN. Attacking the local source of the problem (guard posts, lighting rigs, Paladin staging posts, propaganda print shops) can temporarily suspend the fallout in an area and allow the cell to operate normally. These acts are definitely criminal, so will usually result in marking stress to Liberty and cause the situation to escalate until operations become untenable.

MAKE IT LOOK LIKE AN ACCIDENT. If no-one important realises that a crime takes place, it doesn't count as a crime. Arranging "tragic accidents" or "temporary malfunctions" is an art form, requiring no small amount of social engineering to make it appear as though the element breaking down was simply a matter of course – and, while morally and logistically tricky, it is theoretically possible to murder or silence anyone who might dare to speak out against you.

ADVANCEMENT BEATS

In *Heart: The City Beneath*, we replaced the broad advancement system of *Spire* (“change something in the city, and gain power”) with something more focused and controlled – beats. In short, beats are challenges, goals or achievements that a player selects at the end of a session and pursues throughout the next one (or multiple sessions) – if they achieve those beats, they can advance by selecting a new ability from the ones provided by their class. Once a player has achieved (or “hit”) a beat, they cross it off their list – they can’t achieve it a second time.

Each character has two beats “active” at the start of each session – these are the events that they’re signalling to the GM that they want to happen. Players are free to pursue as many different beats as they desire but can only claim a maximum of two per game and one per situation; this limit is in place to reduce the overall mental strain on the GM and avoid proactive players advancing too far past passive ones.

Heart uses Callings – tragic motivations chosen by the players at character creation – to provide beats. While some beats are aspirational for the character (“claim a valuable item,” “make a friend”) they often aren’t things that they would want to happen to them. Instead, they’re strictly things the player is choosing to pursue – events such as “take minor **Blood** fallout” or “betray someone who cares for you.”

Beats have worked really well for *Heart* so, while *Spire*’s advancement system as it stands works well, we wanted to offer some rules for using beats in your games of *Spire*. You’ll have to create them yourself, rather than choosing from a list, but we’ll do everything we can to make the process as straightforward as possible.

TYPE AND LEVEL

Unlike in *Heart*, player characters in *Spire* share a common goal – glorious revolution and dethroning the cruel Spiral Council. This leads to two broad types of beat.

Shared beats affect the whole group, and are accessible by any of the players. They can represent an official mission granted to them by the Ministry, goals they’ve decided upon themselves, or shared misfortune. Viewed together, they’ll form an outline of a campaign. Shared beats can be used as many times as there are characters, but only once by each character.

Personal beats are distinct to each character and reflect their development, story arc and relationships with NPCs and each other. Personal beats can only be used once.

There are three levels of beat, each associated with advancements of the relevant grade – low, medium and high. A player can expect to fulfil a low beat the session after they select it if they put their mind to it (and you provide suitable opportunity); medium beats should take 2-3 sessions and high beats are the sort of thing you’d take 4-5 sessions to achieve. Alternatively, you can think of the level as associated with the importance and gravity of the beat, or how much they’d transform the person who underwent them. We’ve provided some examples of beats below to give you an idea of how to balance them.

As a guideline, you’ll need more low advances than medium and more medium than high, and you’ll need more personal beats than shared ones.



CREATING BEATS IN SPIRE

You can create all the beats for a campaign yourself, but this requires a great deal of effort on your part and if you get it wrong, you end up with an advancement mechanic which doesn't work properly and can lead to player frustration. Much easier (and more efficient) is to gather the players together once everyone's made their character and talk through the beats you're all interested in hitting. The best option is to do it right after character generation, so the players are excited and engaged to build some potential futures for their characters.

EXAMPLE BEATS

PERSONAL

LOW

- Suffer minor **Mind** fallout.
- Argue with your Magister.
- Win the affections of a handsome Knight.
- Fall more than three storeys and live.
- Disguise yourself as an aelfir.
- Visit the New Heaven shrine built to honour your mother.
- Attend a funeral.
- Fix the results of a skylark race or joust.
- Sell someone out to the authorities.
- Recruit someone to the Ministry.
- Kick someone off the side of Spire.

MEDIUM

- Suffer Major **Silver** fallout.
- Kill another (NPC) Minister.
- Research and perform a demonological ritual.
- Marry your sweetheart.
- Get published in an academic journal.
- Inflict some truly regrettable collateral damage.
- Infiltrate and take over a cult; they work for the Ministry now.
- Rebuild your disgraced father's pub and reinstate his order of Knights.
- Witness a miracle of Our Hidden Mistress and be irrevocably changed by it.

HIGH

- Consecrate a new temple to Our Hidden Mistress.
- Kill someone you love to maintain your cover.
- Become possessed by a vengeful Hallow.

SHARED

LOW

- Get in a fight with the City Guard.
- Get arrested.
- Kill an aelfir who trusts you.
- Take on a job for someone you don't trust.
- Rescue an informant from your enemies.
- Betray someone who has saved your life.
- Help a drow get revenge.

MEDIUM

- Drive the pro-aelfir landlord out of Kiln Street.
- Secure a reliable source of funding for your cell and fight off your rivals.
- Kill a Solar Paladin and take a trophy.
- Destroy a City Guard garrison.
- Frame a loyalist drow for a scandalous crime.
- Extract a valuable asset from imprisonment in the Hive.
- Sabotage a weapons factory supplying arms and ammunition to the Nujab front.
- Set up a soup kitchen and shelter in the windswept shanty streets of Perch.
- Eliminate every witness to your crimes.

HIGH

- Install a controllable asset to the Spiral Council.
- Detonate the ADF's ammunition stores.
- Summon and kill a Solar Pantheon deity.
- Steal the computational device at the core of the Intelligence cult.
- Break all aelfir control within Red Row.
- Set Amaranth ablaze.

ACQUISITIONS

There's a whole world of options available to up-and-coming rebels in the city of Spire – experimental equipment, connections to rich and powerful people, hidden magicks and forbidden prayers, extortionate property rentals – but it's not always easy to work out how to get them, and as the GM, how to give them to the players. Acquisitions solve all these problems and more.

Acquisitions are a means of adjudicating what it will take for a player character to get something – anything – that isn't an advance listed as part of their character class (or one of the extra advances they have access to). Using acquisitions, a player can ask for:

- Abilities from a class other than their own
- Access to an extra advance
- Equipment (built or purchased)
- Consumables (made or purchased)
- Bonds
- Removing fallout
- Favours
- Access to property or accommodation
- Safehouses
- Other mechanical and story benefits

ROLLING FOR ACQUISITIONS

Pursuing Acquisitions takes time and can draw unwanted attention from the authorities; players can roll to earn an Acquisition once per game without incurring stress (unless they mark any due to the roll itself). However, players can opt to **act recklessly** and mark D3 stress to Shadow to make another roll.

Acquisition rolls assume that player characters are weighing up the odds and taking the safest possible route to get what they want. Players can **do something stupid** and attempt a riskier, more effective action to resolve the situation more quickly. Increasing the difficulty of a roll by 1 means that the roll counts as 2 successes rather than 1 for the purposes of Acquisitions; increasing it by 2 means that it counts as 3 successes.

ACTING OUT ACQUISITIONS

The rules as written for acquisitions assume that the players and the GM push the events into the background, focusing instead on the more pressing business of overthrowing the aelfir. It's enough to describe a combination of skill and domain, roll the dice and go from there – but if you'd like to, feel free to play through acquisitions as though they were any other event in the game.

ACQUISITION LEVEL

All you have to do is work out whether it's a Low, Medium or High acquisition and go from there. Ultimately, the level of an acquisition is going to be a negotiation between you and the players, as well as informed by the general tone of play at your table and mutual expectations that have already been established. In the following examples we assume a fairly pulpy, free-flowing tone where characters don't have to worry about paying their rent or affording enough to eat unless they suffer appropriate fallout – if your game is more grim or more luxurious than the default, you can adjust up or down as appropriate.

Some things aren't important and don't require a roll or any sort of associated drama; these you can give to players instantly as a matter of course.

LOW ACQUISITIONS are easy to access and unlikely to result in major complications. If they're equipment-focused then they're probably cheap, legal or not terribly illegal, and easy to make. Removing most Minor fallout, Individual-level bonds, and Low advances are all Low acquisitions, too.

MEDIUM ACQUISITIONS are the sort of thing you'd need to put some serious thought into, and that open you up to moderate risk as you get your hands on them. Equipment is expensive, rare and difficult to make (most property starts at this level) or the sort of thing that'd get you thrown in jail if discovered on your person. This category also includes removing Moderate fallout, making Street-level bonds and earning a Medium advance.

HIGH ACQUISITIONS are top-tier stuff, requiring a lot of orchestration to pull off without suffering terribly as you push yourself beyond your limits and get arrested, burn out from the stress, go broke, lose all your friends or die. Equipment is the best-of-the-best one-of-a-kind, bonds are City-level, advances are High; you could theoretically use High acquisitions to remove Severe fallout, but Severe fallout tends to be the sort of thing that kills you or otherwise permanently takes you out of the running, so you'd have to be pretty clever to pull it off.

Some things are beyond the limits of even High Acquisitions – a seat on the council, ownership of a district, control of the Allied Defence Force, etc. With these, you can either tell the players that it's out of their reach within the limits of acquisitions and the sort of thing that should be the focus of a campaign, negotiate down to a High-level version of the acquisition, or set up multiple High acquisitions chained together to make it all work. (Multiple High acquisitions chained together is just a long-running subplot, but at least the outcome of success is clear.)

ABILITIES

If a player wants to gain an ability through an acquisition, there are two additional requirements:

- They earn an advance of the level required, as normal. Treat a core ability of another class as a Low Advance for the purposes of acquisitions.
- They must justify the access to the ability as part of the actions used to complete the acquisition. For example, if they want to learn a Vermissian Sage ability, it would make sense for them to enter the cursed transit network or make contact with an existing sage

In the *Spire* core book, gaining an ability from a class other than your own requires an advance one level higher than normal (i.e. a Bound taking a Low advance from the Masked class would need a Medium advance to do so). Using acquisitions supersedes this requirement, and you can purchase abilities from any class with an appropriate advance.

STRESS AND DIFFICULTY

Like any other challenging situation, acquisitions have the capacity to inflict stress on characters involved. It's up to the GM to determine the amount of stress marked for any given event; as a rough guide, average folk inflict D3 stress, professionals inflict D6 stress and strange or especially dangerous operators inflict D8 stress.

On a failed roll, players mark stress to their character and the action fails – they're free to try again if they'd like, as each time they roll they open themselves up to marking more stress and suffering fallout. You might want to rule that each player can only roll once for a given acquisition each game to represent their available time, or you might not – it's up to you.

You can assign an increased difficulty to acquisition rolls as you would any other roll, but be wary of this – the higher the difficulty, the more likely the action is to fail and the longer the acquisition will take (and the more stress the characters will suffer). High difficulties can lead to player frustration and abandoning acquisitions, rather than characters getting what they want at a cost.

Choosing the right resistance depends on the approach that the player used. A Carrion-Priest attempting to scare Mortician punks off contested territory could mark stress to **Blood**; a Vermissian Sage researching occult secrets could mark stress to **Mind**; a Azurite bargaining for cheap malak could mark stress to **Silver**; a Knight fixing fights at the Range could mark stress to **Reputation**; a Firebrand riling up public opposition to a planned factory could mark stress to **Shadow**.

LOW. A single successful dice roll is required to complete the acquisition. Talk through the situation with the player to determine the most appropriate combination of skill and domain, have them roll the dice, then apply stress and check for fallout as appropriate.

*Example: Gillian, playing Vaunt the Azurite, wants to buy a gun (D6, Ranged, Reload). The GM rules this as a Low level acquisition, so it'll only require a single successful roll. Setting up a meeting and negotiating a price use the **Compel** skill, and seeing as guns are illegal, the most appropriate domain is **Crime**. Vaunt has **Compel** but not **Crime**, so Gillian rolls 2D10 and picks the highest. The highest dice shows 7, so Vaunt gets their gun but marks stress. The GM doesn't reckon these guys are big shots, so asks Gillian to mark D3 stress to **Silver** as the gun turns out to be pricier than expected.*

MEDIUM. Three successful dice rolls are required to complete the acquisition. Ideally, each dice roll should use a different combination of skill and domain; using the same combination of skill and domain as a previous roll increases the difficulty by 1. Be creative in your application of skill and domain combinations. Multiple characters can (and should!) take part in the same acquisition over the course of a single session or multiple sessions.

***Example:** Vaunt is trying to arm a small squad of rebels with guns – a more difficult proposition than before, so the GM rules that this is a Medium acquisition. Vaunt makes a **Compel+Crime** check to set up a deal; their associate, the Bound, keeps watch on the deal from the warehouse rafters to make sure nothing goes awry using **Sneak+Low Society**; another companion, the Vermissian Sage, inspects the merchandise and asks sensible questions to make them seem like serious customers with **Investigate+Technology**.*

*Vaunt and the Sage's rolls go off without a hitch, but the Bound rolls a 2 as their highest dice and fails, marking D6 stress to **Blood**; the GM rules that the arms dealer's henchmen find them and knock them about a bit, throwing them in front of Vaunt and demanding an explanation as to why a masked assassin was lurking in the rafters. Anyone could attempt to get the third success required; Vaunt opts to make another **Compel+Crime** roll at difficulty 1 (as that combination has already been used) and, luckily for everyone involved, Gillian rolls a 7. The GM rules that Vaunt marks D6 stress to **Reputation** for looking like an amateur, but they get a fair price for the guns and the acquisition is complete.*

HIGH. Nine successful dice rolls are required to complete the acquisition – a High acquisition is, effectively, three Medium acquisitions. As with Medium acquisitions, each dice roll should ideally use a different combination of skill and domain; using the same combination of skill and domain as a roll made in this session increases the difficulty by 1. It can be helpful (and fun) to plan out what the different events in upcoming sessions will be.

ACQUISITIONS FALLOUT

You can represent the trials and tribulations of getting what you want with regular fallout selected from *Spire* or its sourcebooks, or invented on the fly, but the following fallouts may prove useful when using acquisitions.

MINOR FALLOUT

TWO STEPS BACK. [Acquisitions] Not only did you fail, but you made things worse than they were before. Remove one successful roll from the acquisition.

SUBSTANDARD. [Acquisitions] You got what you wanted, but there's something wrong with it. The acquisition is faulty and gains an appropriate negative tag (unreliable, tiring, one-shot, etc) if applicable, or in narrative terms, it's just kind of rubbish. Although applying a negative tag to abilities or advances instead of weapons may seem counterintuitive, with some creativity you can make it fit. (For example, putting the Reload tag on a Divine spell could require the user to pray to their god before using it a second time.)

MODERATE FALLOUT

DANGEROUS. [Acquisitions] You got what you wanted, but it's likely to kill you. The acquisition gains the **Dangerous** tag – on a roll of 1 when using it, it is destroyed and you mark D6 damage to **Blood**. Acquisitions that do not require rolls to operate cannot take this fallout.

SAFEHOUSE

Everyone needs somewhere to take off their boots and fall asleep at the end of the day. For the vast majority of drow in Spire this takes the form of cramped flats, overcrowded terraced houses and ad-hoc accommodation set up in unfavourable locations such as disused factories in the Works, unguarded Vermissian stations, tent villages in Derelictus, and Perch which is lashed and nailed to the side of the upper superstructure and frequently falls off. But for the Ministry's purposes, you'll need a safehouse.

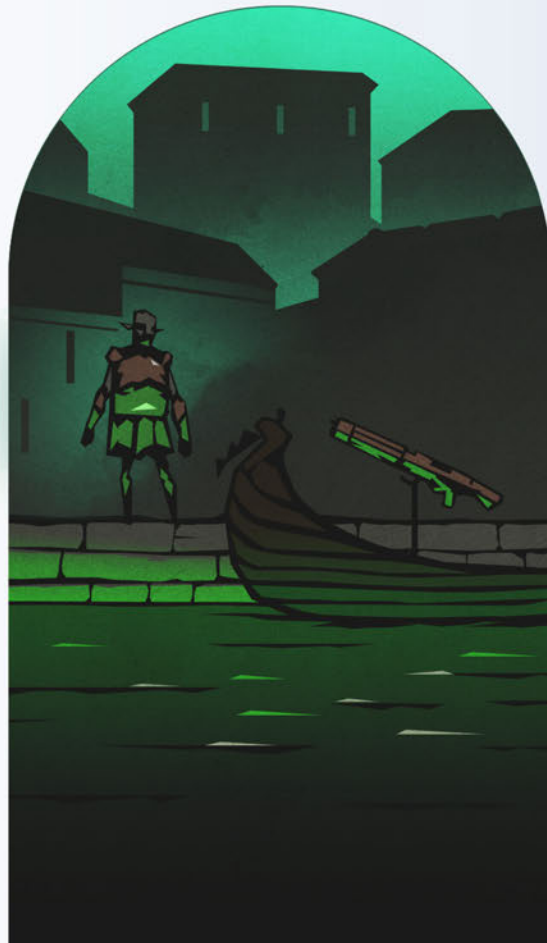
In a city that's trying to kill or arrest them at every turn, providing a safe(ish) space for Ministers to plot, regroup and recuperate is vital. Cells without a stable location from which to operate are frequently subject to unsustainable security breaches as suspicious families and room-mates stumble across illegal materials – and providing a base allows the Ministry to have at least a rough idea of where their Ministers are meeting and how to keep tabs on them. Or eliminate them all in one go, if need be.

Most safehouses are repurposed civilian structures with false walls, hidden doors and unobtrusive silhouettes; they're commonly located in busy thoroughfares and inside other, larger structures which provide operatives cover upon entry and exit. The more extensive locations have hundreds of feet of winding tunnels, ritual ante-chambers, multiple entrances, stockpiles of equipment and emergency resources; most of them are just half a pub basement walled off by amateurs. Given the warrenous nature of Spire, expanding a safehouse is usually possible (if risky) and successful Ministers can see their labours and faith rewarded with improved quarters or, more likely, access to new premises.

YOUR FIRST SAFEHOUSE

If you're using these optional rules, give the players a safehouse at the start of the campaign (or after they prove their worth to the Ministry with a suitably harrowing initiation mission) with an advance of your choosing attached to it. You'll need to provide a rough location of the safehouse and a few details about it. Here are some ideas to get you started.

A disused algae vat in the Garden District, covered with a tarp and multiple dusty signs reading "OUT OF ORDER." Underneath the tarp are a few cots, a stash of knives and unstable explosives, and a ramshackle shrine to the Hidden Mistress.



A false door in the manager's office in a Works factory (the Manager was killed and replaced with a Ministry plant six years ago) which leads, through a shoulder-scraping web of crawlspaces and vents, to a completely walled-off and surprisingly spacious storage area.

Ropebridges and planks lashed together in the dark vastness above an ancient Ivory Row theatre which has been proudly performing the same interminable play every single night for one hundred and twelve years.

In the "haunted" cells beneath a Blue Port police garrison where no City Guard dare tread; the ghosts are a mixture of spooky noises made by enterprising Ministers and the occasional actual phantom dragged in and bound by a friendly Mortician.

Atop a Tower of Silence in New Heaven; mostly, the Carrion-Priests they've paid off to keep guard remember which is the tower with the paramilitary cult and which is the one they're supposed to put the bodies in, but sometimes they get it mixed up.

UPGRADES

Once the cell is set up in a safehouse, they can start to improve it by selecting upgrades from the list below. Unlike advances, these aren't divided up into Low, Medium and High – but some of them have prerequisite upgrades that are required before they can be accessed. To earn an upgrade, player characters can undertake a Medium acquisition (p. 10–12) or choose one instead of a Medium advance – a reward from the Ministry in exchange for causing disruption in Spire.

A starting safehouse has enough space and resources to support three upgrades (including the first free one). To apply additional upgrades past the first three, players will need to take the **BREATHING ROOM** upgrade, which does not count towards their maximum.

BREATHING ROOM. *Safehouses are never luxurious, spacious accommodation – but it can be nice to have a bit of space to think and get things done.* Increase the number of upgrades your safehouse can support by 3.

GUNSMITH. *Ever since humans dug the first gun out of a collapsed arcology and started shooting each other with it, the face of combat has never been the same.* Once per session, each player may ignore the effects of the following tags when applied to a gun for a single action: Dangerous, Reload, Tiring, Unreliable, Unstable. In addition, each character can pick up a pistol (D6, Ranged, Reload) from the safehouse should they need it.

COMMUNITY

If you want to reduce the cloak-and-dagger elements of *Spire* and increase the community-building, grassroots revolutionary aspect of it, you can modify these safehouse rules into reflecting a “safe” neighbourhood, a semi-official autonomous zone or a secret support network. Instead of hiding away on their own, Ministers lay low in one of dozens of friendly businesses and houses; the Blade Maiden operates a legitimate knife-sharpening business on the high street; the Sanctum of the Left Hand is operated by an ex-Scryatrix who does Malrique readings in her spare time; the sacrificial chamber is more of a sacrificial mural in front of which throat-slit, gagged aelfir sputter and choke as the community elders watch on in silence.

MASTER GUNSMITH. *The fervent priests of the Mistress preach the power of blades and shadows, but on the streets of Spire, sometimes you need to really show people you mean business.* Requires **GUNSMITH**. Once per session, each player may add one of the following tags to a firearm they are using: Brutal, Concealable, Extreme Range, Piercing, Spread D3, Surprising. The tag remains on the weapon for the remainder of the situation.

BLADE MAIDEN. *The blade maiden holds an important role in the Ministry's faith: crafting and sanctifying edged weapons to function as blessed instruments of the Hidden Goddess.* Once per session, each player may add one of the following tags to a bladed weapon they are using: Bloodbound, Brutal, Conduit, Piercing. The tag remains on the weapon for the remainder of the situation. In addition, each character can pick up a sacred longblade (D6) from the safehouse should they need it.

EXPLOSIVES. *Someone drops these off once a week; you're kind of glad they don't make them on-site, as they're alarmingly dangerous.* Once per session, each player character can retrieve a bomb (D6, Dangerous, One Use Only, Spread D3).

SECRET ENTRANCE. *If you're lucky you'll get one of the ones with a rotating wall and a hidden switch, but usually it's just covered up with a tarp.* Once per session, each player character can remove D3 **Shadow** stress.

CATASTROPHE ALTAR. *A night-black table polished to a mirror sheen where Ministers meditate on their mission and foresee absolute tragedy in order to better avoid it.* Once per session, when a player fails an action and suffers fallout as a result, they can choose to remove the fallout and re-roll the dice; the altar showed it to them during their meditation, and now they can avoid it. The second result stands.

TRAPS. *A series of nasty surprises for uninvited guests.* Should your safehouse be attacked, all adversaries who enter mark D6 stress as they encounter false floors, spring-loaded spikes, shotguns with triggers tied to door handles and low-grade explosives. This stress cannot be absorbed by armour.

DOCTOR. *No-one becomes a doctor hoping to do Ministry work, but the money is good if you know how to keep your mouth shut.* Once per session, one player character in the cell can remove a minor or moderate **Blood** fallout or clear all marked **Blood** stress.

SACRIFICIAL CHAMBER. *Modern Ministers tend not to perform mortal sacrifice – it’s messy and unsubtle – but there remains an old guard of zealots who believe that the goddess demands blood in literal, and not merely figurative, means.* Once per session, when a player drags an aelfir into this room and murders them, refresh D8. If multiple players take part in the murder, they each refresh D6 instead.

SANCTUM OF THE LEFT HAND. *Living double lives as revolutionaries can be a lot for a fragile mortal mind to handle; in this pitch-black room, an agent can share their burdens with the goddess.* Once per session, one player character in the cell can remove a minor or moderate **Mind** fallout or clear all marked **Mind** stress.

REPUTABLE ESTABLISHMENT. *Your safehouse is concealed behind a fully legal business of some kind, providing cover if you need it; it doesn’t make much money, though.* Once per session, one player character in the cell can remove a minor or moderate **Shadow** fallout or clear all marked **Shadow** stress.

DISREPUTABLE ESTABLISHMENT. *Your safehouse is also home to some sort of illegal (and profitable) business: drug labs, smuggling, identification forgery, etc.* Once per session, one player character in the cell can remove a minor or moderate **Silver** fallout or clear all marked **Silver** stress.

MINISTRY ACOLYTE. *A zealous individual who has sworn their life in service to the Goddess but doesn’t have what it takes to be a full Minister just yet.* You have a devoted lackey who maintains the safehouse, handles administrative tasks and keeps a lookout when the police come around asking questions. Your acolyte functions as an Individual-level bond.

MINISTRY TEMPLE. *A shrine to the Hidden Mistress becomes a great forbidden altar; poisoners, murderers, spies and zealots pay their respects to her here.* Requires **MINISTRY ACOLYTE**. Your safehouse functions as a Street-level bond.

VERMISSIAN SHORTCUT. *The coiled parasite realm of the Vermissian teaches us that time and space are more what you’d call “guidelines” than “rules.”* Choose a district in Spire; your safehouse, while it remains firmly where it is, has an additional entrance in that district. The entrance is prone to dimensional collapse, so take care of it.

SAFEHOUSE FALLOUT

COMPROMISED. [Minor, Safehouse, Bond, Shadow] Some interested parties are poking around the area, putting their noses where they don’t belong, and generally being a nuisance. You cannot access your safehouse abilities for the remainder of this session.

REQUISITIONED. [Moderate, Safehouse, Bond, Silver] You enter your safehouse to find that it has been taken over by an Exarch – a high-ranking mystic in the Ministry who you’re surprised would ever show their face to mere Ministers. They have a mission for you that is as crucial as it is dangerous, which is to say that it is plenty of both, and until you fulfil their objectives you’re stuck with them and their weird magic.

DEMOLISHED. [Severe, Safehouse, Bond, Shadow, Reputation] Your safehouse is destroyed; anyone inside it is killed, or at the very least injured and on the run. Lose all advances invested in it and plot your revenge.

METAGAME CONCERNS

Safehouses are intended to provide player groups with a home base from which to operate. Sometimes, as secret as they are, the events of a *Spire* campaign can feel disconnected from a concrete fictional reality. Giving them a stable location (and some NPCs in it) provides a rhythm to games and allows them to let their hair down and relax a little without worrying about anyone overhearing their schemes.

Importantly, however, it also gives you – the GM – a huge and emotive thing to threaten if they start accruing Reputation or Shadow stress. NPCs are all well and good but few things motivate players like the destruction of their home, especially if they’ve built it up over several sessions. If you want to paint the villain as a proper villain, all you have to do is destroy the safehouse in the second-to-last session of the campaign and watch everything shake out from there.





ADDITIONAL MATERIAL FOR EVERY CLASS

What follows is a chapter devoted to helping you, the GM, run an exciting and engaging game for players who've chosen each and every existing class in *Spire*. Not every class has material in all the categories below – we've kept the new elements thematic and interesting for each character type, and avoided forcing new things in where they won't fit or flow when the game is played.

USEFUL ELEMENTS

At the core of it, roleplaying games are a series of prompts a GM provides to the players (and vice versa). The elements listed in these sections are intended to provide quick prompts for when you're preparing or running a game featuring the character class in question. By selecting a few for each class you have in your group, you can work out the bare bones of a session. If you're struggling for inspiration or feel like the pace is slowing down and the players are becoming unengaged from the game, you can throw one or two into the ongoing narrative to give them something fun to do.

ABILITIES

New abilities for each class, organised in order of Low/Medium/High as standard.

EQUIPMENT

Interesting or unusual equipment that's related to each class. As *Spire* doesn't have strict rules for pricing, you can use the Acquisitions rules on p. 10 to distribute equipment or just play it by ear.

SPECIAL EQUIPMENT

A new addition for *The Magister's Guide*, Special Equipment is of equivalent power to an ability, and is earned in the same way. A character who's earned an advance can choose to spend it on Special Equipment of an appropriate level.

ADVERSARIES

Specialised adversaries designed to hunt down and eliminate (or otherwise mess with) a particular character class. These adversaries might have abilities which nullify or down-power a class' abilities, so use them with caution – sometimes it's fun to be a powerless underdog, but maybe not every single session.

FALLOUT

Class-specific fallout that you can apply as a consequence of marking stress to a character. Many of these are broad enough that you can use them for different character classes from the one they're written for; feel free to get creative.

AZURITE

Clerics of glorious sunlight or the ineffable ferocity of nature are all well and good, but when you're trying to move and shake things in the biggest city on the continent, you need a cleric of cash to get things done. Azurites are priests of Azur, the golden god of trade, and they control the Blue Docks on the south side of ground-level Spire; where the Knights of the North Docks rely on legbreaking and protection rackets to keep the peace (as it were), the Azurites have an inscrutable web of allegiances, debts, favours and grudges that maintain a sort of precarious equilibrium.

For the Ministry, the Azurites are invaluable – every radical organisation needs funding, after all, and always it's useful to have someone who knows how to cut a deal and get hold of contraband supplies. Whether it's illegal black moon-amber, several crates of explosives, a stable supply of malak or a prominent politician's loyalty, the Azurite knows where to get it; and if they don't, they definitely know someone who does.

ABILITIES

HIRED HELP. [Low advance] *You try not to get your hands dirty; it doesn't reflect well on your worth as a merchant.* +1 **Blood**. If you didn't choose a Bodyguard at character creation, take one now. Your Bodyguard now functions as an individual-level Bond and gains the Brutal tag in combat.

MONEY, MONEY, MONEY! [Divine, Low advance] *You're not above dipping into your pockets to create a distraction or block someone's path.* Mark D3 stress to **Silver** to activate this spell; you toss a handful of sten on the ground and everyone in the immediate area is made aware of it. Folks in desperate need of money will swarm to grab the spare change (and create cover or a distraction for you in the process), but more well-to-do types will just think you're a bit strange. Mark D6 stress to **Silver** instead to get everyone nearby excited to grab some free cash, regardless of their current financial situation.

MISER'S CURSE. [Divine, Low advance] *Azur doesn't want you to keep the money; he wants you to spend it.* Mark D6 stress to **Mind** or **Silver** to cast this spell by slipping a cursed coin into the target's belongings. All items of value on their person first become uncomfortably hot and then actively burn their skin; people without much should be able to discard their purse before they take any lasting damage, but especially ostentatious or wealthy targets might mark D3 or D6 stress before they can pull off every last piece of jewellery.

EQUIPMENT

SILVER ROBES. These robes are actually blue, and "silver" refers to the wide variety of currency stitched within the folds and seams – sten, queens, Nujabian *manat*, Yssian *arjon*, Aliquami *som* and countless others. They're noisy, uncomfortable and hard to wash, but sometimes it's nice to have spare change. (Armour 2, Heavy. You can mark **Silver** stress, as well as **Blood** stress, to Silver Robes.)

STEN GUN. This gun fires the nail-like coins known as sten instead of regular bullets. (You can get five standard spherical bullets for a sten, so it's five times more expensive – and, users would argue, more impressive.) It should be noted that sten tend to tumble in flight due to their non-aerodynamic shape, which limits the range and application of this weapon, but some people just like to make a point. (D3, Piercing, Point-Blank, Reload)

QUEEN'S CANNON. The Queen's Cannon is unusual in that it is so expensive to make and operate that only an aelfir could afford it, but so artless that most aelfir would never dare commission it. It fires high-value silver and gold coins known as denari (or queens) at unfathomable speeds; each pull of the trigger costs about a month's rent for an average drow citizen, and sustained fire could easily pay for months of upkeep on a run-down sanctuary or temple. Forget the sten gun – if you really want to show someone you mean business, kill them with this. (D6, Point-Blank. Each time you fire the Queen's Cannon, mark D8 stress to **Silver**.)

ADVERSARIES

BLUE MARKET THIEVES

The Blue Market is the Azurite territory, but those at the fringes are under constant threat from thieves who don't share their piety. The shifting maze of temporary stalls and cloth pagodas belie a complex power structure; unpopular Azurites are shifted out of the protective ring of the inner Azurite circle and out into the edges of the grand market square, where predatory gangs wait until they're alone and take everything they can get. Thieves make frequent use of Mercenaries (*Spire*, p. 99) to bolster their numbers. On occasion, they'll be hired to take something specific from a target, which will usually be something crucial to the cell's ongoing mission.

BLUE MARKET THIEVES

Names: Quintain, Kline, Vystero
Description: Wearing stolen Azurite vest-ments arranged incorrectly
Difficulty: 0, or 1 if you're trapped in their territory
Resistance: 4
Equipment: Slitters (D3, Concealable)
Special: The thieves aren't out for blood – they're out for silver. They can inflict **Silver** stress rather than **Blood** stress in combat; use the following fallout, too. Once they've got what they're after, they'll usually make their escape.

FALLOUT

SILVER ITCH. [Minor, Mind] You are possessed by the spirit of Azur; a grating, grinding, golden thrum between your shoulder blades that can only be cured by trade. Until you buy something you don't strictly need or sell something for a decent price, increase the difficulty of all rolls by 1.

CLEANED OUT. [Minor, Silver] *Your pockets are empty.* You cannot use any additional **Silver** resistance slots until the start of the next session.

PRICED TO MOVE. [Moderate, Mind, Silver] At the end of a string of deals you have ended up with several pallets of some hard-to-sell resource – live lobsters, moody revolvers, abstract art, work it out with the GM – and you've got until the end of the next session to sell it on, otherwise you mark D8, Brutal stress to **Silver**.

USEFUL ELEMENTS

A rich dickhead to fleece out of their money

A bad Azurite, as in an Azurite that's got even fewer morals than they normally have, to act as a counterpoint

A pious Azurite, who's devoted to the whole "buying and selling" thing and not making a profit, who's just a tiresome conduit for the will of the market

Businesses, side-hustles, schemes, gambits, maybe the occasional ruse

A lot of something interesting to try and sell all of a sudden

Someone who desperately needs something, especially if the Azurite has no immediate means of acquiring it but could probably figure out how to get it

Markets, souks, trade halls, any place where lots of people get together to hustle at the same time

BOUND

While these vigilantes are most prevalent in Perch – the luckless shanty district nailed and lashed to the side of Spire thousands of feet above the ground – they operate throughout the city wherever they believe that justice is not adequately being served, and especially where the City Guard are too scared to enter. While they are beloved by the oppressed masses *in theory*, their methods (hiding on rooftops for hours at a time, whispering to the god they imprisoned in their knife, quietly murdering criminals) mean that it can be hard to get along with them in practice.

ABILITIES

THE SECRET OF SACRIFICE. [Divine, Low advance] *The god buried deep in your blade hungers for one thing above all else – the blood of the bastard who put it in there.* Your blade gains the Bloodbound tag. When you activate the Bloodbound tag, you may opt to mark D6 stress to **Blood** instead of D3 to roll with mastery and add the Brutal tag to your blade for the remainder of the current situation.

THE SECRET OF SECOND STOREYS. [Low advance] *You are well-versed in the ancient art of kicking people off tall buildings.* Gain the **Steal** skill. When fighting at an elevation higher than any other player character present in the situation, you roll with mastery.

THE SAINT OF SNIPERS. [Divine, Medium advance] *Your gun whispers words of wind-speed and elevation in your waiting ear.* Requires **BOUND RIFLE** (below). +2 **Shadow**. Your bound rifle replaces the Ranged tag with the Extreme Range tag, and when you attack from hiding, it gains the Brutal tag.

EQUIPMENT

SMOKE BOMB. When you use this equipment, you and all allies nearby roll with mastery when attempting to escape from danger for the remainder of the situation or until the smoke clears. (1, One-Shot, Spread D6, Stunning)

SPECIAL EQUIPMENT

BOUND RIFLE. [Divine, Low advance] *You have trapped a furious small god within an archaic-looking rifle.* Gain a bound rifle (D6, Bound, Piercing, Ranged, Reload). Class abilities which channel power through your blade can be used through this rifle.

ARMOUR OF THE FALLEN HOST. [Divine, Medium advance] *You have access to a special suit of armour built out of remnants scavenged from dead or retired Bound; each part of it is home to a different godling that tries its frantic best to keep you safe from harm.* It functions as an (Armour D8 (roll at the start of each situation)) item, and you mark stress to **Mind** equal to half the armour rating (rounding up) at the beginning of each situation in which you wear it.

USEFUL ELEMENTS

- Difficult but exciting escape routes
- Tight security with an exploitable flaw
- Something to do while they're off on their own that helps out the rest of the group
- Conversations overheard whilst crouched in the rafters
- Supremely murderable villains with interruptible monologues
- Balconies, windows, skylights, gantries, rigging, cranes, ladders, crawlspaces, rooftops, widow's walks, etc
- Other solitary murderous weirdos for them to hunt down/fall in love with/both
- Small gods, and conversations in their head with same
- Desperate people down on their luck asking for help
- Unsolved crimes, especially committed against **Low Society** NPCs
- Scenes for them to appear in using **SURPRISE INFILTRATION**

ADVERSARIES

CITY GUARD BOUND SQUAD

- Names:** DeWitt, Ynette, Sloan
- Description:** Shouting a list of the Bound's alleged crimes aloud; Whipping a bolas around their head; Laying in wait behind a chimney trying not to hyperventilate
- Difficulty:** 0 at range, 1 when they're close enough to use their nets
- Resistance:** 6
- Equipment:** Reinforced guard fatigues (Armour 2), Finch Carbines (D6, Ranged, Unreliable), Heavy clubs (D3, Brutal), bolas (D3, Ranged, Stunning), nets, ropes and climbing gear

FALLOUT

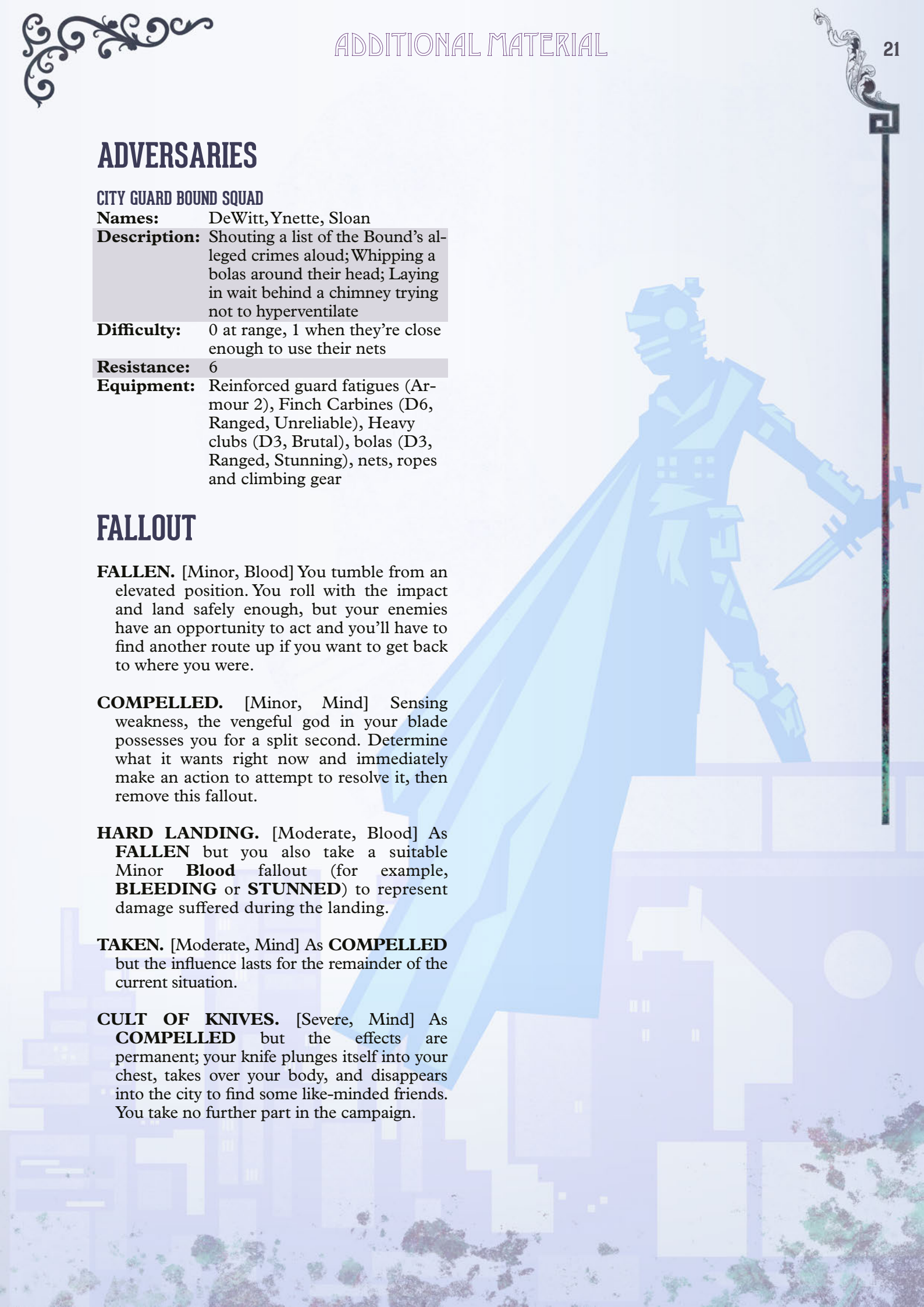
FALLEN. [Minor, Blood] You tumble from an elevated position. You roll with the impact and land safely enough, but your enemies have an opportunity to act and you'll have to find another route up if you want to get back to where you were.

COMPELLED. [Minor, Mind] Sensing weakness, the vengeful god in your blade possesses you for a split second. Determine what it wants right now and immediately make an action to attempt to resolve it, then remove this fallout.

HARD LANDING. [Moderate, Blood] As **FALLEN** but you also take a suitable Minor **Blood** fallout (for example, **BLEEDING** or **STUNNED**) to represent damage suffered during the landing.

TAKEN. [Moderate, Mind] As **COMPELLED** but the influence lasts for the remainder of the current situation.

CULT OF KNIVES. [Severe, Mind] As **COMPELLED** but the effects are permanent; your knife plunges itself into your chest, takes over your body, and disappears into the city to find some like-minded friends. You take no further part in the campaign.





BLOOD-WITCH

Introduced in the *Black Magic* sourcebook, Blood-Witches are one of the strangest character classes in *Spire*. As diseased occultists, they have problems blending in with polite society, and whenever something goes seriously wrong for them they immediately transform into a murderous zoetrope horror, which makes things even more difficult.

Blood-Witches have a lot to offer the game in terms of raw occult weirdness that even the Vermissian Sage can't keep up with, and if you want to focus on the horrific elements of *Spire*, they're a perfect addition to the player group.

ABILITIES

MENAGERIE. [Occult, Low advance] *Your blood warps and changes animals, bending them to your will.* +1 **Reputation.** Gain an additional familiar as per the Blood-Witch bond (*Black Magic*, p. 3). You can enhance this familiar with **BLOOD-BOUND COMPANION** and **HEARTS-BLOOD THRALL** as normal (see *Black Magic* p. 4). You may take this advance as many times as you desire, creating a new familiar each time.

UNFETTERED TERROR. [Medium Advance] When you use **NIGHT TERROR** on an NPC, they mark D6 stress. If this is enough to reduce them to 0 Resistance, they are completely at your mercy, and will likely do whatever you tell them to.

BLOOD-BOND. [Occult, Medium advance] *Sometimes the only way a blood-witch can trust their coven is to operate under conditions of mutually-assured destruction.* Mark D3 stress to **Blood** to cast this spell; you draw forth a measure of your blood and infect your target with the disease within (via an open wound, ingestion, contact with cornea, etc) to bind your fate to theirs. Until the next sunrise, when you mark stress and your target is within the same district as you, they mark equal stress.

TRUE POWER. [Occult, Medium advance] [Occult] When you enter your true form (*Black Magic*, p. 4) you gain the **Fight** skill and your unarmed attacks are (D6, Piercing).

SPECIAL EQUIPMENT

SACRIFICIAL BLADE. [Low Advance] *Witches portion off a measure of their life-force into their knives to enchant them.* Once per session, when you kill a restrained or helpless target with your athame, you may refresh D8.

USEFUL ELEMENTS

Horrible dank chambers and tunnels

Mysterious runes, glyphs, sigils and occult scratchings

Young magicians desperate to join the Blood-Witch cult

Animals behaving strangely (too friendly, terrified, walking on ceilings)

Impressionable people to terrify with blood magic and general weirdness

Someone nice to try and act normal around and inevitably upset

Locations, items and people touched by the Heart

Someone villainous to torment and hunt

ADVERSARIES

HOUSE GRYNDEL WITCH-HUNTERS

The moneyed drow of House Gryndel love a hunt, and in the urban confines of Spire it can be hard to find suitable prey aside from the odd hyena or particularly large raven. They'll spend large sums of money to track down a Blood-Witch and then kill her in the most exciting way possible – usually by trying to trigger a shift into her true form in a busy area for extra collateral damage and then nailing her through the head with a rifle shot.

HOUSE GRYNDEL WITCH-HUNTERS

Names: Jollity Gryndel, Phantasmagoria Gryndel, Distemper Gryndel

Description: Whooping and firing their gun in the air; wearing traditional Gryndel hunting dress of feathers, leather and blood; trailed by a long-suffering assistant with a spare shotgun and a stress headache

Difficulty: 1 if they're on an official Hunt, 0 at all other times

Resistance: 6

Equipment: Glyph-marked bees in a glass vial (Armour 3 against blood-witch spells), a collection of filigreed hunting rifles (D8, One-Shot, Ranged) or shot-guns (D6, Double-Barrelled, Point-Blank, Ranged), assortment of blades handed down for generations (D3)

BLOOD-WITCHES AND GENDER

Although the majority of Blood-Witches in our Spire are women, there is no official gender requirement for a blood-witch, either in the rules of *Spire* or within the fiction of the game. Your Spire may have a different gender balance, or an in-game reason for the imbalance: perhaps women are more able to carry the Witch-virus without succumbing to its effects; or perhaps the virus itself has a gender and prefers its hosts to share it.

FALLOUT

DARK MISTRESS. [Reputation, Shadow, Occult, Minor] Tales of your exploits have spread to impressionable young occultists in the city; one of them comes to you bearing a gift and begs to be allowed into your coven. They refuse to stop trying, even if you turn them away, as a means of displaying their devotion to the art.

FERAL CURSE. [Blood, Mind, Occult, Minor] The Witch virus hates right-angles, mathematics, computation and all things scientific – and it rears up in your R-complex feeling frantic and trapped in your skull. When you are in an area with the Technology tag, increase the difficulty of all actions by 1.

WITCH-SICKNESS. [Blood, Reputation, Occult, Moderate] Most people can't contract the Witch virus that pulses through your veins – turns out someone that you care about (preferably a bond) could, and somehow you managed to infect them. They begin the transformation into a blood-witch and this ruins their life appropriately.

MEAT. [Blood, Mind, Moderate] You are struck with the sickening realisation that everyone in the world is just an ambulatory sack of wet electric meat, barely cognisant of their physical existence, scurrying through life like fleas on a great beast. Increase the difficulty of all social actions by 1.

DEMANDS. [Blood, Mind, Occult, Moderate] The Witch-virus locks the doors and bolts the windows and coils around your heart, refusing to co-operate until you give it the care and attention it deserves. You cannot enter your true form or cast any Blood-Witch spells until you sacrifice a living person in a suitably ritualistic manner then adorn yourself with their still-warm blood.

CARRION-PRIEST

The Carrion-Priests of New Heaven are a microcosm of the revolution itself. Displaced from the southlands after the aelfir war machine rolled through their territory and demolished settlements en route to forming a unified high elf empire, the Charnelites now cling to what few traditions they have left as they battle with the well-established Mortician death cult atop the city of Spire. Ministry of Thought propaganda paints them as bestial terrors in an attempt to sever what little public support they possess.

And yet they keep fighting. They strive to maintain proper funerary rites, and to shepherd others through the pain of death, and to offer up spirits to Charnel in an attempt to sate his furious hunger. There are streets in New Heaven where Morticians simply will not go for fear of hyena attack or death-curse, and small but close-knit groups of second- and third-generation faithful who welcome newcomers with open, if slightly blood-stained, arms.

USEFUL ELEMENTS

Corpses, preferably fresh

A fight to plan out tactically using their **LAY OF THE LAND** core ability

Crows, ravens, rooks and hyenas

Any sort of carrion-beast

Ghosts (whether manifested or occluded)

The Guild of Morticians, poking their noses in where they don't belong

Someone more zealously devoted to Charnel than they are, to provide contrast

Needy faithful asking for guidance, divine blessing or alms

People who think their hyena's cute if it's scary, or scary if it's cute

Visions of the great god Charnel, laughing and powerful

Strong but slow adversaries for them to outmanoeuvre

Festivals, holy days, lay rituals and raucous ceremonies

ABILITIES

CARRION-TONGUE. [Divine, Low advance] *You speak the common language of the eaters of the dead.* Mark D3 stress to **Blood** or **Mind** to speak with a carrion-creature for a situation; if they're not scared of you, they'll probably be up for a chat – especially in exchange for some food or a treat. Crows are the best conversationalists in Spire (as far as this spell goes) and are about as intelligent as a five-year old; hyenas are a bit dim but generally enthusiastic; flies have tiny pinball brains of panic and desire; vultures love a joke; and some particularly patient and skilled priests have managed to commune with the networked fungal ur-minds of the red-capped mushrooms that grow on the bodies of the dead in the Hanging Gardens, though it's hard to understand anything they say.

READY FOR THE BLADE. [Divine, Medium advance] *Charnel abhors armour when not worn by his priests; it shields the flesh, and makes sacrifice arduous.* Mark D3 stress to **Blood** or **Mind** to cast this spell. For the remainder of the current situation, any enemy who comes close enough to you to strike you loses access to their armour – it falls off, rusts, becomes brittle or is otherwise rendered useless.

CANNIBALISM

Carrion-Priests (sometimes) eat people. This can be a problem at even very accepting tables. If you have a Carrion-Priest in your group, you should get everyone's approval before they tuck in. There are ways to sidestep the unpleasantness of it by dressing it up in rite and ritual; feeding flesh to hyenas or ceremonially "consuming" it can be more acceptable than eating it raw and bloody.

EQUIPMENT

NUJABIAN JEZAIL. A flintlock rifle used extensively in the winding mountain passes and blood-soaked slate valleys of Nujab; thanks to a long barrel, custom manufacture and a famously high-calibre shot, these weapons outrange the faster-firing legrande and jaeger rifles used by enlisted soldiers of the Allied Defence Forces. Due to their weight and size, it's rare to see one of these relics outside of New Heaven for fear that it will be confiscated by the City Guard. (D8, Accurate, Extreme Range, One-Shot)

BONE-SPLITTER. An oversized maul with a weighted head designed to crack open bones so hyenas can get at the tasty marrow inside; the bone-splitter is carried by high-ranking Charnelite priests and used only on the bodies of honoured dead so that their spirits can quickly move on to Charnel. Using it on a living target is a sign of respect. (D6, Brutal, Tiring)

SPECIAL EQUIPMENT

SACRED PELT. [Low advance] +1 **Blood**, +1 **Reputation**. A pelt taken from a particularly mighty and holy hyena, hunted on the blood-moon and skinned by the wearer. Some sects of Charnelites like to keep the skin as unadorned and intact as possible, going so far as to create a hood with eyeholes out of the hyena's face and head fur; others like to cover it in crow-bones, obsidian beads and red streamers to display their allegiance.

SACROSANCT SKIN. [Medium advance] +2 **Reputation**. Gain **Compel**, **Pursue** and **Sneak** on the streets of New Heaven or when within the Necropolis. A pelt taken from a legendary (named) hyena such as the Terror of Dove Street, The Red Bishop, or Hallow Viscera. The Morticians claim that the Charnelite's practice of establishing a breeding program for particularly massive and dangerous hyenas on the streets of the city's largest funerary district is reason enough for their expulsion from Spire, and a lot of grieving relatives agree with them.

ADVERSARIES

MORTICIAN DEATH-RUNNERS

The streets and rooftops of New Heaven are the staging ground for a holy guerrilla war between the well-established Morticians and the struggling Charnelites. As the Mortician Guild provides a means of stable employment and status, hundreds of scrappy young drow join up each year and attempt to earn the favour of their masters by taking funereal territory from Carrion-Priests. Their name – “Death-Runners” – is an informal one, and speaks to both their skirmish combat tactics and high turnover rate.

MORTICIAN DEATH-RUNNERS

Names:	Locke, Korrina, Greaves
Description:	Shirtless and wearing a home-made hangman's hood; Crouched on a rooftop keeping watch and smoking a dog-end; Daubing anti-Charnelite graffiti on a temple wall
Difficulty	0
Resistance	5
Equipment:	Weighted Sceptre (D6, Tiring) or Over-wound Crossbow (D6, Brutal, One-Shot, Ranged) and dagger (D3, Concealable)

FALLOUT

HUNGRY. [Minor, Blood, Mind] You can't think straight; Charnel's immense hunger earths in you like lightning and your belly itches with divine want. Until you eat at least a handful of raw meat, the difficulty of all actions not related to eating at least a handful of raw meat is increased by 1.

HAUNTED. [Moderate, Mind, Reputation] After taking someone's life, you are assailed by their ghost. It will continue to haunt you and make things difficult (**Compel+Religion** roll to overcome this) until you lay it to rest.

HOLY BRAWL. [Moderate, Reputation, Shadow] Either you upset the guild or someone framed you for something you didn't do, but now the Morticians are actively coming for you in search of revenge.

LEGALLY DEAD. [Severe, Reputation, Shadow] After one too many territory disputes with the Morticians, they pull enough strings to have you legally declared dead whilst still alive and are permitted to correct the error at swordpoint. A Mortician Executioner (or three) is dispatched to hunt you down, and they won't stop until you undo the legal declaration (or die).

FIREBRAND

Firebrands can be found everywhere in Spire. In the wretched poverty of Derelictus, despite starvation and deprivation, some people still dream of a better life for everyone – or just getting enough respect and recognition to get out of the slums. In the grinding machinery of the Works and the sodden darkness of the Garden, labour unions form around charismatic individuals eager to get an advantage over their masters. In clubs and hookah gardens all across the Silver Quarter, bored noble scions decide to upset their parents by throwing their lot in with the revolution, safe from repercussions thanks to money and connections.

All of them find their way to the Ministry, and all of them burn bright in an attempt to shine light into dark places.

USEFUL ELEMENTS

Injustice, generally

Gullible (read: inspire-able) citizens to rile up and get in trouble; name them for full effect

Duranced work-gangs

Debates, pub arguments, some pig-headed conservative to show up in public

Raised platforms, plazas with good acoustics, balconies – anywhere they can grandstand

Offers to sell out their friends or betray their ideals which they can righteously refuse or feel terrible about accepting

Folk music, anti-fascist anthems, drums and pipes

Opportunities to create distractions for other, more mission-oriented player characters

ABILITIES

RUNNING HOT. [Low advance] *You push hard to get the most out of everything.* Gain the **Technology** domain. Once per situation, re-roll an action that you made using a piece of equipment as you overwork it. If none of the re-rolled dice show 7 or higher, the equipment is destroyed.

CAT AMONGST THE PIGEONS. [Low advance] *Well-behaved drow seldom make history.* You throw caution to the wind and get things done, no matter the consequences. Mark D6 stress to **Shadow** to add 2D10 to your next action roll.

STRENGTH OF BELIEF. [Divine, Medium advance] *The hand of the oppressor shall not restrain you; their bullets and blades will be cast asunder upon your brow.* Gain Armour 4 that can only be used to absorb attacks from members of the City Guard, the Ethics Board, the Allied Defence Force, the Paladins, and any other agents of the state.

FOR THE CAUSE. [Divine, Medium advance] *You told them when they joined you that this was going to be dangerous; you hope they believed you.* When you would mark fallout, remove a (permanent, not temporary) bond from your character sheet and clear all remaining stress. The fallout happens to your bond rather than you, and they know that you're at least tangentially responsible. (Or if it kills them: their next of kin know.)

EQUIPMENT

HEAVY OVERALLS. Reinforced and upgraded work clothes that are popular with drow-of-the-people Firebrands. The labour gangs of the Works take great pride in wearing their colours, and there's a complex system of identification and heraldry inherent in every boiler suit. (Armour 2, Heavy, Camouflaged: The Works)

LEGAL SWORD. Officially, Spire bans civilian ownership of any blade greater than a palm's width in length, making swords functionally illegal outside of the North Docks. In an attempt to circumnavigate this law, this weapon has a blade which is a palm's width in length but happens to be two feet wide and sharpened along the top. An easily-removable hilt is lashed to a hole on the side closest to the user, and it can be affixed to what is technically the "side" of the knife with a few minutes' work. (D6, Unreliable)

FIREBOMBS. Nothing finishes an argument like arson. Firebombs come in a wide variety of shapes and sizes but most follow a basic pattern of a flammable liquid, a breakable container, and an ignition medium made out of a rag – and all they make an excellent point with regards to collateral damage. City Guard (and even military forces) will often avoid using fire-based weapons in an attempt to preserve the infrastructure around whoever they’re oppressing or murdering – if you get to kill a cop and burn down a police station at the same time, some people reckon, so much the better. (D6, Spread D3, Ranged, Dangerous. Gain access to the fallouts below.)

ON FIRE. [Minor, Blood, Reputation] Something you really didn’t want to be on fire is now on fire and it’s all your fault.

FIRE TRAP. [Moderate, Blood, Reputation] As **ON FIRE**, but you’re trapped inside whatever is on fire. On the plus side, anyone you’re fighting is trapped too.

PYRE. [Severe, Blood] The building you are trapped in burns to the ground, killing you. Hopefully your surviving allies can sell it as a valiant martyrdom rather than a brawl that got out of hand.

SPECIAL EQUIPMENT

TRADEMARK ITEM. [Low advance] A red leather greatcoat; a brightly-dyed mohawk; a harmonica; anything that makes you stand out from the hundreds of wannabe revolutionaries that pepper the understreets of Spire. Once per session, when you make a stand or say something inspiring and your trademark item is clearly visible (or audible, if it makes noise), all allies who witness it refresh D6 stress.

SYMBOL OF THE REVOLUTION. [Medium advance] This banner, icon or otherwise heavy and symbolic item is distinct to you and your fight against the aelfir. It functions as a (D6, Tiring) weapon and every time you take a worthy adversary out of action with it, all allies who see it happen refresh D3 stress.

ADVERSARIES

GARGOYLE

One of a small number of mechanically-augmented informants that prowl the streets looking for information on revolutionaries to send back to their masters. They absolutely can’t blend into a crowd given the way that they look, so they rely on being able to stand absolutely still for hours at a time and waiting until something interesting happens. It’s rare to “fight” a gargoyle, or group of gargoyles, on their own – they’ll generally hang out at the back of a brawl and then high-tail it out of there once they’ve got some info.

GARGOYLE

Names: Grynnel, Wrax, Ashling

Description: Ear trumpets permanently installed in ears; Eyes augmented with a variety of swappable lenses and filters; Puffing bluish smoke out of a weathered pipe and staring directly ahead

Difficulty: 0, 1 if they’re trying to get away with information

Resistance: 3

Equipment: Flare gun (D6, Ranged, One-shot), Traitor’s Ink (D3)

Special: Gargoyles inflict **Shadow** stress, rather than blood stress, with their attacks. This ability spreads to adversaries in any fight they’re watching.

FALLOUT

HAPPY TO HELP. [Minor, Shadow, Reputation] You draw a young, impressionable rebel in via the gravitational pull of your reckless charisma. You gain them as an individual-level Bond, but they only ever roll 1D10 when making actions on your behalf. If you go a whole session without asking them to do something, they’ll take the initiative and do something themselves – the GM determines what.

DROW LIBERATION FRONT. [Moderate, Shadow, Reputation] As **HAPPY TO HELP**, except that the gang of hopeful ne’er-do-wells functions as a street-level Bond, so they can cause bigger and more extravagant kinds of trouble.

GUTTER CLERIC

Gutter Clerics are hustlers of divine magic – metaphysical confidence tricksters who lie to gods for a living – that were introduced in the *Sin* sourcebook. They are positioned at the crux of the argument that occult magic and divine magic are just the same thing in different hats; after all, if they can cycle through miracles granted by gods thought long-dead and scoured out of existence, saying the words but not feeling the faith, how is that different from the improvised, cruel glamour of the Idol or the pop-culture reality-hacking of the Inksmith?

As such, almost no-one likes Gutter Clerics, because they're convinced they've got the one and only set of keys to the back door of heaven. Even the Ministry tries to keep them at arm's length – they're useful when you need an expert on obscure religions and malevolent cults, but when they start performing time and motion studies on your Conspiracy Shrines they can quickly fall out of favour.

ABILITIES

INSTANT SCHISM. [Low advance] *You know all about the various holy wars that lead to the current theological state of Spire.* Gain the **Compel** skill. You always know just the right thing to say to spark up a fierce religious debate between members of rival, allied, or even outwardly-identical faiths – but they might have more important things to do, so it's not a get-out-of-trouble free card.

USEFUL ELEMENTS

Churches, temples, basilicas, cathedrals, hidden sanctums with forbidden altars, etc.

Theological debates

Grim cults, basement sects, cowled pilgrims, sacred assassins

The Solar Pantheon, in all its glory

Any scene set in or nearby to Pilgrim's Walk

Some old-fashioned high-status priest ready for a comeuppance

Mysteries focusing around a church or cult that can be infiltrated or observed

Fearful aelfir worshippers of the Old Gods looking to witness ancient miracles

FAILSAFE SCRIPTURE. [Divine, Low advance] *Your body is covered in protective tattoos and doom-absorbent relics.* Once per session, when you would take **Mind** fallout, take a Minor **Blood** fallout instead as the sacred ink on your skin burns away the whirling chaos.

ALL-PURPOSE WARD. [Medium advance] *You've read up on dozens if not hundreds of sacred wards and boiled them down to their core elements – a barrier, a sacrament, and an enemy.* Mark D6 stress to **Silver** to cast this spell as you hurriedly inscribe a boundary with blessed chalk and moonsilver; when you do, pick a god who you're invoking protection against. Any devout worshipper of the god will be unable to cross the warded area; those who pay lip-service or just go to church for the big events are wracked with headaches and reduce their difficulty by 1 for the remainder of the situation or until they retreat over the wards.

CELESTIAL SPONGE. [Divine, Medium advance] *Your performances of piety are enough to fool even the most engaged of gods.* If you watch an ally cast a spell with the [Divine] tag, you can cast it as though you possessed the ability until the next time you sleep.

EQUIPMENT

HOLY-LOOKING STAFF. Many religions all over the world appreciate the utility of a big stick; you can lean on it if you get tired, it's nice to have something to hold and wave around when you're making an important point, and if all else fails you can hit someone with it. Yours is done up to look as holy as possible whilst honouring no god in particular, and covered in esoteric-looking symbols, vague scripture and assorted votive tokens. (D3, Defensive)

SPECIAL EQUIPMENT

MULTIPURPOSE VESTMENTS. [Low advance] Your standard daily wear is several layers of cassocks, scarves, collars and nondescript holy symbols that you have accrued over years of lying to gods for a living. As long as you've seen one of their type before, you can disguise yourself as a priest of any religion that's big enough to have a congregation of at least a hundred in the city of Spire; you can't aim for a particular rank, and whatever faith you emulate you're going to end up looking a bit shabby and mismatched, but you can fashion a close enough approximation to blend in.

ADVERSARIES

ETHICS BOARD ENFORCER SQUAD

The Ethics Board of the Spiral Council are devoted to scouring out the existence of proscribed knowledge. Their primary goal is to eliminate any evidence of the Old Gods of the aelfir: the primordial entities which the high elves once worshipped in their northern homelands. Given that Gutter Clerics draw power from the echoes of these very same deities, they are a common target of the terrifying Erasure Squads. (These adversaries are a heavier, more specifically anti-Gutter Cleric variant of those described in *Sin*, p. 109.)

ETHICS BOARD ENFORCER SQUAD

Names: Sword's-Keen-Decision, Heavenly-Hosts-A-Hundred, Victory-Strides-Unassailed

Description: Putting the fear of god into a hapless City Guard witness; Anointing their iron mask with protective oils; Standing motionless in your bedroom when you return home

Difficulty: 1, or 2 if you use any Medium-level Gutter Cleric advances against them

Resistance: 9

Equipment: Iron mask and warded robes (Armour 2) Incinerator (D3, One-shot, Point-Blank, Spread D6) and bane spike (D6, Devastating), scouring recorders, shackles and pins

Special: The Erasure Squad uses magitech music-boxes that scour all knowledge of a particular subject out of the brains of those who hear it; these are difficult to use on an unrestrained target, and represented by the fallout below:

ERASED. [Moderate, Blood, Mind] All knowledge of proscribed magics (the exact definition of this is up to the GM, but anything related to the Old Gods, Lekolé or Lombré is fair game) is scoured from your mind. You cannot cast spells of this type until you track down a source of knowledge about them and mark D8 stress to **Mind** to undo the work of the scouring recorder, risking your sanity in the process.

FALLOUT

PETTY HEX. [Minor, Mind] You have incurred the wrath of one of the many gods that you have tricked into lending you power. The GM selects a Low advance from those you have chosen; you lose all benefits of that advance until you perform a ritual act seeking forgiveness from the god in question.

BROUGHT IN FOR QUESTIONING.

[Minor, Mind] You enter a trancelike state where one of the gods you've been siphoning power from (or an angel of same) appears to you in a vision and demands to know exactly what it is you think you're doing. Until you convince them you're on the level (or suggest a viable way of making amends) you are trapped in a vulnerable, unresponsive state.

DANGEROUS KNOWLEDGE. [Moderate, Mind] You get the impression that these Forbidden Faiths might be forbidden for a reason. When you take fallout due a spell you cast, any nearby allies mark D6 stress to **Mind** from metaphysical feedback.

SLAVE TO GOD. [Severe, Mind] Your soul has been hollowed out and replaced with the ink-black godstuff of a forbidden deity. You are now a fragment of their consciousness and act in perfect accordance with their will (although your fragile mortal form may be lacking at times), and it is only a matter of time before your body burns out under the strain or the Ethics Board permanently disables you.

AGENT OF FATE. [Severe, Mind] Your eyes are opened to the glory of the Sisters Three and you become a walking doom. You are retired from play, but will appear whenever a player character suffers severe fallout, and you will have been partially responsible for making it happen.

IDOL

Idols are at the cutting edge of occult magic in Spire – they hack together half-formed rituals and badly-researched black magic with the sheer majesty of their presence and talent and, somehow, it works. The line between “artist” and “Idol” is a fine one, and there are no end of failed glamour-wizards who are certainly beautiful enough, and certainly skilled enough in the black arts, but who for some reason never broke through into the Ivory Row scene and remain a hedge-witch in expertly-applied eyeliner.

Idols are tricky prospects for the Ministry – they’re self-interested to a fault (they have to be, otherwise their magic stops working) and don’t like taking orders. Combined with their penchant for drawing crowds, this makes them terrible agents of a shadowy goddess. But they hold remarkable sway in the upper echelons of Spire society, and they can spread an idea through a populace like wildfire, so the good often outweighs the bad.

ABILITIES

24-HOUR PARTY PERSON. [Occult, Low advance] *Seems like whenever you walk through a door, someone cheers and hands you a drink.* +1 **Reputation.** When you activate your **LIFE AND SOUL** core ability, it happens instantaneously – there’s no set-up time whatsoever, and you don’t have to do anything to make it happen. You can activate the ability and kick in the door to a previously-quiet library to find a raucous bacchanal kicking off where seconds before there was only silent reading and the quiet ticking of clocks.

STARVING ARTIST. [Low advance] *People think that true art comes from suffering, which is nonsense, but somehow it seems to work for you – on a metaphysical level.* When you are suffering from **Silver** fallout or have four or more stress marked to **Silver**, you roll with mastery to cast Idol magic.

COME TO ME. [Occult, Medium advance] *You draw them in from miles around.* Roll **Compel+Occult** to cast this spell as you prepare yourself in your quarters (light a few candles, pour some wine, spray on some scent) and speak your target’s name aloud into a mirror. On a success, they are compelled to drop whatever it is they’re doing and reach you by the most direct means possible. Once they arrive, they’ll listen to what you have to say, but after that the spell wears off and you’ll have to rely on your (un)natural charm.

DRAMATIC EXIT. [Occult, Medium advance] *You get the last word in, even if that means breaking the laws of space and time.* Roll **Compel+Occult** and make a suitably dramatic exit to cast this spell. As long as you break line of sight with every named character present (they’re the only ones that really count) and don’t accidentally walk into a broom closet or something, you disappear from the narrative completely and arrive later on in the plot by walking into a suitable scene.

EQUIPMENT

OBJET DE MORT. Spire is home to some of the most innovative and unhinged gunmakers in the continent, if not the world, and while owning a gun for defence is technically illegal, owning one for artistic purposes is perfectly acceptable. These one-of-a-kind firearms are absurdly overdesigned, either fragile or heavy or both, and often ironic in their construction – all of which backs up the argument that they’re not really weapons *per se*, and more beautiful items that happen to be able to kill people. (You could hit someone with a statue and kill them, and we put those outside schools, so who’s really at fault here?) (D6, Dangerous, One-Shot, Ranged.)

DEVOTEE. Not strictly equipment: this is a person who fights for you. They might be in your employ and survive on a modest stipend, but it’s more likely that they’ve sworn their service to you for free as you’re just so beautiful and so talented. They were probably pretty handsome before they got their nose broken so many times defending your honour, but here we are. (D3, Defensive.)

SPECIAL EQUIPMENT

MAGIC PAINTBRUSH. [Medium advance] The human who sold you this ebony-handled brush claimed that it’s made from unicorn tail hair, and whether that’s true or not, you can use it like a wand to channel your magical powers. Mark D6 stress to **Silver** to paint something into existence – but it only works with red paint, so you won’t be able to fool anyone that what you’ve created is anything other than a simulacrum. The paintbrush operates on the rules of perspective relative to the user, so if you squint and paint a little bridge between two rooftops several stories above you, the bridge will be full-size to anyone who’s up there. Objects created with the magic paintbrush last for a few minutes at most.

ADVERSARIES

BATTLE CRITIC

Following the official decree of the mad Warrior-Poet Shatter-The-Stars'-Iniquity in the year of Nine Crimson Kings, it is technically legal to hunt down anyone whose art is deemed "mentally unsanitary" (as long as you fill out the proper forms). Given the bureaucratic and logistical difficulties involved, very few battle-critics ever surface in the city – but the aggressive nature of Idol art-magic has led to a few devoted bands attempting to purge unwanted creators from the art world.

BATTLE CRITIC

Names:	Merriweather VII, With-Hollow-Hearts-We-Prosper, Chastiser X
Description:	Spinning their own artistic spells with paint and chalk; Loudly decrying the Idol's attempts to resist capture as "derivative" and "banal"; Covered in lead wards and carrying little birds in cages to withstand Idol magic
Difficulty:	0, unless you're an Idol, in which case 1
Resistance:	6
Equipment:	Mismatched clubs, short-blades and "critic's staves" (D3), binding pins and iron bridles (see Special)
Special:	If you mark stress from a Battle Critic, you lose access to the Occult domain for the remainder of the situation (if you have it)

FALLOUT

FOLLOWING. [Mind, Minor, Occult] Your work, however hard you try to avoid it, always includes an indistinct and threatening hound; in the background of visual art, howling in the chorus of songs, mentioned ominously by characters in a play, and so on. This has no mechanical effect but will probably confuse your critics and raise arguments amongst your fans. Can upgrade to **HUNTING**.

HUNTING. [Mind, Moderate, Occult] Requires **FOLLOWING**. The hound in your art becomes more prominent and detailed – it is skinless, ravenous, steaming, sharp-edged and obsidian-eyed. No matter your intentions, all your work is now about the hound, and its terrible approach – you could write it off as a metaphor, perhaps. Every

session you don't paint, draw, sing about, write about or otherwise somehow represent the hound in your art, mark D6 stress to **Mind**. Can upgrade to **RAVENING**.

CRITICAL RECEPTION. [Reputation, Moderate] Your work (or the collateral damage from it) attracts the attention of a squad of Battle-Critics (see above) who will attempt to drag you into art jail in exchange for a small reward and a sizeable amount of prestige.

RAVENING. [Mind, Severe, Occult] Requires **HUNTING**. Your efforts pay off; you finally create the perfect simulacrum of the hound, and it manifests physically and attempts to eat you. (It's a difficulty 2, Resistance 11 creature with claws and teeth that are D6, Devastating weapons.)

LIFE AND SOULLESS. [Severe, Mind, Occult] Your life changes from only feeling like a constant stream of parties to actually being a constant stream of parties. Every time you walk in somewhere there's a shindig happening, or there's one in an adjoining room; you just happen to bump into every festival parade as you walk through the town; you are unable to sleep, or find any time to work, or get on with the serious business of revolution.

USEFUL ELEMENTS

Stages, lecture halls, catwalks, trestle tables, any sort of even slightly raised platform

Beautiful, stupid, rich people to bewitch and lure

Someone who's not beautiful or stupid but is rich and wants to team up for some kind of mutually beneficial scheme

Patrons looking to commission a special piece or private performance

Gorgeous costumes, elaborate uniforms, any excuse to dress up

The sort of stuffy old guard art establishment who'll harrumph and lose their monocles over the Idol's latest exhibit, and their ignored and easily-fascinated spouses

A space in need of a makeover/overhaul, preferably via montage

Treasures – precious metals, luxurious clothes, fine kafee and chocolates, stained glass

INKSMITH

Introduced in *Strata*, Inksmiths are something of a poster child for *Spire* character classes mainly due to Adrian Stone's incredible art and the way that they can summon a man holding a gun into any situation to make the plot more interesting. They're the least "fantasy" of all the classes available to players – being cemented firmly in film noir and pulp fiction archetypes – which can cause some issues meshing with the rest of a party, as they seem to inhabit a slightly different world to everyone else.

But they're very cool. And they have that thing with the man with a gun. So let's get into it.

USEFUL ELEMENTS

Rain, even indoors or underground

Everyone smoking, all the time

Light shining through venetian blinds

Dames walking into their office

A mystery to solve and maybe write about

Some kid in over their damn head

Unfathomably rich, unfathomably evil aelfir

A torch singer to fall in love with

More cops than you can shake a pen at, none of them honest

Mobsters, crooks, gangsters and hired muscle

Matchbooks bearing a significant logo

Money and inheritance inevitably bringing with it a sort of amoral above-this-all corruption

Better writers who are far less stylish, and bitter about the Inksmith's success

ABILITIES

IT'S A MATCH. [Occult, Low advance] *Thank god no-one uses lighters in this town; you'd never get anything done.* Roll **Investigate+Occult** to cast this spell when you're picking through a scene in search of answers. On a success, you find a matchbook from somewhere that's key to your ongoing investigation even if that place doesn't give out customised matchbooks. You could find a matchbook for a smoking cessation clinic or an arsonist support group if it would help with your case.

MIGHTIER THAN THE SWORD. [Occult, Medium advance] *The aphorism is probably about politics, but you know that a nib can pierce an artery just fine.* Gain +2 **Blood**. Roll **Fix+Occult** to cast this spell on a pen you're holding; on a success, it becomes a (D6, Piercing, Surprising) weapon until you put it down.

EQUIPMENT

WREN SINGLE-ACTION. A snub-nosed compact pistol popular with the sort of people who don't look like they should be carrying a gun at all – in the pulp novels, the fatale always draws one out of a handbag or garter holster. (D3, Concealable, Point-Blank, Reload, Surprising)

SPECIAL EQUIPMENT

LUCKY CIGARETTE CASE. [Low advance] Or: lucky flask, lucky prayer book, etc. A small, sturdy object kept in the breast pocket that has an unusually high chance of catching a bullet aimed at one of your vital organs. Once per session, when you would take **Blood** fallout due to an attack from a bullet or sharp weapon, instead declare that the attack hit the cigarette case – you ignore the fallout but clear stress as normal. You can't use this ability more than once against fallout from the same enemy; there's no way even your schlocky pulp-fiction narrative can support something that lucky.

CHEKHOV'S GUN. [Medium advance] The true identity of who “Chekhov” was is lost to time, but his gun sure as hell still works – as long as you perform the right rituals. To charge Chekhov's Gun (which is an old-fashioned but well-lit pistol), you must display it on the wall and mention it in conversation. When you take the gun down from the wall and shoot it at a named target who you've spoken to in the past, instead of rolling to hit normally, you automatically inflict 4 stress for each session you mentioned the gun but didn't take it off the wall.

ADVERSARY

ATTRACTIVE FOIL

You work in this town for long enough to make a name for yourself, you're gonna get your heart broken. Or your legs. Or, sometimes, with some guys, both.

ATTRACTIVE FOIL

Names: Addison, Herald, Souvain Hell-For-Leather

Description: Smoking a Nujabian black and watching you fight someone else; Turning up to steal the objective for their employer and winking at you as they leap out of a window; Waiting under a streetlight in a trench coat and trilby

Difficulty: 1. If you kiss each other, reduce the difficulty to 0 until the end of the situation.

Resistance: 9, but see special below, and they have a knack for near misses and scrapes

Equipment: A better version of whatever the Inksmith is carrying (same stats but increase stress dice by 1 step)

Special: If the Attractive Foil attacks a target other than the Inksmith or is attacked by a target other than the Inksmith, half the stress inflicted. In addition, use the fallout below liberally:

NEXT TIME. [Moderate, Blood] The Attractive Foil ties you to a chair, locks you inside a room or knocks you out with a punch. They get away, you're in more trouble than you'd like to be, but you sustain no major damage aside from maybe a roguish scar.

FALLOUT

INKSKIN. [Minor, Mind, Occult] Overloaded with potential stories, your fingertips leak spireblack ink at a rate of about a quarter-pint a day. You become very easy to keep track of unless you undertake a meticulous regime of gloves and sponges; you can remove this fallout by “getting the story out of you” and writing it down for someone else to read.

PROTAGONIST CURSE. [Moderate, Mind, Occult] Splicing narrative power into your mortal body was bound to take its toll sooner or later; raw protagonism earths itself in you, and your life becomes unsustainably interesting. Old lovers return with grudges or professing their undying love; wise masters approach you and offer profound wisdom in exchange for completing dangerous quests; goons shadow you and beat the tar out of you for asking the wrong questions, leading you ever deeper into a mystery you were not previously aware of. Every time you try to relax and kick back, something exciting happens to you that lets you demonstrate character or push the plot forward. It's exhausting.

REDACTED. [Severe, Mind, Occult] Accidentally, or perhaps as a last-ditch misguided noble gesture, you write yourself out of the plot. You no longer exist, you never existed, and any character that mentions you by name marks D3 stress to **Mind** from the dissonance.

KNIGHT

Several hundred years ago, the Knights of the North Docks were ordained to protect travellers and traders that moved through Spire's river port in an effort to encourage trade, promote the safety and stability of the city, and to give them something to do after the Queen of Destera ran out of holy wars. Since then, the aelfir rolled in, and they've gone from being a handful of devoted orders to at least a hundred scrappy gangs operating out of pubs, breaking legs and collecting protection money from those around them. The aelfir are largely content to let them run the place; as inefficient as they are, their leader (the Duke) knows to toe the line and they maintain a decent flow of business into the city.

In any given Ministry cell, the Knight is the wild card – their abilities push them towards unprompted action, which can be a bit difficult for some groups to plan around. Thankfully, they're one of the easiest classes to keep happy and engaged.

USEFUL ELEMENTS

Someone who definitely reckons they can hold their own in a fight

Dares, challenges, duels

Pubs, bars, inns, taverns

Some sort of organised fighting contest (a joust, a melee, a pit fight, etc), especially if you can bet on it

Parties, festivals, parades – any excuse to use their “Engage in reckless excess” refresh

A big fight they can wade into and get the most out of their armour

A love interest who's missing a couple of teeth and has a solid right hook or a love interest who's looking for a bit of rough or both, why not

Rivers, canals, waterways, boats

City Guard out of their jurisdiction, or who want the Knight to get out of theirs

ABILITIES

HOLY WARRIOR. [Low advance] *Some Knights still go in for the “ordained by the Goddess” shtick, even if the other ones think they're a bit naff for doing it. Gain the **Religion** domain and lose access to the **Crime** domain. Your **PUBCRAWLER** core ability is replaced with the **PILGRIM** ability, which functions exactly the same except it lets you find familiar churches, not bars. You are sworn to a temple of Our Glorious Lady in the North Docks rather than a pub, and while your Quests still consist of some pretty grimy business, you dress it up as “collecting tithes”.*

LEGBREAKER. [Low advance] *Nice business you got here; would be a real shame if someone broke all the windows, wouldn't it? +1 Silver. When you rough someone (or someplace) up for protection money or just plain rob them, mark D3 stress to **Reputation** and downgrade a **Silver** fallout you or another character are currently suffering from. Downgrading minor fallout removes it.*

JUST GETTING STARTED. [Low advance] *No-one makes you bleed your own blood. Gain the **Resist** skill. When you are suffering from ongoing **Blood** fallout, increase all the stress you inflict by 1 step.*

BETTER SORRY THAN SAFE. [Low advance] *You'd rather die for something you believe in than live for something you don't. Any armour you wear gains the Assault tag (mark 1 stress to Armour to roll with mastery in close combat).*

EQUIPMENT

PANZERHAMMER. Most Knights of the North Docks look down on weapons like the panzerhammer; the reinforced iron spike coupled with a weighted head makes an absolute mockery of armour, and if you can counteract expensive quarter-plate and helmet with what amounts to a masonry tool, what's the point of spending all the money on it in the first place? Far better to carry a sword, have fights go on much longer, and weather dents and bruises rather than two inches of metal in your brainpan. Still; for when the lads are out for blood and don't want to mess around, most pubs have one of these shameful weapons hidden in back. (D6, Brutal, Piercing, Tiring)

SQUIRE'S TOOL. Euphemistic name for a specialised drowning weapon commonly carried by squires. This six-foot boathook has been modified with a brutal spike on the end, and if a Knight manages to shove an opponent into the river (or indeed any source of water) the squire leaps into action and pins the bastard under the surface so they drown in their armour. It's not a terribly honourable way to kill someone, but that's why you have the squire do it. (D3, Piercing. Roll with mastery when pinning someone in place.)

PUNT GUN. An eight-foot shotgun with a two-inch bore used to eradicate waterfowl. Punt guns are traditionally mounted on boats and gently paddled into position to blow away a whole flock of ducks in one shot; they are so hard to carry, load and aim that their use as combat weapons is almost zero. Still, this is Spire, and if it makes a loud noise someone's going to try and kill you with it eventually. (D6, One-Shot, Point-Blank, Spread D12. Attempting to fire a punt gun without attaching it to a mount first inflicts D6 **Blood** stress on the user from recoil.)

SPECIAL EQUIPMENT

GENUINE MAGIC SWORD. [Medium advance] There are very few actual "magic" swords in Spire; arcane power has a cost, and you can't just stick a load of old wizardry in a sword and expect it to work without any problems. But Knights love a story, and may spread rumours of their own swords being magic to make themselves sound more impressive. The bearer of this (D6) sword gains +2 **Reputation** and access to the **Occult** domain, and rolls with mastery in combat against anyone who believes that the sword is magic – that sort of thing can really put an opponent on the back foot. Informing people how mighty and arcane your sword is becomes a necessary and often quite arduous part of combat, but you can probably get your squire to do it ahead of time.

FALLOUT

HUNGOVER. [Minor, Blood, Reputation] Your head feels like some darkling creature of the night used it as a toilet then a mausoleum; your guts roil and churn like thunderous storm clouds; your breath smells like a distillery that needs a shower. Increase the difficulty of all actions involving bright light, loud noises or people being able to smell you by 1 until you get a decent night's sleep and several pints of water.

PENITENT. [Moderate, Reputation] You've brought shame to your Knightly order. Until you appear before a superior Knight (probably whoever runs the pub you're sworn to), learn the requirements for your penance and perform them, you can't use Domains to add dice to your rolls. Your penitent quest will generally focus around doing dirty work for your landlord that they don't want to do themselves.

ALCOHOL

Knights drink. You can play a teetotal Knight, if you'd like, but the use of alcohol is woven into the character class in ways that make it hard to avoid. Given the prevalence of alcoholism pretty much everywhere you can buy alcohol (and also some of the places you can't), before you embark on a story prominently featuring a drunkard it's worth checking in with the other players to make sure drinking binges, hangovers and terrible decisions made whilst drunk are the sort of things they're comfortable with.



LAJHAN

Around half the classes in *Spire* are clerics, whether they're clerics of death or money or the other kind of death or spiders or their own knife or the working class – the Lajhan is just the most honest about it, and happens to worship the moon. These priests are fundamental champions of traditional Desteran drow culture, though continual efforts to underfund the Church of Our Glorious Lady by the aelfir are weakening their influence on the average drow year on year.

They have two main functions in a party: interpersonal pleasantries and weird moon magic. Both are generally useful, and compared to some of the flashier characters (Idols and Firebrands, for example) can provide a much-needed counterpoint to help level out the pacing of your sessions.

ABILITIES

DIRE CIRCUMSTANCES. [Divine, Low advance] *You ask the Goddess to share her limitless bounty with you.* Once per session you may remove Minor or Moderate **Silver** fallout from yourself or an ally as you find a miraculous store of cash (or some other resource) with which you are able to pay off the debt.

BELOVED. [Divine, Low advance] *The faithful of Spire adore you, and the city itself rises up to keep you safe.* When you mark stress as a result of a roll using the **Low Society** domain, halve the stress suffered.

EYE OF THE STORM. [Divine, Low advance] *The more chaos swirls around you, the calmer you become.* +1 **Mind**. While you're in a stampeding crowd, a riot or a particularly raucous dance hall, you'll never incur incidental stress (elbows, riot guns, someone stamping on you as they try to escape) unless someone specifically wants to hurt you. In addition, while you stand calm in the midst of a frantic and furious group of people, you roll with mastery.

EQUIPMENT

FULL-MOON SHIELD. Many Lajhan eschew combat entirely, but some believe that it is their responsibility to guard Limyé's chosen. The design of the full-moon shield dates back hundreds of years to the Home Nations where specially-selected units of clerics to the three drow moon goddesses would stride into battle against the enemies of Ys; those devoted to the full moon wore heavy armour and carried broad shields to protect the archers of the red moon and the skirmishers of the new moon. Carrying a replica of one of those shields is the mark of a brave Lajhan indeed. (Armour 3. Characters within arm's reach can use your Armour slots to soak incoming **Blood** stress.)

SPECIAL EQUIPMENT

MIRACLE DOLL. [Low advance] Some of the faithful carry little dolls or statuettes representing the Goddess; on occasion these idols can miraculously take on burdens visited upon the bearer. You can "trap" a Minor fallout in this doll, removing it from yourself or an ally within arm's reach. While the doll is holding a fallout, it changes form to reflect it. You (or another willing party) can release the fallout upon themselves at a later date, but until you do, you cannot store another fallout in it.

IDOL DOULÈ. [Medium advance] A triptych painting of the Goddess adorned with silver and ebonwood that depicts her shouldering the innumerable burdens of the drow of Spire; worn on the shoulders like a back-banner, it can attract misfortune and harm. The Idol Doulè functions as a **MIRACLE DOLL** but it can absorb three Minor fallouts or a single Moderate fallout (but not a combination of either).

ADVERSARIES

PRIEST-CATCHERS

One of the biggest risks of being a priest of Our Glorious Lady isn't the fact that your church is massively underfunded, but rather that the second you're ordained you instantly become much more valuable as a sacrifice in no end of grimy black-magic rituals. It's rare to find the sort of unscrupulous cove who'd try to kidnap and/or kill a drow of the cloth, but anything is possible in Spire. Priest-Catchers are specialist mercenaries who work for Ivory Row occultists, and are paid top sten for living lunar clerics.

PRIEST-CATCHERS

Names: Mr Pitch, Mr Weyland, Mr Victory

Description: Adjusting the cufflinks on his suit and nodding politely to the congregation as he waits outside a temple; carrying a writhing sack into an alleyway; locking the door to the church to stop you from escaping

Difficulty: 0 during the day, 1 at night

Resistance: 7

Equipment: Slim metal clubs wrapped in leather (D3, Brutal, Concealable),

Special: Priest-Catchers fight to capture rather than kill or drive away. Use the following fallout to represent this in combat:

BAGGED. [Moderate, Blood] You are bundled into a sack and dragged off to be delivered to a mad up-Spire occultist; you'll need your allies to rescue you, or work something else out on your own if they're otherwise occupied.

FALLOUT

THE WEIGHT OF YOUR SINS. [Minor, Mind, Reputation] Weighed down by dolorous thoughts of your failings, you feel that you have disappointed the Goddess and must make amends. Until you do something selfless for someone needy, increase the difficulty of all social actions by 1.

WASTING AWAY. [Minor, Silver] You go without so that others might share in the Goddess' bounty; you are in dire need of a sit down, a sandwich, and maybe twenty minutes' sleep. Your hands shake and you feel feeble, increasing the difficulty of all physical actions by 1 until you get some time to rest and recuperate.

HOLY VISIONS. [Moderate, Mind] The Goddess "blesses" you with a bombardment of visions and hallucinations, making it hard to concentrate or even understand what's going on at any given point in time. Once per session, another player can refresh D6 when they establish that something you believed is true is in fact a misunderstanding brought on by a hallucination – you mark D3 stress to **Mind** from the confusion.

USEFUL ELEMENTS

Tired, hungry, weary faithful

Priests of Our Glorious Lady with problems that a young go-getter with few scruples could definitely solve

Lots and lots of bonds

Moon Weirdness, which is different from occult weirdness or heart weirdness or death weirdness – lots of silver, glassy-eyed oracles, mystery cults and omens, stars and weather

A community to look after, or ignore and damn to ruin

Show-off Solar priests with more money, bigger congregations and more expensive holy symbols

Rite, ritual, faith and ceremony

MASKED

While not every aelfir in Spire enforces the wearing of masks at all times – in bed, whilst making love or bathing, immediately upon birth, etc – all members of aelfir high society understand that covering one's face in public is the done thing. This belief extends to their servants, and it's a poor Lord who's seen out and about with unmasked staff – a sign of rebelliousness, perhaps, or a lack of suitable funds.

Of all Ministry operatives, the Masked are closest to the high elves that the organisation is trying to overthrow – and therefore of great strategic value. While they may not be able to hold their own in a street-fight or possess the unshakeable faith of a moon-priest, their access and skills provide a route into the upper echelons of the city and their hatred for the aelfir is limitless.

ABILITIES

MASK MAGIC. [Low advance] *You begin to understand the true power of masks.* +1 **Mind**. Gain the **Occult** domain. When you spend an entire night wearing a mask and staring into a mirror with a single lit candle in front of it, instead of suffering from the effects of sleep deprivation, refresh D3.

BACKSTAB. [Low advance] They never saw it coming; you almost feel sorry for them. (Almost.) When you stab someone who trusts you (or thought you no threat) in the back with a blade, inflict (D6, Brutal) damage.

MASK OF PERFECT REPLICATION. [Occult, Medium advance] *Some of your techniques turn the stomachs of those possessed of a less fierce will.* To make this mask, cut off someone's face and attach it over the top of your own – mark D6 **Mind** stress if they're unconscious and D8 if they're awake. The magic you imbue it with allows you to perfectly pass as them, right down to their voice, height, mannerisms, and so on. The only way you'll be discovered is if you act out of character, and even then, people are likely to suspect that you're just behaving unusually rather than a stranger wearing their friend's cut-off face as a mask. The **MASK OF PERFECT REPLICATION** lasts for about a week – longer if you keep it cold – before it rots away into uselessness.

GLAMER MASK. [Occult, Medium advance] *A folding mask made of stiff paper that can be reformed into a hundred different patterns.* If you touch the Glamer Mask to another mask and spend a minute or so rearranging it, it resembles that mask perfectly. Anyone examining it by touching it will discover it is a fake almost instantly, but as far as vision goes, it's a perfect copy.

EQUIPMENT

POISON. Like daggers hidden behind the back and scathing comments on a target's cravate, poisons and potions are trademark weapons of the Masked. The poisons below are generally introduced into the target's bloodstream via non-violent means (via ingestion or dripping quietly into an orifice while the target sleeps, for example) via a **Sneak+Domain** roll. All of these poisons are illegal, to a greater or lesser extent, depending on their lethality.

Inexorable Hecaton. At the end of a week where they are dosed at least every other day, the target marks D3 stress from their internal organs slowly shutting down. Hecaton is hard to identify but takes a while to kill the target, meaning that the poisoner will need access to the target for a few weeks to ensure a clean kill.

Quicksilver Ague. A single dose of this potion makes the target despondent, furious, easily confused and prone to blinding headaches for about six hours. The lack of physical symptoms makes this a popular pre-duel poison to even the odds against a superior opponent, and over 30% of the midnight standoffs on Silver Quarter rooftops see one or both participants dosed with it. Targets under the effect of quicksilver ague reduce their difficulty to 0.

Love's Idolatry. A classic love potion, mixed with the blood of the secondary target and introduced to the primary target's bloodstream while they sleep. Upon waking, they will fall in love with the secondary target with a burning, alien intensity – if they don't know the secondary target, this is akin to madness, and even if they do know the secondary target it can feel very strange indeed. They will do whatever they can to be close to their beloved, up to and including risking their own life.

SPECIAL EQUIPMENT

MASK BOX. [Low advance] This sturdy wooden case contains a wide variety of masks suitable for any social occasion, including but not limited to: a mourning mask, a hunting mask, a mask for dancing whilst wearing, a mask for pointedly *not* dancing whilst wearing, a mask for special Solar Church festivals, a mask for normal Solar Church festivals, a mask for just going to church on an average day, an eyeless mask for listening to music in, and a mask for watching airlark or boat races. They're not fashionable but they are stylish, and with some tools and materials (and by marking D3 stress to **Silver**) a skilled Masked can modify an unsuitable mask into a suitable one. Whatever **High Society** situation they may find themselves in, they can be sure they'll have the correct formal mask for the occasion.

USEFUL ELEMENTS

Corridors, hidden passages, back ways in, servant's quarters, tradesmen's entrances

Conversations to overhear and potentially influence

Powerful aelfir with institutions to infiltrate and subvert to their own ends

Powerless aelfir to take out their frustrations on

Servants, assistants, staff, bodyguards, overworked and looked-down-upon half-siblings

Books of accounting, private diaries of the rich and famous, secret letters and impassioned communiqués

Opportunities to quietly mess with things behind the scenes

Rich types, preferably eminently murderable, who don't really consider the Masked to be a person and more a sort of tool

ADVERSARIES

YOUR LORD'S AWFUL NEPHEWS

The Lords of Amaranth, on average, don't like to inflict direct physical punishment on their staff – they'd rather have other members of staff carry it out, or instead rely on crushing financial and social punishments that are, in the long run, much more cruel. But younger members of their families might not share their reliance on unstated power, and prefer to beat up their servants by hand in order to feel good about themselves and reiterate the brutal power structure of Spire.

YOUR LORD'S AWFUL NEPHEWS

Names: Prince Dulcet Gather-the-Wandering, Iphras Joyful-The-Sunrise, The Little Baron

Description: Torturing some small animal they found in an alleyway; jeering at a passing servant; chucking coins out of a window and watching as they tumble hundreds of feet into crowds below and crack off some poor bastard's head

Difficulty: 0

Resistance: 4

Equipment: Impractical and over-designed weaponry (D3, Unreliable), the occasional hunting pistol (D6, One-Shot, Ranged)

FALLOUT

MISTAKEN IDENTITY. [Minor, Shadow] You have been mistaken for a servant by someone nearby and roped into performing an arduous or complicitly evil task – preparing a five-course meal, dressing a Lord in a particular way, disposing of a corpse, etc. While performing the task may allow you to influence proceedings or gain useful information, you're definitely not prepared to do it smoothly and will have to improvise a solution to maintain your cover.

UNMASKED. [Minor, Shadow, Reputation] For whatever reason, you are unmasked and your true identity is revealed – and what's worse, someone nearby recognises you.

MIDWIFE

Drow do not carry their young to term and instead lay fist-sized eggs in community hatcheries which are tended to by Midwives. Given their crucial position in dark elf society, Midwives are well-respected by the populace of Spire; their nightmare occult powers and shapeshifting combat abilities certainly help, too. They form the cornerstones of drow neighbourhoods up and down Spire, often acting as teachers and carers for their young charges with a collection of assistants.

Midwives would seemingly make perfect Ministry agents – they're trained in combat and the occult arts, they're fiercely devoted to the continued existence and liberty of the drow, and they're welcome almost everywhere – but they have their own agenda. The Ministry might make a business of backstabbing, intrigue and betrayal, but the Midwives were doing it long before the cult was a twinkle in the Hidden Mistress' eye, and will be doing it long after they fade into insignificance.

ABILITIES

CHOICE ASSIGNMENT. [Low advance]
Even rich drow want to have kids sometimes; you looked after their eggs in a well-appointed private hatchery. +1 **Reputation.** Gain the **High Society** domain and lose the **Low Society** domain. Gain an individual-level bond with a young noble-born drow who you brought into the world, or if they're still too young to be useful, their parents.

HANDS OF SILK. [Occult, Low advance]
Glands pucker red-raw at your wrists; you pluck thick strands of web from them. Gain the **Pursue** skill. You can declare that any non-ranged weapon you are carrying has the Stunning tag as you bind your foes with spider-silk. You can easily restrain an adversary whose resistance has been reduced to 0 with webs and transport them where you wish.

TRAPPED DOOR. [Occult, Low advance]
Roll **Fix+Occult** to cast this spell on a door within arm's reach. By anointing it with shadow glyphs written in Ishkran ink, you remove it from onlookers' perception and they no longer realise that it's a door – it's just part of the wall. (If this traps them in a room, they'll work it out eventually.) When you and your allies burst forth from behind the door, your first action (as long as it's to kill or disable someone on the other side) is rolled with mastery.

EQUIPMENT

PROSTHETIC LIMB ARRAY. Some midwives never quite get the knack of turning themselves partially into giant spiders, and it's not strictly required to take care of eggs, so it isn't that important in the long run. However, the public image of a proper midwife is a conservatively-dressed drow with additional limbs semi-concealed under a bustle, so some choose to wear prosthetic alternatives to make their lives easier. These prosthetics are also popular with people impersonating midwives (not technically a crime but don't let them catch you) and midwife-themed erotic dancers who titillate boisterous aelfir audiences in the Silver Quarter.

ARACHNID GLAIVE. Archaic polearms styled after ritual staves carried by Priestesses of Ishkrah; unpopular in modern Spire, as a licence is needed to carry them in public and their weight means they are of little use in one-on-one urban combat. Most designs have a black-wood staff as a base and an ornamental spider at the tip gripping the heavy, single-edged blade. (D6, Brutal, Tiring)

USEFUL ELEMENTS

Children, communities, families, long-term concerns

The opportunity to build something that will endure

Someone or something tied to an altar

A real bastard who deserves a good kicking from a giant spider-nurse

Medicine, doctors, surgeries, biology

Someone who's keen to uphold traditions, as this is the way it's always been done

Someone who's keen not to uphold traditions, as things need to change now

EBON SHORTBOW. Almost no-one uses bows in Spire; the amount of training and arm strength required to use them properly makes them unattractive compared to the point-and-shoot technology of crossbows or the flashy intimidation factor of guns. Midwives still insist on training their initiates in the use of bows for tradition's sake, and some of the best archers in the city are amongst their number. (D3, Brutal, Ranged)

SPECIAL EQUIPMENT

FRENZY INCENSE. [Medium advance] Carried in a locked brazier smouldering above the midwife's shoulders, this psycho-active incense was used in days past to spur the sacred protectors of unborn drow into action and sell their lives dearly. Those who breathe deeply find their eyes shifting to pitch-black orbs and feel the bile rise in their throat, disgusted as they are by the fact their enemies still draw breath. Until the end of the current situation, all those nearby to the bearer ignore negative effects from Minor or Moderate **Blood** fallout, but increase the difficulty of non-violent actions by 1.

GENDER AND CHILDREN

Just like Blood-Witches, Midwives tend to be represented in the fiction of *Spire* as majority female. There's no rule – genetic or societal, in-fiction or outside of it – that says Midwives have to be female. It's a throwback to the matriarchal Home Nations where, beset by natural disasters and grim civil wars, protecting unborn drow was seen as an honoured position and entrusted to women. In modern Spire, there are no limits with respect to gender on who can become a midwife, but they still must possess the (rare) innate capacity to work arachnid magic.

One of the possible story beats available to you with a midwife in the party is drow eggs being damaged, destroyed or stolen. This is pretty heavy stuff, and your players might not want to play a fun-time game which involves the drow equivalent of miscarriage, or that risks harming children. Be sure to check in with your table before you put drow eggs under threat.

ADVERSARIES

THE BLACK SHEEP

Midwives can take responsibility for those they raise throughout their lives; there are no end of them that hold significant sway because of this, and some of them view their charges' achievements as partially their own. But when a child a midwife has raised turns out bad, the duty of bringing them to heel sometimes falls to their childhood protector – or their underlings, if they're powerful enough. While a good talking to is often enough to sort things out, Midwives brought them into this world – and by the blood of Ishkrah, they'll be the ones to take them out of it.

THE BLACK SHEEP

Names: Yence, Ophid, Alabaster
Description: Running a semi-successful criminal enterprise; whispering secrets of rebellion to an aelfir Lord; dragging people into a basement and sacrificing them to the wrong kind of dark goddess
Difficulty: 0, but 1 to the Midwife that raised them – there's history there
Resistance: 7
Equipment: If they're a professional, a Winters single-action (D6, Ranged); if they're just a wrong 'un, a gruesome knife (D3, Brutal)

FALLOUT

SPIDERS. [Minor, Blood, Mind, Occult] Your self-control slips for a crucial second and you let loose a swarm of inquisitive spiders – they might crawl out of your clothing, they may start emerging from cracks in the walls, or you might retch up a wet gutful of them. (Work what's tonally appropriate with your GM.) This is understandably upsetting to everyone nearby, unless they're other midwives in which case they'll probably look down on you for making a mess.



MORTICIAN EXECUTIONER

The Mortician Executioners are a mix of bureaucrat, priest and assassin; it is by their hand alone that the state can legally execute people by first declaring them dead and then correcting the oversight with a blade. In practice the state kills dozens if not hundreds of people each day through brutality, oppression, malnourishment and war, but for important people, it does the decent thing and makes their death officially sanctioned.

State executioners – especially those with the skill to perform executions on unrestrained, and often resistant subjects – are prized recruits for the Ministry. Quite aside from their combat prowess, most people would not interrupt an Executioner about their business, and if they can evade the attentions of their superiors they can be a valuable asset.

USEFUL ELEMENTS

Graves, cemeteries, funerals, ghosts, the grieving and the dead

Bureaucracy, paperwork, overstuffed desks and administrative oversights

Rules, order and restrictions

The administrative infrastructure of the city – passes, permits, licenses and fines

Back doors, breakable windows, unorthodox lines of sight and avenues of approach

A well-defended target with some tactical weaknesses to exploit

Other Morticians, especially ones with perfectly reasonable questions about the Executioner's behaviour

ABILITIES

SANCTIFIED KILLER. [Divine, Low advance] *You have spent countless hours in communion with Mehror, contemplating your sacred task.* Gain the **Religion** domain. When you attack a target who has been declared legally dead, your attacks gain the Brutal tag.

SCYTHE THROUGH RED TAPE. [Low advance] *Many Executioners are afforded immense powers of access with their rank, and if that's not enough, they can resort to good old-fashioned obstinance.* Gain the **Order** domain. When you bluster your way through opposition by waving documentation or citing ordinances, roll with mastery.

SURGICAL IMPROVEMENTS. [Occult, Low advance] *Your body is a veritable reliquary of mementos mori and carrion-implants.* Requires **CUTTING EDGE** (Sin, p. 15). Gain one of the following implants:

Subdermal cartilage. *Arranged in stylish polygonal patterns.* +1 **Blood**. Your face is an avant-garde, hard-edged mask of flesh.

Hollow bones. *Modelled after exotic birds from distant lands; feathers are optional.* Roll with mastery on **Pursue** checks.

Mourning Veil. *Experimental ethereal skin-graft from a banshee; covered with a veil, in polite company.* You no longer need to sleep, but must spend an hour each night in moonlight or suffer wretched migraines.

INHABIT DEAD. [Occult, Medium advance] *The ability to animate and control the bodies of the dead is one of the Mortician's closely-guarded secrets.* Roll **Compel+Occult** to cast this spell on a corpse within arm's reach. (If the corpse is more than a week old, increase the difficulty by 1.) On a success, you gain control of the corpse until the end of the current situation. For the duration of the spell, your own body collapses into a heap and you experience the world through the corpse's sense organs; your control is inexact and you increase the difficulty of all tasks by 1. If you would mark blood stress when you're controlling the corpse, mark it to the corpse's resistance of 4; if it hits 0, you are ejected and your consciousness returns to your own body.

EQUIPMENT

MORTICIAN GREATCLOAK. Some Executioners try their best to go undetected; others wear Mortician Greatcloaks. These oversized floor-length cloaks (complete with a generous cowl) are designed to flare dramatically at a moment's notice, framing the wearer perfectly and putting the fear of Mehror into their opponents. The cloak provides Armour 3 in close combat only (it can't turn aside a bullet, but it can confuse and wrong-foot opponents) but increases the difficulty of all attempts to blend in or go unnoticed by 1.

SPECIAL EQUIPMENT

PHANTOM VIAL. [Occult, Medium advance] The Morticians can bind ghosts into objects if said ghosts might prove useful informants when interrogated through divination; a phantom vial is a cut-down version of the more permanent tetherboxes used to restrain important spectres. Inside a padded box, this fragile glass vessel houses a frantic and deranged ghost – not the persistent type that will lead to ongoing hauntings, but something more immediate and dramatic. Once per session, smash one of your vials open and release the ghost within, causing chaos in the immediate vicinity as temperatures rapidly drop, psychokinetic energy throws objects around at random, lights dim and flicker and weak-willed individuals pass out. (In mechanical terms, everyone in the area marks D3 stress, but it's more of a tool than a weapon.) Assume that you have a steady supply of captured ghosts from your contacts, or you know how to make the vials yourself.

A HOLY WAR

The Morticians and the Carrion-Priests are caught up in a vicious and brutal war. We recommend that, if you have a Mortician Executioner and a Carrion-Priest in the same cell, get the players to figure out how the two have managed to set aside their differences and work together – maybe they share a Bond, even. Whatever the situation is in New Heaven, and whatever their respective masters might want, they get along and support one another. While this might seem against the themes of espionage and indeed religious warfare established so far in *Spire*, we've found that the intrigue and tension isn't worth the conflict generated by having directly opposed characters in the same party.

ADVERSARIES

CHARNELITE BLOOD-HUNTER

The Charnelites and the Morticians, death-cults both, have long been warring atop the city for territory. While most of the fighting is done by street gangs of delinquent priests and hangers-on on the streets of New Heaven, serious murder business is handled by Executioners – or, in the case of the Charnelites, sanctified killers known as Blood-Hunters. These prowling assassins are whispered of in fearful tones amongst the Morticians – tales of them coalescing from shadows, transforming into great beasts and eating their foes to gain their power are commonplace, and not without good reason.

CHARNELITE BLOOD-HUNTER

Names: Brother Tendon, Sister Ligation, Father Avulsion

Description: Appearing for a fraction of a second in your peripheral vision as you look in the mirror at night; Cackling madly atop a Tower of Silence as you limp away bleeding; Hiding for days, motionless, in a pile of corpses

Difficulty: 1, but 2 if they manage to taste your blood

Resistance: 7, but when they hit 0 resistance, they transform into a hyena-beast with resistance 10 and add the Brutal tag to their attacks

Equipment: Cleavers, prey-hooks, flensing blades, sprouting bone-claws (D6)

Special: The first character to mark stress against the Blood-Hunter takes D6 stress to **Blood** as they are attacked by their target's pet hyena.

FALLOUT

UNEXPLAINED PHENOMENA. [Minor, Blood, Mind] Spilled blood and loose necromancy mixes to create chaos. Treat as **PHANTOM VIAL** (above) focused on you.

THE DEAD RISE. [Moderate, Mind] Animated by misfiring death magic, a nearby corpse springs to frantic life and attempts to do the last thing it desired in life, or if that's unclear or impossible, it tries to murder you. It functions as a Resistance 4 enemy that inflicts D3, Brutal damage.

SHADOW AGENT

Shadow Agents are the ultimate instruments of the Goddess – broken apart and reformed in strange ways during their Ministry initiation rites, they have become able to shift their identity to such an extent that many of them have forgotten who they originally were.

While their masters appreciate their devotion to the cause, this can cause friction with their fellow Ministers – Shadow Agents are widely regarded to be a bunch of inscrutable zealots, and their constant changing of covers can make them hard to read, or trust. The truly strange ones don't survive for long (it's hard to survive when none of your cell-mates think you're on the level) so it's up to them to cultivate a convivial, or at least polite, personality that ensures they can rely on their allies.

ABILITIES

QUICK CHANGE. [Divine, Low advance]

Your false forms flicker over your face like shadows; you're not sure who you are anymore, but you're sure of what you have to do. +1 **Mind**. When you use **THE RITE OF MANY FACES** core ability, mark D3 stress to **Mind** or **Shadow** to change instantly into the cover identity and bypass the five minutes of preparation time.

BEYOND SUSPICION. [Low advance] *You have a knack for appearing as though you're no threat, which is unfortunate for your enemies.* Any weapon you carry gains the Surprising tag. If it already possesses the Surprising tag, it gets the Brutal tag instead.

PERFECT PLANNING. [Low advance] *You reach under your chair and pull out a gun no-one knew was there.* Mark D3 stress to **Silver** or **Shadow** to pull a gun (D6, One-Shot, Ranged) from somewhere within arm's reach: under a counter, at the back of a cupboard, stuffed between the cushions on a sofa, inside a loaf of bread, etc. Whether you put it there, a fellow Shadow Agent planted it, or it's a spontaneous miracle from the Goddess is up to you.

LAST RESORT. [Medium advance] *They think they've got you on the back foot, but they've walked right into your trap.* Once per session, if there's any way you could have feasibly prepared to do so ahead of time, you detonate the explosive you placed earlier. Everyone present (aside from you and allies in arm's reach of you) marks D6 stress to **Blood**. Detonating explosives in tight quarters may have other side-effects.

TENEBOUS ESCAPE. [Divine, Medium advance] *You dissolve your mortal form and become something more pure and graceful, flowing through the city like a rumour.* Mark D6 stress to **Mind** to cast this spell. You immediately dissolve into a pool of shadow and drip down through Spire, reforming somewhere safe the next time the sun sets – if you have a safehouse it's there, otherwise the GM picks where the Goddess deposits you. Your clothes and equipment aren't transformed with you and stay in place; you are reborn naked and vulnerable.

LEVEL THE PLAYING FIELD. [Medium advance] *The Goddess provides.* Gain the **Fight** skill. Mark D3 stress to **Mind** to summon a shadowy, half-real version of a weapon that an enemy is using against you; it has exactly the same stats as their weapon, but dissolves into nothingness at the end of the current situation.

SPECIAL EQUIPMENT

SHARP-MIND SLIVER. [Medium advance]

Slivers are made in the Home Nations using jealously-guarded techniques known only to a few surgeon-artisans; these shards of metal and crystal are implanted in the user and twist their body into new and terrifying patterns with barely-understood magic. Made of a series of resonant crystals studded along the left arm and a node at the base of the user's brain, the sharp-mind sliver is automatically activated when the user undergoes mental stress – it redirects and amplifies the stress into a psychic blast issued from the palm. The first time in a session you take **Mind** fallout, clear stress as normal but don't mark the fallout. All adversaries nearby mark stress as the madness is ejected from your outstretched hand; D3 for Minor fallout, D6 for Moderate and D8 for Severe.

LEGEND-BEARER SLIVERS. [Medium advance]

You have a series of slivers containing knowledge harvested from desperate scholars, retired Shadow Agents and expendable Ministers; you can insert them into the itching, red-raw hole at the base of your neck to use the knowledge as if it was your own. Once per session, pick a skill or domain; you gain access to it until the end of the session. You can change out the sliver during the session to acquire a different skill, but mark D3 stress to **Mind** if you do so.

ADVERSARIES

MINISTRY GODHANDS

Loyalty is paramount to the Ministry of Our Hidden Mistress. Punishment for betrayal is generally handled by the cell's Magister (or another cell under their control) but for deep-rooted infractions, Internal Security operatives known informally as Godhands are sent in to deal with the troublemakers. While these inhuman agents are privately reviled by almost everyone in the organisation, they are publicly afforded a great deal of respect due to their sacred position.

MINISTRY GODHANDS

Names: Seventy-Seven, Nine, Thirty-three

Description: Anointing their ivory mask with blessed spireblack; Jumping down from the rafters, their cloak billowing behind them; Walking towards you on a broken ankle, apparently feeling no pain

Difficulty: 1 if you find them, 2 if they find you

Resistance: 8

Equipment: Leather armour (Armour 2), Anointed moonsilver blades (D6, Brutal, Piercing – without specialist training they're just D6), Ivory masks (allow user to see in pitch darkness)

Special: If it's tactically useful, Godhands magically extinguish every light in their area of operations before engaging in combat – which goes some way to explain their high difficulty.

FALLOUT

SHADOWS FALL. [Minor, Mind] Magical feedback from your gifts extinguishes every single light in the surrounding area, plunging you and everyone else there into darkness until the end of the current situation.

COLLATERAL. [Minor, Shadow] Someone saw you, and they'll sell you out to the City Guard if you let them. Make sure they don't talk – kill them, buy their loyalty or otherwise ensure their silence.

THE GREATER GOOD. [Moderate, Shadow] As **COLLATERAL**, but it's someone you know – a Bond, or someone otherwise important.

EXTRACTION ORDERS. [Moderate, Mind, Shadow, Reputation] You receive new orders from the Ministry – someone in your current area is an agency plant and needs extraction immediately. (Or: you had orders all along but kept them quiet up until now.) If you don't, you'll incur the wrath of your masters.

AN OLD FRIEND. [Moderate, Mind, Shadow, Reputation] Someone from your old life – before you underwent your identity fracturing at the hands of the Goddess – arrives on the scene, and wants to help you out. You remember bits and pieces of who they were and what they meant to you, but nothing elaborate. Upgrades to **AN OLD "FRIEND"**.

AN OLD "FRIEND". [Severe, Mind] Requires **AN OLD FRIEND**. Your old ally is revealed to be a Ministry plant, the memories manufactured and implanted, and you're being manipulated as part of some grander scheme; you can't trust anything anymore, not least of all yourself. Your mind and reality starts to come apart at the seams, and Ministry Silence cadres or Godhand enforcer squads are being dispatched to bring you quietly into line.

USEFUL ELEMENTS

Plentiful Bonds that they can harvest to turn into Covers

Ministry subterfuge, spy games or espionage

Ministry cultishness, secret rituals and blood sacrifices

Idealistic NPCs who believe they're making a difference when, in fact, they're just a tool in the Ministry's schemes

People who recognise them from their old life that they maybe don't remember

VERMISSIAN SAGE

The Vermissian is one of Spire's greatest shames – a grand attempt to build a functioning, state-of-the-art mass transit network. Thanks to budget cuts, dangerous levels of miscommunication between engineers and construction teams, and the way that the network pierced a festering rip between realities in order to harvest cheap fuel, the project was a spectacular failure. Vermissian Sages navigate this strange space, siphoning power from alternate timelines and attempting to chronicle the ongoing history of the drow despite constant efforts by the aelfir to grind it into nothingness.

While most Sages are happy to work in the background and quietly protect their heritage, there are certainly occasional rogue elements who are more proactive in their approach to saving the drow. The Ministry recruits extensively from the Vermissian Collective, hoping to gain an occult edge over their competition and perhaps divine some useful information from adjacent timelines where Spire never fell to the high elves.

ABILITIES

CULTIST OF THE CELESTIAL WYRM.

[Low advance] *You are part of the splinter sect of sages that worship the Vermissian as the manifestation of a god. Gain the **Religion** domain. When you enter the Vermissian, you are blessed by its magnificence, and refresh D3.*

CONDUCTOR. [Occult, Medium advance]

*The Vermissian echoes through your bones; sometimes you recite station names in your sleep, or scratch subway maps into your arms without thinking. When you are in an area with the **Technology** domain, reduce all stress marked by 2 (to a minimum of 0).*

GHOST TRAIN. [Occult, Medium advance]

*The trains that were to navigate the Vermissian are cursed to exist in multiple parasitic dimensions forever, flickering between impossible timetables; you hitch a ride on one of them. Roll **Investigate+Occult** to cast this spell when you are within (or very near to) the Vermissian Network. On a success, you are transported through the Network to a station of your choice – it takes about half an hour in real time, although to you it feels both instantaneous and interminably long. You can bring others with you, but increase the difficulty of the action by 1 if you do. (If you don't have a map of Spire or the Vermissian to hand, you can specify your destination district and the GM can work it out.)*

EQUIPMENT

VERMISSIAN CARBINE. In the early days, the Vermissian was made up of multiple different train companies competing for business – and on the borders between their territories, opportunistic train bandits would ride jury-rigged wagons down maintenance lines and rob good, law-abiding passengers of their belongings before speeding away on a slip road. To counteract this, guards armed with short-barrelled, lever-action rifles were positioned in every other carriage; it didn't work, but some of the filigreed carbines survive to this day and are treasured by Vermissian Sages for their nostalgic value. (D3, Point-Blank, Ranged, Unreliable.)

SPECIAL EQUIPMENT

METAPHYSICAL CROWBAR. [Low advance] A crowbar made from melted-down Vermissian tracks that allows the user to more easily pry open gates to alternate dimensions. The crowbar allows you to use your **BACK DOOR** core ability more than once per session, but you mark D6 stress to an appropriate resistance each time you do. It works on other dimensions too, allowing you to roll with mastery when you crowbar open a door to the Moon Garden or the Vyskant bloodsong empire, for example.

CHRONOMETRIC ACTUATOR. [Occult, High advance] This strange-looking device resembles a steel flask with a handle and trigger welded onto the side; it is suspiciously heavy and users have said that it “lags” behind the rest of the world on occasion, freezing in place or rapidly changing position in stressful situations. It functions as an energy weapon (D8, One-Shot, Ranged) that, if it kills the target, transports them backwards through time and space by about half an hour. The target doesn't remember anything that happened between their re-entry point and their death, which may cause some confusion.

Using the Chronometric Actuator on yourself is a terrible plan; if it works, you won't remember that you used it and may end up repeating the same mistakes. (Sustaining Moderate fallout from the device is enough to “kill” you and send you backwards in time; sustaining Severe fallout indicates you have become trapped in an untenable time loop.

ADVERSARIES

YOURSELVES, BUT FROM AN ALTERNATE DIMENSION

There are many reasons not to delve into the Vermissian – electrocution, ghost infestation, bone relocation, etc – but assassination by yourself is one that few people consider until it’s too late. All too often Vermissian Sages (and their accomplices) are hunted down and killed by versions of themselves from alternate dimensions who got pissed off after one too many freakish disruptions in the space/time continuum. After all, when the Sage plucks resources from a dimensional rift or reorganises reality so things go their way, someone’s on the other end of that. Turns out it was this lot, and they’ve had enough.

YOURSELVES, BUT FROM AN ALTERNATE DIMENSION

- Names:** Your own names, but maybe with one letter changed or different surnames
- Description:** Like you, but with weird circuitry under their skin; like you, but with an iridescent scarab beetle the size of your fist attached to the base of their neck; like you, but in black and white
- Difficulty:** 1; this isn’t the first dimension they’ve travelled to
- Resistance:** 10
- Equipment:** Compact, anachronistic energy guns (D6, Brutal, Dangerous, Ranged)
- Special:** If the situation looks truly dire, they will activate their reality-hook failsafes and yank themselves (and everything in a 5ft sphere around them) back to their own dimension and return to try again later on. Or earlier on, if they can pull it off

FALLOUT

NO EXIT. [Minor, Mind] Try as you might, every door you touch opens into the Vermissian, breaking the rules of time and space and giving everyone nearby a nosebleed. Even if you don’t open a door, passageways you travel down slowly shift into entrances to the Vermissian. It’ll wear off after an hour or so. (You hope.)

DOUBLE. [Severe, Mind, Shadow] An identical version of you (played by the GM) appears, and: they are absolutely identical, right down to the smallest detail, right down to the way that they know that they’re the real one. If for whatever reason either you or the double dies, roll a D10; on a 6 or more it was the real one, otherwise it was the Vermissian-made clone. The clone is actively malevolent and will hunt down and kill the party for daring to create it.

THE LAST TRAIN. [Severe, Mind] After casting too many reckless spells and playing fast and loose with the rules of reality, you draw the attention of The Last Train (*Spire*, p. 131), the only functional locomotive left on the Vermissian network. It immediately crashes through the scene, killing you, and causing horrendous destruction before disappearing back into a nearby tunnel (or making a new one).

USEFUL ELEMENTS

- Train stations, metro tunnels, junkyards
- Maintenance hatches, access tunnels, under-floor passageways and crawlspaces
- Machinery to tinker with and obsess over
- Stuffy old academics with an axe to grind
- Forensic accounting, cross-referencing information, research and raw data
- Alternate timelines and extra-dimensional weirdness
- Cults of people who worship trains
- Political campaigns of lies, mistruths and illusion



ESSAYS AND ADVICE

JUST THE BASICS

Communicating the setting of Spire to the players can be a daunting task. To make it easier, here's a single source of information that you can give or read aloud to new players that should bring them up to speed.

Spire is a very tall and very old city located towards the centre of the land of Desteria. Two hundred years ago the aelfir, or high elves, invaded from the north and (with the help of gun-toting human mercenaries) took Spire from the native drow, or dark elves.

The aelfir now rule Spire from gilded ice-palaces within the upper areas of the city. They live lives of perverse luxury and senseless excess compared to the countless drow who work in their factories, houses and farms. Each drow is required to serve a Durance when they come of age – four years of unpaid labour in the service of an aelfir lord. Working conditions are poor, and injuries and deaths are common.

Traditional Desteran culture is under attack from the aelfir. Worship of two of the three main goddesses of old Spire has been forbidden, and as such, cults devoted to them have been destroyed or radicalised and driven underground.

The player characters are members of one such cult – The Ministry of Our Hidden Mistress – and call themselves Ministers, paramilitary zealots living secret lives in service to their dark goddess of grace, subterfuge and misdirection. They have sworn to do anything necessary to remove the aelfir from power and return Spire to the drow.



PREPARING FOR A GAME OF SPIRE

Making things up on the spot is hard. Running an entire world in your head and coming up with everything on the spur of the moment – even if it's just the bit of the world and the things the player characters are experiencing at that moment – is stressful, exhausting, and unlikely to result in a satisfying experience unless you're really good at it.

But sticking to a set of preprepared events so strictly that the players don't really have any say over the events of the story can be difficult, too. Players feel constrained and useless; you get frustrated when the action goes in unexpected directions, because you don't know what's there.

Whether your preparation (or "prep," as we're going to call it from now on) for a session is reams and reams of notes or six words written on the back of your hand, having something in mind before things kick off can help make running the game much easier and more fun.

You need to find a balance that works for you. There isn't a right or wrong way to prepare for a game, and you'll work out what you enjoy the more you play. All we can hope to do is help you find that balance and offer advice with respect to the peculiarities of Spire in particular.

In order to do that, we're going to go through different levels of prep in order, starting with absolutely zero prep. You can mix and match these, drawing different parts from each, to find what you're looking for. All of these assume that you're playing an ongoing campaign of at least five sessions in length; one-shots are detailed separately, and benefit from a different method of planning.

AN IMPORTANT CONCEPT: SPIRE IS CHANGING

The world of your game is constantly in flux and only exists when you speak it aloud at the table, and the same goes for your story. Whenever you prep, you shouldn't be building an adventure for the players to find – but rather you should be readying yourself to find adventure in whatever the players do. The "story" isn't a preordained narrative, but a loose sack of ideas and prompts that you can stitch together into something that sort of makes sense.

Spire is a dangerous city and there's no end of things that can go wrong at any given time. The Ministry's enemies (and potential allies) are everywhere. There's no right or wrong route through the story, and it's not possible to go "off the rails" or "get caught up on side missions" – the story is hunting for them at every turn. The story is going to find them, and you are there to help it.

Your prep isn't a series of set events in order that the players can be guided through. Your prep is ammunition; your prep is your crack team of agents; your prep is your equipment; and you should be ready to use any of it whenever you like.

ABSOLUTELY ZERO PREP

Ask the players to recap the events of the last session to remind yourself what you're doing and to take up a few minutes of time. Change who delivers the recap each session to ensure you get a different series of viewpoints.

(If this is your first session, ask the players to describe what trouble their characters have got themselves into recently.)

Ask the most engaged player what their character is doing to advance the goals of the Ministry today. Ask the other players if their characters are involved, and if not, what they're up to instead. Go back to the most engaged player and describe an obstacle that stands between their character and their goal. If you can't come up with an obstacle, ask the other players for input.

Because of the way that *Spire* works, either they'll get what they want (brilliant! Ask them what they're going to do with it, and then come up with another challenge) or *Fallout* will introduce unexpected elements into the storyline. Lean into these as hard as you can and try to issue *Fallouts* that push the action in strange and interesting ways.

Write down or remember any interesting elements (non-player characters, locations, events, items) that arise from this process. Reuse those elements before inventing new ones; you'll look like a genius.

Repeat this process with anyone who wasn't involved in that scene, making sure that everyone gets a turn at being an active player rather than watching the situation play out. Do this until a) the session reaches a climax and release, b) the session reaches a cliffhanger, and you can continue next time or c) it's time for everyone to stop playing because you're tired. It should take about two and a half hours.

Next time you do this, look at (or think about) that list of things you wrote down (or memorised) during the session. Keep reusing things. Repeat the whole process until all of the characters are dead, mad, arrested or promoted into uselessness.

TWENTY MINUTES OF PREP

Get the players' character sheets and write down the domains that they chose – these are your basic building blocks. As long as the game involves these in some way, at least some of your players will feel engaged and able to more reliably contribute mechanically to the plot (as they get an extra dice when they act in a domain they have access to).

Invent, or select from the book, two organisations that share at least one domain each with the player characters. (If you're in the middle of an ongoing story, pick two existing organisations that you've already encountered at the table.)

Come up with a reason why those two organisations would come into conflict with one another. Select, or create, an NPC to represent each organisation with: something they want, something they hate, and some flaw to exploit so the players can get leverage over them. Select or create two locations which share the player domains and that the organisations might have (or desire) influence.

Tell the players that their characters have discovered what these two organisations are in conflict over and the Ministry has tasked them with exploiting the situation to gain power. Run the session as in **ZERO PREP** above but instead of coming up with material on the spot or asking the group for input, look at the details you've written down beforehand first and see if anything fits before improvising.

AN HOUR OF PREP

As **TWENTY MINUTES OF PREP**, but take a closer look at the players' character sheets, paying attention to their skills and abilities. What strengths do they have? What situations can they exploit? Try to envisage an event directed at each player character – something that's primarily a problem that they'll have to (or want to) solve, or an event that the player will love getting their teeth into.

If you already know what the "right" course of action is to take in a given situation, you're relying on your players to guess at it from your (imperfect, human) cues. This isn't a puzzle to be solved, but a story you're all telling together – so let the players tell it. Instead of working out solutions, work out interesting problems and be surprised by what the players do to overcome them.

Then, take a think about the other characters and organisations referenced so far, especially if they're NPC Bonds attached to the player characters. What are they up to? How will it impact the player characters? If it wouldn't be apparent to the player characters, or it doesn't make their lives different in any way, change it so that it becomes relevant.

Then, play as per **ZERO PREP** above but keep those personalised events ready to fire off to keep the pace of the game up or to engage a player who's not had much attention this session – and those actions on the parts of NPCs to back those up if the players are in an especially passive mood.

TWO HOURS OF PREP

As **AN HOUR OF PREP**, but also think about what elements you struggle to come up with on the spur of the moment, and try to counteract that. If you're not good at doing character voices for your NPCs, practice some basic mannerisms that you can drop into your speech later on. If all your locations feel the same, write down something that marks them out with regards to each of the five senses. If you can't describe people confidently, find some images of people online that you can use as shorthand to "face cast" characters in the game. Do whatever you can do make the game as fun for you – and your players – as possible.

PREPPING FOR A ONE-SHOT

In a one-shot, you're only going to play for a single session. We have published eleven brilliant one-shot missions in *Shadow Operations* which can act as inspiration; this advice is for when you want to make your own.

Come up with a mission, issued by the Ministry, for the players to complete. The mission should have clear parameters, room for players to improvise solutions, and a definite win condition with visible effects. Some ideas for missions:

- Extract someone or something from a dangerous situation
- Protect someone or something against attackers
- Plant something dangerous in enemy territory
- Kill someone powerful and/or important

Pick or create a mission area. The more restricted a mission area is, the easier it'll be to run a game in it and the easier players will find it to make informed and quick decisions. Don't worry about how the cell get into the area – ask the players how it happened and cut to the fun part. Some ideas for locations:

- An up-Spire mansion
- A cursed but inhabited Vermissian station
- A Solar temple and the surrounding streets
- A run-down neighbourhood pub and the tunnels beneath
- A few streets of contested territory in New Heaven
- A mid-range Silver Quarter casino

Break down the mission location into five or so locations – make sure there's something interesting in each of them. The examples below are for the up-Spire mansion mentioned above:

- The sterile and austere gardens
- A sumptuous bedchamber leading out onto a balcony
- A drawing-room full of books and loose crows
- A sweltering, cacophonous kitchen
- The expansive and well-stocked wine cellar

Then, come up with something unusual going on in the mission location. Again, some ideas:

- A wedding
- A party
- A clash between two rival organisations
- A riot
- A plague of ghosts
- A dark ritual
- A festival or parade
- Experimental theatre
- A very recent murder
- The worst storm in decades

Invent (or select from the books) three or so NPCs connected to the mission who could get up to something interesting and pose as opposition to the player characters – or who could help them, if given the right incentive to do so. If these people dislike each other, so much the better.

NPCs are important because it gives both you and the players an opportunity to roleplay, and a lot of character abilities rely on NPCs to function. Name them and allocate them to a location; here are some loose concepts:

- The target, if the target is a person
- The target's bitter ex-husband
- A pious and righteous Solar Priest
- A lackadaisical occultist for hire, currently out of work
- The social-climbing head of the Liftsman's Guild
- The target's business rival

Once the situation's in place, you need to add a twist. Something is going to happen that's going to surprise the players (and probably some of the NPCs) and make the third act of the story much more interesting. You can get as wild as you like with these as long as you reference them in the opening stages of the game a little.

A handful of twists:

- This place is haunted, and the ghosts are angry
- The ritual upstairs is the distraction; the real ritual happened last week, and it worked
- The masked celebrants draw long knives and fall upon one another, stabbing
- The building detaches from Spire and floats away on a skywhale
- The bomb you're delivering is, in actual fact, a person

And, finally, you can come up with as many props as you like. Props are little hooks and scene elements that give players an easy way to interact with the game. If you've got a fun idea but it's not in-depth enough to be a location or an NPC, make a prop out of it.

- A rifle hanging over the mantelpiece
- Two enormous dogs snoozing in the back yard
- A chandelier
- One of those paintings with eye holes cut out
- An anxious, late, overburdened delivery boy
- An unattended kebab cart

Pre-generate the characters (or use some of the ones ready-made in the *Spire* campaign frames) and ensure that each of them can use at least one of their domains and one of their skills in the game you have envisioned. Choose abilities for them that will key in with the mission area and the events as well as the requirements of the mission itself. Then – and this is crucial – write down all the locations, NPCs and props on index cards (or similar, or some sort of digital equivalent).

When you play the game, arrange them facing the players and ask them what they want to explore. Again: you can't afford to mess around, so don't be coy with it. Let them know that this isn't the be-all and end-all of their potential interactions in the game, but instead a series of prompts for them to investigate and elements to exploit. You'll find that it saves a lot of time that would normally be spent describing the situation to them, and they'll be able to get to the meat of the game sooner. You can even give the index cards to players to keep track of after they, say, recruit an NPC to the cause or grab hold of a prop.

That should be enough for a one-shot all on its own.



WHEN TO ROLL, AND WHEN NOT TO

One of the most important jobs you have as a gamesmaster is determining when players should and shouldn't roll the dice – because when they do, they're opening themselves up to a wide variety of awful outcomes thanks to the way that stress and fallout works.

Fundamentally, if a character is attempting something that is broadly within their abilities, they're not under any particular pressure and you can't think of anything interesting that would happen if they failed, you can assume it goes off without a hitch and move on. The boundaries of this are fuzzy, and deliberately so, because they're so bound up with context that it's hard to define exact parameters – but a lot of it comes down to pacing.

For example, let's say that a Masked player character is attempting to infiltrate an office to search for blackmail materials. They're already in the building; in fact, they passed a **Deceive+High Society** roll to get in without a hitch and had a fun interaction with a passing guard. It makes sense to you that the office door would be locked – there's sensitive documents in there – and picking a lock or circumnavigating the obstacle somehow is the meat and drink of infiltration scenes. The Masked's player announces that they're going to try and pick the lock.

DO THEY ROLL?

It depends. How much time have you spent with the game's attention focused on them? Are they, or the other players, looking antsy and bored? Would it be interesting to re-introduce that guard on a failure after establishing the fact that they exist earlier on, or would it be frustrating to have to come up with another cover story? What's at stake if they fail, and if they succeed? Has the player "earned" access to the room by passing that **Deceive+High Society** check, in your opinion? Did you need to mention that the door was locked in the first place, and could you have glossed over it?

There's no single right or wrong answer. When you ask a player to roll the dice, you're giving up the narrative authority you have over the situation – and you're taking it away from them, too – as the dice now determine what happens next, not general consensus. One of your jobs as GM is to steer the game and decide when to go with the flow and when to let fate decide what happens next, and to maintain a balance of predictability and surprise in the narrative.

LET'S MAKE FAILURE INTERESTING: A GUIDE

Characters are going to fail their actions, which is a good thing, because if the protagonist in a story succeeded all the time that might make for a pretty boring story. But it can be hard, at the table, to roll with failures and keep the game interesting. Here's the most important thing to remember: whenever a player rolls dice, whether they succeed or fail, the world still changes.

When a player rolls dice and fails, they'll mark stress; if they're unlucky, they'll also mark Fallout. But if they don't mark Fallout, failure can sometimes feel a little bit hollow – as though they acted and nothing happened. To avoid this, when a player marks stress but doesn't take Fallout, you can use this as an opportunity to describe the world moving against them. *Apocalypse World* uses the phrase “signal future badness” to explain this, which we think is a lovely way to describe the sense of building narrative tension as stress builds up. Look to the right for some ideas for what's going on when a player marks stress to a given resistance.

Whatever you choose, one piece of advice we really want to emphasise is: the player characters probably didn't screw up. They're competent, dangerous people who are operating on the wrong side of the law – if they were complete no-hopers they would have died during initiation. If a player rolls a failure, it's much more exciting to describe how things are actually more difficult or dangerous than their character thought than it is to describe them falling on their arse, or saying something daft, or completely missing the point of a challenge. *Spire* positions the characters as vicious underdogs, and having their failures come with a side order of humiliation can really undermine that theme.

BLOOD

Their heart hammers in their chest
 Their opponent cracks their knuckles and grins
 They spit out a mouthful of blood
 They're winded, but intact
 They're knocked on their back
 There's a vicious dent in their chest-plate
 They feel blood running down their arm
 One of their teeth comes loose
 Their muscles spasm and cramp from the strain

MIND

They see a flash of something that can't be real
 They taste tin, like they're about to throw up
 Onlookers glance at them and then quickly turn their heads
 They hear a voice telling them they're useless, dangerous or otherwise a problem
 Occult symbols burn into their eyes and itch in the back of their mind
 Time seems to slow down and lights grow unnaturally bright or dim
 A high-pitched, keening wail rings in their ears

SILVER

They're down to their emergency ammo
 They use up the last of their spireblack
 They remember the overdue rent letter sitting unopened on their kitchen table
 Their stomach rumbles from going hungry again
 Their shoes feel thin and threadbare
 They look at the bill and realise it's more than they thought it would be

SHADOW

They see onlookers outside peering through the windows
 A nearby guard mutters something and prepares to investigate the disturbance
 They break some glass or visibly damage a lock whilst picking it
 They realise there's no sneaky way out of here and they'll have to make a run for it
 Someone wakes up and blearily gets a glass of water to cure their headache
 They drop something that could potentially identify them later on

REPUTATION

A respected member of the community frowns at them
 A bartender quietly and respectfully gets the club out from under the bar and locks eyes with them
 Children run away, scared
 Someone yells an insult at them in the street
 Gangsters flick open their jackets to show their sidearms, just in case
 Someone they care about looks uncomfortable at their behaviour and leaves



CREATIVE USE OF SKILLS

Skills and domains are present in the game to allow players a chance to be better at some important things than they are at others. They make for differentiation between the characters and let actions be more reliable in certain situations, giving each player time to shine.

However: they're all nonsense.

You can make them do whatever you want. You can, and indeed should, encourage your players to get creative with applications of skills; once all's said and done, it doesn't really matter whether a player rolls two or three dice on a given check. What matters is that you told a good story together and did something memorable and exciting.

So if a Masked player wants to use **Sneak** instead of **Fight** to murder some guy in his sleep, sure! Why not? Have them roll and see what happens. If a Lahjan wants to use **Resist** to get a crowd of people onside with a display of penitence, go for it. If a Midwife wants to use **Fix** to rig the outcome of a corvid-race due to a linguistic overlap, it really doesn't matter if you give them that extra dice, so long as it helps you collectively tell a cool story.

One caveat: cool stories aren't ones where the protagonists always get everything they want, without having to try. *Spire* isn't a power fantasy, and the game is designed to make failure interesting rather than blocking the party's progress. It's also not the best fun to spend too much of your play time trying to shoehorn your skills into every situation. The exact balance is up to your group to define.

Here's the secret, most important, never-written rule of almost every roleplaying game out there: if you can convince the GM, your character does it. Having certain words and numbers written on your character sheet makes it more likely you can convince them, because they're the arbiters of this narrative – not the dice.





SPIRE: THIS CITY MUST FALL

A fantasy-punk RPG about rebellion, brutality and oppression. What are you prepared to sacrifice to get what you deserve? You are a dark elf. Your home, the towering city of Spire, was occupied by the high elves two hundred years ago. Now, you have joined a secret organisation known as the Ministry, a paramilitary cult with a single aim – to overthrow the cruel high elves and restore the drow as the rightful rulers of the city.

What – or who – will you sacrifice to achieve your aims? Will you evade the attention of the authorities, or end up shot in the street like so many before you?



STRATA

Strata is the first full-length sourcebook for the *Spire* roleplaying game. Written by Grant Howitt and Chris Taylor, and with ten scenarios from a wide variety of other authors, *Strata* gives more details on the best and worst that the city of Spire has to offer. It won 2020's silver ENnie award for Best Art for the beautiful, full-colour artwork from Adrian Stone.

Try two new classes – the purple-prose black-magic pulp fiction occultist Inksmith and the multifaceted and fractured Shadow Agent. Or expand any class with many new extra advances: the flower-skinned Druid of the Living Spire, the muckraking Gazetteer, the sigil-scrawling Children of the Runestack and more.



SHADOW OPERATIONS

Climb aboard the Last Train and steal the secrets of its locomotion. Assassinate the most powerful man in the lawless undercity of Red Row. Defend the wedding of Brother Hellion's only daughter at the Church of the Gun. Spring a gnoll prisoner-of-war from the best-defended prison in all of Spire. Kidnap a reborn Saint gone rogue on the streets of Pilgrim's Walk.

All these adventures and more await you in *Shadow Operations*, a collection of eleven *Spire* scenarios designed to be run in a single session and written by a wide variety of authors. Each of them is laid out in an easy-to-read format, allowing you to get up and running as quickly as possible.



EIDOLON SKY, KINGS OF SILVER, BLOOD AND DUST

With these standalone campaign frames, you might:

- Take to the sacred streets of New Heaven to fight demons, deal drugs and evade the attentions of a cruel and beautiful serial killer.
- Try and take control of the Silver Quarter, armed with only a run-down gambling hall and a sheaf of newspaper clippings.
- Delve into a nightmare undercity as it crumbles apart under the strain of forgotten magicks



HEART: THE CITY BENEATH

Heart: The City Beneath is an award-winning complete tabletop roleplaying game about delving into a nightmare undercity that will give you everything you've ever dreamed of – or kill you in the process. It is a dungeon-crawling, story-forward tabletop RPG from the designers of *Spire* that focuses on what characters have to lose in pursuit of their dreams in the chaotic darkness beneath the world.