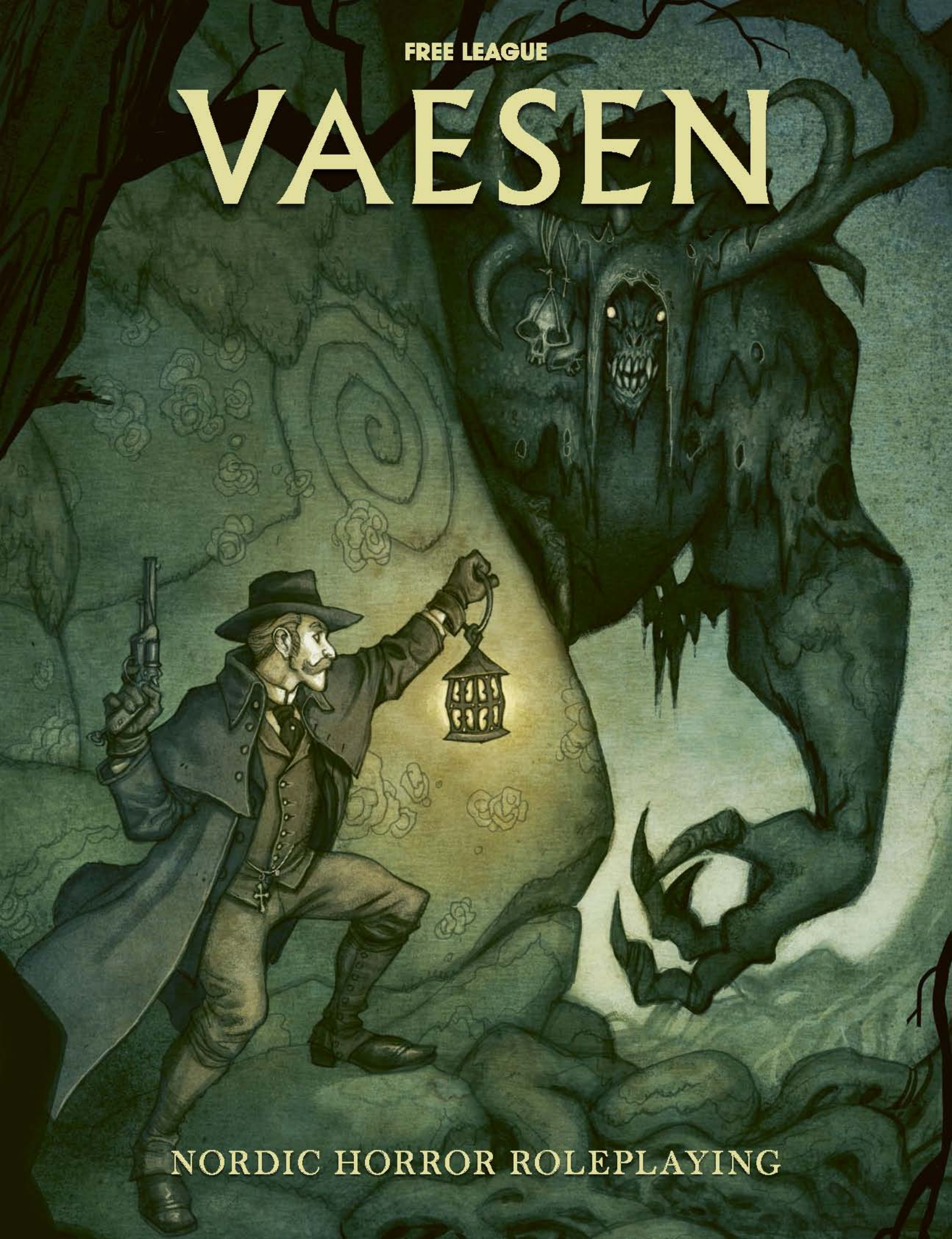


FREE LEAGUE

# VAESEN



NORDIC HORROR ROLEPLAYING















Based on the book *Vaesen* by  
JOHAN EGERKRANS

# VAESEN

## NORDIC HORROR ROLEPLAYING

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PRINT:  
Livonia Print 2020

ISBN:  
978-91-89143-92-0



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# PREFACE

I'VE ALWAYS LOVED monster books.

One bright August night in the late 1980s, my ten-year-old self made first contact with the enchanting world of roleplaying games. It wasn't just the playing that was magical. Delving into the monster books was just as cool – specifically the prosaically titled *The Monster Book* and *The Monster Book II* for Swedish fantasy RPG *Drakar och Demoner*, illustrated by the inimitable Nils Gulliksson. These modern bestiaries were teeming with strange creatures. Some were original creations, but others – like brook horses, trolls, and vaettir – I recognized from myths and folklore, although they had been recast into roleplaying monsters with long lists of attributes and skills (or “statblocks”, in roleplaying lingo).

I could sit and read and fantasize for hours about what it would be like to encounter these beings. And with the help of a box of paperback books, some weird-looking dice, and two or three friends, I was able to do just that.

When my editor Maja Lindqvist and I came up with the idea of making a book about Nordic folklore, the old familiar monster book format seemed like a perfect fit. A beautiful drawing and the right amount of text, just enough to spark the reader's imagination, became the perfect way to present the old vaesen. The main

difference is that the creatures and beasts featured in *Vaesen* do not have “stats.” They are allowed to keep their mystery. I'm delighted to say that *Vaesen* seems to have inspired many of today's ten-year-olds, just as *The Monster Book* and its sequel fueled my own imagination back in the day.

Now, you are holding the roleplaying game *Vaesen* in your hands. The book of folklore inspired by roleplaying games has gone full circle and become a game of its own. With this book, a set of dice, and a group of friends, you can venture into the dark woods and encounter the mythical brook horses, lindworms, trolls, and vaettir.

But our vaesen still lack the endless statblocks of old. We wouldn't want to spoil the mystery, would we?

Johan Egerkrans

STOCKHOLM, MARCH 10TH 2020











# INTRODUCTION

No one in Hedås wanted to talk about the dead children. At the inn we were met with silence, and a friend of the priest — a white-haired nobleman named Gustaf von Flink — implicitly threatened that, if we kept on asking, we wouldn't return to Upsala alive. Luckily, an employee at the local orphanage defied the stern look from her headmistress and asked us to visit an abandoned mill south of the village. It was getting dark as we arrived. The path between the cow pastures was covered in puddles, with light from the full moon reflecting off the water. With every step we had to pull our shoes out of the mud.

The path reached a swift-flowing stream with a wooden bridge leading to the mill on the other side. The mill was old and neglected. The wheel had been shattered by the rushing waters, and the building was leaning over the stream.

Halfway across the bridge we heard screaming. It sounded like a baby, coming from inside the mill. Could this be the myling to whom we had come to bring peace?

Kaspar pushed past me on the bridge, but stopped cold when he reached the other side, almost causing Iljenka and I to run straight into him. On the patch of grass in front of the mill stood the headmistress of the orphanage and the nobleman, Gustaf von Flink. He was carrying a rifle, while she held a flintlock pistol in one hand, and in the other her long riding crop which we had seen her use on the dirty children at the orphanage. Before them lay the woman who had asked us to investigate the mill. Her hands and feet were tied, her clothes bloody and torn — and she did not move.



THE GAMEMASTER: They haven't spotted you yet, but it's a matter of seconds before they do.

PLAYER 1 (KASPAR STÅHL): I draw my rapier and assume a fencing stance. "Let her go!"

THE GAMEMASTER: They look at you, but seem neither afraid nor surprised.

PLAYER 2 (ASTRID LILJA): I raise my palms and take a couple of steps toward them. "We have come to help the village. We know why the children are getting sick and dying."

THE GAMEMASTER: The headmistress flashes a joyless smile. "Then you know too much." She aims her pistol at you.

PLAYER 1: "You can help us or stand aside. Either way, we will do what we're here to do."

THE GAMEMASTER: Make a **MANIPULATION** test.

PLAYER 1: That's five dice. One success, I pass!

THE GAMEMASTER: She lowers her gun as if she's ready to listen. Meanwhile, the sky goes dark, as the moon is covered by a huge black bird descending on the mill. Its feathers are broken and scraggly, its beak long and sharp; the eyes are as orange as hellfire. Neither the headmistress nor Gustaf von Flink seem able to see it.

PLAYER 2: The myling!

THE GAMEMASTER: What do you do?



WHAT YOU ARE holding in your hand is a roleplaying game based on Johan Egerkrans' book *Vaesen: Spirits and Monsters of Scandinavian Folklore*. The idea is that you and your friends will use it to tell – or play – mystery stories together in mythic Scandinavia of the nineteenth century.

Only one of you will have to read the entire book, but it would be good if the others flipped through the first chapters as well. You are not supposed to know its contents by heart, but rather use it as a reference book while playing the game. In addition to this book you will need pens, paper, and at least ten six-sided dice.

## INTRODUCTION TO VAESSEN

Throughout history, supernatural vaesen have lived side by side with the people of Scandinavia. But these creatures are not perceptible to human senses – unless they choose to be. Invisible, they have helped out on farms, assisted in calving, made sure that stray ewes find their way home, and kept people safe during harsh winters or wildfires, in exchange for some of the farms' milk and grain. Vaesen have filled the fields with flowers, shown the way to ponds where people can see their future reflected on the surface, and whispered dreams into the ears of the sleeping.

In the nineteenth century, Scandinavia is changed by industrialization, war, and revolutions, and new ways of thinking and understanding the world are spreading through its universities. Old truths are being questioned. The rural poor are pouring into the cities or across the Atlantic to escape starvation, hoping to build a life where they can be free.

It is no longer the nobles and priests who decide how people should think and act. Instead, those who are able to use the inventions of this new age can make a fortune and exert influence through their wealth. Factories are emerging around the cities, giv-

ing rise to vast suburbs where impoverished workers are crammed together in harsh conditions.

The elderly are left behind in the villages, along with those too weak or scared to leave. Meadows become overgrown, forests are cut down, and the construction of railways between cities lays waste to paths and communities that have existed for centuries. Glassworks spew out chemicals, while the mines eat their way into the mountains like wolves feasting on a wounded animal.

The vaesen of Scandinavia are changing as well. The villagers used to know how to appease the creatures when angry and gain their help with farm work – for instance, they refrained from peeing on the ground where the vaettir have their burrows, and provided the nisse with porridge and a new hat every year. But the old rules and traditions no longer seem to apply. The vaesen have turned aggressive and bloodthirsty, snatching children from the villages, wrecking houses, and setting barns on fire.

In certain parts of Scandinavia, the supernatural seems to have grown stronger and started acting erratically – like a storm sweeping over the farmlands. There are rumors of kittens being born with two heads, streams where the water is mixed with blood, forests lulling young ones into eternal sleep, and fairies dancing through villages, luring youngsters into the woods to slave for those underground. In other places, the creatures seem to have disappeared from the countryside, as if they never existed, and magic along with them. It is also said that some vaesen have followed people to the cities and found new homes in sewers and abandoned factories.

Some people in Scandinavia are able to see the vaesen, even when they are trying to stay invisible – it is called “having the Sight.” You are one of them. At some point you experienced something that scared or hurt you; maybe you almost died in a fire or a werewolf chose to reveal itself to you. After that, nothing was ever the same. Suddenly you could see nature spirits stealing food from the tables and trolls showing up uninvited to weddings and christenings.

You and several others who also have the Sight have gathered in Upsala in central Sweden. You have learned that there used to be an organization called the Society. Their mission was to study and combat the *vaesen*, but the last members of the Society went missing or left the organization about ten years ago, and since then the Society's headquarters – the old Castle Gyllencreutz by the Fyris River in Upsala – has been left to decay. You have decided to re-establish this organization. A former member by the name of Linnea Elfeklint, an elderly woman who spends her days at the city's mental asylum, has given you the keys to the castle along with documents making you its legal owners.

You all have your reasons for wanting to track down *vaesen* and protect people from them. And you will embark on long journeys to remote villages and regions of the wilderness, attempting to uncover the secrets of Scandinavia. Armed with nothing but your courage, conviction, and ability to see the supernatural, you will come face-to-face with *vaesen*. Neither bullets nor steel can stop them – to drive them off, you must identify their weaknesses. And even if you succeed, your encounters with the *vaesen* of the north will leave you with scars that never heal.

## THIS BOOK

In this chapter we explain what roleplaying games are and how they are played. It begins with an example of what a gaming session might look like, and there are more examples scattered throughout the book. Here you will also find a brief description of the world in which *Vaesen* takes place, and the kinds of people these stories are about. After a short overview of what the *vaesen* are, the chapter concludes with an introduction to the game's form and rules for conflicts – that is, how to play the game and roll the dice to determine what happens in exciting or dangerous situations.

The next chapter describes how to create a player character, meaning the person or character you will

portray while playing the game. Your player character is based on one of ten archetypes – a skeleton or framework to build on during the creation process. Then comes chapter 3 which covers Skills – different actions you can perform, the success of which is decided by rolling dice; perhaps you are trying to trick someone, or escape some terrible monster. Chapter 4 is devoted to Talents, which are various tricks and types of expertise that your player character may possess and might find useful in his or her encounters with the *vaesen*.

Chapter 5 describes conflicts that might arise during the game; it can be anything from life-and-death battles, to what happens if someone tries to poison you or if you are trapped in a burning building. It includes rules for how your player character might be injured or even killed, and addresses what happens when you encounter things that frighten you. Chapter 6 focuses on the Society, the organization to which your character belongs, while chapter 7 provides information about the world where the game takes place: the mythical Scandinavia. There you will also find some thoughts on how to approach the difference between the historical nineteenth century and the world featured in this game.

The last three chapters hold secrets about the game world and its *vaesen*. Only one member of the group should read these chapters, and the one who does cannot have a player character, but will be the person who runs the game – the Gamemaster. Therefore, no one should read these chapters until

### THE BOOK AND THE GAME

This volume is fully self-contained and is all you need to play. However, we highly recommend Johan Egerkrans' *Vaesen: Spirits and Monsters of Scandinavian Folklore* to dive even deeper into Scandinavian folklore and myth. It can be used as a sort of manual for the players when they explore the horrors of mythic Scandinavia.





you have decided who will take on the role of Gamemaster. Chapter 8 describes vaesen and their magic. There are several examples of vaesen, with descriptions of how they can be used in mysteries and how they can be fought. Chapter 9 contains instructions on how the Gamemaster may run and write his or her own mysteries, while the tenth and final chapter of the book comprises a complete mystery titled *The Dance of Dreams* – meant as an introduction to the game, and as the first mystery your player characters will experience.

## WHAT ARE ROLE-PLAYING GAMES?

Roleplaying games are a form of collaborative storytelling, usually taking place around a table with papers and dice in front of you. All but one of you will have a player character – a character to portray just like in a play or a movie. In this book we address both you, the player, and your player character as “you” – since you should be thinking of your character as “I”. For example, when you want your character to do something, you might say “I chase the thief into the train car” and act out what she is saying, perhaps screaming “Stop, in the name of the law!” You decide what

your player character is wearing and what she looks like, what she thinks and feels, and how she reacts to what is happening in the story.

When roleplaying you are usually in a group of three to six people, with sessions normally lasting between two and five hours. No individual player decides exactly what happens; you all help fill in the details. That is one of the great pleasures of roleplaying – no one can predict what will happen next. For it to work well, you must always listen to what the others are saying and pay attention to how they describe the game world around them. You must also contribute to the story with your own ideas of what things look like and how they work.

The members of your gaming group will have different tasks. All but one of you are “players”, each controlling a player character. Your task is mainly to inhabit your characters as fully as possible. Try to see the world through your character’s eyes and do what she would do in any given situation – which can sometimes mean making decisions you as a player know are bad for her.

The person without a player character is the “Gamemaster”. Her role is to ensure that the story makes sense and keeps moving forward. She also describes what the world looks like and plays all the



people who are not player characters. Should your player characters run into some grumpy innkeeper, he or she will be played by the Gamemaster, who at the same time describes the filthy inn – the dwindling flames in the fireplace and the huge hunting trophies on the walls. The individuals controlled by the Gamemaster are called non-player characters (NPCs).

The Gamemaster does not have to make everything up herself. She can always lean on the players for support, and furthermore, she has a mystery to fall back on. A mystery is a text much like a manuscript, except that the story you create around the gaming table does not have to unfold as written. It is more like a foundation for the Gamemaster to build on, suggesting things that could happen in the game and NPCs one might encounter. There is also some advice on how to describe locations and how the player characters could piece together the available clues to solve the mystery. The mystery also contains challenges – obstacles and dangers that might befall the player characters. It is up to the Gamemaster to determine which parts of the written mystery she will actually use, being sure to take into account the actions of the player characters when deciding. Perhaps you choose to visit people who are not even described in the mystery?

During the course of the game, situations will arise where your player character will attempt things that are difficult and dangerous. Perhaps you are trying to threaten an enemy into dropping its weapons, or stop a friend from bleeding out? On such occasions, the outcome is determined by rolling dice. How good your character is at doing things – such as shooting, sneaking, or interpreting clues – will affect your chance of success. You can read more about die rolls at the end of this chapter and in chapter 5.

It is important to remember that roleplaying is not a competition, but a collaboration. It is not the Gamemaster's job to try to sabotage or kill the player characters – although she may of course put you in dangerous situations if that is where the story takes you. Sometimes it can be good to pause and talk about the game, to make sure that everyone is having fun.



## THE UNSEEN

“Oh, there have always been nissar, on secluded farms and crofts, and on estates deep in the backcountry. Wise folk fear them. The nisse is wayward and vengeful – and punishes severely those who anger him.

My grandmother Kerstin was a maid at Aninge Farm, and there lived a farmstead nisse. Granny spoke of how the masters one night were having a feast, making a tremendous noise long after dark. As the guests left, and the masters and servants had gone to bed, the nisse started making noises of his own and did not stop until morning.

But the nisse is kind to the livestock, although he has his favorites. Granny Kerstin said that one of the manor's horses got its mane and tail brushed and braided every night, while another was shooed into the woods to be eaten by wolves.

The nisse doesn't show themselves to just anyone, either. Only the second-sighted can see them. Should such people encounter the nisse on the road, they better stand aside. For a nisse will not. People should respect the unseen. They sense his presence, but don't like talking about him, and I never heard of anyone associating with the nissar.”

– ANNA ENOGSDOTTER, MIDWIFE IN KVIDAHULT.

## VAESEN IN A NUTSHELL

This section offers an overview that might be good to keep in mind while reading the rest of the book. It also contains references to later chapters where various aspects of the game and its world are described, all to make it easy for you to find the information you seek.

### THE MYTHIC NORTH

*Vaesen* takes place in a mythical nineteenth-century Scandinavia. This version of Scandinavia is not historically accurate, but an alternate world where events may correspond more or less to our reality.

As such, the stories do not take place in any specific period of the 1800s – the Mythic North combines phenomena from the entire century. Steamboats, trains, as well as political and philosophical movements from the end of the nineteenth century may well be mixed with earlier phenomena. That said, you would do well to draw inspiration from historical events – much that happened in the 1800s would make excellent starting points for creating exciting mysteries.

The mythical game world is described further in chapter 7, with a particular focus on the player characters' current home, Upsala.

### VAESEN

Throughout history, humans have shared their land with vaesen; trolls, ghosts, lindworms, and other creatures inhabiting the woods and lakes. Like the humans, these have had their ups and downs with one another. Many have assisted the farmers in their back-breaking labor and made the dark, winter nights more bearable with enchanted music and gifts in the form of strange handicrafts to blacksmiths and lute players.

Although vaesen have always been present, few have actually seen them. The creatures are imperceptible to the human eye – they choose whether or not to reveal themselves. It is said that their presence may be inferred from something as innocuous as a

### USING OTHER CITIES

This book assumes that the characters will be based in the city of Upsala. The town is ideally located in central Scandinavia and is home to a famous university, scores of societies and curious academics. However, you can of course choose to place your game in another town of your choice. Read through the chapter about Upsala (page 105), research your location using books and the Internet and then write your own short gazetteer about the characters hometown.

draft in the room, or from the abnormal behavior of farm animals.

Tales and songs tell of rules that must be followed so as not to anger the vaesen. Rural people often think they know how to avoid getting on the wrong side of those who dwell underground, but something has altered the balance between the humans on the surface and the creatures beneath. Vaesen have started attacking villages and destroying homes, factories, and train stations. They no longer behave as they do in the stories. Some think they have gone mad, others that the end times are nigh.

Twenty-one different vaesen are cataloged in chapter 8, along with a description of their relationship with humans, as well as their powers and special rules.

### THE SIGHT

You are a person with the Sight, meaning that you have the ability to see vaesen – even when they are trying to remain invisible. You acquired the Sight as a result of some physical or psychological trauma, most likely some form of supernatural event, either during childhood or as an adult. Those who have the Sight are sometimes referred to as Thursday's Children.

For one reason or another you have sought out other people with the Sight, and together you have decided to use your ability to help those affected by the







## HORROR, MYSTERY, AND ADVENTURE

In *Vaesen*, a session normally includes horror, mystery, and suspense. It is up to the gaming group to decide whether one of these should outweigh the others. To emphasize the horror aspect, the Gamemaster can put the player characters in situations where they are alone and exposed. The creature seems unbeatable. Screams and strange scents occupy the characters' nightmares. The countryside is dark and strange, and most questions are left unanswered.

If you would rather focus on solving mysteries and challenges, the players should be given tricky clues and time to reflect on them. A murder would then involve multiple suspects and subtle details that might reveal the truth. Clues from different places must be pieced together to form the big picture. Over the course of the game, the characters uncover how it is all connected. In these stories, *vaesen* are often used as tools by NPCs seeking power, riches, or acknowledgment.

To create a sense of adventure and suspense, there should be chase scenes, creatures to attack with sabre and rifle, and aggressive NPCs looking for a fight. Perhaps the player characters are running

from a monster on top of a train passing through a tunnel – soon afterwards they are forced to hurl themselves down a waterfall in order to escape, after which it all ends with them confining the creature to its cave by blowing up the entrance with dynamite.

The atmosphere and focus of the mysteries are mainly the Gamemaster's responsibility. But as a player, there are also ways you can contribute. The character you create, and how you choose to play her, will determine what kind of experience you and your group will have. In a horror story your player character must be susceptible to fear and despair – she must be allowed to flee when frightened. If your focus is on puzzles and clues, your player character will need the appropriate skill set; she must be able to read and skillfully investigate crime scenes and libraries. In an adventure story, you should try to create a sense of momentum by making bold decisions and throwing yourself into epic battles. Do not rely on the others to create the story or feeling you want to experience – it is your responsibility to make sure that you are having a good time.

ill-tempered caprice of the *vaesen*. You have learned that there used to be an organization known as the Society, and decided to re-establish it. The Society existed for hundreds of years, made up of people with the Sight who devoted their time to studying and expelling *vaesen*. Its members met at the old Castle Gyllencreutz in Upsala, but some ten years ago the last of them abandoned the organization, locked the castle gate, and left the building to decay. No one knows why.

You and your friends have tracked down a former member of the Society – an elderly woman named Linnea Elfeklint, now a patient at Upsala Asylum. Linnea has told you about the history and traditions of the Society, and given you the keys and deeds to Castle Gyllencreutz. But she refuses to leave the asylum and will not come with you to the castle under

any circumstances – and she does not say why. It is up to you to restore the old organization, build your headquarters, and go on expeditions in Scandinavia, solving mysteries and driving off *vaesen*.

During the game you will have the opportunity to explore and expand Castle Gyllencreutz. The castle is your headquarters, where you may prepare for journeys and heal any physical or mental wounds from your encounters with *vaesen*. At the same time, you must maintain a façade of normality in front of your friends and relatives in Upsala – if they ever found out about your alleged ability to see supernatural creatures, they would sooner or later have you locked up in the asylum with Linnea.

You can read more about the Society, Linnea, and the headquarters in chapter 6.

## THE FIGHT AGAINST VAESEN

Your mission is to protect humanity from vaesen. But the world is not black and white. The vaesen you encounter are often victims of other vaesen, or of human activities, so you will have to take a stand and do what is right. Whatever that may be.

Before heading out on expeditions you arm yourself with rifles and rapiers. Your weapons can help you defeat human adversaries such as robbers and rebels. Against vaesen, however, you may as well be carrying sticks and scraps of paper. Vaesen may be stalled or temporarily driven off by human weaponry, but can rarely be killed by bullets or blades.

To combat vaesen, you must turn to the tales and forgotten books of the olden days. The rituals required to expel them are always exact and seldom easy to perform. You might have to sprinkle silver powder into the waterfall on the night of a full moon – or chase giants into the woods by ringing the church bells at dawn. Each vaesen protects its weakness very carefully, and those seeking to exploit it risk provoking its wrath.

General information on how vaesen can be fought is provided in chapter 5, while more specific details are found in chapter 8, in the descriptions of individual vaesen.

## THE FORM OF THE GAME

The Society's expeditions start from Upsala, with the purpose of solving a mystery that has come to your attention. A mystery usually lasts between one and three game sessions of four to six hours each. A typical session starts with you making preparations such as buying equipment, gaining knowledge at the library, and visiting friends and contacts.

An invitation of some kind initiates the story. It tells of a place where a vaesen seems to be present. The invitation could be a letter from someone asking for help or rumors of people going missing.

On the way to this location you have the opportunity to prepare by gaining a so-called Advantage. You get a chance to describe and play your character



### THURSDAY'S CHILDREN

“MONDAY’S CHILD IS FAIR OF FACE  
TUESDAY’S CHILD IS FULL OF GRACE  
**WEDNESDAY’S CHILD IS FULL OF WOE**  
THURSDAY’S CHILD HAS FAR TO GO,  
FRIDAY’S CHILD  
IS LOVING AND GIVING,  
SATURDAY’S CHILD  
WORKS HARD FOR A LIVING,  
AND THE CHILD THAT IS BORN  
ON THE SABBATH DAY  
IS BONNY AND BLITHE,  
AND GOOD AND GAY”

– NURSERY RHYME ABOUT PEOPLE WITH THE SIGHT



in a short scene where you acquire an item, gain an insight, or meet someone who can help you once you reach the location.

Upon arrival, you will investigate various places and talk to NPCs. These places have challenges and clues. Challenges can include aggressive people trying to stop you, strange enchantments, deadly tempests, or fairies leading you astray, while the clues tell you more about the vaesen you are hunting and how to destroy or expel it.

Vaesen is played in scenes. This means that you play a situation, and when it ends, the Gamemaster “cuts” and proceeds to the next one. You do not have to play every single thing that happens – only what you feel is important. The Gamemaster decides when a scene starts and when it ends.

THE GAMEMASTER: *Iljenka, what are you doing while the others are seeing the mayor?*

PLAYER 3 (ILJENKA PROKOTIN): *I try to break into the priest's home to see if he's hiding something.*

THE GAMEMASTER: *How do you go about it?*

PLAYER 3: *I wait until the middle of the night, then I sneak up there and try to open the door.*

THE GAMEMASTER: *You're just outside the door to the vicarage. The stars are shrouded by clouds, and it's really dark. An owl is hooting from the trees. The door is locked.*

PLAYER 3: *I take out my lockpick and try to unlock it.*

Over the course of the gaming session you gather information about the vaesen haunting the place and how it is affecting the people living there, while the situation gradually deteriorates. Hopefully you find enough information to perform the ritual necessary to expel the creature. Whether you succeed or not, you will finally return to your headquarters in Upsala, where you can recover from injuries and learn from your experiences.

For more information on how mysteries are structured and played, and how to create your own mysteries, see chapter 9.

## CONFLICTS

When attempting something difficult, or when someone is trying to stop you, it is time to take out the dice. The die roll decides the outcome. The number of dice to be rolled depends on your character's attributes and skills. For example, if you are trying to hide from an angry nisse, you use Precision and **STEALTH**. Add both values together, and roll a number of six-sided dice equal to your total.

You must roll at least one six to succeed. Sixes are called successes. Sometimes you will need more than one success, and rolling more successes than required means that you are extra successful.

If the conflict involves someone trying to stop you, you must both roll dice and compare who gets the most successes. In some places in this book it says that you get +1 to your roll, which means that you get to roll one extra die.

More detailed information about how conflicts and die rolls work is found in chapter 3.

THE GAMEMASTER: *The farmer grabs you. He reeks of alcohol, but his gaze is lucid and his grip tight. "I don't care about your fancy titles. No one disturbs my sister."*

PLAYER 1 (KASPAR STÅHL): *"Can't you see that we're trying to help her? This is no ordinary illness. Your sister is possessed!"*

THE GAMEMASTER: *He burps straight into your face. "No lord or lady comes through here."*

PLAYER 1: *I push him aside and open the door.*

THE GAMEMASTER: *Make a **FORCE** test.*

PLAYER 1: *I've got Physique 3 and **FORCE** 1, four dice in total. I roll a six. Sweet!*



THE GAMEMASTER: *He has seven dice and rolls three sixes. That's two more than you, which means he succeeds, and is extra successful. You grab the farmer and try to push him over, but it's like he is anchored to the ground. His body won't move.*

PLAYER 1: *"Right, okay... Perhaps we can talk about it?"*

### SPECIAL DICE

*Vaesen* uses special dice. They are not required in order to play the game, but may contribute to the atmosphere around the gaming table.

## ROLLING DICE

The characters have numeric ratings for what they are good at – understanding things, fast talking, climbing, and running fast. The rating indicates how many six-sided dice you get to roll when trying to overcome trouble. A six means a success. You rarely need more than one success. If you fail, you may try again, but

then you risk getting a Condition. This is explained further in chapter 3.

Some tables ask you to roll a D66. This means you roll two six-sided dice, after deciding which die represents the tens and ones, respectively. For example, if you roll a three on the first die and a six on the other, the result is 36.

## SIX PRINCIPLES

*Vaesen* is governed by six principles that can be drawn on for inspiration or used to define the benchmark for how the world should be portrayed and how its people and creatures ought to behave. These principles are:

1. *Vaesen* are neither good nor evil: The creatures encountered by the player characters have their own daily lives, their own dreams and plans. Some are cooperating with human locals; others are mischievous or downright murderous. Whatever the case, they always have a motive for their actions.
2. Nature is dark and dangerous: The player characters have their homes and headquarters in the city; that is where they feel most safe. Nature represents the unknown – the other, the different – and anything can happen in the dark woods and lonely mountains. No one will find you if you go missing.
3. Scandinavia is changing: The old Scandinavia is being swept away by industrialization, and signs of this often violent shift are everywhere: abandoned farms, paupers roaming the streets, and confused *vaesen* seeking their place in the new world of factories and steam engines.
4. Knowledge and cunning are the keys to success: The mysteries of *Vaesen* can rarely be solved with violence. Instead you must use your abilities to study clues, contextualize the information you discover, and convince humans and *vaesen* to share their secrets.
5. The journey is part of the goal: The mysteries are not merely problems to be solved or overcome – their whole point is to pull the players and the player characters into the story that emerges during the course of the game. Another important focus is each player character's journey from naive and untrained youngster to seasoned and experienced – and likely scarred – veteran.
6. You will not survive without each other: The player characters will face creatures the mere sight of which can drive a person mad, and beasts that can kill a man with a single blow. The only way to survive is to stick together. The player characters' relationships with each other and with important NPCs are crucial, both to the story and for healing injuries that are sustained during the game.







*What I thought was a bird crashing into my window proved to be a young woman, no bigger than a crow. She was naked with ethereal wings. Her body shone like pink crystal, and her back and neck were covered with bite marks. They looked like rat bites, but I never found out what caused them. She fled and ended up with me. Having tended to her wounds, I initially kept her locked in a cage by my bed. It came as quite a shock when, after four days, it turned out that she could speak. What's more, she seemed more knowledgeable than me and claimed to be older, too, by hundreds of years. Later I let her sleep on my pillow with a silver chain around her ankle. She kissed my cheek goodnight. Now, as I try to understand how she could wind up dead and preserved in a glass jar, I think of those kisses. I still love her. But she did not return my feelings.*



# YOUR PLAYER CHARACTER

YOUR PLAYER CHARACTER is a human living in nineteenth century Upsala, gifted with the Sight. Together, she and her friends have re-established the Society – an organization whose purpose is to track down and combat vaesen.

As a player, you should play your character wholeheartedly. Put her in dangerous and interesting situations. Do not hold back – it is more fun that way. This chapter offers a step-by-step description of how to create a player character. You may want to do it as a group, so you can make choices that link your characters together and form interesting relationships.

The choices involved in character creation have been categorized under three headings: *personality*, *characteristics*, and *miscellaneous*. Under *personality*, you must first pick an archetype – a kind of template for the character. You then name your character and determine your motivation for hunting down vaesen. You also need to specify your source

of trauma, describe the event that gave you the Sight, and come up with a dark secret which you are keeping from the other player characters

Characteristics are things your character is good at, and are used when rolling dice to see what happens in dangerous and suspenseful situations. They consist of attributes, skills, and talents.

The last part of the character creation process is covered under *miscellaneous* and concerns your relationship with the other player characters, but also what equipment and financial resources you have at your disposal. There you will find rules for how you can be injured – physically and mentally – and how to improve your characteristics through the experience you gain from completing mysteries. The *Advantage* heading details how, on your travels to strange locations in Scandinavia, you can prepare yourself by honing your skills, reading occult literature, or meeting people who inspire you.

## PERSONALITY

You build your player character based on decisions about their background and personality. These become the foundation of your character; as the game progresses you will get an increasingly clear picture of who your character really is.

### ARCHETYPE

The first thing to do is choose an archetype. Your archetype is a basis for creating the player character, and specifies a number of choices that need to be made. Your choices become a skeleton from which a character of flesh and blood may emerge. The archetype also says something about what you are good at. There are ten archetypes to choose from, all of them described at the end of this chapter. There should not be more than one player character of the same archetype in the group.

### AGE

The next step is to decide the character's age. There are three age groups in the game: young, middle-aged, and old. Pick one, and note your choice on the character sheet. Your age will affect your attributes and skills

### NAME

Choose one of the names suggested under your archetype, or make up your own.

### CREATING YOUR CHARACTER

1. Choose an archetype.
2. Choose an age.
3. Choose a name.
4. Distribute Attribute Points according to your age.
5. Distribute points to skills and Resources according to your age.
6. Choose a talent.
7. Choose a motivation.
8. Choose a trauma.
9. Choose a dark secret.
10. Choose your relationship with each of the other PCs.
11. Roll for mementos.
12. Choose equipment.

### MOTIVATION

Your Motivation explains why you are willing to risk your own life to track down and fight vaeßen. It helps you play your character. Pick one of those suggested for your archetype, or come up with one yourself.

### TRAUMA

Your Trauma is the event that gave you the Sight. It could be an incident from your childhood or something more recent, but usually it has some connection to the supernatural. A Trauma can be

physical or mental – perhaps you witnessed something terrible, or were involved in an accident.

### AGE

| AGE GROUP   | AGE         | ATTRIBUTE POINTS | SKILL POINTS |
|-------------|-------------|------------------|--------------|
| Young       | 17–25 years | 15               | 10           |
| Middle-aged | 26–50 years | 14               | 12           |
| Old         | 51+ years   | 13               | 14           |



## DARK SECRET

Your Dark Secret is a problem you are ashamed of and therefore keep to yourself. It may be linked to your Trauma or concern something completely different, but either way it will actively affect the game – it makes things difficult for you, in Upsala as well as on your travels. Perhaps you are hounded by government agents, hiding your alcoholism, suffering from delusions, or maybe there is something in your family that no one must know about.

It is the Gamemaster's job to make sure that your Dark Secret comes into focus in your stories. Incorporating the secret into the game makes the mysteries more fun – even if it may cause trouble for your player character. Should your Dark Secret be resolved, or if you are getting bored with it, you should replace it with something else.

**THE GAMEMASTER:** *The miller says that's all he knows, and is just about to leave when he suddenly stares at you, Astrid. You see in his eyes that he recognizes you.*

**PLAYER 2 (ASTRID LILJA):** *Ohcrap!*

**THE GAMEMASTER:** *"What did you say your name was?"*

**PLAYER 2:** *"Astrid Lilja, formerly a nun at the Convent of the Holy Mother Mary. Why do you ask?"*

**THE GAMEMASTER:** *"We've met before. But you had a different name back then, and you certainly weren't a nun."*



"CUCKOO IN THE NORTH  
BRINGS SORROW FORTH  
CUCKOO IN THE EAST  
MEANS GRIEF DECREASED  
CUCKOO IN THE SOUTH  
HOLDS DEATH IN ITS MOUTH  
CUCKOO IN THE WEST  
IS THE VERY BEST"

– NURSERY RHYME ABOUT HOW  
TO INTERPRET THE CUCKOO'S CALLING

## GENDER ROLES

The real 19th century was a patriarchal society where men had power over women, and women were constrained in what they could do, say, and what jobs they could hold. However, this roleplaying game is not about the real 19th century but the mythical Scandinavia. It is up to the gaming group to determine how your version of Scandinavia looks like and how you will handle this around the table. We see no reason to let historical injustice limit the options available to the players, particularly since there are lots of examples of powerful women in historical literature and fairy tales.





“All must protect themselves against the invisible ones, witches and trolls, and satanic creatures such as snakes and lizards. If there’s anything they can’t handle it is steel and coins and other man-made creations they cannot control. My brother was fool enough to listen to a merchant telling him that vaesen and trolls are mere children’s stories. It made my brother stop sticking his sheath knife above the door and have his wife remove the coins that had been placed on the cornerstones of the barn for protection. And just like that, he had nature spirits in the house, stealing bread and pieces of cloth, gnawing the children’s fingers and toes until they bled. The snickering of the invisible kept the family awake for several nights until my brother had enough and fired his shotgun into the house, using shells filled with silver shavings. The spirits went up the chimney like a black cloud, shrieking that they would return with fire and ice. But as soon as they left, my brother jammed his knife into the doorframe, and with that they had lost their power.”

— ENOG SVENSSON, CROFTER IN BIDLITR

## CHARACTERISTICS

Attributes, skills, and talents indicate what your player character is (or is not) good at, and they affect the die rolls you will make as conflicts and exciting or dangerous situations arise in the game.

### ATTRIBUTES

There are four attributes which together indicate what you are more or less good at: Physique, Precision, Logic, and Empathy. Each attribute has a value between 2 and 5 which determines the number of dice you roll when attempting things that depend on the attribute in question.

You may distribute points according to your age between your attributes. The minimum value is 2 and the maximum is 4, except for the main attribute of your chosen archetype, which has a maximum value of 5.

#### PHYSIQUE

Physique is a measure of how big and strong you are. It is the ability to take and deliver a beating. It determines things like how long you can go without food or rest, and how easily you can lift a fallen tree trunk.

#### PRECISION

Precision is a measure of your coordination and motor skills.

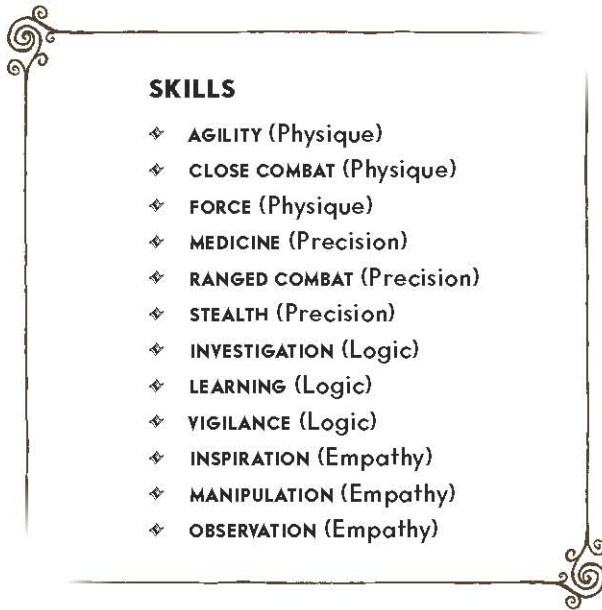
#### LOGIC

Logic is your intellectual capacity, which you use to solve problems. Logic also measures how well-educated you are, and can help you tackle certain scary situations.

#### EMPATHY

Empathy represents your ability to understand other people, and to persuade, charm, or trick them. Empathy can also help you tackle certain scary situations.





### SKILLS

- ❖ **AGILITY** (Physique)
- ❖ **CLOSE COMBAT** (Physique)
- ❖ **FORCE** (Physique)
- ❖ **MEDICINE** (Precision)
- ❖ **RANGED COMBAT** (Precision)
- ❖ **STEALTH** (Precision)
- ❖ **INVESTIGATION** (Logic)
- ❖ **LEARNING** (Logic)
- ❖ **VIGILANCE** (Logic)
- ❖ **INSPIRATION** (Empathy)
- ❖ **MANIPULATION** (Empathy)
- ❖ **OBSERVATION** (Empathy)

### SKILLS

Skills represent acquired knowledge, training, and experience. There are twelve skills, all of them described in chapter 3. Each skill has a value between 0 and 5. The value determines the number of dice you add to your attribute when attempting something difficult or dangerous.

You may spend a number of points determined by your age. At the start of the game you cannot have more than 2 in any skill, except for the main skill of your chosen archetype, which you may spend 3 points on. Solving mysteries grants you Experience Points which you can use to improve your skills (see below).

### TALENTS

Talents are tricks, traits, and abilities that can benefit you in various situations. They affect your die rolls, or give you access to powers or resources. Talents are described in chapter 4.

Your archetype offers three starting talents to choose from when creating your player character. As you play and gain experience points (addressed below) you can get more talents. You may then choose freely among them, including talents from other archetypes.

## MISCELLANEOUS

In order to survive her encounters with vaesen, your player character will need help from her friends, as well as weapons, equipment, and resources to pay for travel and accommodation in remote villages. Finish your character by describing her to the others.

Here you will also find information on what happens when you are injured, how to prepare for your journeys by acquiring an Advantage, and how your experiences can improve your skills and allow you to buy new talents.

### RELATIONSHIPS

You have a relationship with each of the other player characters; at the start of the game you all know each other. You may have just become acquainted with each other, or been friends your whole lives. For each of the other characters, choose a relationship from your archetype or make one up on your own. The other player must approve the relationship. Relationships should be interesting, without making you enemies – you must be able to travel and work together.

### RESOURCES

Your Resources value indicates how much capital you have at your disposal. A higher value means that you enjoy a nicer home and lifestyle, and have easier access to things you need. The table on the next page shows the meaning of different values. In-game events that affect your living standard will change the value. Normally you start out with the lower value for your archetype. However, this can be raised by spending skill points – each point raises Resources by one step, although your starting value cannot exceed what is indicated in the archetype. Resources can only be raised with skill points before you start playing; once the game has begun you can only increase Resources by purchasing talents (see chapter 4).

## RESOURCES

### VALUE STANDARD OF LIVING

- 1 **DESTITUTE.** You are completely dependent on others for your survival. Every day is a struggle for food and you have few, if any, belongings. This may have caused you to contract diseases, starve, or turn to drugs or alcohol for relief.
- 2 **POOR.** You live very simply. Most days there is food on the table, but far too little. If you have children, they are forced to live in squalor. You might own a change of clothes and a few possessions. Loss of income would be disastrous for you and your family.
- 3 **STRUGGLING.** You have a humble home and a fixed income. You have no money for savings, but you can dress your family for special occasions and your children have some access to education – at least for a few years.
- 4 **FINANCIALLY STABLE.** You own your own home and have a job that provides a steady income. Most likely you have some money stashed away. Occasionally you may treat yourself to some sweets, a trip, or a beautiful object. In times of crisis there are people to lend you money.
- 5 **MIDDLE-CLASS.** You own a home and a business. You may have one or several employees and know how to invest for the future. You have savings and access to loans. You and your family are living well.
- 6 **WELL-OFF.** You have a big house or apartment. You probably have multiple sources of income and several employees. You do not think of money as a scarce resource, but as a game to increase your capital and influence. You keep fine company and have little contact with the poor. Your family can go on vacations and you can afford all the latest innovations.
- 7 **WEALTHY.** You have large amounts of inherited money and real estate. You probably own multiple properties, keep lots of servants, and have many sources of income. There are few things you cannot afford. You are well-connected with the city's and country's elite, and on good terms with senior officials, politicians, and nobles. The only time you see any poor people is through your carriage window.
- 8 **FILTHY RICH.** You are one of the richest people in the country and have direct contact with its rulers. You own one or several castles or mansions. There is no expense too great. You can treat yourself to lavish extravagance without ever worrying about the cost.

## EQUIPMENT AND MEMENTOS

Your archetype specifies what equipment you start with. In addition to your regular equipment you get a memento that will help you play and portray your character. Roll on the table for mementos or decide for yourself what items you have. You can use your memento to heal a Condition by interacting with it. Explain how you use the item in question. The Gamemaster has the final say.

Your memento is part of your character – feel free to weave it into your personality or background. It can be broken or lost during a mystery, but by spending one experience point you can have it returned or repaired in time for the next mystery. You may also choose a new one, but in that case you must first play a full mystery without a memento.



## MEMENTOS

Roll two six-sided dice. The first one represents tens and the other ones.

| D66 | ITEM  | D66 | ITEM  |
|-----|---|-----|---|
| 11  | Dried red rose                                    | 41  | Well-thumbed novel with dedication                  |
| 12  | Photo of someone close to you                     | 42  | Plans for a family tomb                             |
| 13  | Seal ring with a secret chamber                   | 43  | Map with notes in the margin                        |
| 14  | Your father's cane                                | 44  | Strange animal preserved in a glass jar             |
| 15  | Hat with a secret compartment                     | 45  | Music box from your childhood                       |
| 16  | Book in a foreign language                        | 46  | Sunstone (cut mineral)                              |
| 21  | Hip flask with inscription                        | 51  | Small bottle of perfume that reminds you of someone |
| 22  | Old love letter                                   | 52  | Hymnbook passed down in the family                  |
| 23  | A scruffy cat                                     | 53  | Pocket watch with a photo inside                    |
| 24  | A monkey's skull                                  | 54  | An unsigned will                                    |
| 25  | Bloodstained promissory note                      | 55  | Golden box from a foreign land                      |
| 26  | Gold jewelry worn by your mother                  | 56  | Sheet music from a forgotten master                 |
| 31  | Silver cross on a chain                           | 61  | Powder compact with sleeping pills                  |
| 32  | Beautiful fiddle passed down in the family        | 62  | Beautifully ornamented pipe                         |
| 33  | Journal (yours or someone else's)                 | 63  | Rabbit's foot or some other lucky charm             |
| 34  | Newspaper from a date that means something to you | 64  | Syringe with needle in a box                        |
| 35  | Ragged doll                                       | 65  | Worn dice made of bone                              |
| 36  | Tame pigeon                                       | 66  | A manuscript passed down in the family              |

## DESCRIPTION

Before starting the game, you must introduce yourself to the Gamemaster and the other players. For example, you could describe what you looklike, how you make the others feel, what you are wearing, and how you should be addressed. Perhaps there are rumors about you, or maybe you have an ability to always become the center of attention in social situations. Are you quiet and mysterious? Do you smell of forest and sweat? Your description should be vivid, but brief. Make some notes on your character sheet, and feel free to draw your character.

## CONDITIONS

During the game you may have to suffer what are called Conditions, which can be likened to injuries or afflictions. These occur when you fail to protect yourself in dangerous situations, or when you push yourself to succeed. This is described further in chapters 3 and 5.

There are three physical Conditions and three mental ones. Acquiring a Condition means that you get a -1 modifier to skill tests for that type of action. Physical Conditions add a penalty to skills related to Physique and Precision. Mental Conditions add a

penalty to skills related to Logic and Empathy. Also note that these modifiers accumulate: acquiring two Conditions adds -2 to your skill test. However, it is possible to cure Conditions during the mystery (see chapter 5), and no matter how many Conditions you accumulate, you may always roll at least one die.

If you have incurred all Conditions of either type, mental or physical, and then suffer yet another one, you become Broken. The player character cannot continue without medical attention.

Being physically Broken can mean that you are exhausted beyond your limits, or have sustained a serious wound. You might be unconscious or dying. Perhaps you have had your leg crushed or been shot in the gut, writhing in agony. While physically Broken you cannot move or do anything but utter a few words at a time. The Gamemaster decides whether you are able to crawl away, roll to safety, or cry for help.

When you are mentally Broken you might be terrified, shocked, or confused. Perhaps you have lost all hope of getting through the situation alive, or lost faith in yourself or your companions. Maybe you can no longer make sense of the world and collapse in tears. While mentally Broken you may move and flee the scene, should you wish to do so, but are unable

to engage in any kind of sensible dialogue; at best, you can scream or whimper in monosyllabic bursts.

If you are Broken, you cannot make any successful die rolls, whether physical or mental. You also sustain a critical wound, which means that you must roll on a table to see whether you get a Defect or an Insight. Defects and Insights are described further in chapter 5.

Conditions can help you portray your character: if she is upset, that should be reflected in how you play her. But in the end, it is of course you who decides the extent to which Conditions will affect the way you play your character.

## ADVANTAGE

On the way to a mystery you will be able to gain an Advantage, but only one per mystery. The Advantage might be a new acquaintance who will then be available at the location to help you, a mysterious experience that gives you power, or you maintaining or training with your weapons on the way to the location. The Advantage can also be you bonding with another player character, which will later help you work together.

You can use your Advantage once per gaming session, which adds +2 dice to a skill test. You must decide whether to use it before rolling the dice, or



### CONDITIONS

#### PHYSICAL CONDITIONS (PHYSIQUE AND PRECISION)

- ✦ Exhausted
- ✦ Battered
- ✦ Wounded

#### MENTAL CONDITIONS (LOGIC AND EMPATHY)

- ✦ Angry
- ✦ Frightened
- ✦ Hopeless



when pushing the roll (see chapter 3), and explain how you use it. After the mystery your Advantage is lost. Next time you must choose another skill as your Advantage.

### EXAMPLES OF ADVANTAGES

- ✦ I have trained with my rapier day and night
- ✦ Miss Silferdaal seems to like me
- ✦ I was blessed by an angel
- ✦ I dreamed that I risked my life for my friends
- ✦ The conversation with Captain Brungaard resolved our differences once and for all
- ✦ With the memory of Professor Brunelius's kiss, I can do anything

**GAMEMASTER:** *A rumble is heard in the distance. Everyone around you disappears. You are alone in the town square. The sun is coated in a sickly shade of green. Something approaches from the forest. The ground turns muddy, pulling you down. Make a Fear test.*

**PLAYER 1 (KASPAR STÅHL):** *I take out the icon I got from the old lady on the train. Looking at it, I remember her words. "In the darkest moments, hold out your hand and feel the Lord's presence." I get to roll two extra dice.*

### EXPERIENCE POINTS

At the end of each session your player character gains Experience Points (XP). The Gamemaster asks your character questions (see text box), and for every one that you can answer with a "yes" you are granted 1 XP.

When you have gained 5 XP you can buy an Advance. This means that you may increase the value of a skill by one step, or buy a new talent. You can never have more than 5 in a skill, but there is no limit to how many talents you can purchase. Also note that

you are free to choose any talent you want, including those pertaining to other archetypes.

### QUESTIONS FOR EXPERIENCE POINTS

1. Did you participate in the session?  
(The character always gets at least 1 XP)
2. Did you confront any vaesen?
3. Did you identify a previously unknown vaesen?
4. Were you affected by your Dark Secret?
5. Did you take risks to protect other people?
6. Have you learned anything? (what?)
7. Did you develop something in your headquarters?
8. Did you perform an extraordinary action?

## ARCHETYPES

This section describes ten archetypes, one of which you must choose as a basis for your character. For each archetype there are choices to be made, and suggestions on what to choose.

For the parts that constitute your character's personality, you are free to make up your own alternatives – although they must ultimately be approved by the Gamemaster. For those that are referred to as characteristics, however, you must stay within the bounds of your archetype.

### LIFE PATHS

The quickest method of creating player characters is the default one found in this chapter. However, for those that want some more detail there is an alternative character creation process using random rolls on life path tables found on page 214 at the end of this book.

# ACADEMIC

*We all agreed that it was theoretically possible to give those who are not verum videntes, or so-called Thursday's Children, the ability to see vaesen. The others quickly forgot our discussion. For me, the issue became an obsession. And not only a theoretical one. If people around us could see the truth, we would become the leaders of the new world. A text written by a Sufi philosopher from Kottayam mentioned a dark fluid which, after translation, was called Black Mud. Drinking it causes creatures to emerge. I had to sell much of my mother's jewelry to have a merchant bring a jar of said mud back to Upsala. And now, here it is, on the desk before me.*



Choose among the suggestions below or make one up yourself.

## NAME

- ✦ FIRST NAME: Albert, Astrid, Elin, Isaac, Louis, Praskoviya
- ✦ LAST NAME: Brugge, Gregorius, Taalinen

## MOTIVATION

- ✦ Charting the unknown
- ✦ Proving my critics wrong
- ✦ Becoming famous

## TRAUMA

- ✦ Vaettir turned you into a rat
- ✦ Aged by the magic of a mermaid
- ✦ Watched your partner being torn apart by a giant

## DARK SECRET

- ✦ Addicted to drugs
- ✦ Stole or falsified documents to get research results
- ✦ Hunted by a vaesen

## RELATIONSHIPS

Choose a relationship for each of the other player characters, or make up your own.

- ✦ A tool for my purposes
- ✦ I cannot stay calm in your presence
- ✦ A good friend

- ✦ **MAIN ATTRIBUTE:** Logic
- ✦ **MAIN SKILL:** LEARNING
- ✦ **TALENTS:** Bookworm, Erudite, Knowledge is Reassuring
- ✦ **RESOURCES:** 4–6
- ✦ **EQUIPMENT:** Book collection or map book, writing utensils, liquor or slide rule.



# DOCTOR

*There are electrical signals moving through our bodies. When a foreign organism penetrates the skin, microscopic soldiers are created in defense. The brain can remember more things than anyone could possibly write down in a lifetime. These wonders take place every second. Yet my colleagues continue to question the existence of supernatural beings. I was forced to retract my statements under humiliating circumstances in order to retain my right to practice. I know that the creature I dissected during my business trip to Rovaniemi in northern Finland was not one of God's creations. My oath as a doctor, to help and protect my fellow man, includes the threats of Hell.*



Choose among the suggestions below or make one up yourself.

## NAME

- ✦ **FIRST NAME:** Alfred, Dorotea, Friedrich, Karl, Margit, Vilhelmina
- ✦ **LAST NAME:** Borelius, Köningsmark, Luukonen

## MOTIVATION

- ✦ Exploring and describing the world
- ✦ Aiding the weak and afflicted
- ✦ Strengthening the Society and becoming its leader

## TRAUMA

- ✦ A corpse came back to life during an autopsy
- ✦ Operated on a person with donkey's ears and hooves
- ✦ Saw your destiny in the eyes of a dying mermaid

## DARK SECRET

- ✦ Has two separate personalities
- ✦ Involved in illicit affairs
- ✦ Unnatural lust

## RELATIONSHIPS

Choose a relationship for each of the other player characters, or make up your own.

- ✦ I trust you with my secrets
- ✦ You annoy me
- ✦ I dream of you at night

- ✦ **MAIN ATTRIBUTE:** Logic
- ✦ **MAIN SKILL:** MEDICINE
- ✦ **TALENTS:** Army Medic, Chief Physician, Emergency Medicine
- ✦ **RESOURCES:** 4–6
- ✦ **EQUIPMENT:** Doctor's bag with medical equipment, liquor or fine wine, weak horse or strong poison

# HUNTER

*The Baroness's interest in duck hunting was nothing more than an excuse to get some time alone with me in the open air. We used to bring wine and baguettes, and she would read to me tales of monsters and vaesen before we made love on beautiful blankets. I had mustered the courage to call her darling, even though her face told me I was moving too close to, or even beyond, the boundaries of our relationship. One night she came to my home, stark naked and exposed. Only when she straddled me did I notice that the Baron and several others had followed us into the cabin and hidden in the darkness by the door. I tried to get up, but the Baroness's increasingly violent movements pushed me down. As her moaning turned into strange words in a tongue that made my body cramp with fear, the others approached us, chanting along with her.*



Choose among the suggestions below or make one up yourself.

## NAME

- ✦ FIRST NAME: Algot, Blenda, Egil, Maj, Malte, Torun
- ✦ LAST NAME: Ek, Lindberg, Sigridsson

## MOTIVATION

- ✦ The thing that attacked my family must be destroyed
- ✦ Live in tune with nature
- ✦ Wants to bag some fantastic game

## TRAUMA

- ✦ Attacked by the branches of an ash tree wife
- ✦ Broke your leg in the forest, but was guided home by a will o' the wisp
- ✦ Captured at dawn by a mountain troll and was stuck in its petrified arms

## DARK SECRET

- ✦ I sold my soul
- ✦ I cannot control my fits of rage
- ✦ Has children with a vaesen

## RELATIONSHIPS

Choose a relationship for each of the other player characters, or make up your own.

- ✦ I am attracted to you
- ✦ I hate bullies like you
- ✦ You're a townie weakling

- ✦ **MAIN ATTRIBUTE:** Precision
- ✦ **MAIN SKILL:** RANGED COMBAT
- ✦ **TALENTS:** Bloodhound, Herbalist, Marksman
- ✦ **RESOURCES:** 2–4
- ✦ **EQUIPMENT:** Rifle, hunting knife or hunting dog, hunting trap or hunting equipment



# OCCULTIST

*I had to know the truth. How did I acquire the power of foresight, and how could I make men collapse in pain just by imagining their beating hearts? When I was young and moved to the city, my mother stayed behind in Långaby. She lived alone with two goats and a pig which she oddly enough had named after my late father. Mother didn't like to talk about these things. She kept coming back to the same two sentences: Your cradle. I woke up and looked in your cradle. Eventually I lost my patience. I threatened her with the fireplace poker, claiming that I could turn her into a wart on my cheek. Then she told me. I was swapped for another.*



Choose among the suggestions below or make one up yourself.

## NAME

- ✦ **FIRST NAME:** Aleksander, Niklas, Thomas, Ingrid, Ulrika, Valentina
- ✦ **LAST NAME:** Bäcklund, Konradsson, Mörk

## MOTIVATION

- ✦ Learning about vaesen
- ✦ Understanding myself
- ✦ Power

## TRAUMA

- ✦ Was hit by corrosive venom while trying to steal a lindworm egg
- ✦ The family farm is being run by a grumpy house nisse
- ✦ Was attacked by a night raven who infected you with a febrile disease

## DARK SECRET

- ✦ Guilty of a heinous crime
- ✦ My powers control me
- ✦ Changeling

## RELATIONSHIPS

Choose a relationship for each of the other player characters, or make up your own.

- ✦ You are hiding something from the rest of us
- ✦ You bring me peace.
- ✦ You will save us all one day



- ✦ **MAIN ATTRIBUTE:** Precision
- ✦ **MAIN SKILL:** STEALTH
- ✦ **TALENTS:** Magic tricks, Medium, Striking Fear
- ✦ **RESOURCES:** 1–4
- ✦ **EQUIPMENT:** Crystal ball, powdered stag's horn (page 123) or tinder box, dagger or cooking pot



# OFFICER

*As a child, I was enchanted by the glistening medals of the stately gentlemen moving across the dance floor at my parents' gatherings. An uncle taught me to shoot. He instructed me in the moral principles to which the king's soldiers ought to adhere. As I myself rode toward the battlefield, I fantasized about my spectacular return. No one had told me what would happen in between. Among screaming bodies and gut-spewing soldiers, I saw looting and abuse. I was hit by a bullet from one of my own. When I woke up, I was lying on a cart packed with corpses.*

*The creatures caring for me were quite strange-looking. I think they were trolls. Yet friendly and shy. I haven't told mother about them or the battlefield. But I lose my speech when I think of the courier that will one day summon me to the next battle.*



Choose among the suggestions below or make one up yourself.

## NAME

- ♦ FIRST NAME: Alexandra, Franz, Jarmo, Johan, Klara, Kristina
- ♦ LAST NAME: Almklint, Lidén, Nordenflycht

## MOTIVATION

- ♦ Make my father proud
- ♦ My friends need me
- ♦ Seek out danger and death

## TRAUMA

- ♦ Almost drowned when your ship was dragged down by a sea monster
- ♦ Lost all your men to an angry giant
- ♦ Saw dead warriors rise again on the battlefield

## DARK SECRET

- ♦ Deserter
- ♦ Cannot cope with filth and disorder
- ♦ Killed a defenseless enemy

## RELATIONSHIPS

Choose a relationship for each of the other player characters, or make up your own.

- ♦ Protects you at any cost
- ♦ My leader
- ♦ Distrusts you

- ♦ MAIN ATTRIBUTE: Precision
- ♦ MAIN SKILL: RANGED COMBAT
- ♦ TALENTS: Battle-hardened, Gentleman, Tactician
- ♦ RESOURCES: 3–7
- ♦ EQUIPMENT: Rifle or pistol, compass or bayonet, map book or saber



# PRIEST

*I was a skeptic like any other. Despite the color of my collar I met with modern thinkers talking about the symbolic messages of the bible. Leviathan, the great devil-snake, was mankind's struggle against its own potential for evil. Possessions and demons were historical descriptions of the mental disorders of the time. But I saw revenants crawling out of the fjord near the village of Vestnes on the Norwegian coast. We hid inside the church and let the bells ring until the morning light drove them off. Now I know better than to be ignorant of the word of our Lord. The scriptures are true!*



Choose among the suggestions below or make one up yourself.

## NAME

- ✦ FIRST NAME: Elizabeth, Erik, Lydia, Maria, Otto, Viktor
- ✦ LAST NAME: af Blacke, Forsmark, Nyström

## MOTIVATION

- ✦ Performing a sacred mission
- ✦ Cleansing my tarnished soul
- ✦ Understanding God's creation

## TRAUMA

- ✦ Hurt someone after being enthralled by a witch
- ✦ Watched a church grim tear apart some thieves trying to steal the church silver
- ✦ The third owner of a spertus, serving the church to avoid being twisted

## DARK SECRET

- ✦ The Devil speaks to me
- ✦ I have stolen my identity
- ✦ Ensnared by a vaesen

## RELATIONSHIPS

Choose a relationship for each of the other player characters, or make up your own.

- ✦ I am better than you
- ✦ Secretly in love with you
- ✦ My disciple

- ✦ **MAIN ATTRIBUTE:** Empathy
- ✦ **MAIN SKILL:** OBSERVATION
- ✦ **TALENTS:** Absolution, Blessing, Confessor
- ✦ **RESOURCES:** 4–6
- ✦ **EQUIPMENT:** Musical instrument or fine wines, writing utensils, holy water or old bible (page 123)

# PRIVATE DETECTIVE

*It never occurred to me to ask why they hired a detective to go all the way to Kristinehamn instead of contacting the local authorities. I assumed they had heard of the man who solved the dockside murders. But what they needed was someone to clean up a slaughterhouse. The castle looked as if it had been blasted by cannons. The villagers were afraid to enter. It reeked of blood and excrement. I don't even want to think about what happened next. I banished whatever it was that had attacked the von Fleesingen family and turned their bodies inside out. But not before it had slain*

*every man, woman and child  
in the nearby villages.*

*I now visit the castle  
every night.*



Choose among the suggestions below or make one up yourself.

## NAME

- ✦ FIRST NAME: Anders, Felicia, Gabriella, Henrik, Samuel, Stina
- ✦ LAST NAME: Bagghult, Järv, Mäkinen

## MOTIVATION

- ✦ Getting away from my family
- ✦ Uncovering the truth
- ✦ Thrill-seeking

## TRAUMA

- ✦ Heard the cry of a myling during your search for a missing child
- ✦ Had nightmares and woke up breathless and mare-ridden
- ✦ Came face-to-face with a werewolf

## DARK SECRET

- ✦ There is a price on my head
- ✦ Constant adulterer
- ✦ Drug addict

## RELATIONSHIPS

Choose a relationship for each of the other player characters, or make up your own.

- ✦ You think you can trust me
- ✦ A good person
- ✦ Tries to understand you

- ✦ **MAIN ATTRIBUTE:** Logic
- ✦ **MAIN SKILL:** INVESTIGATION
- ✦ **TALENTS:** Eagle Eye, Elementary, Focused
- ✦ **RESOURCES:** 2–5
- ✦ **EQUIPMENT:** Magnifying glass or lockpicks, revolver, knuckle duster or binoculars



# SERVANT

*I was saved by my small bladder. While I was out pissing against a tree, an uninvited fiddler showed up at the Christmas party which the Duke lets us servants hold once a year, on Boxing Day evening. The tunes of his fiddle made my legs twitch as I stepped back toward the house. Through the window I saw them dancing, their faces frozen in desperate grins; they couldn't stop. I had heard of the devil's instrument which forces one's limbs to move until they fall apart. There were rumors of skulls still rhythmically clacking their jaws as they were being buried. How would I be able to resist the musician of Lucifer? When I returned the following morning, the music had stopped. No one spoke of the party. More than half quit their jobs. I wonder what would have happened had I joined the others inside.*



Choose among the suggestions below or make one up yourself.

## NAME

- ✦ FIRST NAME: Anna, Elsa, Joakim, Rut, Sören, Torsten
- ✦ LAST NAME: Bäck, Rask, Änglund

## MOTIVATION

- ✦ Protecting my master
- ✦ Curiosity
- ✦ An urge to help humans and vaesen alike

## TRAUMA

- ✦ Bitten by a brook horse
- ✦ Lost a master to the alluring song of the Neck
- ✦ Served a household plagued by a changeling

## DARK SECRET

- ✦ I murdered someone
- ✦ Persecuted for my religion
- ✦ Spying for a foreign power

## RELATIONSHIPS

Choose a relationship for each of the other player characters, or make up your own.

- ✦ At your service
- ✦ I don't take orders from you
- ✦ Mutual respect

- ✦ MAIN ATTRIBUTE: Physique
- ✦ MAIN SKILL: FORCE
- ✦ TALENTS: Loyal, Robust, Tough as Nails
- ✦ RESOURCES: 2-4
- ✦ EQUIPMENT: Revolver, hurricane lamp or make-up, field kitchen or simple bandages

# VAGABOND

*I was five years old when I learned to carve and interpret hobo signs. At fifteen I came across a symbol I'd never seen before. It had been scratched into the fence of an isolated farm — a star with a distorted guard dog, along with the symbol for warning, repeated several times. Instead of getting out of there I hid in in the hay loft of a barn, and waited, eager to learn what I would see through its window. When night came, a bright light rose from the ground, and I could hear a whistling sound seemingly coming from the starry sky above. I grabbed my pack, ready to run far away from there. But there was a handsome man with shining eyes standing in the doorway. It took me ten years to break the spell that made me his slave. Next time we meet, he will pay for the humiliation he subjected me to.*



Choose among the suggestions below or make one up yourself.

## NAME

- ✦ FIRST NAME: Dagmar, Oskar, Rasmus, Rolf, Signe, Viola
- ✦ LAST NAME: Dolk, Eriksson, Krabbe

## MOTIVATION

- ✦ Avenging my family
- ✦ Exposing supernatural secrets
- ✦ Being liked

## TRAUMA

- ✦ Saw a revenant rise from its grave
- ✦ Forever in love with a wood wife
- ✦ Survived a week inside a troll bag

## DARK SECRET

- ✦ Stolen identity
- ✦ Terminal illness
- ✦ A vaesen kills anyone I love

## RELATIONSHIPS

Choose a relationship for each of the other player characters, or make up your own.

- ✦ You scratch my back, and I'll scratch yours
- ✦ Feigned gratitude
- ✦ You are my friend

- ✦ **MAIN ATTRIBUTE:** Physique
- ✦ **MAIN SKILL:** MANIPULATION
- ✦ **TALENTS:** Hobo Tricks, Suspicious, Well-traveled
- ✦ **RESOURCES:** 1–3
- ✦ **EQUIPMENT:** Walking stick, knife or crowbar, liquor or pet dog



# WRITER

*Was the creature trying to hurt me or do me a favor? I had been sitting in my chamber for several nights in a row, with no money for candles or lamp oil, my only companions a stack of blank sheets of paper and my own growling stomach—or so I thought. Suddenly there was something beside me, breathing white clouds in the cool air. It grabbed my pen in a firm grip. And then it wrote. At first I rejoiced in the beautiful words. But it wouldn't stop. For five days and five nights the creature wrote with my hand. The result was the book everyone is talking about, and the fingers I can no longer use. I never saw its face. But I will find it again.*



Choose among the suggestions below or make one up yourself.

## NAME

- ✦ **FIRST NAME:** August, Edvard, Helena, Hugo, Maud, Selma
- ✦ **LAST NAME:** Johansson, Nilsson, Skytte

## MOTIVATION

- ✦ Finding a certain vaesen
- ✦ Researching a book
- ✦ Revenge

## TRAUMA

- ✦ Angered fairies who put you to sleep and sucked your blood
- ✦ Cursed by a homeless vaettir to write a book in your own blood
- ✦ Heard the song of the Neck, but failed to write down the lyrics

## DARK SECRET

- ✦ I record and use the secrets and weaknesses of my friends
- ✦ Wanted for revolutionary ideas
- ✦ My life's work is a lie

## RELATIONSHIPS

Choose a relationship for each of the other player characters, or make up your own.

- ✦ You inspire me
- ✦ Tries to win your appreciation
- ✦ You frighten me

- ✦ **MAIN ATTRIBUTE:** Empathy
- ✦ **MAIN SKILL:** INSPIRATION
- ✦ **TALENTS:** Automatic Writing, Journalist, Wordsmith
- ✦ **RESOURCES:** 2–5
- ✦ **EQUIPMENT:** Writing utensils and paper, camera or opera glasses, pet dog or book collection







*In the daylight, the pond and the surrounding pine forest seemed perfectly peaceful. The villagers who showed us the way assured us that the place had nothing to do with Father Holtz's disappearance. Yet everything pointed here. We shared their food and laughed. On the way back to the village they asked when we would return to Upsala, and we pretended they had convinced us, claiming that we would depart first thing in the morning. That night we slipped out into the forest. The stars had painted the trees gray. The darkness deepened between the tree trunks, as the moonlight glittered on the surface of the pond. Standing close together, we waited. Glowing eyes opened around us; there must have been close to a hundred owls gathered in the surrounding treetops. Thunderous drums roared from the forest. We heard voices chanting in a tongue devised by the Dark One, and we knew it was the villagers who had also snuck out in the night. There were ripples in the water. Something was rising from beneath the surface.*



## SKILLS

MOST OF WHAT happens in *Vaesen* can be handled through conversations between the players and the Gamemaster. But sooner or later a player character will attempt something exciting, where success is not guaranteed. In that case, it is time to bring out the dice and let chance decide what happens next. The more proficient your character is in her skill, the greater her chance of success will be.

This chapter describes using skill tests to determine how well you succeed at certain actions through a combination of skill and luck. It outlines the various stages of the skill test – and what the outcome

may look like. We also describe how the test can be made easier or more difficult by the circumstances at hand, such as you being hurt or using your talents, Advantage, or equipment. There are rules for how you may push your roll – that is, putting in so much effort that you suffer negative effects but also get a chance to re-roll the skill test. The text proceeds to explain what happens when you are injured and forced to acquire physical or mental Conditions – as a result either of pushing the roll or failing a skill test. The chapter concludes with a description of the twelve skills featured in the game.

## SKILL TESTS

Skills will let you handle or endure difficult situations, if used successfully. There are twelve of them, each linked to a certain attribute. When using a skill, you start by adding the skill value and the attribute together. The sum determines how many six-sided dice you get to roll. Rolling a six counts as a success. You rarely need more than one success in order to pass a skill test.

Also note that your player character is free to use any skill in the game, even if her skill value is 0; in that case you simply roll the number of dice indicated by the relevant attribute. The same applies if you attempt something that is not covered by a specific skill.

**PLAYER 1 (KASPAR STÄHL):** *I put on the cowl and the mask, and sneak into the church.*

**THE GAMEMASTER:** *It's dark and cold, and the great double doors of the church are decorated with demonic faces made of metal. As you open them, you hear the murmur of a hundred or so people — all wearing cowls. There must be several villages gathered here. There are red candles burning all over the place. Someone is playing a*

*stringed instrument you can't identify. At the front there is a person facing the crowd. The face is shrouded by a hood. Make a **STEALTH** test.*

**PLAYER 1:** *I have Precision 2 and **STEALTH** 2. That's four dice. No sixes — I fail!*

**THE GAMEMASTER:** *The person at the front pulls back his hood. It's your brother. Your eyes meet.*

### ADDING MODIFIERS

A basic rule is that everything affecting the roll is added together. If you have a Talent that adds +2 to the roll, and use your Advantage to gain another +2, you get four extra dice to roll. Should you also be injured and have a Condition, that deducts one die, giving you a total of three extra dice.

### MEANS AND ENDS

Before rolling you must tell the others what your player character is doing and what she is trying to achieve. The Gamemaster may ask you to explain further or change your goal. This usually happens when she cannot get a clear picture of what you want to do, or finds your goal too unrealistic. For example, you cannot use **MANIPULATION** to make an enemy kill itself, or heal hundreds of patients without access to medicine, equipment, or beds.

**THE GAMEMASTER:** *Kaspar is sitting in a metal cage in the middle of the marketplace. He is naked, filthy, and barely conscious. Twenty or so villagers have gathered around him, armed with hunting rifles and scythes. They have that crazy look in their eyes which seems to be spreading through the entire town.*

**PLAYER 3 (ILJENKA PROKOTIN):** *I draw my knife and launch myself at them.*

**THE GAMEMASTER:** *Do you really want to do that? Alone against twenty armed opponents, you are guaranteed to lose.*

### SKILLS

- ✦ **AGILITY** (Physique)
- ✦ **CLOSE COMBAT** (Physique)
- ✦ **FORCE** (Physique)
- ✦ **MEDICINE** (Precision)
- ✦ **RANGED COMBAT** (Precision)
- ✦ **STEALTH** (Precision)
- ✦ **INVESTIGATION** (Logic)
- ✦ **LEARNING** (Logic)
- ✦ **VIGILANCE** (Logic)
- ✦ **INSPIRATION** (Empathy)
- ✦ **MANIPULATION** (Empathy)
- ✦ **OBSERVATION** (Empathy)





## FAILED TESTS

Failing a test means that something detrimental or unexpected happens to you. In most situations the implications are quite obvious. A failed attempt at sneaking means that you are detected. If you are trying to inspire a crowd they may turn against you. Even before the roll is made, the Gamemaster should try to be clear about what happens if the test fails.

In particularly difficult or dangerous situations, failing a test also means that you become afflicted with a Condition. The Gamemaster should inform you of this before you roll. You suffer a Condition of the same type (physical or mental) as the skill you attempted to use, but are free to choose which one. Not all tests should carry the risk of acquiring a Condition – the player characters would quickly be worn down and the game would come to a halt.

Some situations are so serious that you immediately become Broken upon failure. Perhaps you are trying not to get hit by a train or defending your seemingly outrageous behavior before the entire commission.

PLAYER 2 (ASTRID LILJA): *I sit down across from the sorcerer, staring into his eyes. "Do your worst!" I let him use his powers on me. But I'm trying to resist and understand how he is controlling others.*

THE GAMEMASTER: *Make an **OBSERVATION** test. If you fail, he takes control of you. You will also suffer a mental Condition.*

## PUSHING THE ROLL

Having failed a test, you can choose to muster your strength and give it one more try. This can only be done once per action, and must happen immediately after failing a test. This is called *pushing the roll*.

When pushing your roll, you suffer a Condition. If you are using Physique or Precision you choose a physical Condition – if you are using Logic or Empathy you choose a mental one. You

### A SINGLE ROLL

Whenever your player character tries to do something, you make one roll for the entire situation. If you are attempting to sneak through a castle, you do not roll to see if you reach the gate, then roll again to see if you get to the stairway, and then to go up the stairs. One die roll is enough. Sometimes that means the effect of the skill test can last a long time; for instance, it can take many days to craft something or cure a sick person. The only exception is combat, which is covered in chapter 5.

may then re-roll every die except the sixes, should there be any. You can push rolls that have already succeeded, since there are situations where multiple successes make you succeed particularly well (see below).

PLAYER 1 (KASPAR STÅHL): *I shout at him: "I'm your brother!" I try to get him to snap out of whatever spell he is under.*

THE GAMEMASTER: *Make a **MANIPULATION** test.*

PLAYER 1: *I roll three dice, but fail. I choose the Condition Angry and push the roll. I grab him, screaming: "Look into my eyes, Roland!" Then I re-roll all three dice.*

### BROKEN TO SUCCEED

When pushing a roll, you get to re-roll all dice except the sixes. The Condition you acquire as a result does not come into effect until after the roll. It is therefore possible to become Broken from pushing a roll. Only after the roll does the Condition Broken render you incapacitated.

### THE STORY MUST GO ON

The Gamemaster must make sure that failed tests do not bring the story to a standstill. It could happen if you fail to obtain the information you need to locate a certain creature, or if you are locked up and required to pick a lock in order to escape. When a failed test threatens the flow of the story, there are three methods the Gamemaster can use to salvage the situation: consequences, Conditions, and requirements.

- ✦ Consequences mean that you succeed even though you failed the test, but that something else goes wrong instead. You got the information you wanted, but the creature has noticed you in the library and blocks your path. Sometimes the Gamemaster may keep the consequence secret for a while and reveal it later on.
- ✦ Conditions mean that you achieve what you wanted despite failing the test, but that you must choose a physical or mental Condition. You manage to push away the rock that is crushing your friend, but become Exhausted in the process.
- ✦ Requirements mean that you get some of what you wanted, but that more is required to achieve success. It can also mean that you fail, but the Gamemaster suggests an alternative way of resolving the situation. Perhaps you get the information you need, but it is written in a strange language and you must find a way to translate it. Maybe the person who can help you has already left, but the Gamemaster reveals that her children share some of her knowledge – and they are still in the village.

## CONDITIONS

There are two ways to acquire Conditions. You may have to choose one when pushing a roll, and can also get them as a consequence of failing a test. Acquiring Conditions means that your player character has been negatively affected.

Conditions are divided into two types: physical and mental. Physical Conditions are linked to Physique and Precision, and mental ones to Logic and Empathy. Physical Conditions include: **EXHAUSTED**, **BATTERED**, and **WOUNDED**, while mental Conditions include **ANGRY**, **FRIGHTENED**, and **HOPELESS**.

While you are suffering from a Condition you get 1 fewer die for all rolls that are linked to either physical or mental attributes. Also worth noting is that Conditions stack, meaning that two Conditions of the same type will subtract two dice from your dice pool. No matter how many Conditions you have accumulated, you may always roll at least one die. Conditions can be healed through rest and other activities, which is described further in chapter 5.

When you already have three Conditions of the same type and acquire a fourth one, you become Broken. This means that you are seriously injured, temporarily insane, or otherwise worn down. You may not perform any actions, physical or mental. In addition, a Broken player character also sustains a critical injury (see page 64).

### CONDITIONS AND SKILLS

| TYPE OF<br>CONDITION | AFFECTS SKILLS<br>BASED ON: |
|----------------------|-----------------------------|
| Physical             | Physique and Precision      |
| Mental               | Logic and Empathy           |



## LEVELS OF DIFFICULTY

In extreme cases, the Gamemaster may decide that it takes more than one success to succeed. This might happen when attempting to persuade a lynch mob to release the accused, or when you are being pursued by a killer across the stormy rooftops of a town. A challenging action requires two successes, while a difficult one requires three successes.

| DIFFICULTY  |                     |
|-------------|---------------------|
| ACTION      | NUMBER OF SUCCESSES |
| Normal      | 1                   |
| Challenging | 2                   |
| Difficult   | 3                   |

## HELPING EACH OTHER

Other player characters can increase your chance of passing a skill test by offering to help with whatever you are attempting to do. The Gamemaster decides whether you really do benefit from their actions. You gain +1 to your skill test for every person helping you, to a maximum of +3.

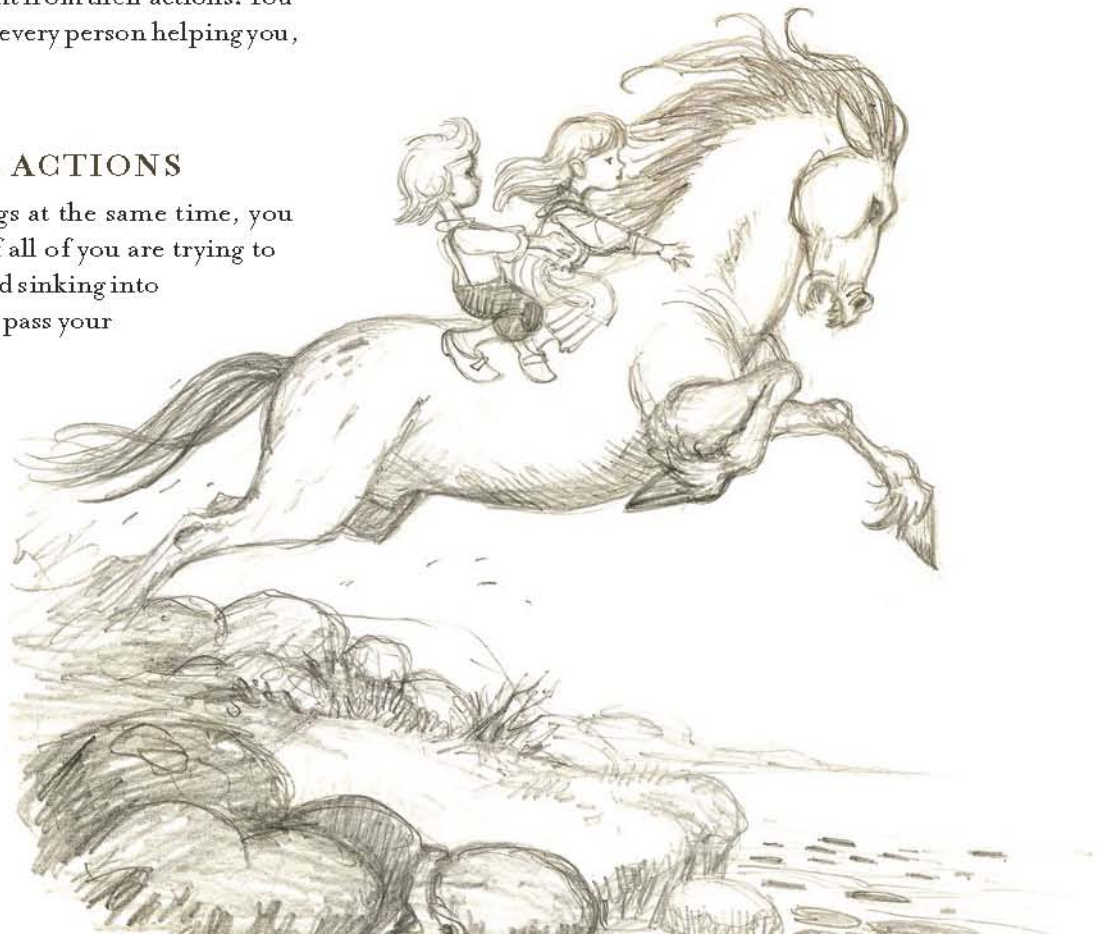
## PARALLEL ACTIONS

When you are doing things at the same time, you cannot help each other. If all of you are trying to sneak past someone or avoid sinking into a swamp, each of you must pass your own test without assistance from the others. However, some skills allow a character whose test is extra successful to give successes to others (see *Extra Successes*), and help them that way instead.

## CHANCE OF SUCCESS

This table shows the chance of succeeding at a roll, as well as the chance of succeeding if you then choose to push the roll.

| NUMBER OF DICE | CHANCE TO SUCCEED | PUSHED ROLL |
|----------------|-------------------|-------------|
| 1              | 17%               | 31%         |
| 2              | 31%               | 52%         |
| 3              | 42%               | 67%         |
| 4              | 52%               | 77%         |
| 5              | 60%               | 84%         |
| 6              | 67%               | 89%         |
| 7              | 72%               | 92%         |
| 8              | 77%               | 95%         |
| 9              | 81%               | 96%         |
| 10             | 84%               | 97%         |



## OPPOSED ROLLS

There will be many situations where an NPC or a player character tries to stop you from succeeding. A guard may try to detect you while you are sneaking. You and your friend disagree on something and each try to sway the opinion of the other. In such cases the outcome is decided by opposed rolls.



“My mother had a sister called Gunlög who, when they were children, always used to sit on the porch and gaze at the stars, telling stories about the glitterfolk living in the deep woods beyond the lakes and meadows. One night, when the mist lay heavy on the land, she heard music coming from the pasture and snuck over there without telling her parents.

In the middle of the pasture stood a fiddler who made the grass and flowers sway to his tunes. She danced with him in the moonlight until she could no longer stand. She was somewhere else then. When she returned the following morning, her hair had grown long and white, and her skin was wrinkly like an old woman’s. Gunlög said she’d been to the land of the fairies and lived a life as the glitter prince’s wife. But now he was dead, and she had come home.

– ELSA TAPPER, FARMER’S WIFE IN OVNÅKER

You and your opponent each make a roll. The person with the most successes prevails. Should both get an equal number of successes, you have neither succeeded nor failed. If your opponent is an NPC the Gamemaster may use one of the three methods described under failed rolls: consequences, Conditions, or requirements. You get what you want, but something goes wrong.

In a conflict between two player characters, where both roll the same number of successes, each may choose to push the roll to win. If you still get the same number of successes, you must agree on a compromise. Both get something they want, but at a cost.

THE GAMEMASTER: *As you throw the holy water on Kaspar’s brother it creates a shockwave that knocks both you and him off your feet. Kaspar, when you get up you see your brother on his knees. His eye color has returned to normal.*

PLAYER 3 (ILJENKA PROKOTIN): *I snatch one of the axes and sever his head from his neck.*

PLAYER 1 (KASPAR STÅHL): *No way. I run straight into you and yank the axe from your hands.*

THE GAMEMASTER: *You’ll need to make an opposed roll. Kaspar, you roll for **AGILITY** while Iljenka rolls for **CLOSE COMBAT**.*

PLAYER 1: *I got two successes.*

PLAYER 3: *Me too.*

THE GAMEMASTER: *Then it’s a compromise. How about this: Kaspar manages to push you away, positioning himself in front of his brother, but fails to take the axe and suffers a physical Condition?*

## ADVANTAGE

You can use your Advantage to increase your chance of success. The GM must be able to explain what makes it helpful, but it is probably best to be gener-



ous in their assessments – it would be a shame if the player characters never got to use it.

Advantages are specific to each mystery and may be used once per session, granting you two extra dice when making a skill test. Using an Advantage must be declared before rolling the dice, or when you decide to push a roll. In other words, you cannot use an Advantage if you have already failed the test. The Advantage you have gained on your journey to a mystery expires when you return to Upsala, but you will of course be able to acquire a new one on your way to the next mystery. The next Advantage you gain cannot be tied to the same skill, you have to choose another.

## EQUIPMENT

Most of the items you find during your mysteries are of the everyday variety, but some can be more useful, increasing your chance of passing your skill tests. You might need lockpicks to open something, or a horse to outride a lynch mob. These items add a bonus to your test, usually +1. Some special or even magic items may grant you a greater bonus, but rarely more than +3.

## EXTRA SUCCESSES

Rolling more successes than required means that you are extra successful. You impress yourself as well as others, get more than you wanted, or win renown for your skillfulness. In some cases, the Gamemaster may deem your surge in confidence so great that you heal a Condition.

Some skills let you use extra successes to achieve certain effects, such as helping another player character who has failed the same kind of skill test. Each effect costs one success. The Gamemaster decides whether or not (and for what purpose) you may use your extra successes.



“MARE, MARE, MARE!  
THOU MAY’ST NOT ENTER HERE,  
UNTIL THOU HAST COUNTED  
BIRDS IN WOODS, FISH IN RIVERS,  
EVERY OAK,  
AND THE WORDS OF GOD!”

– TRADITIONAL CHARM FOR BANISHING THE MARE

# THE SKILLS

## AGILITY (PHYSIQUE)

**AGILITY** is the ability to run fast, be flexible, and leap out of danger. You make an **AGILITY** test when attempting to flee, chase someone, jump, or climb. If there are several of you performing the same action you may transfer your successes to others, thus improving their chance to succeed.

In combat you can use **AGILITY** to evade attacks or escape. Extra successes can be used to:

- ❖ Outmaneuver your enemy. You exchange initiative cards.
- ❖ Stress your enemy. The enemy gets a mental Condition (may be chosen once per turn).
- ❖ Move one zone away from the enemy.
- ❖ Make your enemy position itself in a certain part of a zone.
- ❖ Perform actions while evading the enemy, for instance performing a ritual or setting fire to things in the room.

## CLOSE COMBAT (PHYSIQUE)

When fighting with melee weapons you use **CLOSE COMBAT**. By rolling more successes than required, you may:

- ❖ Increase your damage by 1. This effect can be chosen multiple times.
- ❖ Outmaneuver your enemy. You exchange initiative cards.

### RESISTING ATTACKS

A character who is targeted by an attack or ambush, poisoned food, or an attempt at persuasion has a chance to resist or detect the assailant. **AGILITY** is used to evade physical attacks. **VIGILANCE** is used to detect someone sneaking up on you or slipping something into your pocket. In social situations where your character is passive, you use **OBSERVATION**.

- ❖ Stress your enemy. Your attack causes mental Conditions rather than physical ones.
- ❖ Push the enemy into another zone or a specific part of the zone you are in.
- ❖ Make the enemy drop a weapon or item. Picking up an item during combat requires a fast action.

## FORCE (PHYSIQUE)

When using brute strength to lift something heavy, or to endure pain and hardship, you make a **FORCE** test. The skill can let you survive without food or water, or walk day and night, without suffering a Condition. You may transfer any extra successes to other player characters in the same situation.

**FORCE** can sometimes be used to repair things, such as a wagon with a broken wheel.

When engaged in hand-to-hand combat, or when attempting to wrestle or grapple the enemy, you use **FORCE**. By rolling more successes than required you may:

- ❖ Increase your damage by 1. This effect can be chosen multiple times.
- ❖ Outmaneuver your enemy. You exchange initiative cards.
- ❖ Stress your enemy. Your attack causes mental Conditions rather than physical ones.
- ❖ Push the enemy into another zone or a specific part of the zone you are in.
- ❖ Make the enemy drop a weapon or item. Picking up an item during combat requires a fast action.
- ❖ Grapple your enemy. She must succeed with an opposed roll to break free.

## MEDICINE (PRECISION)

**MEDICINE** lets you use your expertise to help someone who is hurt. The skill can also provide knowledge about anatomy, diseases, and injuries.

When a player character has sustained a physical critical injury, she may sometimes require medical assistance in order to survive (see chapter 5). Passing your skill test means that she is no longer Broken. Each extra success heals one physical Condition. If



you fail and wish to try again, you must first procure more medical supplies, transport the patient to a more suitable location, or get help from someone else with medical training.

**MEDICINE** can be used to heal physical Conditions. Your patients must be in bed, safe from immediate harm, and have access to food, drink, and medical equipment. You make a **MEDICINE** test for each day of treatment. A successful test heals three physical Conditions, distributed between the patients as you see fit. Each extra success heals another three Conditions. Even the Broken Condition can be healed this way. Usually a failed test simply means that a day has been wasted, though the Gamemaster may allow an enemy to act.

## RANGED COMBAT (PRECISION)

When attacking with ranged weapons or explosives you make a **RANGED COMBAT** test. By rolling more successes than required you may:

- ❖ Increase your damage by 1. This effect can be chosen multiple times.
- ❖ Outmaneuver your enemy. You exchange initiative cards.
- ❖ Stress your enemy. Your attack causes mental Conditions rather than physical ones.
- ❖ Push the enemy into another zone or a specific part of the zone you are in.
- ❖ Make the enemy drop a weapon or item. Picking up an item during combat requires a fast action.

## STEALTH (PRECISION)

When attempting to sneak, hide, pick locks, or perform card tricks, you make a **STEALTH** test. Extra successes make you succeed even better.

## INVESTIGATION (LOGIC)

You can use **INVESTIGATION** to search a room, understand what happened at a crime scene, examine a dead body, or find what is obscured. If you succeed, the Gamemaster will provide you with clues. If you roll more

The **INVESTIGATION** skill is not used to find hidden things such as doors or traps, or to uncover hidden clues. If you describe your character searching in the right place, the Gamemaster should simply let you find what you are looking for, if it can be seen at all. However, a successful skill test can provide a bonus if the GM wants.

successes than required, the Gamemaster decides whether you find more clues, understand the context, or simply enjoy the satisfaction of a job well done.

## LEARNING (LOGIC)

**LEARNING** is a measure of your education, as well as your ability to establish connections through logic and knowledge. When you need to know something about what is in front of you, you can make a **LEARNING** test to gain clues. Sometimes the Gamemaster will say that it requires books or other sources of information. In some situations, it is impossible to get any clues.

You can use **LEARNING** to translate foreign languages, figure out how best to behave in a certain situation, or understand the workings of a mechanical device, an occult ritual, or a magic item. You can use **LEARNING** to obtain basic information about a vaesen if the Gamemaster deems it appropriate. By rolling more successes than required you can sometimes gain access to more information.

**GAMEMASTER:** *Inside the abandoned barn the boards are covered in symbols, clearly carved with a knife.*

**PLAYER 2 (ASTRID LILJA):** *I make a **LEARNING** test to see if I recognize them. One success.*

**GAMEMASTER:** *You definitely recognize them. The man who kidnapped you and your mother when you were a child had lots of books with similar symbols. They are ancient Egyptian hieroglyphs. Several of them resemble those from his most precious text — the one he read that drove him insane and led him to do those terrible things.*

## VIGILANCE (LOGIC)

You use **VIGILANCE** to notice someone sneaking up on you. The person doing the sneaking makes an opposed **STEALTH** roll (see page 62) against your **VIGILANCE** roll. You also use **VIGILANCE** to follow tracks left by creatures or other people.

Furthermore, **VIGILANCE** can be used to interpret situations you are monitoring. If you succeed the Gamemaster provides you with information. You may realize what is about to happen, who the leader of a group is, which people might become a threat, or how best to tackle a situation. If you roll more successes than required, each extra success adds a +1 bonus to a skill test where the information is helpful to you. Failing can mean that you have misread the situation, been detected, or appear hostile to the people you are watching.

## INSPIRATION (EMPATHY)

**INSPIRATION** is the ability to address a crowd, encourage and guide your friends, and create or understand works of art. When trying to influence the thoughts or actions of a group of people, you make an **INSPIRATION** test.

When a player character has sustained a mental critical injury, she sometimes requires **INSPIRATION** in order not to become chronically Broken (see chapter 5). If you pass the test she is no longer Broken. Each extra success heals one mental Condition. If you fail and wish to try again, you must first find another way of getting through to her. You may need to take her to a new place, seek help from someone else, or find another way to connect with her.

**INSPIRATION** can be used to heal mental Conditions. Your friends must be somewhere safe, have access to food and drink, and be willing to engage in close contact or dialogue with you. You make an **INSPIRATION** test each day you spend together without doing anything else. A successful test heals three mental Conditions, distributed between your friends as you see fit. Each extra success heals another three Conditions. Even the Broken Con-

dition can be healed this way. Usually a failed test simply means that a day has been wasted, though the Gamemaster may allow an enemy to act.

## MANIPULATION (EMPATHY)

You can use **MANIPULATION** to influence how other people think, feel, or act by lying, flirting, bribing, negotiating, haggling, or using your social skills in other ways. When **MANIPULATING** someone you describe what you hope to achieve and what you are doing. You also use **MANIPULATION** to trade or purchase items and services during the mystery (see *Equipment* in chapter 5).

On a success you get what you want. Failure means that the other person distrusts or dislikes you, that you take a Condition, or that she is reinforced in her original convictions. Player characters can make an **OBSERVATION** test to resist your influence.

If the other person tries to **MANIPULATE** you as well, she too describes what she hopes to achieve. You must approve each other's goals before rolling the dice. There are limits to what you can convince people to do or believe. An opposed **MANIPULATION** test determines who gains influence over the other.

The losing party can decide to lay down a Condition for doing what the winner wants. Perhaps you must promise not to tell anyone about what she agreed to do, or maybe she first wants to know something about you?

### NOT MIND CONTROL

When engaging in **MANIPULATION** your goal must be reasonable. You cannot completely alter another person's way of thinking, make someone commit suicide, or turn people against their friends without good cause. After you have successfully used **MANIPULATION** on someone, other things might cause the person to reconsider. The same applies when **MANIPULATION** is used on you.



When you get more successes than you need, you can use them to impose a mental Condition on your opponent – one for each extra success.

PLAYER 2 (ASTRID LILJA): *"He is a traitor who uses others for his own purposes. If we let him go, he will continue to plague this town. We can't imprison him." I use **MANIPULATION** to convince you that we should execute your brother.*

PLAYER 1 (KASPAR STÄHL): *Kaspar would never agree to that. Let's say that, if you win, you get me to stop taking responsibility for my brother. Okay?*

## OBSERVATION (EMPATHY)

When talking to another person or spending time in her presence, you can use **OBSERVATION** to understand what she is thinking, feeling, or planning. If you pass the skill test the Gamemaster describes the impression you get from her. For example, the Gamemaster may tell you that she is lying or reveal whether she means you harm. You have the right to ask specific questions and have them answered.

Each extra success adds +1 to a test where the information is useful to you. Failing the test means that you give yourself away to the opposite party and must disclose your player character's thoughts, feelings, and intentions.

## HONEST INFORMATION

Several skills give the player characters access to information. It is the Gamemaster's responsibility to provide information that is accurate and useful. A successful skill test should not result in vague answers or ones that "protects" the truth or an NPC. What makes the story interesting is what the player characters do with their information – not leaving them ignorant and unable to act.





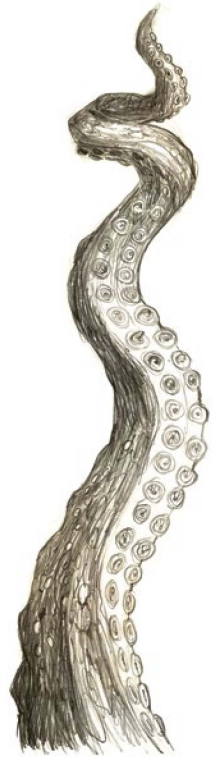




*There were three of us rowing out in the Karlskrona archipelago that moonlit night. And three times the priest at the seamen's church had, inexplicably, seen Captain Wählin scream silently from the pulpit. The captain and his three-master, the Karolina, disappeared in a storm last fall. It was said that he had sold his soul to buy that ship, and now the devil had come to collect.*

*I was the one rowing when suddenly we saw the Karolina just a few meters ahead of us. No lanterns were burning. I pulled the oars out of the water and let the boat drift the last few meters. No one said a word as we climbed on board. The hull was covered in barnacles and seaweed, as if the ship had been there for months. During the day it should have been visible from land.*

*It took us several hours to search the vessel. We found neither living nor dead, no cargo or provisions, and when the sun rose — painting the water red, green, and orange — we were utterly exhausted. But then we saw bubbles rising to the surface around the boat. We decided to dive down there. Maybe Captain Wählin's secrets were still waiting for us in the deep. I was the only one who made it back up — and what I saw down there I shall keep to myself, until the day I die.*



## TALENTS

IN ADDITION TO your skills, you have certain tricks and traits that might come in handy. These are called talents, and they are described in this chapter. First we list the talents that are specific to the various archetypes, then the general ones.

A newly-created player character has one talent, chosen from among the three talents specific to her archetype. Over the course of the game you will be

able to purchase more of them by spending Experience Points. You may then choose any talent you want — including those from other archetypes.

Some talents add bonuses to skill or Fear tests (see page 68), affecting the number of extra dice you get to roll. The effects of different talents are added to the total.

## THE ACADEMIC'S TALENTS

### BOOKWORM

Gain +2 to **LEARNING** when looking for clues in books or libraries.

### ERUDITE

You can pass a **LEARNING** test to establish truths about places and phenomena in the game. You may know that a certain location is renowned for its glassblowers, or that a gang of criminals operates in the area. The Gamemaster judges what is appropriate, and what is reasonable for you to know. You should not be allowed to make up things about vaesen.

### KNOWLEDGE IS REASSURING

Ignore Conditions when making **LEARNING** tests.

## THE DOCTOR'S TALENTS

### ARMY MEDIC

Gain +2 to Fear tests when frightened by dead or damaged human bodies.

### CHIEF PHYSICIAN

When you use **MEDICINE** to treat the other player characters, they can heal a total of four Conditions instead of three. The same applies to extra successes.

### EMERGENCY MEDICINE

Ignore mental Conditions when using **MEDICINE**.

## THE HUNTER'S TALENTS

### BLOODHOUND

Gain +2 to **VIGILANCE** when tracking your prey.

### HERBALIST

By utilizing wild herbs, you can use **MEDICINE** without having access to medical supplies.

### MARKSMAN

Gain +2 to **RANGED COMBAT** on your first turn when successfully ambushing or attacking your enemy.



“WHEN OPPRESSED  
WITH WRETCHED LOVE  
FIND FOR YOURSELF  
A NEW PAIR OF SHOES  
AND WALK A MILE,  
THAT YOUR FEET MAY SWEAT  
THEN REMOVE YOUR RIGHT SHOE  
POUR INTO IT EITHER WINE  
OR ALE AND HAVE A GOOD SIP  
AND YOU SHALL BE FREE”

— TRADITIONAL FOLK MAGIC FOR BANISHING UNWANTED LOVE





## THE OCCULTIST'S TALENTS

### CONJURING TRICKS

You can use **STEALTH** instead of **MANIPULATION** when performing conjuring tricks to influence people.

### MEDIUM

You can use **OBSERVATION** to perform seances where you predict people's futures and contact the dead. Extra successes provide more information, prolong the contact, or cause spirits to materialize. On failure you are given inaccurate information, attacked, or suffer a Condition.

### STRIKE FEAR

You can strike fear with Fear 1 (see page 68). It counts as a slow action and does not work against vaesen. Choose a victim in your zone. Targeted NPCs must pass a Logic or Empathy test. Their roll gains bonus dice equal to the number of friendly individuals in the same zone.





“A vicar in Hammenkulla was preaching from his pulpit, swearing on almighty God that there was no such thing as trolls, nissar, and other nature spirits. The next morning his house had no windows and the door was bolted from the outside, forcing the vicar to bang his way out with a sledgehammer. Yet in his next sermon he said the same thing, and when he woke the following morning, all animals at the vicarage had lost their heads, walking around with neither eyes nor mouths. And still he persisted – saying that God created humans and animals, but that the creatures of the forest were products of human superstition and satanic lies. Then, in the morning, he woke up next to a wooden log instead of his wife. Only then did he mount the pulpit and say he did not know whether it was God or the Devil who brought vaesen into existence, but exist they did. And when he came home, his wife was waiting for him outside the vicarage. Nothing angers the Unseen more than claiming they do not exist.”

– OLA STEN, CARPENTER IN DALFORS

## THE OFFICER'S TALENTS

### BATTLE-HARDENED

You are used to battle. When drawing for initiative, draw two cards and pick one of them (see chapter 5).

### GENTLEMAN

You were raised to control your emotions and behavior in social situations, even under pressure. Ignore penalties from mental Conditions when making **MANIPULATION** tests.

### TACTICIAN

When you pass a **RANGED COMBAT** test during combat and get extra successes, you may – in addition to the usual alternatives – issue an order to a friend. Doing so costs one success. If she follows your order, she gains +2 to her next test (can be chosen multiple times to give orders to different people).

## THE PRIEST'S TALENTS

### ABSOLUTION

A player character who confesses to you as an activity (see page 72) heal three Conditions instead of two.

### BLESSING

Once per session you can bless an object or another player character. The player character, or anyone using the object, gains the Blessed Advantage, adding +2 to a test of their choice. The Advantage expires upon use or when the mystery is over. You can only bless the same character or object once per mystery.

### CONFESSOR

You may use **OBSERVATION** instead of **MANIPULATION** when having a confidential conversation.



## THE PRIVATE DETECTIVE'S TALENTS

### EAGLE EYE

You gain +2 to **VIGILANCE** when trying to interpret a situation you are not involved in.

### ELEMENTARY

Once per session you can ask the Gamemaster to explain how clues are connected.

### FOCUSED

Ignore penalties from Conditions when making **INVESTIGATION** tests.

## THE SERVANT'S TALENTS

### LOYAL

Gain +2 on Fear tests in the presence of someone you have sworn to protect.

### TOUGH AS NAILS

Gain +2 to **FORCE** when fighting unarmed.

### ROBUST

You may ignore penalties for physical Conditions on one roll per gaming session.



## THE VAGABOND'S TALENTS

### HOBO TRICKS

Gain +2 to **STEALTH** when trying to hide yourself or an object from a wealthy human.

### SUSPICIOUS

Ignore mental Conditions when making **VIGILANCE** tests.

### WELL-TRAVELED

Once per mystery you can make a **MANIPULATION** test to create an NPC who is situated in the area, and who you have met before. The Gamemaster decides how she has changed since you last met, and what she thinks of you now. If the test fails, she is either hostile or in great need of your help.

## THE WRITER'S TALENTS

### AUTOMATIC WRITING

When channeling spirits through automatic writing you can use **INSPIRATION** to gain clues. The Gamemaster provides more or less vague clues, predictions about the future, or momentary insights into the thoughts and experiences of your enemies. Extra successes reveal more clues. On failure the Gamemaster decides whether you suffer a Condition, become possessed, or undergo a personality change (you decide what kind) that lasts for 1D6 hours. You can use Automatic Writing once per gaming session.

### JOURNALIST

You may use **INSPIRATION** instead of **MANIPULATION** when charming or deceiving someone to gain information.

### WORDSMITH

Ignore penalties from Conditions when making **INSPIRATION** tests.

## GENERAL TALENTS

### BATTLE EXPERIENCE

Gain +2 to **MEDICINE** when treating a physical critical injury.

### BRAVE

Gain +1 to all Fear tests.

### COMBAT-TRAINED

Gain +2 to **CLOSE COMBAT** and **FORCE** when parrying.

### CONTACTS

Once per session you can decide that you already know a certain NPC, and that your relationship is a positive one. The Gamemaster may disallow it, if the contact would make the mystery less fun.

### COWARD

When wounded in combat, you can make another player character take damage in your stead by passing a **STEALTH** test. It does not count as an action. If the test fails, you are hit for 1 extra damage. This can be done once per combat encounter.

### DECEPTIVE

Gain +2 to **MANIPULATION** when cheating and deceiving.

### DEDICATED

Once per session you can ignore the mental Conditions from a skill test.

### DEFENSIVE

Each turn you get one extra action that may only be used to dodge or parry.

### DUAL WEAPONS

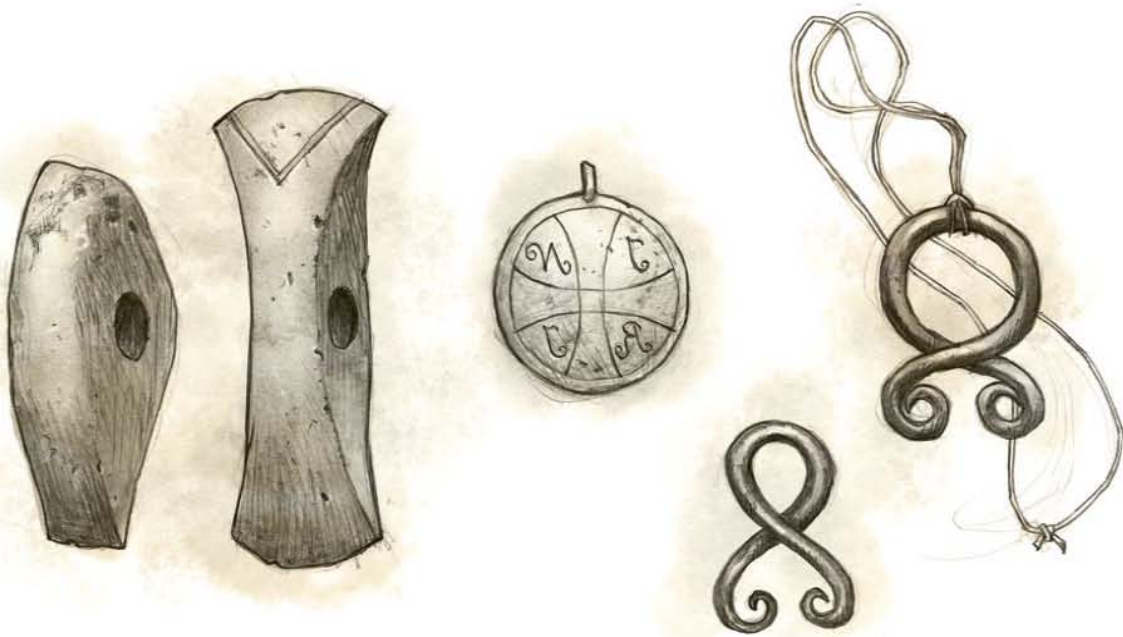
When using dual weapons in close combat, you can use extra successes to hit an additional enemy in the same zone. If you use more successes to increase damage, you may choose which attack deals more damage.

### DYNAMITER

Gain +2 to **RANGED COMBAT** when using explosives.

### EMPATHETIC

Ignore penalties from Conditions when making **OBSERVATION** tests.







#### ESCAPE ARTIST

Ignore penalties from Conditions when using **AGILITY** to flee.

#### FAMOUS

Gain +2 to **MANIPULATION** when trying to influence someone who has heard of you.

#### FLEET-FOOTED

During combat you may move within your own zone without using actions.

#### HOLY SYMBOL

You have a religious item that allows you to use **INSPIRATION** to attack vaesen in close combat, dealing 1 damage.

#### LIGHTNING REFLEXES

You can draw weapons without using an action.

#### NINE LIVES

When rolling for a critical injury, you may decide which of the dice represents the tens and which represents the ones.

#### PET

You have a pet that you can use once per session to gain +1 to a test of your choice in a situation where your pet is clearly of use.

#### PUGILIST

Deal 1 extra damage when fighting unarmed.

#### SAFETY IN NUMBERS

Gain +2 to Fear tests when accompanied by at least two other player characters. In combat this only applies if you are in the same zone.

#### SIXTH SENSE

When making **INVESTIGATION** tests you may spend extra successes to learn if a vaesen has been in the area, gain more or less vague impressions of what kind of vaesen it is, and find out if magic has been used.

#### SPRINTER

Gain +2 to **AGILITY** when trying to outrun or chase down someone.

#### THE LORD'S SHEPHERD

Gain +2 when using **INSPIRATION** to treat a mental critical injury.

#### WEALTHY

Increase Resources by 1 (can be purchased multiple times).





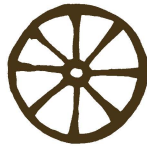


*I was a prisoner in my own dreams, unable to wake. The sleep had been bestowed on me by a wood wife whom the locals called the Bark Angel. She kissed me on the forehead and vanished among the trees, as I fell sleeping to the ground.*

*My friends brought me back to the castle in Upsala and put me to bed. In my sleep I apparently kept talking about my wife, who was also a member of the Society but died on an excursion to Knäred in rural Halland. I was sweating profusely, twisting and turning in my bed.*

*It took my friends several days to track the Bark Angel to Digerfallet – a waterfall north of Sysseleback in Värmland. She suffered their wrath, but even though she was shot twenty times with pistols and rifles, she would not die. Only when they found the mighty oak tree where she hid her soul, and burned it, did she cease to exist.*

*After the flames finished consuming the Bark Angel, I woke up. There was a cup of tea gone cold on the bedside table. I was touched that they remembered to add a sprinkle of cinnamon, just how I like it. When my friends returned, we celebrated. Again and again they wanted to hear how I'd been tormented by nightmares of snakes, fire, and black dogs. I never told anyone what I had really dreamed – that the kiss of the Bark Angel sent me to heaven, to see my wife.*



## CONFLICT AND INJURIES

THE SUBJECT OF this chapter is conflict – situations that escalate beyond words, where passing a skill test is not enough, and you must follow the rules step-by-step to determine the outcome. The first section of the chapter presents rules for combat. It describes how to determine the order in which your characters will act during combat, what actions they can perform, and various circumstances that may affect your chances of success. It also explains how movement works during combat, and lays out rules for setting ambushes, chases, and grappling your enemy or breaking free from a hold.

Next, we provide rules for physical injuries and how they can affect you. This is followed by a section that explains how beholding a vaesen or going through other terrible experiences can cause mental injuries. The rules describe how to make Fear tests to avoid being affected by what is happening before your eyes.

The subsequent section concerns rules for explosions, fire, poison, damage from falling, and the effects of hunger, thirst, and fatigue. We then describe how you can heal your own injuries and those of others, before the chapter concludes with rules for armor, equipment, and weapons.

# COMBAT

Combat begins when you or someone else attempts to shoot, hit, or otherwise harm someone. The first thing to do is determine the order in which you may act—who is quick enough to strike first. This is done by drawing initiative cards.

## INITIATIVE AND ROUNDS

Combat is divided into rounds. During each round everyone takes turns performing actions. When everyone is done, the round is over and another one begins.

Before the fighting begins, everyone involved draws a card to determine the order each participant (willing or otherwise) performs their actions in. Take ten playing cards numbered 1 to 10. Shuffle them and let everyone participating in the fight draw one card each. The value of the card is your initiative.

Put your initiative card next to your character sheet so everyone can see it. The Gamemaster puts the cards of NPCs and creatures in front of her, so you can see them as well. If you are facing multiple opponents identical to each other, the Gamemaster may choose to draw a single card for them as a group.

The one with the lowest initiative goes first. She performs her actions, followed by the person with the second lowest initiative, and so on until everyone has finished their turn. Once this is done, the round is over, and you start a new round in the same turn order. You do not draw new cards during the fight.

A round is not an exact measure of time. Usually each turn lasts a few seconds—long enough to aim and shoot, or dive out of the way.

## SWAPPING INITIATIVE

You and another player character can choose to swap initiative cards during combat. You may only swap cards at the start of the round—before anyone has performed their actions. Your player characters must be able to talk to each other in order to swap initiative. In combat, extra successes can be used to outmaneu-

## PLAYING CARDS FOR INITIATIVE

The special *Vaesen* card deck (sold separately) includes ten initiative cards. Should you not have access to it, a standard deck of playing cards will suffice. The ace then counts as one.

ver the opponent (see skills in chapter 3), forcing her to swap initiative cards with you. If you are fighting a creature with multiple initiative cards, you get to pick the one you want.

## ZONES AND DISTANCE

The scene where combat takes place is divided into zones. A zone is an area where it only takes a couple of steps to engage the enemy in close combat. To hit enemies one zone away you need throwing weapons or pistols, while reaching someone two zones away requires a rifle.

Zones can vary in size depending on terrain. Usually it is an open space delimited by walls, stairs, a river or other similar features. When combat begins the Gamemaster can draw a map of the area and mark each zone. The Gamemaster can also mark places

## INTERESTING ZONES

You can make combat more interesting by varying the surroundings. Let two zones be separated by a wall, a locked door, or a great hedge that must be broken through. Perhaps a zone can only be reached from a certain place. Let there be a balcony where an enemy is hiding with a rifle.

Do not forget to describe the environment even when it does not affect any success tests. Make the ground muddy, the lanterns dazzling, or the smell pungent. Have hundreds of birds take flight when the first shot is fired.



where it is possible to take cover. Some obstacles can only be moved through, over or around by performing an action or passing a skill test. For example, it might take a successful **FORCE** test and a slow action to clear a pile of rubble blocking an exit.

## CIRCUMSTANCES

If a fight takes place under particularly difficult circumstances, the Gamemaster may decide that certain skill tests are harder to pass. For example, when fighting in darkness you may need an extra success to use **RANGED COMBAT**.

The Gamemaster should only demand extra successes when the circumstances clearly reduce the chance of success. Fog and dim light may contribute to the atmosphere, but should not affect skill tests.

Since some creatures are not affected by things like darkness, it can be tactical for them to choose the time and place of the confrontation. The player characters can also use such circumstances to their advantage. The Gamemaster should even encourage this, for instance by providing indications that a certain vaesen is vulnerable to sunlight or cannot stand the smell of soap.

## FIGHTING VAESSEN

Everything you have heard about vaesen suggests that they can rarely be killed in combat. Physical confrontations with them will almost always be a matter of holding them off long enough to perform a ritual or escape.

Performing a ritual rarely requires any skill tests. Instead you describe what you are doing. If performed correctly, the ritual will drive the creature off.

THE GAMEMASTER: *The myling seems bigger than before. Its bird-like body hovers over the mill without moving its wings. Suddenly it dives, banging its talons against the building. The mill leans further and further over the stream. Here and there boards come off or snap in two.*

PLAYER 3 (ILJENKA PROKOTIN): *I open the hatch in the floor.*

THE GAMEMASTER: *Down there you see the corpse of a child, wrapped in rotting cloth. It can't have been dead for more than a couple of days.*

PLAYER 2 (ASTRID LILJA): *I gently pick up the child. "We have to bury the body. Someone must give their name to the child, or the myling will never be at peace."*

THE GAMEMASTER: *The myling's talons are tearing away at the walls around you.*

PLAYER 1 (KASPAR STÅHL): *"It can have my name!" Is there any place we can bury it?*

THE GAMEMASTER: *There's dirt in the hole where you found the body. You could bury it there.*

PLAYER 2: *I take out my bible and my crucifix to consecrate the ground.*

## ACTIONS IN COMBAT

Humans, animals, and most vaesen can perform two actions per turn, one slow and one fast. Slow actions take more time and usually involve a skill test. Fast actions are quick and rarely require a test to succeed; you might shout a word or two, or draw your weapon. If you want, you can perform a fast action instead of your slow one and thus get two fast actions that round.

Some fast actions are reactions – usually some kind of maneuver to evade attacks. Reactions may be performed at any time during the round. This means that you can use your fast action before your turn, or wait until after your turn to be ready for an enemy's attacks. When using reactions to protect yourself, you must choose to spend your action before you know whether your opponent's attack roll fails or succeeds.

### TYPICAL SLOW ACTIONS

| ACTION                                     | SKILL         |
|--|---------------|
| Attack with melee weapon                   | CLOSE COMBAT  |
| Attack with ranged weapon                  | RANGED COMBAT |
| Unarmed attack                             | FORCE         |
| Wrestle, push, grapple                     | FORCE         |
| Flee                                       | AGILITY       |
| Persuade                                   | MANIPULATION  |
| Lure enemy to a certain place              | AGILITY       |
| Perform ritual (often takes several turns) | —             |
| Survey the situation                       | VIGILANCE     |
| Treat injuries                             | MEDICINE      |
| Climb a wall                               | AGILITY       |

### DESCRIBING ACTIONS

When choosing an action you must also describe how you perform it. This is part of creating the game's atmosphere and bringing the story to life. Perhaps you plunge yourself into the mud, swearing as you fire your rifle at the creature. Or maybe you crouch down, sneaking toward the enemy, gripping your knife so tight your knuckles turn white.

### MOVEMENT IN COMBAT

You can use a fast action to position yourself anywhere within your zone. If the enemy is hiding behind cover or located far away in the zone, you may have to spend a fast action to get close enough to make a close combat attack. Entering an adjacent zone also requires a fast action.

### TYPICAL FAST ACTIONS

| ACTION                         | SKILL                   |
|--------------------------------|-------------------------|
| Draw weapon/<br>Swap weapon    | —                       |
| Stand up                       | —                       |
| Dodge (reaction)               | AGILITY                 |
| Parry (reaction)               | CLOSE COMBAT/<br>FORCE  |
| Break free (reaction)          | FORCE                   |
| Hold (reaction)                | FORCE                   |
| Chase (reaction)               | AGILITY                 |
| Resist magic (reaction)        | Depends on<br>the magic |
| Shout more than<br>a few words | —                       |
| Turn around                    | —                       |
| Close a door                   | —                       |
| Put out a candle               | —                       |
| Move within the zone           | —                       |
| Move into the<br>next zone     | —                       |
| Take cover                     | —                       |

### CLOSE COMBAT

Attacking an enemy requires a skill test. Unarmed attacks are performed with **FORCE**. When armed with melee weapons you use **CLOSE COMBAT**. For ranged attacks you use **RANGED COMBAT**.

You need one success to hit your target, dealing damage as indicated on the *Weapons* table. The damage value shown is the number of physical Conditions that afflict the enemy as a result of your attack. When rolling multiple successes you can choose to deal additional damage (for more on using extra successes in



combat, see the skills in chapter 3). For each success the opponent suffers another Condition.

Human NPCs and animals don't suffer Conditions, but have a Toughness value instead, which works in a similar way. For instance, an NPC who is hit for 3 damage loses 3 Toughness points and gets 3 fewer dice on the next test (see *Non-Player Characters* in chapter 8).

## RANGED WEAPONS

The *Weapons* table shows the range of ranged weapons. The value indicates how many zones your weapon can reach from where you are standing. A zero means that you can only use that weapon against enemies in the same zone, whereas a one or more means it possible to attack enemies in adjacent zones.

A revolver with range 0-1 can be used in the same zone as your enemy or one zone away. A rifle with range 1-3 can be used against enemies one, two, or three zones away from you, but not against those in the same zone.

## DODGING AND PARRYING

When attacked, you can use your fast action to parry in close combat, or dodge a gunshot or some other ranged attack. Both of these are reactions you can use at any time during the round, even if it is not your turn. This means that you can choose to "save" your

## AMMUNITION

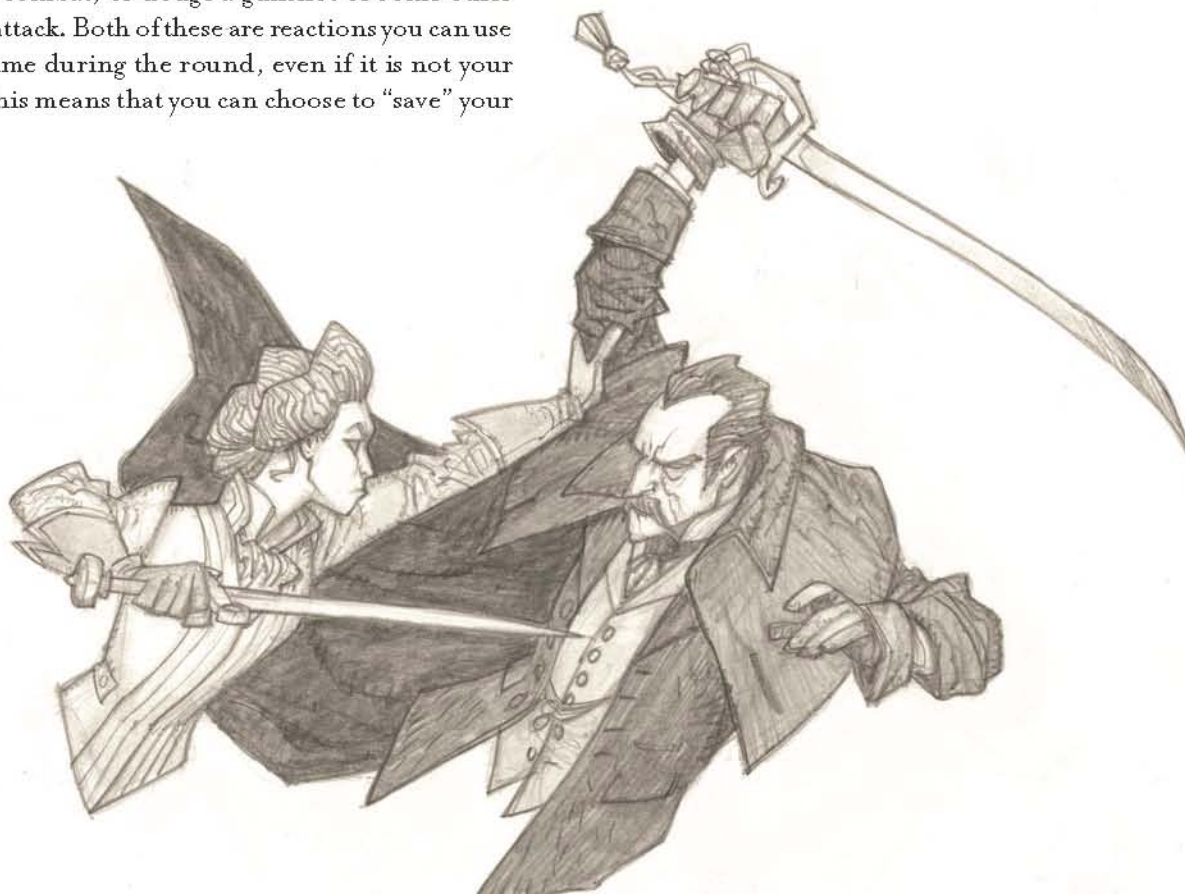
You are expected to carry enough ammunition to use your weapon. In combat you have time to reload between actions. In certain situations the Gamemaster may ask you to keep track of how many bullets you have left – perhaps you are trapped in a network of caves and must preserve your resources. Or maybe you must rush to the desk, grab the silver bullets, and load your revolver before the werewolf reaches you.

fast action in case you need to parry later in the round – but you can also use it before your turn.

You dodge or parry by passing a skill test. You use **AGILITY** to dodge, and **FORCE** or **CLOSE COMBAT** to parry depending on whether or not you are armed.

Each success deducts one success from the enemy's attack. If you deduct all the enemy's successes, the attack misses. By rolling more successes than required you may choose to swap initiative cards with your enemy.

You must choose to dodge or parry before you know whether the enemy has succeeded with her attack.



## HOLDING AND WRESTLING

When attempting to wrestle or grapple your opponent, you make a **FORCE** test. Your opponent can use a reaction to break free, also using **FORCE**. If you succeed, she is restrained and cannot perform any actions other than breaking free or shouting. Preventing your opponent from speaking by putting your hand over her mouth requires an extra success.

The opponent is restrained until you let her go or she breaks free. Once per turn she may use a fast action to try and break free. You can use hold as a reaction. The two of you then make an opposed roll for **FORCE**. The person being held must get more successes than her opponent in order to break free; if you get the same number of successes the situation remains unchanged. If you do not use a reaction to hold her, she only requires a single success to break free.

The person being held can parry, but cannot attack or flee until she manages to break free.

## FLEEING AND CHASING

You use **AGILITY** to flee. A successful skill test means that you leave the fight; if you fail, you remain in the same zone. You cannot flee if doing so would require you to move through a zone occupied by an enemy (this does not include the zone the character starts her turn in).



“ACHE, ACHE, ACHE!  
FROM HAND I BANISH YOU  
WITH THIS COMMAND  
FAR AWAY TO A DISTANT LAND”

— TRADITIONAL SPELL FOR SOOTHING PAIN

An opponent standing in the same zone as you can try to prevent you from fleeing. She uses a reaction to chase and then makes an **AGILITY** test. Each of her successes deducts one success from your result. If she manages to deduct all your successes, you stay in the fight. Both of you have moved one zone in the direction you were fleeing.

## AMBUSH AND SNEAK ATTACK

In order to ambush or sneak attack your opponent you roll **STEALTH** against **VIGILANCE**. If successful you may draw an extra initiative card and pick the best one. Each extra success adds +1 to your first action of the round.

If the sneak attack fails you are detected, and your opponent may draw an extra initiative card and pick the best one. If there are several ambushers only one of you makes a **STEALTH** test. The result applies to all of you.

In some situations, the Gamemaster may decide that no skill tests are required in order to surprise your enemy. You may automatically draw an extra initiative card.

THE GAMEMASTER: *Through the window you see Father Torheim going to the privy out in the yard.*

PLAYER 2 (ASTRID LILJA): *I draw my knife and run over there, snatching the door open to slit his throat.*

THE GAMEMASTER: *Draw initiative cards. You get to draw an extra card since you take him by surprise. He draws a four.*

PLAYER 2: *I draw a three and a five, so of course I choose three as my initiative. I start by attacking him in close combat.*

THE GAMEMASTER: *He uses a reaction to parry with his arms. Make a **CLOSE COMBAT** skill test, and he will parry with **FORCE** since he is unarmed.*





## INJURIES

As previously mentioned, taking damage causes you to suffer Conditions – the type of damage (mental or physical) determines the type of Condition that afflicts you. In combat, the weapon's damage value indicates how many Conditions you get.

### BROKEN

When you have checked off all physical or mental Conditions and suffer another one of the same type, you become Broken. This means that you are incapacitated, and have sustained a critical injury that threatens to kill you or traumatize you so badly that

you may never recover – immediately roll on one of the *Critical Injuries* tables, pages 65–66. You and the Gamemaster together decide exactly what happens to your character, depending on what caused you to become Broken.

### BROKEN BY PHYSICAL INJURY

If you become Broken due to a physical injury, it can mean that you have passed out, are bleeding heavily, have broken several bones, or that you experience such severe pain that you lose control of your body. You automatically fail all tests. The only actions you can perform are talking succinctly and, if the Gamemaster allows it, crawling to safety. Each attack that hits you while Broken causes another critical injury.

### BROKEN BY MENTAL INJURY

Being Broken as a result of acquiring mental Conditions means that you are overwhelmed by the situation you are in – perhaps you are suffering from delusions or have lost all hope of survival, or maybe you no longer know who or where you are. In any case, you have lost the ability to look after yourself and act with purpose.

If attacked while Broken by mental Conditions, you can flee, parry, and dodge, making skill tests as usual to see if you succeed. You cannot attack enemies or perform rituals, but are otherwise able to use your body and move around. You are still able speak, although what you say may not be coherent.



“Little Måns in Tvålåker was known for his thirst and his mischief. One dark autumn night he took a drunken leak in the troll forest. The next day, sitting in the out-house doing his business, he felt something sticky cling to his behind and heard laughter coming from below. It was the trolls who had smeared him with tar, and it is said that the black color never went away. Little Måns never touched the bottle again, but still no woman has wanted him. He lives alone in his cabin, and some say he’s marked by the trolls who continue to play tricks on him.”

– IDA WESTMARK, WASHERWOMAN IN LÖT

### CRITICAL INJURIES

When you become Broken you sustain a critical injury. Immediately roll on the table for either *Physical* or *Mental Critical Injuries*. You roll a D66, that is two six-sided dice, after deciding which die represents the tens and which represents the ones. For example, if you roll a three on the first die and a six on the other, the result is 36.

The tables on pages 65–66 show what kind of injury you get.

There is a fatal column for physical injuries, and a chronic column for mental ones. This means that some critical injuries must be treated by someone else (see *Treating Critical Injuries* later in this chapter) within a certain time limit – or else you will die or remain mentally broken forever. Should that happen, you discard your player character and create a new one. The Society has gained a new member.

Even if you receive treatment and cease to be Broken, the injury will affect you for the rest of the mystery. The *Critical Injuries* table states whether you have acquired a Defect or an Insight. Defects are things that affect you negatively, such as impaired vision in one eye or a general sense of dread that refuses to let up. Insights are superhuman abilities that help you, for example by giving you visions of the future or infusing you with power that makes it easier for you to pass a certain skill test.

When you return to your headquarters, you must determine whether your Defects and Insights become permanent, or whether they heal or pass during the return trip to Upsala. Rules for this can be found in chapter 6, on page 88.

### NPCS AND CRITICAL INJURIES

The rules for critical injuries, Defects, and Insights only apply to player characters. When an NPC becomes Broken she is effectively eliminated. The context determines whether she is dead, unconscious, or has succumbed to despair. The Gamemaster may of course roll on the *Critical Injuries* table for inspiration when describing what is happening.



## PHYSICAL CRITICAL INJURIES

| D66 | INJURY                | FATAL | TIME LIMIT  | EFFECT  |
|-----|-----------------------|-------|-------------|---|
| 11  | Foot injury           | No    | —           | Defect: Limp, <b>AGILITY</b> -1                                       |
| 12  | Broken fingers        | No    | —           | Defect: Crooked fingers, <b>CLOSE COMBAT</b> -1                       |
| 13  | Ruptured tendon       | No    | —           | Defect: Reduced mobility, <b>AGILITY</b> -1                           |
| 14  | Knee injury           | No    | —           | Defect: Skewed walk, <b>AGILITY</b> -1                                |
| 15  | Fracture              | No    | —           | Defect: False joint, <b>FORCE</b> -1                                  |
| 16  | Splinters in the body | No    | —           | Defect: Ulcer, <b>INSPIRATION</b> -1                                  |
| 21  | Skin lesion           | No    | —           | Defect: Disfigured, <b>MANIPULATION</b> -1                            |
| 22  | Damaged throat        | No    | —           | Defect: Wheezing, <b>STEALTH</b> -1                                   |
| 23  | Eye injury            | No    | —           | Defect: Impaired eyesight, <b>VIGILANCE</b> -1                        |
| 24  | Injured arm           | No    | —           | Defect: Crooked arm, <b>RANGED COMBAT</b> -1                          |
| 25  | Facial injury         | No    | —           | Defect: Deformed face, <b>MANIPULATION</b> -1                         |
| 26  | Crush injury          | No    | —           | Defect: Tremor, <b>RANGED COMBAT</b> -1                               |
| 31  | Dislodged teeth       | No    | —           | Defect: Toothless, <b>INSPIRATION</b> -1                              |
| 32  | Ear injury            | No    | —           | Defect: Impaired balance, <b>CLOSE COMBAT</b> -1                      |
| 33  | Jaw injury            | No    | —           | Defect: Drooling, <b>INSPIRATION</b> -1                               |
| 34  | Back injury           | No    | —           | Defect: Hunchback, <b>AGILITY</b> -1                                  |
| 35  | Severed fingers       | No    | —           | Defect: Finger stumps, <b>RANGED COMBAT</b> -1                        |
| 36  | Nerve damage          | No    | —           | Defect: Pain, <b>FORCE</b> -1   |
| 41  | Torn ear              | No    | —           | Defect: Impaired hearing, <b>VIGILANCE</b> -1                         |
| 42  | Abdominal injury      | Yes   | 1D6 days    | Defect: Stiff body, <b>CLOSE COMBAT</b> -1                            |
| 43  | Dirty wound           | Yes   | 1D6 days    | Defect: Sepsis, <b>FORCE</b> -1                                       |
| 44  | Bleeding wound        | Yes   | 1D6 days    | Defect: Gangrene, <b>AGILITY</b> -1                                   |
| 45  | Crushed genitals      | Yes   | 1D6 days    | Defect: Incontinence, <b>AGILITY</b> -1                               |
| 46  | Punctured eye         | Yes   | 1D6 hours   | Defect: One-eyed, <b>VIGILANCE</b> -1                                 |
| 51  | Ruptured bowel        | Yes   | 1D6 hours   | Defect: Wears a colostomy bag, <b>AGILITY</b> -1                      |
| 52  | Deep arm gash         | Yes   | 1D6 hours   | Defect: One-armed, <b>FORCE</b> -1<br>(cannot use two-handed weapons) |
| 53  | Burst artery          | Yes   | 1D6 rounds  | Defect: Phobia of blood, <b>Fear</b> -2                               |
| 54  | Internal bleeding     | Yes   | 1D6 rounds  | Defect: Anemia, <b>FORCE</b> -2                                       |
| 55  | Caved-in forehead     | Yes   | 1D6 rounds  | Defect: Altered personality, <b>OBSERVATION</b> -2                    |
| 56  | Cracked skull         | Yes   | 1D6 rounds  | Defect: Brain damage, <b>LEARNING</b> -2                              |
| 61  | Coma                  | Yes   | 1D6 days    | Insight: Prophetic vision, <b>INVESTIGATION</b> +3                    |
| 62  | Spinal injury         | Yes   | 1D6 hours   | Insight: Living dead, <b>STEALTH</b> +3                               |
| 63  | Torn abdomen          | Yes   | 1D6 hours   | Insight: Supernatural focus, <b>RANGED COMBAT</b> +3                  |
| 64  | Torn body             | Yes   | 1D6 minutes | Insight: Champion, <b>CLOSE COMBAT</b> +3                             |
| 65  | Punctured lungs       | Yes   | 1D6 rounds  | Insight: Guardian angel, <b>AGILITY</b> +4                            |
| 66  | Crushed chest         | Yes   | 1D6 rounds  | Insight: Supernatural strength, <b>FORCE</b> +4                       |

## MENTAL CRITICAL INJURIES

| D66 | INJURY                             | CHRONIC | TIME LIMIT  | EFFECT  |
|-----|------------------------------------|---------|-------------|---|
| 11  | Confused                           | No      | —           | Defect: Dazed, <b>INVESTIGATION</b> -1              |
| 12  | Overwhelmed                        | No      | —           | Defect: Sensitive to stress, <b>STEALTH</b> -1      |
| 13  | Pushed too far                     | No      | —           | Defect: Fanatic, <b>MANIPULATION</b> -1             |
| 14  | Incapacitated                      | No      | —           | Defect: Clumsy, <b>AGILITY</b> -1                   |
| 15  | Exhausted                          | No      | —           | Defect: Claustrophobic, <b>STEALTH</b> -1           |
| 16  | Panic attack                       | No      | —           | Defect: Skittish, Fear -1                           |
| 21  | Sees her true self                 | No      | —           | Defect: Compulsive liar, <b>INSPIRATION</b> -1      |
| 22  | Frozen facial muscles              | No      | —           | Defect: Mask of terror, <b>MANIPULATION</b> -1      |
| 23  | Whitened hair                      | No      | —           | Defect: Aged, <b>OBSERVATION</b> -1                 |
| 24  | Feelings of worthlessness          | No      | —           | Defect: Shattered confidence, <b>INSPIRATION</b> -1 |
| 25  | Paralyzed                          | No      | —           | Defect: Lacks initiative, <b>INVESTIGATION</b> -1   |
| 26  | Trembling                          | No      | —           | Defect: Tremor, <b>RANGED COMBAT</b> -1             |
| 31  | Confronted with mortality          | No      | —           | Defect: Fear of death, <b>CLOSE COMBAT</b> -1       |
| 32  | Fighting and screaming             | No      | —           | Defect: Impaired impulse control, <b>STEALTH</b> -1 |
| 33  | Divided attention                  | No      | —           | Defect: Hears voices, <b>LEARNING</b> -1            |
| 34  | Disgusted                          | No      | —           | Defect: Hates filth, <b>MEDICINE</b> -1             |
| 35  | Shaken                             | No      | —           | Defect: Sentimental, <b>MANIPULATION</b> -1         |
| 36  | Stressed                           | No      | —           | Defect: Weakened immune system, <b>FORCE</b> -1     |
| 41  | Extreme muscle tension             | No      | —           | Defect: High-strung, <b>AGILITY</b> -1              |
| 42  | Traumatized                        | Yes     | 1D6 days    | Defect: PTSD, Fear -1                               |
| 43  | Furious                            | Yes     | 1D6 days    | Defect: Capricious, <b>MANIPULATION</b> -1          |
| 44  | Abandoned                          | Yes     | 1D6 days    | Defect: Lack of trust, <b>MANIPULATION</b> -1       |
| 45  | Overwhelmed by vulnerability       | Yes     | 1D6 days    | Defect: Paranoid, <b>VIGILANCE</b> -1               |
| 46  | Crushed                            | Yes     | 1D6 hours   | Defect: Impaired empathy, <b>INSPIRATION</b> -1     |
| 51  | Ashamed                            | Yes     | 1D6 hours   | Defect: Self-loathing, <b>MANIPULATION</b> -1       |
| 52  | Detached                           | Yes     | 1D6 hours   | Defect: Egocentric, <b>MEDICINE</b> -1              |
| 53  | Out-of-body experience             | Yes     | 1D6 rounds  | Defect: Dissociating, <b>RANGED COMBAT</b> -2       |
| 54  | Dream state                        | Yes     | 1D6 rounds  | Defect: Nightmares, Fear -2                         |
| 55  | Return to childhood                | Yes     | 1D6 rounds  | Defect: Regressing, <b>LEARNING</b> -2              |
| 56  | Horrifying realization             | Yes     | 1D6 rounds  | Defect: Mortified, <b>MEDICINE</b> -2               |
| 61  | Hypersensitive                     | Yes     | 1D6 days    | Insight: Healer, <b>MEDICINE</b> +3                 |
| 62  | Possessed                          | Yes     | 1D6 minutes | Insight: Haunted, <b>LEARNING</b> +3                |
| 63  | Obsessed with detail               | Yes     | 1D6 minutes | Insight: All-seeing, <b>INVESTIGATION</b> +3        |
| 64  | Supernatural experience            | Yes     | 1D6 minutes | Insight: Divine messenger, <b>INSPIRATION</b> +3    |
| 65  | Invaded by other people's emotions | Yes     | 1D6 rounds  | Insight: Absolute empathy, <b>OBSERVATION</b> +4    |
| 66  | Split consciousness                | Yes     | 1D6 rounds  | Insight: Enlightened, <b>LEARNING</b> +4            |



## DEFECT

Defects mean that your body has sustained an injury that will not heal, which makes life more difficult for you. A Defect can affect you once per session – the Gamemaster decides when. The Gamemaster can activate your Defect in the following ways:

- ❖ **INCREASED DIFFICULTY:** Adds a penalty to a skill test. The Defect states which skill it affects, and how many dice are deducted. Some Defects affect Fear tests.
- ❖ **SOCIAL STIGMA:** A non-player character reacts negatively to meeting you. Your injury might make her afraid or hostile. The Gamemaster describes what happens.
- ❖ **MY OWN WORST ENEMY:** A situation which you would normally be able to handle now automatically requires a skill test. Perhaps you acquire a limp and must pass an **AGILITY** test to make your way up a hill.
- ❖ **LOSS OF CONTROL:** The Gamemaster assumes control of your actions in a certain situation. This only lasts for a brief moment – then you return to normal. Perhaps your traumatic memories make you question what a friend is saying, or gaps in your memory cause you to confuse important pieces of information?

## INSIGHT

Insights change you, giving you supernatural powers beyond anything normal for a human. You can use an Insight once per gaming session. Insights can be used in the following ways:

- ❖ **INCREASED SKILL:** Adds a bonus to a skill test. The Insight states which skill it affects, and how many dice are added.
- ❖ **VISION:** You have a supernatural experience, a prophetic vision, or an intuitive understanding of a problem. This provides a clue you need to solve the mystery. The Gamemaster sets the scene and gives you a clue. In some cases the Insight cannot be used this way. The Gamemaster decides.

- ❖ **OPEN THEIR EYES:** You can give another human the ability to see *vaesen* for the duration of one scene. When using this Insight, you must either touch the other person or say something that creates a strong emotional bond between you.
- ❖ **CONTROL MY OWN DESTINY:** You can use your Insight to control what an NPC is thinking or doing. The effect only lasts a moment and you cannot make her harm herself or her friends. The Gamemaster may decide that an NPC cannot be controlled at the moment.

PLAYER 3 (ILJENKA PROKOTIN): *I want to use my Insight to get a vision. I'm thinking that I go to the hotel for a nap, and that something visits me in my dreams.*

THE GAMEMASTER: *You fall asleep as usual, in the huge German bed with eider pillows. There are hunting trophies mounted on the wall, along with a beautiful mirror. Suddenly you're awakened by someone whispering your name: "Iljenka, Iljenka." It's still night, and it is impossible to determine where the voice is coming from. Seeing yourself in the mirror, you realize that you are dreaming. Your body is dead, your eyes are empty black sockets, and your hair, now gray, has grown to your knees.*

## PLAYING OUT AND DESCRIBING THE EFFECTS

Tell the gaming group how your Defect affects your actions and appearance. The Gamemaster describes how NPCs react to it.

If you have an Insight, you must describe what happens when you activate it. Keep in mind that *Vaesen* is not a game about superheroes and magicians; you will not light up as if you are on fire or float in the air. The effects of Insights are subtle.

### FEAR VALUE

| SITUATION  | FEAR VALUE |
|--|------------|
| Scary – a vaesen, bloody corpse                                    | 1          |
| Terrible – a werewolf, dead children                               | 2          |
| Unbearable – mass grave, tied up and subjected to serious violence | 3          |

### TERRIFIED

When Terrified you can choose either to:

- ❖ **FLEE:** You must use all your actions to flee from the thing that frightens you. There is no time to pick things up, talk, or help someone else. You choose the nearest and fastest way out of there.
- ❖ **FREEZE:** Your body refuses to move, rendering you completely immobile. You cannot talk or perform any actions whatsoever. If you are in a dark or concealed position, it takes a successful **VIGILANCE** test to spot you.
- ❖ **FAINT:** Your body goes limp, and a veil of darkness descends over the world. If you are lying in a dark or concealed position, it takes a successful **VIGILANCE** test to spot you.
- ❖ **ATTACK:** You attack the nearest hostile person or creature with whatever weapon you are currently holding. You lose the ability to make strategic choices, and will not stop attacking until the enemy is vanquished. You cannot perform any fast actions. If there are no enemies nearby, you explode in a fit of rage and start breaking things around you.

## SPECIAL EFFECTS

Your player character might end up in, or even cause, an array of dangerous or frightening situations that are not directly involved with combat, although they can certainly occur during combat as well. The rules for the effects of these situations are presented below.

### FEAR

When encountering vaesen, being exposed to magic, or feeling scared or stressed as a result of seeing something horrible like dead bodies, it takes effort not to lose control and become Terrified. You must pass a Fear test.

Choose whether to tackle the situation with Logic or Empathy. The attribute value indicates how many dice you may roll. Add additional dice equal to the number of player characters present in the scene (maximum +3 dice). Player characters who are Broken or already Terrified do not count. If you become frightened during combat you use the number of player characters situated in the same zone as you.

Mental Conditions add penalties to Fear tests. On failure you can push the roll by acquiring a mental Condition. Some talents make Fear tests easier to pass.

The Fear value of the creature, magic, or occurrence indicates how many successes you need. If successful, you manage to control your emotions and can act normally. Extra successes have no effect.

On failure you become Terrified. Roll a six-sided die to see how many rounds it takes to regain control of yourself. Whether you flee, freeze, faint, or attack is up to you (see the Terrified text box). Once you have regained control you are no longer Terrified.

When you become Terrified, you suffer a number of mental Conditions equal to the Fear value. Each success on your Fear test reduces the number of Conditions that afflict you by 1. If you become Broken you sustain a mental critical injury.

Lastly, it should be noted that if you become Terrified in a situation that isn't particularly hazardous, where the duration of the effect or your exact reaction





is irrelevant, the Gamemaster can let you improvise your reaction and how long it lasts – for example if you are examining a mutilated corpse in an otherwise secure location.

**THE GAMEMASTER:** *You push the knife into Father Torheim's throat, but instead of blood there's some kind of green, sulfur-smelling slime gushing from the wound.*

**PLAYER 2 (ASTRID LILJA):** *I drop the knife and back out of the privy.*

**THE GAMEMASTER:** *The priest's body dissolves onto the floor in front of you. You hear the roar of a thousand burning fires, steel drums, and the clanking of chains being dragged across sand. The slime rises from the ground, slowly taking the shape of a creature. Two eyes emerge, then a mouth. It smirks at you. Make a Fear test. The Fear value is 2.*

**PLAYER 2:** *I use Empathy. One success. I fail, but only suffer one Condition. I choose to flee, and roll a D6 to see how many rounds I remain Terrified.*

## EXPLOSIONS

Explosions hit everyone in the same zone. Dodge can be used to dive behind cover or into an adjacent zone. Cover reduces the damage of explosions, but armor does not.

The damage is determined by rolling a number of dice equal to the Blast Power. The number of suc-

cesses shows how much damage is dealt to those hit by the explosion. The roll cannot be pushed.

You use **RANGED COMBAT** to throw explosives up to two zones (Range 1–2). Extra successes increase the damage. If you fail the skill test, the explosive charge hits a randomly selected adjacent zone.

The *Explosives* table indicates the Blast Power of different explosives and how many adjacent zones they affect. An explosive charge with one adjacent zone means that the explosion affects the zone where the charge detonates plus one additional zone. Exactly which adjacent zones it affects is determined at random. Mark the adjacent zones with numbers corresponding to a six-sided die. If there are three adjacent zones, they are marked with the values 1–2, 3–4, and 5–6. One die decides which zone is hit. For each zone away from the place of detonation, the damage decreases by 1.

### EXPLOSIVES

| TYPE                 | BLAST POWER | ADJACENT ZONES |
|----------------------|-------------|----------------|
| Homemade grenade     | 6           | 0              |
| Stick of dynamite    | 8           | 1              |
| Big explosive charge | 10          | 3              |

## FIRE

Catching fire causes you to take damage and suffer a Condition. If the fire is not extinguished, you will keep taking damage at the start of each subsequent round. The amount of damage depends on the intensity of the fire (see *Fire table*), but also on an automatic **FORCE** test you make to reduce the damage – each success deducts 1 point of damage. The only actions you can perform while burning are attempts to extinguish the fire, flee, or shout.

| FIRE                              |        |                         |
|-----------------------------------|--------|-------------------------|
| EXTENT                            | DAMAGE | SUCCESSES TO EXTINGUISH |
| Small part of the body is burning | 1      | 1                       |
| Half the body is burning          | 2      | 1                       |
| Most of the body is burning       | 3      | 2                       |

Extinguishing the fire is a slow action and requires a successful **AGILITY** test. More intense fires are harder to put out and require a greater number of successes. The successes are saved between rounds, which means that you can start extinguishing it on one turn and finish on your next.

Each round the fire is not extinguished, the Gamemaster rolls a die. A success means the fire spreads and increases by one step, until most of the body is burning.

## POISON

Poison is measured in toxicity. A weak poison has toxicity 3, a strong one has toxicity 6, and an extremely potent one has 9 or more. When you are subjected to poison, you and the Gamemaster make an opposed roll. The Gamemaster rolls as many dice as the poison's toxicity, while you use **FORCE**. If successful you do not take any damage. If it is a tie you suffer one Condition. If you fail, you suffer a number of Conditions equal to the Gamemaster's successes.

In subsequent rounds you keep acquiring Conditions, though one fewer for each round. When you become Broken, you sustain a physical critical injury. The effect of the poison can be canceled by using an



“WHILST SHE ENGAGES  
IN CARNAL IMPURITY  
FIND A DOVE AND CUT OFF  
ITS GENITALS  
DRY IT AND GRIND IT INTO POWDER  
TO BE INGESTED BY  
THE ONE YOU DESIRE”

– TRADITIONAL RECIPE FOR A LOVE POTION





antidote or passing a **MEDICINE** test with as many successes as the poison's damage.

## FALLING DAMAGE

When you fall three meters or more onto a hard surface, the Gamemaster rolls an attack against you. She rolls as many dice as the number of meters you fall, minus 2. For each success you get a physical Condition. Armor offers no protection.

## HUNGRY, TIRED, THIRSTY

If you do not eat, drink, or rest, the Gamemaster will ask you to make a **FORCE** test, where failing means you suffer a Condition. The Gamemaster decides whether it is physical or mental.

3, but is repeated here to avoid having to flip back and forth unnecessarily.

## TREATING CRITICAL INJURIES

When you have sustained a critical injury that might either kill you or become chronic, someone must treat you with **MEDICINE** or **INSPIRATION** before the time limit expires. If it succeeds, you cease to be Broken, while retaining all other Conditions. Extra successes can be used to heal additional Conditions.

If the attempt fails, the person treating you must either find help, gather more medical supplies, or move you to a safer location before she can try again. If no one has successfully treated you before the time runs out, you either die or become permanently Broken. Then it is time to create a new player character.

## HEALING INJURIES

After violent or frightening encounters, you and your friends may need to heal your Conditions. This section describes ways in which you can help each other. Some of this has already been mentioned in chapter

## HEALING CONDITIONS

You can use **MEDICINE** to heal other people's physical Conditions, but not your own. You and your patients must spend a full day on treatment, in a secure location where you can drink, eat, and rest. You cannot do anything else that day.

### CHEAT SHEET FOR MEDICAL CARE

| ACTION                   | TIME  | DESCRIPTION   |
|--------------------------|-------|---|
| Treat critical injury    | Turn  | Treat a Broken character with <b>MEDICINE</b> or <b>INSPIRATION</b> (each extra success heals an additional Condition)                        |
| Heal physical Conditions | Day   | Use <b>MEDICINE</b> in a safe location to heal three Conditions per success for someone else (including Broken)                               |
| Heal mental Conditions   | Day   | Use <b>INSPIRATION</b> in a safe space while having a close dialogue to heal three Conditions per success for someone else (including Broken) |
| Rest                     | Scene | Describe a scene together with one or several other PCs to recover from two Conditions (except Broken), once per day.                         |
| Services                 | Scene | Use Resources and describe a scene where you, alone or with friends, receive medical services (see separate table).                           |



“OUT OF A SPRAIN AND INTO JOINT  
OUT OF DISORDER AND INTO ORDER  
BONE TO BONE  
JOINT TO JOINT  
AS IT WAS BEST  
WHEN IT WAS WHOLE”

— TRADITIONAL INCANTATION FOR MENDING BROKEN BONES

Likewise, you can use **INSPIRATION** to cure others of their mental Conditions. In addition to spending a day, and having access to a safe place, food, and beverages, your friends must willingly engage in close contact and dialogue with you.

If the skill test succeeds, your patients heal a total of three Conditions which you distribute between them. They decide which Conditions are healed. Broken can also be healed this way. Each extra success can be used to heal another three Conditions. A failed skill test usually means that a day has been wasted, and may also give an enemy time to take further action against the characters.

A patient cannot have her physical or mental Conditions treated by more than one person at a time. However, it is possible for one person to treat the physical Conditions while another treats the mental ones. While you are treating the Conditions of others, you yourself may not receive treatment. That goes for both physical and mental Conditions.

## ACTIVITIES

It is possible to heal your own Conditions by engaging in an activity that provides relaxation and rest. Summarize what happens or play a short scene. The

activity must involve at least one other person, NPC or player character. For example, you can have a conversation with someone or pray alone in the woods while a friend keeps watch nearby.

Activities heal two mental or physical Conditions of your choice, although Broken cannot be healed this way. Even if multiple player characters are participating in the scene, only one will heal Conditions. You can heal Conditions through activities once per day, or as often as the Gamemaster sees fit.

## SERVICES AND ESTABLISHMENTS

Finally, it is possible to purchase medical attention or heal Conditions at a local doctor's office, by recuperating at some finer establishment, traveling lavishly, or resting at a nice hostel or hotel (see table on page 76). It counts as a special activity that must be bought with a roll for Resources (see below), with a couple of differences. In this case, all participants may heal Conditions, and in addition, you can perform the activity yourself. In other words, seeking medical attention at an establishment can only be done in lieu of a regular activity.

### EXAMPLES OF ACTIVITIES

- ✦ Drinking alcohol
- ✦ Intellectual discussions
- ✦ Prayer/meditation
- ✦ Watching a play
- ✦ Romantic meeting
- ✦ Self-flagellation
- ✦ Storytelling
- ✦ Singing or dancing
- ✦ Keeping a journal
- ✦ Arguing
- ✦ Confession
- ✦ Playing cards
- ✦ Arm wrestling
- ✦ Tending to the sick, poor, or vulnerable





## EQUIPMENT

Your player character may need to procure weapons, armor, or other equipment. This is usually done during the mystery's preparation phase, before leaving your headquarters, but it can also be done on site as the story unfolds. Rules for this are described below.

### PREPARATORY EQUIPMENT

Equipment has a level between 1 and 5 that indicates its availability – how easy it is to acquire. Equipment is mostly obtained through contacts and status, represented by your Resources value (page 22). Your party is expected to procure equipment for the expedition at the start of the mystery, before you head out. It is part of the preparation phase (see chapter 9).

Each player rolls the number of dice indicated by their character's Resources value. The number of successes is used to purchase equipment – for example, an item with availability level 1 costs one success, while another with level 3 costs three successes.

You can donate successes to each other, or add them together to purchase higher level equipment and decide among yourselves who will carry the equipment, regardless of whose successes paid for it.

Each player may also decide to move points from their free Capital, but will then have less money to spend during the mystery (see below).

### SHOPPING DURING THE MYSTERY

Once on site, the PCs are expected to have money, status, or goods that correspond to their respective living standards.

When bartering with a non-player character who is reluctant to part with an item, you make an opposed roll for **MANIPULATION** and add a bonus based on your living standard (table *Modifier from Resources*). Equipment is bought by achieving a number of successes equal to or greater than the equipment's availability level.

#### MODIFIER FROM RESOURCES

| RESOURCES | LIVING STANDARDS   | BONUS | CAPITAL |
|-----------|--------------------|-------|---------|
| 1         | Destitute          | -1    | —       |
| 2         | Poor               | —     | —       |
| 3         | Struggling         | —     | 1       |
| 4         | Financially stable | +1    | 2       |
| 5         | Middle-class       | +1    | 3       |
| 6         | Well-off           | +2    | 5       |
| 7         | Wealthy            | +3    | 8       |
| 8         | Filthy rich        | +5    | 12      |

For normal purchases, from someone willing to sell at a fixed price, the Resources value is rolled to see how much money (or what promise of future payment) the player character is good for.

Rich individuals can automatically purchase equipment during an ongoing mystery by spending Capital (table *Modifier from Resources*), as long as it is not done with an opposed roll. The point is spent until the next mystery and can be used instead of a success test or added to increase the number of successes.

### ARMOR AND COVER

You can wear armor to protect yourself from attacks. Armor gives you a Protection value. When hit by an attack, you roll the number of dice indicated by the armor's Protection. Each success reduces the damage by 1. Wearing armor also makes you clumsy and imparts a penalty to **AGILITY**.

The *Armor* table lists the Protection value, the number of dice you must subtract from **AGILITY** tests, and the availability level.

An example of light armor is a leather cuirass. A medium armor could be to wear a helmet and a

## ARMOR

| TYPE         | PROTECTION | AGILITY | AVAILABILITY |
|--------------|------------|---------|--------------|
| Light armor  | 2          | -1      | 2            |
| Medium armor | 4          | -2      | 3            |
| Heavy armor  | 6          | -3      | 4            |

## COVER

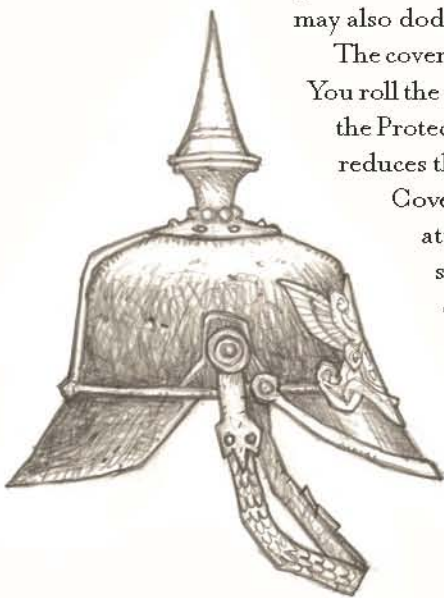
| TYPE OF COVER | PROTECTION |
|---------------|------------|
| Furniture     | 3          |
| Wooden door   | 4          |
| Hill          | 5          |
| House wall    | 6          |

chain mail shirt, while heavy armor could mean putting on an old suit of plate mail armor before your encounter with a fearsome vaesen.

In combat you can also choose to take cover behind walls, barriers, or parts of the terrain to avoid getting hit by ranged weapons. This requires a fast action. While in cover you may also dodge attacks as usual.

The cover gives you a Protection value. You roll the number of dice indicated by the Protection value, and each success reduces the damage of the attack by 1.

Cover does not protect against attacks from enemies in the same zone as you, since the enemy can go around or over the cover and attack you. An exception to this rule is explosions; cover protects against explosions even in the same zone.



## EQUIPMENT AND WEAPONS

Tools, weapons, and other items help you by adding a bonus to your skill tests. The bonus indicates the number of extra dice you may roll. See the *Equipment* list for examples of items from each availability level. You may also visit various establishments or purchase services that can make things easier during the mystery or serve as a place for healing Conditions. Each service applies to the whole party, rather than any individual character. For examples, see the *Services and Establishments* list.

The *Weapons* table shows a list of weapons the characters might use. Damage indicates how many Conditions the opponent suffers if hit. Range shows which zones you can reach with your attack. Range 0-1 means you can attack enemies in your zone and adjacent zones, while 1-3 means you can attack enemies one, two, or three zones away, but not enemies in your own zone. Bonus indicates how many dice you may add to your success test when trying to hit your enemy. Skill shows which skill to roll for. Availability indicates how difficult the weapon is to obtain.

## EQUIPMENT

| ITEM              | BONUS | AVAILABILITY | EFFECT  |
|-------------------|-------|--------------|---|
| Crowbar           | +1    | 2            | Break locks with <b>FORCE</b>   |
| Lockpicks         | +1    | 2            | Pick locks with <b>STEALTH</b>  |
| Opera glasses     | +1    | 1            | Use <b>VIGILANCE</b> from a distance  |
| Binoculars        | +2    | 2            | Use <b>VIGILANCE</b> from a distance  |
| Hunting trap      | +1    | 1            | Detect sneaking people with <b>VIGILANCE</b>  |
| Hunting equipment | +2    | 2            | Use <b>INVESTIGATION</b> in the wilderness  |
| Tinderbox         | +1    | 1            | Use <b>INVESTIGATION</b> in dim places  |
| Hurricane lamp    | +2    | 1            | Use <b>INVESTIGATION</b> in darkness and detect sneaking people with <b>VIGILANCE</b> |
| Compass           | +1    | 2            | Use <b>LEARNING</b> to find the way   |

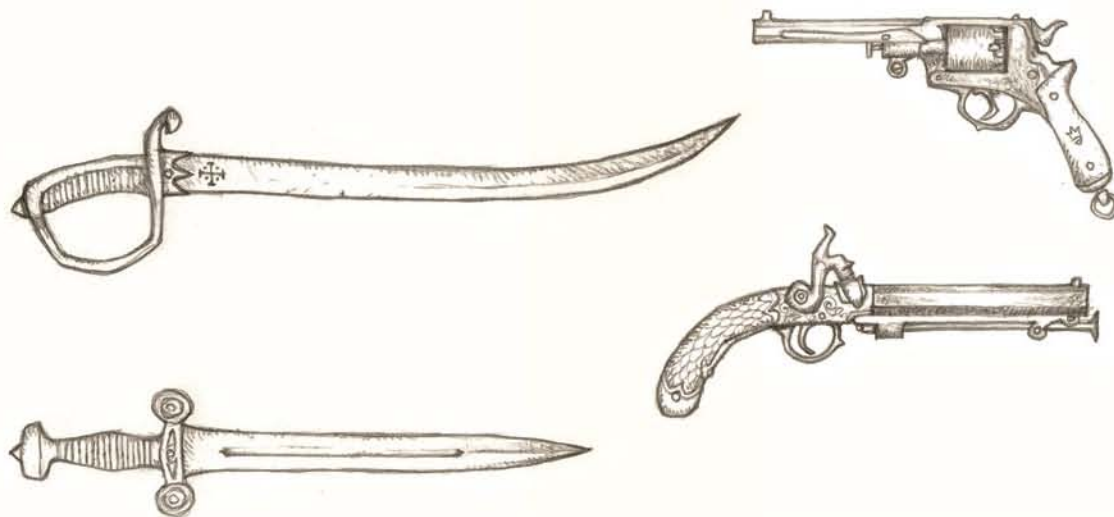


## EQUIPMENT

| ITEM                             | BONUS | AVAILABILITY | EFFECT   |
|----------------------------------|-------|--------------|--|
| Magnifying glass                 | +1    | 2            | Use to find clues during <b>INVESTIGATION</b>  |
| Camera                           | +2    | 3            | Use to gain knowledge about a place with <b>LEARNING</b> or <b>INVESTIGATION</b>             |
| Writing utensils and paper       | +1    | 1            | Use to take notes during <b>INVESTIGATION</b>  |
| Slide rule                       | +1    | 2            | Use to make calculations with <b>LEARNING</b>  |
| Simple bandages                  | +1    | 1            | Required for <b>MEDICINE</b>   |
| Medical equipment                | +2    | 2            | Required for <b>MEDICINE</b>   |
| Musical instrument               | +1    | 2            | Influence listeners with <b>INSPIRATION</b>  |
| Mastercrafted musical Instrument | +2    | 3            | Influence listeners with <b>INSPIRATION</b>  |
| Cooking pot                      | +1    | 1            | Cook with <b>INSPIRATION</b>   |
| Field kitchen                    | +2    | 2            | Cook with <b>INSPIRATION</b>   |
| Simple provisions                | +1    | 1            | Last several days without <b>FORCE</b> tests   |
| Nutritious provisions            | +1    | 2            | Last many days without <b>FORCE</b> tests  |
| Liquor                           | +1    | 1            | <b>INSPIRE</b> with alcohol  |
| Fine wines                       | +1    | 2            | <b>INSPIRE</b> and <b>MANIPULATE</b> with alcohol  |
| Chemical equipment               | +1    | 2            | Determine cause of death with <b>INVESTIGATION</b>   |
| Portable laboratory              | +1    | 3            | Produce poison with <b>LEARNING</b>  |
| Book collection                  | +1    | 2            | Use to find information for <b>LEARNING</b>  |
| Old scrolls                      | +2    | 3            | Use to find information for <b>LEARNING</b>  |
| Crystal ball                     | +1    | 3            | Use <b>OBSERVATION</b> to search for clues   |
| Map book                         | +1    | 2            | Use for <b>INVESTIGATION</b> and <b>LEARNING</b> when navigating                             |
| Weak horse                       | +1    | 2            | Use for <b>FORCE</b>   |
| Strong horse                     | +2    | 3            | Use in <b>CLOSE COMBAT</b> and for <b>FORCE</b>  |
| Pet dog                          | +1    | 1            | Use for <b>CLOSE COMBAT</b>  |
| Guard dog                        | +2    | 2            | Use for <b>VIGILANCE</b> and <b>CLOSE COMBAT</b>   |
| Hunting dog                      | +3    | 3            | Use for <b>VIGILANCE</b> , <b>CLOSE COMBAT</b> and <b>INVESTIGATION</b>                      |
| Make-up                          | +1    | 1            | Sometimes required for <b>MANIPULATION</b>   |
| Disguise                         | +2    | 2            | Sometimes required for <b>MANIPULATION</b>   |
| Elegant disguise                 | +2    | 3            | Sometimes required for <b>MANIPULATION</b> and can be used to sneak with <b>MANIPULATION</b> |
| Rope                             | +1    | 1            | Use <b>FORCE</b> to climb  |
| Rope ladder                      | +3    | 2            | Use <b>FORCE</b> or <b>AGILITY</b> to climb  |
| Weak poison (3 doses)            | —     | 1            | Required to poison someone (toxicity 3)  |
| Strong poison (2 doses)          | —     | 2            | Required to poison someone (toxicity 6)  |
| Extremely strong poison (1 dose) | —     | 3            | Required to poison someone (toxicity 9)  |

## SERVICES AND ESTABLISHMENTS

| SERVICES                   | AVAILABILITY | EFFECT  |
|----------------------------|--------------|---|
| Quack or feldsher          | 1            | Heals Broken  |
| Doctor                     | 2            | Heals Broken and one mental Condition   |
| Personal doctor or surgeon | 3            | Heals Broken and any two Conditions   |
| Bathing facility           | 1            | Heals one mental Condition  |
| Barber                     | 2            | Restores two mental Conditions  |
| Errand boy                 | 1            | Allows the PCs to call in a contact during the next scene, if they pass a <b>MANIPULATION</b> test          |
| Homing pigeon              | 2            | Allows the PCs to call in a contact during the next scene   |
| Post rider                 | 3            | Allows the PCs to call in a contact or get hold of an item small enough to be carried during the next scene |
| Carriage                   | 2            | Travel to a new location and heal one Condition   |
| Train or boat              | 3            | Travel to a new location and heal three Conditions  |
| Shelter or hostel          | 1            | Overnight accommodation with opportunities for rest or medical aid  |
| Upscale hotel              | 3            | Overnight accommodation and food that heals one Condition   |
| Simple meal                | 1            | Last a few days without <b>FORCE</b> tests  |
| Fancy dinner               | 2            | Last several days without <b>FORCE</b> tests  |
| Banquet                    | 3            | Last several days without <b>FORCE</b> tests and heal a mental Condition                                    |





### MELEE WEAPONS

| WEAPON          | DAMAGE | RANGE | BONUS | AVAILABILITY | SKILL        |
|-----------------|--------|-------|-------|--------------|--------------|
| Kick or punch   | 1      | 0     | ±0    | —            | FORCE        |
| Knuckle duster  | 1      | 0     | +1    | 2            | CLOSE COMBAT |
| Chair           | 1      | 0     | +1    | 1            | CLOSE COMBAT |
| Sledgehammer    | 2      | 0     | ±0    | 2            | CLOSE COMBAT |
| Flail           | 2      | 0     | +2    | 4            | CLOSE COMBAT |
| Rifle butt      | 1      | 0     | +1    | —            | CLOSE COMBAT |
| Knife or dagger | 1      | 0     | +1    | 1            | CLOSE COMBAT |
| Rapier          | 1      | 0     | +2    | 3            | CLOSE COMBAT |
| Sword or saber  | 2      | 0     | +2    | 4            | CLOSE COMBAT |
| Crowbar         | 1      | 0     | +1    | 2            | CLOSE COMBAT |
| Axe             | 2      | 0     | +1    | 1            | CLOSE COMBAT |
| Quarterstaff    | 1      | 0     | +1    | 1            | CLOSE COMBAT |
| Halberd         | 3      | 0     | +1    | 4            | CLOSE COMBAT |
| Bayonet         | 2      | 0     | +1    | 3            | CLOSE COMBAT |
| Whip            | 1      | 0     | +1    | 1            | CLOSE COMBAT |

### RANGED WEAPONS

| WEAPON             | DAMAGE | RANGE | BONUS | AVAILABILITY | SKILL                          |
|--------------------|--------|-------|-------|--------------|--------------------------------|
| Spear              | 1      | 0–1   | +1    | 1            | CLOSE COMBAT/<br>RANGED COMBAT |
| Bow                | 1      | 0–2   | +1    | 1            | RANGED COMBAT                  |
| Longbow            | 2      | 1–3   | +1    | 2            | RANGED COMBAT                  |
| Crossbow           | 2      | 0–1   | +1    | 3            | RANGED COMBAT                  |
| Pistol or revolver | 2      | 0–1   | +2    | 4            | RANGED COMBAT                  |
| Musket             | 2      | 1–2   | +1    | 3            | RANGED COMBAT                  |
| Rifle              | 2      | 1–3   | +2    | 4            | RANGED COMBAT                  |
| Cannon             | 5      | 2–5   | +1    | 5            | RANGED COMBAT                  |







*They said that the black candles in the candelabra were made from the blood of bulls sacrificed by virgins on nights when the moon shone full. And yet I was drawn to their light. I was alone in a dark part of the headquarters where I had previously not been allowed. On my head I wore a hat much like a cockscomb. It was time for me, the youngest among us and the daughter of a lowly maid, to be accepted into the group.*

*The floor seemed to move beneath my feet. They had made me drink two carafes of wine, claiming it would help me cope with what was about to happen. There was talk of me facing some kind of vaesen. A lindworm was mentioned, and a kraken, although it seemed impossible. The thought of hearing a werewolf growl in the darkness terrified me.*

*The creak of a door opening grabbed my attention. A pair of glowing eyes appeared in the shadows, and there was a foul stench in the air. I grabbed a candelabra and raised it above my head, hot candlewax dripping onto my forehead. In its light a face emerged. It was a troll, and so gruesome was its face that I screamed and felt something warm and wet running down my legs. The beast was upon me. I was knocked to the floor, covered in the creature's ooze. Then I heard laughter around me. Several lanterns lit up in what turned out to be the library where we have tea every Sunday. I was holding a troll's head made of wax and cloth. I was soiled with shrimp soup left over from several days ago. Our leader gave me his hand and said it was time I took that silly hat off. Then we went to Elana's tavern, where we drank and sang well into the morning. I was part of a new family.*



# THE SOCIETY AND THE HEADQUARTERS

THIS CHAPTER PROVIDES a historical background to the Society – an organization made up of people with the Sight that for centuries devoted itself to studying and banishing vaesen, before it ceased to exist roughly ten years ago. It also explains how you and the other player characters band together

to breathe new life into the organization and reopen the Society's old headquarters – an abandoned castle in the Swedish city of Upsala. The chapter concludes with a description of how you can explore unknown parts of the headquarters and work to improve it.

## THE HISTORY OF THE SOCIETY

Linnea Elfeklint can tell you a lot about the founding of the Society and what happened afterwards. Once the game begins, it is up to the Gamemaster and the players to fill in the details where needed – perhaps a vaesen from the organization’s past comes back to take revenge on the player characters for the actions of previous members, or to ask them for help?

### A THURSDAY’S CHILD IS BORN

The founder of the Society was born into a poor family in a small town called Elsinore on the Danish island of Zealand at the beginning of the sixteenth century. Tine Rasmussen is said to have gained the Sight as a child after contracting smallpox and spending almost two weeks in a coma. When she woke up, seven of her nine siblings had died, and Tine could see strange creatures all around her. Growing up, she made contact with the fairies and trolls dwelling in and around the town, and helped other people in their interactions with vaesen. It is said that even as a teenager she was treated like a wise old lady, advising people both older and richer than herself.



“OFF, OFF I SOAR  
TO BLOCKULA’S SHORE  
TO SHARE IN THE FEAST  
AND THE BLISS OF THE BEAST”

– INCANTATION RECITED BY WITCHES BEFORE THEIR  
JOURNEY TO SATAN’S GATHERINGS AT BLOCKULA

Tine’s life changed when the Church found out about her alleged abilities. On the priests’ instruction, Tine’s parents had her imprisoned and brought to the town square to be tried for witchcraft and, if found guilty, condemned.

The creatures Tine was in contact with helped her escape the wooden cage where she was awaiting trial, and the townspeople gave her a horse and some food. In the dead of night she fled south and made her way to Copenhagen, where she went into hiding under an assumed name.

### THE ORDER OF ARTEMIS

By sheer coincidence, Tine came to live with a man who also possessed the Sight. The noble Mats Rosenberg was renting out parts of his home, which had previously been used by his late wife and child, to earn some extra money from passing travelers in need of accommodation. Mats had gained the Sight after being wounded by the werewolf that killed his wife and child, and was frightened by his ability and the things he saw.

After the ghost of his dead wife passed through the house in the middle of the night, Tine and Mats realized they shared the same ability. Shortly thereafter they founded the Order of Artemis for Studies of Vaesen, and set out to recruit more people with the Sight in order to study and understand such creatures.

One of those who joined the Order of Artemis was an Italian nun named Ana Rastelli, who had fled the Roman Inquisition and settled in Scandinavia. Ana took it upon herself to compile and catalog the Order’s discoveries. She wrote numerous books and essays on vaesen, her life’s work being the colossal tome titled *In Libro de Invisibilia* (The Book of the Invisibles).

The Order of Artemis grew and had a meeting hall built in central Copenhagen. In their encounters with vaesen, the members of the Order learned that the creatures would sometimes harm, enslave, and even kill humans, and several members believed that vaesen were in league with the devil. Mats wanted the Order to focus on locating and banishing vaesen,



while Tine insisted that the accumulation of knowledge should remain its primary objective.

When Ana and Mats passed away, others took their place. For two hundred years the Order of Artemis spread across Scandinavia, constructing several meeting halls – one of them in Upsala. And during all that time they gathered texts and information about vaesen and magic, building secret libraries of occult knowledge.

### CARL LINNAEUS

In the early 18th century, the young scientist Carl Linnaeus left his home in Upsala and embarked on a scientific expedition to northern Sweden. No one knows whether Linnaeus already possessed the Sight at the time of his departure or gained it on his journey, but either way he returned with a secret journal titled *Homo Ferus*, in which he recorded numerous encounters with, and rumors about, vaesen. Linnaeus joined the Order of Artemis in Upsala and quickly became its leader.

Carl Linnaeus organized another expedition to Dalecarlia, this time composed of members of the Order, with the secret aim of studying vaesen. He planned to create a comprehensive scientific catalog of vaesen, which would make him a world-renowned scientist.

Linnaeus called his expedition to Dalecarlia “Societas Itineria Reuterholiana” – the Reuterholm Society. The name referred to the governor of Dalecarlia, Nils Reuterholm, who financed the expedition, unaware of its true purpose. Upon his return to Upsala, Linnaeus proclaimed that the expedition had been an “astounding success,” and decided that the Order of Artemis’s branch in Upsala should be renamed as the *Society for Studies of the Invisibles and Protection of Mankind*, or in short: the Society.

A few years after the expedition to Dalecarlia, Linnaeus gathered the members of the Society and announced that he was leaving the group, claiming to have lost the Sight. This sparked discussions that escalated into physical violence. Many felt duped, and expressed doubt as to whether Linnaeus had even had the Sight in the first place or just been lying all along to make a



“A merchant rode in on horse and wagon, claiming to have seen firsthand how the mare came to Husby and did not leave until every human and animal had drawn its last breath. He said the mare had always haunted Husby, slipping in during the night through cracks and keyholes to ride the sleeping men and women until they frothed at the mouth. This had been part of life in Husby, and the nightly visits could be profitable since the mare would leave some coins on the porch. But the mare had changed, no longer dispensing any money. The last time she came to Husby, she was governed by wrath and no one knew what had angered her so. That night the merchant slept on a kitchen bench at the parsonage, with a mare’s broom for protection, and it saved him. He lay awake, hearing the men and women of the village – even the pastor himself – breathe like trumpets without getting any air, and one by one they died. The merchant said the mare had turned malicious, and that she now traveled from village to village, clearing them of life.

– ALVA FRISK, MILLER’S WIFE IN LÅNGSJÖ PARISH

name for himself as a scientist. A week after the argument, someone set fire to the Society’s headquarters, and before it could be extinguished all records of the Dalecarlia expedition were consumed by the flames.



### THE DIVIDED SOCIETY

When the Society was first founded in the 16th century, there were conflicting views about the aims and methods of the organization. Several splinter groups have emerged over the years, but most of them soon ceased to exist. Some used magic themselves – like the group in the early 15th century led by a former school-teacher named Caja Larsson, who was arrested for witchcraft in Stockholm and imprisoned. Others allied themselves with vaesen, like the followers of sea captain Vilfred Steen who allegedly walked off into the woods of Värmland for good after Captain Steen married a vaesen.

A group that has endured through the years is the so-called Rosenbergers, named after Mats Roseberg who co-founded the Society. The Rosenbergers consider vaesen to be monsters created by Satan, and are tracking down and killing or banishing them. Many of their members are former soldiers or hunters, well-trained in the art of combat. The group is currently led by Johanna Lampinen, a Finnish priest's daughter said to be an exceptionally talented exorcist. Relations are strained between the Society and the Rosenbergers, and meetings between the groups have on several occasions resulted in violence. The current numbers and whereabouts of the Rosenbergers remain unclear.

### THE OULU MASSACRE

In the 18th century, the entire Order of Artemis was renamed the Society. During this period, many members around Scandinavia were wounded or killed in their encounters with vaesen, and several meeting halls were closed down. Many of the Society's members felt that the balance between humans and vaesen had changed; the covenant that had been made centuries ago no longer existed. In some places the creatures were attacking humans without provocation, and in others they vanished without a trace.

The purpose of the Society shifted more and more to banishing vaesen that attacked humans. They did so by using the Sight, as well as the vast stores of knowledge the organization had accumulated since the sixteenth century. The rural population may have known everything about appeasing and coexisting with the creatures, but when it came to driving them off, no one could match the Society.

At the end of the 18th century, northern Finland was ravaged by a family of giants trying to drive the humans away. The matriarch of the family, Bestla, claimed to be the protector of the wilderness, the mountains, and the woods, and would savagely attack hunters and miners in the area. The Society focused their efforts on repelling the threat, and more than a hundred people with the Sight gathered at Oulu Castle to formulate a strategy. But the giants got there first. That night, Bestla had her children set the castle ablaze. Almost every member of the Society perished in the fire.



The three who made it out alive – Baroness Katja Kokola, Professor Albert Wredenhielm, and Countess Hilma af Thulenstierna – did so by diving into the castle well. After spending several hours in the freezing water, they were eventually rescued, and promptly left Finland and fled back to Castle Gyllencreutz, the Society's headquarters in Upsala.

## THE SOCIETY DWINDLES

The three who survived the fire in Oulu tried to recruit new members and rebuild the Society. But in the years that followed, all three disappeared.

Professor Wredenhielm went to northern Norway to investigate reports of strange lights in the sky and was never heard from again. Baroness Kokola was last seen getting on a ship in southern Sweden, supposedly to banish a creature in the depths of the sea. Countess Hilma af Thulenstierna traveled east, leaving no information as to where she was going.

The new recruits either died or went mad in their encounters with vaesen, or chose to save themselves by leaving the organization. One of these was Linnea Elfeklint, who is currently living at Upsala Asylum. It was she who told the player characters about the Society, and she has also suggested that there may be other groups of similar orientation operating across Scandinavia – without knowing their exact whereabouts or how to contact them.

## THE SOCIETY IS REBORN

You and the other player characters have for different reasons decided to track down and dispose of vaesen, or help resolve conflicts between humans and vaesen. At the start of the game, you have already contacted Linnea Elfeklint. She has told you about the history of the Society and given you the keys to its headquarters in Upsala – Castle Gyllencreutz.

The game begins with you entering the castle, where you will begin the process of exploring and

### WHO ARE WE?

Your Motivation should explain what makes you want to re-establish the Society and start hunting down vaesen. You and the other players may also have to think about how your characters first met, and what makes you want to work together. You could be friends or relatives who have all gained the Sight, you could be hired by the same nobleman, or you could be total strangers who met by coincidence or were brought together by destiny for a greater purpose. Alternatively, you could all have tracked down Linnea individually and gotten to know each other through her.

rebuilding it. Soon you will head out on your first expedition into the unknown.

### LINNEA ELFEKLINT

Linnea Elfeklint is a former member of the Society who chose to leave the organization. She is renting a room in a simple apartment in central Upsala, but spends most of her time at the city's mental asylum. Linnea refuses to visit the castle. You meet at the asylum or at an inn called the Burgher and Baker.

Linnea is dirty and confused. She often forgets your names and who you are. Her knowledge about the Society comes in short bursts, as she gradually recalls things she would rather forget. What she says is often contradictory.

When asked to describe her expeditions and encounters with vaesen in greater detail, she turned silent, and shortly afterwards you were informed that she had been readmitted to the asylum. Linnea's reasons for helping you rebuild the Society are so far unknown.

If you would rather use another person instead of Linnea, you are of course free to make up your own elderly individual to guide and aid the player characters.

### WHO IS LINNEA?

As a group you can work out exactly how your player characters came in contact with Linnea, and what reasons she gives for wanting to help you. Some suggestions are presented below:

- ✦ Linnea has noticed that vaesen have grown more aggressive and are no longer behaving as they used to. Worried about the humans they afflict, she reached out to you, one by one, and brought you together to convince you that the Society must be restored.
- ✦ You have all had strange dreams about Linnea and the Society, and sought her out in an attempt to make sense of what is happening to you. Linnea does not know why you are dreaming about her, but understands the meaning of those dreams: the people of Scandinavia need protection from vaesen, and you have been chosen to re-establish the Society.
- ✦ You found each other in your search for other people with the Sight. Trying to learn more about the supernatural, you came across information about the Society. It was you who tracked down Linnea, and she has reluctantly agreed to help you revive the organization.
- ✦ One of you was attacked by a vaesen which Linnea helped banish. Afterwards she told that person about the Society, saying that she was too damaged by her experiences to resume her search for strange and hostile creatures, but she could at least help the person seek out the other player characters.
- ✦ You are members of a club, a secret covenant, or some other kind of group. There you approached each other, realizing that all of you possessed the Sight. At one point you heard another member – a man who happened to be Linnea's doctor at the asylum – talk about her nightmares and fantasies. You realized she knew much more about vaesen and the Sight than you did, and decided to meet with her.

### THE STRUCTURE OF THE SOCIETY

Linnea has told you about how the Society used to operate, and what traditions its members adhered to. How you choose to run and shape the Society's branch in Upsala is of course entirely up to you, but maybe there is something to be learned from history?

The Society has traditionally been led by a council of senior members. The council convenes in the salon on the ground floor, overlooking the garden and the Fyris river. Members who misbehave can be voted off the council. Decision are taken by consensus. Usually a meeting is held once a week, or whenever there are urgent matters to discuss – often rumors of vaesen in some remote part of Scandinavia.

The council appoints the members of expeditions that are sent to study and neutralize the creatures. Before they head out, all available resources are used to give the expedition the greatest possible chance of success. The Society's members are obligated to contribute knowledge and equipment. Everything belongs to everyone – for the good of the cause. Tasks and equipment are assigned to whoever is best suited for the job.





### THE SOCIETY'S CREED

I solemnly swear not to be corrupted  
 Bloodied or weakened  
 By the spawn of the underworld  
 I swear not to let my mind be muddled  
 Clear of eye  
 Keen of thought  
 Pure of deed  
 I swear to put  
 The Society before  
 My own ambitions and emotions  
 My life for my comrades  
 I pledge my life to you, holy Artemis  
 For the battle against vaesen and the protection  
 Of mankind

The Society's mixture of Catholic, pagan, and Greek traditions includes a multitude of rituals. Before an expedition is launched, its members are blessed by a priest at the chapel. They then gather in a room in the cellar before a statue of the goddess Artemis. In the light of lit candles and burning incense, the members recite the Society's creed (see text box). They stand in a circle, pressing their left-hand index and middle finger against their heart. Each is presented with a dried flower for the journey, symbolizing the love and power of the organization. The ones who return must be cleansed with a ritual in which they confess their sins.

The Society's symbol is the ouroboros, the lindworm biting its own tail. Originating from ancient Egypt, the ouroboros also appears in Norse mythology as the giant serpent Jörmungandr.

### CASTLE GYLLENCREUTZ

The headquarters is a huge, neglected old castle on a hill by the Fyris river. It is surrounded by a black iron fence and has a gate flanked by statues of griffins. The garden and the paved walkway leading to the entrance are overgrown with bushes, trees, and

### TITLES WITHIN THE SOCIETY

Members with specific responsibilities are given a title with which they ought to be addressed. A person can have multiple titles. Not all positions have to be filled.

| RESPONSIBILITY                    | TITLE         |
|-----------------------------------|---------------|
| Priest and ritual master          | Chaplain      |
| Equipment                         | Armorer       |
| Security                          | Guardian      |
| Money and other resources         | Treasurer     |
| Contact with the outside world    | Shadowmaker   |
| Headquarters                      | Castle Master |
| Library and information gathering | Librarian     |
| Physical training and medicine    | Custodian     |

shrubbery. There are plenty of mice, rats, foxes, and birds. In the backyard there is a dilapidated jetty on the shore of the Fyris river, and a boarded-up boat-house. The garden has several smaller buildings – most likely used as stables, storage rooms, and servants' quarters – as well as a number of statues and a fountain. Up on a small hill there are seven rotting crosses of wood.

The castle's facade is decorated with monstrous gargoyles. It is a three-story building with several towers and a vast underground cellar.

Castle Gyllencreutz stood vacant for many years. Its old furniture is covered in cobwebs, and mice have nested in couches and chairs. Rats defend their homes, while bats and crows come and go through the holes in the ceiling. Parts of the building reek of mold, and the leaky roof lets rain in.

Most of the castle is unexplored; many of its doors are either locked or nailed shut. By reading old journals left behind by previous residents, you have learned that there are several libraries, a laboratory, an infirmary, a chapel, an observatory, and halls for magical studies. There should also be cells where vaesen were held – all of this hidden behind the many secret doors you have identified but not yet opened.

Shortly after taking over the castle you were visited by a man called Algot Frisk. He claimed that his ancestors had served at Castle Gyllencreutz for hundreds of years, and insisted on being hired as steward of the castle. Steward Frisk works hard to keep you fed, help you dress, and clean up the castle, taking every opportunity to point out the need for more staff. Furthermore, it should be noted the good Steward on many occasions has sported a smile that suggests he knows more about the Society and vaesen than he lets on. So far, none of you have gotten him to reveal his secrets.

## CHALLENGES IN UPSALA

Assuming ownership of Castle Gyllencreutz will attract many prying eyes. You may be visited by journalists, police officers, criminals, and others wishing to learn your secrets or get their hands on your assets.

### HOW DOES IT START?

There is no predetermined opening scene – the game could start with you meeting Linnea for the first time, or entering the castle and starting to explore. Or maybe you have owned it for a few days and are already well-acquainted with Linnea? In the latter case, the opening scene could involve you acquiring information that leads you toward the first mystery.

If you are only going to play a single mystery, you can ignore the castle completely and start on the way to the mystery.

If the truth about who you are and what you are doing ever comes out, it will not be long before people in Upsala try to have you committed to the asylum. It is up to you to make up your own cover story.

## CAMPAIGN RULES

If you are playing multiple mysteries with the same player characters – either as a campaign where the mysteries form a longer story, or as stand-alone narratives – there are things you need to do between the mysteries. Every time the player characters return to headquarters you must determine whether any Insights and Defects obtained (see chapter 5) become permanent or wear off. Furthermore, the player characters may expand and upgrade their headquarters. But there is also a risk of threats arising in Upsala – vaesen who for whatever reason are after the player characters or their headquarters, or ordinary humans such as police officers or journalists looking to cause trouble. The rest of this chapter concerns campaign rules indicting what you should do between mysteries.

## YOUR HEADQUARTERS

After solving mysteries you will have an opportunity to improve your headquarters – Castle Gyllencreutz. You can hire staff, explore unknown parts of the castle, add new facilities or renovate existing ones. It might be fun to draw a sketch map of the headquarters and add new rooms and people as the castle expands.

Once you return to Upsala after a mystery, you must together answer questions (see text box) about what you have experienced – each affirmative answer yields one Development point. Before taking on a new mystery you can use your Development points to purchase Upgrades for your headquarters. Unspent Development points are saved.

Every time you purchase an Upgrade there is a risk that a threat will arise. The Gamemaster makes



a hidden roll using a number of dice equal to the cost of the Upgrade. Should any of the dice roll a success, the Gamemaster chooses a threat from the table. If multiple Upgrades are purchased on a single occasion, the Gamemaster makes multiple rolls and adds an extra die for each additional Upgrade. It is therefore possible for several threats to arise at the same time.

At the start of the game you already have two Upgrades: *The Society's library* and *Butler Algot Frisk*.

## THREATS

When the die roll indicates that a threat arises, the Gamemaster must either pick one from the list or make up one of her own. Extra successes can result in a stronger threat, if the Gamemaster so desires.

The Gamemaster should name any NPC or vaesen relevant to the threat, and preferably start a countdown where the threat becomes more imminent and dangerous with every step. This can take place over multiple mysteries, with different threats overlapping and making life in Upsala less safe. But it is also possible to immediately reveal the threat in a scene and let the player characters handle and neutralize it.

Threats usually arise during scenes that take place at headquarters or in Upsala before or after a mystery, but some threats (such as a snooping journalist) might follow the player characters on their travels. Threats can also strike at the player characters' headquarters while they are away—a burglar, for example.

Threats may very well be connected to the player characters' Dark Secret, backstory, or a previously completed mystery. For example, if an ardent police officer turns up, convinced that there are illegal activities going on at Castle Gyllencreutz, that person could be an NPC from a player character's past—perhaps a brother or a childhood friend? If any player character should happen to awaken a vaesen at headquarters, the creature could be aware of her Dark Secret and decide to exploit it.

## QUESTIONS FOR DEVELOPMENT POINTS

After completing a mystery you must together answer the following questions. Each affirmative answer yields one Development point.

1. Did you play at least one scene at the headquarters?
2. Did you encounter a new type of vaesen?
3. Did you visit a place of magic?
4. Were you subjected to magic?
5. Did you bring occult books or other important items back to headquarters?
6. Did you make important contacts?
7. Was the mystery particularly difficult and epic?
8. Did you solve the Mystery?

## EXAMPLE THREAT

The players purchase an Upgrade to their headquarters, and the Gamemaster gets one success on her roll. She decides that the threat should be a ghost that has come to life at the castle. The ghost's name is Mads, and he is the spirit of a deceased member of the Society buried in disgrace after being falsely accused of consorting with vaesen. The creature will not have peace until he is vindicated. Mads will appear according to the following countdown:

1. Objects are switching places, the player characters are having nightmares, and the servants report that an unknown man has been spotted in different rooms of the castle, though no one has seen such a person enter or leave the building.
2. Mads becomes aggressive and uses magic to frighten the player characters—he uses his spectral voice, summons vermin to swarm the building, and conjures terrifying illusions.
3. Mads attacks the (in his view) haughtiest of the player characters.

### LIST OF THREATS

Pick one of the following threats or make up your own.

- ✦ Policeman convinced that there are illegal activities going on at the headquarters
- ✦ Thieves planning to steal from the headquarters
- ✦ Crime boss who wants to extort or threaten the player characters
- ✦ Journalist intent on exposing the player characters' secrets at any cost
- ✦ Relative who wants one of the player characters committed to the mental hospital
- ✦ Criminal friend or relative in search of help
- ✦ Vaesen wakes up inside the castle and becomes obsessed with a player character
- ✦ Vaesen seeks out the castle and moves in to take control of it
- ✦ Researchers demand access to the books in the castle library – but are really out to steal occult books
- ✦ Noblewoman who claims to own Castle Gyllencreutz and wants the player characters to move out
- ✦ Priest convinced that there is an illegal cult at the castle
- ✦ Government official who has decided to demolish the castle
- ✦ Bank clerk who comes to collect on an old debt connected to the castle's previous owner
- ✦ Occult group that views the player characters as competitors
- ✦ A vaesen posing as a helpless child

### EXAMPLE RECOVERY ROLL

During an unusually blood-soaked mystery, Kaspar Ståhl has gained two physical Defects, limp and gangrene, as well as a physical Insight. When the group returns to headquarters the player makes a recovery roll. The dice show two successes. The player decides to use one success to heal one of the Defects (gangrene) and the other to make the Insight permanent. Kaspar has now recovered from the gangrene, while the remaining Defect (limp) and the Insight both become permanent.

Insights wear off before the next mystery. Insights and Defects that become permanent can never be removed.

If you have gained both physical and mental Insights or Defects, you make a physical recovery roll and a mental recover roll.

The number of dice used for the physical recovery roll is determined by adding the values of your Physique and Precision together – for example, if you have Physique 3 and Precision 2, you should roll 5 dice. For each success you may either heal a Defect or make an Insight permanent.

For mental Defects and Insights you roll a number of dice equal to your combined Logic and Empathy. Each success heals a Defect or causes an Insight to become permanent.

By purchasing Upgrades to the Society's headquarters, you can get a chance to push your recovery rolls or gain additional dice on your rolls. Conditions acquired during the mystery do not affect recovery rolls.

### DEFECTS AND INSIGHTS

After completing a mystery you must determine whether the Defects and Insights (see page 67) you have gained become permanent or wear off. This is done with a die roll called recovery. On failure your Defects automatically become permanent and your

### EQUIPMENT IN THE HEADQUARTERS

Besides your personal items, equipment acquired during a Mystery is assumed to be irrelevant once the Mystery is concluded. Months can pass before the next Mystery takes place, and once it does, it is



### DISCOVERY

Some Facilities are places that can be discovered (page 91). They are relics from the headquarter's glory days, now abandoned or forgotten and dilapidated. If the facility's prerequisite and cost are met, you as Gamemaster can read the discovery text to your players. Then they must decide whether to spend Development points to find out what the facility will be.

time to acquire new equipment. Therefore, every player character only gets to keep one newly acquired item or weapon on the character sheet. This does not apply to equipment that you started the game with, mementos and everyday items – you always get to keep these. The headquarters will, once it is expanded with Upgrades, gain the ability to store additional equipment, but also to reward the player characters with free items to bring on their expeditions without spending Resources.

### UPGRADES

There are three types of Upgrades: Facilities, Contacts, and Personnel. Facilities are new rooms or functions you discover or construct at headquarters. Contacts are people who can help you, and Personnel are servants or new members of the Society.

All Upgrades consist of several categories: Prerequisite, Cost, Function, and Asset. Prerequisites are things you need before the Upgrade can be purchased – Resources means that one of the player characters must have at least the specified value. Cost is the number of Development points to be spent to purchase the Upgrade. Function and Asset together explain the purpose of the Upgrade and what effects it provides you with.

Each Upgrade can use its Function and its Asset once per mystery. The only exceptions are the Infirmary, Chapel, and Treasure Chamber, which can

be used once by each player character – for example, everyone in the group may push their recovery rolls. Some Upgrades can be purchased multiple times, which allows them to be used more than once.

The gaming group is free to come up with other Upgrades in addition to the ones below.

### FACILITIES

These Upgrades are rooms and functions in the castle and on the castle grounds.

#### ARMORY

*Room with weapons on display in glass cases.*

PREREQUISITE: Resources 5 and Weapons Corridor

COST: 5 (Can be purchased up to three times)

FUNCTION: During the preparation phase, each level allows the player characters to bring a melee weapon or an armor from availability level 2 without using Resources.

#### BUTTERFLY HOUSE

*An annex to the glazed garden full of beautiful butterflies and insects.*

PREREQUISITE: Botanical Garden

COST: 2

FUNCTION: A player character who spends a scene in the botanical garden heals two mental Conditions.

#### CARP POND

*A carp pond with little streams and waterfalls under white wooden bridges.*

PREREQUISITE: Botanical Garden

COST: 2

FUNCTION: One of the player characters can gain an extra Advantage before a mystery: Unwavering Calm.

#### INFIRMARY

*A well-equipped infirmary.*

PREREQUISITE: Resources 5 or Doctor in the group

COST: 6

FUNCTION: Makes it possible to push all physical recovery rolls.



“OH, HALLOWED KINGS THREE  
WHOM THIS NIGHT WILL I SEE?  
WHOSE TABLE WILL I SET?  
WHOSE BED WILL I MAKE?  
WHOSE BRIDE WILL I BE?  
WHOSE NAME IS FOR ME?”

— TRADITIONAL SONG SUNG BY GIRLS TO SEE THEIR  
FUTURE HUSBANDS IN THEIR DREAMS

### KENNEL

*An enclosure for breeding and training dogs.*

PREREQUISITE: Gamekeeper or Hunter in the group

COST: 4 (Can be purchased up to three times)

ASSET: During the preparation phase, each level allows the player characters to bring a guard dog or hunting dog without using Resources.

### LIBRARY

*An enormous library.*

PREREQUISITE: Available from the start

COST: 0

FUNCTION: Clues can be found here.

### LOCAL TAVERN

*Tavern (named by the players) of varying quality not far from the castle.*

PREREQUISITE: —

COST: 4 (Can be purchased up to three times)

FUNCTION: One player character per level can gain +2 to their physical recovery roll.

### MAP ROOM

*A room with a large globe. There are numerous maps and route descriptions piled on a massive oak table.*

PREREQUISITE: Library or Professor

COST: 4

ASSET: One of the player characters can gain an extra Advantage before a mystery: Old Map.

### OBSERVATORY

*One of the towers is converted into an observatory, ready to gaze at the stars.*

PREREQUISITE: Patron or Inventor

COST: 5

FUNCTION: The player characters can seek information among the stars and planets. One of the player characters can gain an extra Advantage before a mystery: Divination or Weather Prophet.

ASSET: One player character can bring the item Binoculars without using Resources.

### PIGEON LOFT

*Cage with homing pigeons.*

PREREQUISITE: Caretaker

COST: 4

ASSET: The player characters can bring a homing pigeon with them on the mystery and use it to send for help during a subsequent scene.

### SEANCE PARLOR

*A parlor for contacting spirits.*

PREREQUISITE: Resources 4 or Occultist in the group

COST: 5

FUNCTION: The player characters can hold a séance before a mystery and gain access to additional clues – the Gamemaster decides which ones.

### SHOOTING RANGE

*Basement or walled garden complete with targets.*

PREREQUISITE: Weapons Corridor

COST: 5 (Can be purchased up to three times)

FUNCTION: All castle guards carry ranged weapons from availability level 3.

ASSET: During the preparation phase, each level allows the player characters to bring a ranged weapon of their choosing from availability levels 1 to 3, without using Resources.

### STABLE

*A stable for horses and carriages.*

PREREQUISITE: Resources 5 or Vagabond in the group

COST: 4 (Can be purchased up to three times)



**ASSET:** During the preparation phase, each level allows the player characters to bring a scrawny horse without using Resources.

#### THE ANNALS OF THE SOCIETY

*A hefty tome with written accounts of encounters with vaesen.*

**PREREQUISITE:** —

**COST:** 4

**FUNCTION:** At the end of a gaming session, a player can record the party's experiences, granting each player character one additional experience point.

#### WEAPONS CORRIDOR

*Corridor or room with simple display cases full of weapons.*

**PREREQUISITE:** Resources 4

**COST:** 4 (Can be purchased up to three times)

**FUNCTION:** During the preparation phase, each level allows the player characters to bring a melee weapon from availability level 1 without using Resources.

#### WORKSHOP

*Well-equipped workshop.*

**PREREQUISITE:** Resources 4

**COST:** 4

**FUNCTION:** One of the player characters can gain an extra Advantage before a mystery: Well-Maintained Weapons or Well-Maintained Tools.

### DISCOVERED FACILITIES

These Upgrades are rooms and functions that have fallen into disrepair, been walled off, or been forgotten since the previous members of the Society left the castle.

#### BOTANICAL GARDEN

*Glazed garden with gorgeous greenery and fragrant flowers.*

**PREREQUISITE:** Gardener

**DISCOVERY:** An overgrown part of the grounds with particularly exotic plants conceals crumbled arches, broken glass, and stone pillars...

**COST:** 4

**FUNCTION:** A player character who spends a scene in the garden heals two mental Conditions.

#### CELLAR VAULT

*A simple vault or wine cellar used as a storage space.*

**PREREQUISITE:** —

**DISCOVERY:** Through a cracked door in the cellar you see a dark passageway leading under the annex...

**COST:** 4 (Can be purchased up to three times)

**FUNCTION:** Each level can store up to 3 common items or weapons from previous mysteries.

#### CHAPEL

*A place of Christian worship.*

**PREREQUISITE:** Resources 5, or Priest in the group

**DISCOVERY:** Outside one of the castle's wings is an old ruin. You can see leaded mosaic windows and an altar, overgrown with thorn bushes and dried-up vines...

**COST:** 6

**FUNCTION:** Can push all mental recovery rolls

**ASSET:** The player characters can bring with them the power item holy water.

#### DIFFERENCE ENGINE

*The inventor builds a mechanical computing machine in one of the old castle halls.*

**PREREQUISITE:** Inventor

**DISCOVERY:** One dark night your inventor bursts into the great hall. "Eureka! I have figured it out! We only need a few more parts..."

**COST:** 6

**FUNCTION:** Facilities cost one less Development point to construct.

#### DUNGEON

*Barred room in the basement.*

**PREREQUISITE:** Cellar Vault

**DISCOVERY:** A damp stone staircase leads down to a collapsed cellar vault. Inside you glimpse a sturdy, barred door of rusty iron...

**COST:** 3

**FUNCTION:** NPCs imprisoned here cannot escape without help.

### FORGOTTEN GALLERY

*A vast passageway full of showcases displaying the Society's previous finds.*

PREREQUISITE: Guard or Occult Library

DISCOVERY: Behind an old shelf in a hallway there are scrape marks on the floor, and a mysterious wind seems to be coming from a chamber on the other side...

COST: 6

FUNCTION: One player character gains +1 to Resources until the end of the mystery.

ASSET: The player characters can bring with them a clue in the form of old journal entries from previous members of the Society. They gain +1 to **INVESTIGATION** or **OBSERVATION** when using the clue during the mystery.

### GYMNASIUM

*Fitness room.*

PREREQUISITE: —

DISCOVERY: In the back of an old tool shed is a cracked door that seems to lead to a part of the annex with dirty windows along the roof ridge. Inside you see a hall full of old junk...

COST: 5

FUNCTION: A player character who spends one scene in the gymnasium heals a physical Condition.

### OCCULT ARCHIVE

*A vault enclosed by thick, leaded walls and protective inscriptions.*

PREREQUISITE: Occult Temple or Mystic

DISCOVERY: The alcoves in the passageways behind the library have been bricked up, and behind the porous stone you see impenetrable lead doors...

COST: 6 (Can be purchased three times)

FUNCTION: Each level can store up to 3 power items or magic items from previous mysteries.

### OCCULT LIBRARY

*A library of banned occult books.*

PREREQUISITE: An occult book from a mystery

DISCOVERY: One of the library's bookcases echoes as if hollow...

COST: 5

FUNCTION: Once per mystery a player character can gain a free success on a roll for locating or under-

standing occult knowledge. The player must state what information the character recalls.

### OCCULT TEMPLE

*A place for worshipping vaesen and demons.*

PREREQUISITE: Occult Library

DISCOVERY: Loose stones in the Occult Library are covered with runes that read "worship" and "sub-mission". Hidden under the stones is a leaded hatch that someone has bricked up...

COST: 5

FUNCTION: One of the player characters can gain an extra Advantage before a mystery: Occultist.

### OCCULT WORKSHOP

*A workshop for crafting items that affect vaesen.*

PREREQUISITE: Occult Library

DISCOVERY: Behind a statue in the Occult Temple is a bricked-up vault with a lead rune that reads "creation"...

COST: 5

FUNCTION: Can craft one power item before a mystery. The Gamemaster rolls or picks an item from the list on page 123, or makes one up.

### SELF-FLAGELLATION TOOLS

*Tools and inventions for punishing the body.*

PREREQUISITE: Dungeon

DISCOVERY: In the castle basement there is a cluttered cupboard full of terrifying tools and old inventions...

COST: 4 (Can be purchased up to three times)

FUNCTION: One player character per level can gain +1 to their mental recovery roll.

### TREASURE CHAMBER

*A large vault full of the Society's hidden treasures.*

PREREQUISITE: Banker or Forgotten Gallery

DISCOVERY: Behind a bricked-up doorway is a large iron door. A numbered dial, like that of a safe, mocks your ignorance...

COST: 6

FUNCTION: All player characters gain +1 Resources for the duration of the mystery



## FAMOUS AND INFAMOUS TEXTS

There are lots of texts and books the Society can use to improve their knowledge of vaesen. For example:

- ✦ *In Libro de Invisibilia* by Ana Rastelli. This book laid the foundation for the existence and purpose of the Society. The text was lost more than a hundred years ago. For reasons unknown, no copies were ever made. There are whispers claiming that the content of the text does not match the reader's expectations. Perhaps the book portrays the nun Ana Rastelli in a different light than in the stories. Perhaps she had other objectives and means than the rumors suggest. Whatever the case, the text holds unique knowledge about vaesen.
- ✦ *Fragen – Antworten* by Max Brugger. This is a philosophical text from the eighteenth century. The book was banned by the church in 1792 due to its association with the occult. The questions raised in the book are said to shatter the reader's view of herself and the world. The text is written in red ink on black paper. The cover features a lindworm devouring its own tail.
- ✦ *Malleus Maleficarum* is a text from the 15th century that was used as a handbook by witch hunters of both Catholic and Protestant faith. It focuses on witches, but also contains quite a bit of information about vaesen.
- ✦ *Homo Ferus* by Carl Linnaeus. Linnaeus' secret journal describes the many encounters with vaesen on his travels in northern Sweden in 1732. It is said that the book was stolen from the li-

brary of Upsala University and now rests in private hands.

- ✦ *Death in Helsingland* by Sonia Lindegaard. This is a popular novel about a woman forced to defend her family against a werewolf. Few outside the Society are aware that Sonia was a Thursday's Child and the story is true.
- ✦ *A Description of the Northern Peoples* by Olaus Magnus is a collection of 22 books written in the 1500s. Many of the essays are attempts to describe Scandinavia and its people. It includes a great number of tales about mysterious creatures, and how to defend against them.
- ✦ *Paholaisen Pue* by Veeti Kovisto is a confusing collection of essays, poems, and songs penned by Finnish Satanists who one summer gathered on Åland to perform some kind of ritual. The participants have now been lost to obscurity – all that remains is the book. They say that a person who reads the text gains tremendous riches but also an altered personality.
- ✦ *The Dark Surrounds Me* by Morten Christensen. According to the author, this thousand-page tome contains transcripts of conversations with ghosts and other undead beings. The book includes detailed instructions on how to lure, bind, and control vaesen. Morten Christensen was once a National Antiquarian in Copenhagen, but abandoned his position and his family several years ago. He is claimed to have gathered a group of like-minded people in a remote village in northern Norway.

## CONTACTS

These are helpful individuals or institutions. All people must be named by the players. Feel free to play out a scene as the player characters recruit the contact.

### BANKER

*Can pay in bonds.*

PREREQUISITE: Resources 5

COST: 5

FUNCTION: Once per mystery a player character can raise her Resources by 2 for the duration of one scene.

### FIXER

*A handy contact.*

PREREQUISITE: Six or more Facilities at the headquarters

COST: 4

FUNCTION: Restore or retrieve a lost memento at the end of the mystery without spending experience points (see rules for memento on page 22).

### JOURNALIST

*Investigative reporter on your side* (page 166 in chapter 8).

PREREQUISITE: Resources 4, or Author in the group

COST: 4

FUNCTION: Can provide additional clues and come along on mysteries as a helping hand.



### PATRON

*A generous benefactor.*

PREREQUISITE: **INSPIRATION** 5, or Military Officer in the group

COST: 4

FUNCTION: Grants a free success on a **MANIPULATION** test when bartering or negotiating prices.

### POLICE CONSTABLE

*Kindly policeman.* (Stats as police officer on page 166 in chapter 8).

PREREQUISITE: Resources 5, or Private Investigator in the group

COST: 4

FUNCTION: Can provide additional clues, fabricate evidence, protect against criminals, etc. The Gamemaster decides what is possible.

### PROFESSOR

*Contact at the university.*

PREREQUISITE: Resources 5, or Academic in the group

COST: 4

FUNCTION: Grants a free success on a roll for finding or understanding information in Upsala.

### PSYCHIATRIST

*Treatment at the mental hospital.*

PREREQUISITE: A player character must have become mentally Broken during the mystery

COST: 4

FUNCTION: Gives a player character +2 on her mental recovery roll.

### PERSONNEL

These Upgrades are servants or humans with the Sight who join the Society. The players must give them names and a brief description before they can be used.

### BUTLER ALGOT FRISK

*Algot is already at the castle when you move in.*

PREREQUISITE: Available from the start.

COST: 0

FUNCTION: Manages the headquarters.

### CARETAKER

*A handy janitor looking after the property.*

PREREQUISITE: Workshop

COST: 3

FUNCTION: Repairs facilities in the castle if something is broken, for example by a threat.

### CHEF

*Efficient housekeeper with a passion for large portions.*

PREREQUISITE: —

COST: 4

FUNCTION: Cooks fancy dinners at the headquarters and makes sure that everyone is well fed.

ASSET: Provides each player character with simple provisions during the preparation phase, without rolling for Resources.

### COACHMAN

*Quiet horse groom who lives in the stable.*

Can come along on mysteries, played by the Gamemaster. The players spend 10 points on attributes (max 4) and 8 on skills (max 3), two of which must be based on Physique. Physical Toughness 1, Mental Toughness 1 (page 166 in chapter 8).

PREREQUISITE: Stable boy

COST: 4

ASSET: The player characters have their own carriage with two strong horses that they can use to travel to a new location and at the same time heal a Condition (see page 76).

### GAMEKEEPER

*Keeps the animal population down on the estate.*

PREREQUISITE: Shooting Range

COST: 5

FUNCTION: Upgrades the weapons from the shooting range to availability level 4 for the player characters and the castle guards.



ASSET: The player characters bring along hunting equipment or a hunter trap without rolling for Resources during the preparation phase.

#### GARDENER

*An artisan of nature who looks after the castle grounds.*

PREREQUISITE: Resources 5

COST: 4

FUNCTION: All food from the headquarters automatically counts as nutritious.

ASSET: Can provide the player characters with three doses of weak poison (toxicity 3) or one dose of strong poison (toxicity 6) during the preparation phase, without rolling for Resources.

#### GUARD

*Guard at the castle.*

The players spend 12 points on attributes (max 4) and 6 on the skills **CLOSE COMBAT**, **RANGED COMBAT**, **VIGILANCE**, and **OBSERVATION** (max 3 in any given skill). Physical Toughness 2, Mental Toughness 1 (page 166 in chapter 8). The guard also gets a weapon at availability level 1.

PREREQUISITE: —

COST: 5 (Can be purchased multiple times)

FUNCTION: Protects the castle from burglars and enemies, as best they can – the Gamemaster decides.

#### HOUSE PHYSICIAN

*Troubled doctor who moves into one of the castle's wings.*

PREREQUISITE: Infirmary

COST: 6

FUNCTION: Automatically treats Broken and two Conditions for all player characters at the headquarters during one scene per mystery.

ASSET: Provides the group with medical equipment in the preparation phase without rolling for Resources.

#### INVENTOR

*Eccentric engineer.*

PREREQUISITE: Professor

COST: 5

FUNCTION: The player characters can build one mechanical item of their choosing before the mystery, regardless of availability level.

ASSET: Provides the group with chemical equipment without rolling for Resources.

#### MYSTIC

*Recluse exploring the occult.*

PREREQUISITE: Occult Library

COST: 5

FUNCTION: Can gain a clue about a power item or magic item that has something to do with the mystery's vaesen.

#### QUARTERMASTER

*A former officer with lots of contacts and an organizational mind.*

PREREQUISITE: Banker or Patron

COST: 6

FUNCTION: All player characters gain +2 Capital, regardless of living standard (see page 73). It can be used in the preparation phase or during the mystery.

#### RECRUIT

*A person with the Sight is recruited to the Society.*

The players spend 12 points on attributes (max 4) and 10 on skills (max 2). The Gamemaster decides the recruit's Motivation and Dark Secret. The players and the Gamemaster together create a relationship with each of the player characters, as well as with other recruits. Physical Toughness 1, Mental Toughness 1 (page 166 in chapter 8).

PREREQUISITE: **INSPIRATION** 4

COST: 5 (Can be purchased multiple times)

FUNCTION: Can come along on mysteries. Controlled by the Gamemaster.

#### STABLE BOY

*A hardworking youngster.*

PREREQUISITE: Stable

COST: 3

FUNCTION: All horses the player characters take from the headquarters count as strong.







*The carriage stopped, and I stepped down to a trampled patch of dirt on the outskirts of the village — a world away from my soft bed in the city. The light seemed brighter here. There was neither the smell of smog in the air nor gaslights lining the muddy paths, and rather than lurking in the alleys between buildings the way they did back home, the customary beggars and thieves were completely absent. The cows grazing in the meadow beyond the general store were emaciated, and a girl was beating them with a stick. In the center of the village loomed the church, decorated with strange statues.*

*My reason for coming here was an anonymous letter. The writer claimed that people in the village had lost their minds and gone to live among the trees — naked, without any tools or furniture. They smeared themselves with black mud from the Kalkhara ravine deep within the forest, singing songs to the stars. The writer said they had attacked and eaten a city dweller passing through the area. One such as myself.*

*A rifle hung from a strap over my shoulder, and its weight lent me a feeling of security, however false it might prove to be. To assuage my fears, I kept reminding myself that exposing the secrets of the Kalkhara ravine would require logic and cunning, not violence. Still, I kept the rifle close.*

*The village priest approached me. I was to spend the night at his home while waiting for the others to arrive in the morning. Would I still be here to greet them, or would I too be consumed by the darkness of the countryside?*



## THE MYTHIC NORTH AND UPSALA

THIS CHAPTER PROVIDES some insight into mythical Scandinavia and the conflicts that are driving people apart. The city and the countryside are pitted against each other as two increasingly different habitats for humans and vaesen alike. The city of Upsala — which will be the starting point of all your mysteries — is described with several examples of places you can visit, either to search for clues or drive away the vaesen occupying them. The chapter also includes brief descriptions of important cities in nineteenth-century Scandinavia, which can be used as inspiration when creating a backstory for your player character.

This chapter focuses on the general features and atmosphere of Scandinavia. The idea is that you will create your own version of Scandinavia which may be more or less similar to the historical one. Most things in the game world should be vaguely defined until you need to clarify something that appears in a mystery. For example, if you want to play a mystery centered around an enchanted kinetoscope, you can decide that technology has come far enough for such things to exist. In other words, you do not have to decide exactly what year it is.

## YOUR MYTHIC NORTH

*Vaesen* takes place in Sweden, Norway, Finland, and Denmark—in a version of our world that is entirely its own. It is a time and place that mixes events, cultural expressions, and conflicts from the entire 19th century, in a way that will be unique for each gaming group. Together, the players, and particularly the Gamemaster, get to decide what their version of Scandinavia will be like.

Use what you know, or think you know, about the 19th century, or whatever fantasies you might have about the era, to create a setting that highlights your player characters and stories. If Finland being occupied by the Russian Tsar is what it takes to make your characters' journey to the outskirts of Tampere more exciting, and to build up to an encounter with a *vaesen*, then occupied it will be. If you want your journalist to write her socially critical texts on a typewriter, then typewriters will have been invented and made available.

### CONFLICTS IN SCANDINAVIA

The Mythic North is marked by a series of conflicts that affect your player character. Europe is starting to recover from the Napoleonic Wars that raged across the entire continent, and a number of new wars have already begun, or are about to. News of the American Civil War is coming in from across the Atlantic.

Agrowing nationalism divides people in all countries into two groups: us and them. It becomes important to define what a true Swede or Norwegian really is, and those who fail to meet the criteria risk being ostracized, deported, or even killed. Conflicts are growing within the Church as well. Catholics are pitted against Protestants, and those who dare go their own way with small independent denominations are persecuted and severely punished.

Industrialization sparks conflicts between the old and the new, between workers and employers, and between people living in the cities and those who go there to seek their fortune. Tensions arise between those wishing to leave the rural villages and those wanting to preserve everything that previous generations helped

build. In the forests, peasants and maids are fighting the logging and mining companies that seek to evict them in order to secure timber and ore for the urban factories.

There is a rift between the city and the countryside. The city is vibrant and dynamic—the machines in the factories constantly belch out smoke through huge smokestacks, while shipments of goods and raw materials come and go from the ports and train stations. With each new load, people, stories, and new ideas flow into the cities. The lower class multiplies in the suburbs, while city centers become crowded with new buildings where businessmen are turning gold and labor into profit. Donations from the wealthy are bolstering the universities, where it is believed the spread of knowledge will help man subdue nature. Anything is possible; anything can be explained and understood.

The rural villages seem to wither and die. Houses are abandoned and fields covered with rotting vegetation. The water from the marshes is rising, seeping into people's homes. When the food runs out, the sick and poor are left to die in the snow. The wilderness is untamed and eternal.

There are profound injustices in the distribution of wealth and knowledge. The Church and the nobility still have power, but they are threatened by the bourgeoisie and the influence that trade and property provide. The world is hierarchical, politically as well as domestically. At the bottom are the poor and dispossessed, the children, and those who have been declared insane or enemies of the state.

There are also tensions brought on by the fight surrounding the rights of men and women. It is a time when gender inequality is being challenged and women gain the right to inherit property and make their own decisions about their lives. Women are also becoming more prominent in the workplace. At the same time, new gender ideals emerge that give rise to new constraints—women should be delicate, wear corsets, and preferably faint in difficult situations. A feminist countermovement is launched, leading to greater freedom of movement for some. The strict dress codes that denote gender and social status are starting to erode.



# THE MYTHIC NORTH





Revolutionary groups form all over Europe, infecting many with various philosophies of how society should be arranged – and the idea that the status quo can not only be challenged, but overthrown.

## LIFE IN THE CITY

Cities are the heart of the industrial revolution. Important decisions have previously been made in castles and mansions by representatives of the clergy and nobility; now the burghers are using their capital to take control of political and economic decisions, and their homes are in the cities.

The Church is losing authority to the scientists, who are objectively studying and cataloging everything from stones and moss to human thoughts and behavior. No mystery is left unexamined. The accumulation of knowledge takes place at the universities, which sometimes grow into independent communities within the cities.

On the edge of town, the working class lives in squalor – vast slums are emerging where temporary tents and huts become permanent shacks and

houses. Unions are trying to unite factory workers in the struggle for better living and working conditions, but are opposed with violence and cunning by police and capital holders.

Inventions are changing the lives of many people in the cities. Soap and factory-made cotton clothing improve hygiene and reduce the spread of disease. Robust brick buildings are raised throughout the city, and straight streets are laid out with ample space for coaches and pedestrians. The sewers are expanded, and the filth that would previously pile up in the alleys can now be washed away from the city centers. Healthcare also improves, thanks to new technology and medication.

Ships from colonies around the world enter the ports with spices, tea, opium, and exotic animals in cages, spreading stories of strange cultures and landscapes.

The police force becomes more organized, with greater responsibility for controlling the general population, and the role of the state changes. Citizens must be governed, supervised, and shaped according to national ideals. Many governments employ secret police to monitor and crack down on the

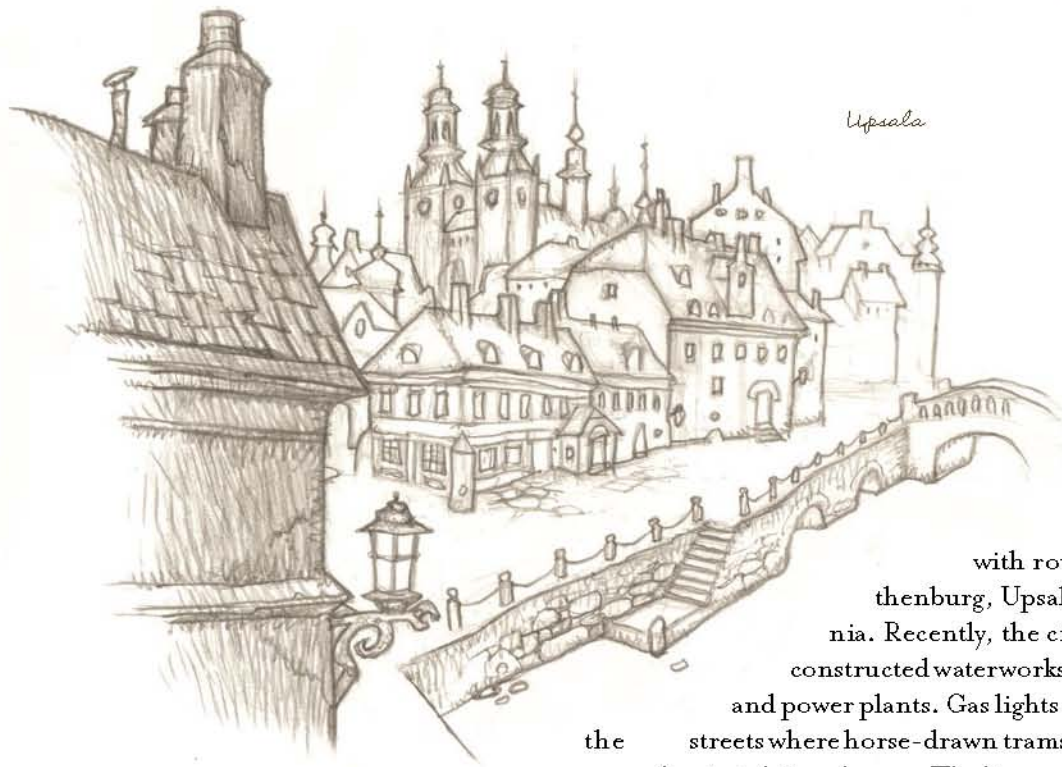


“TO FIND OUT WHO IS A WITCH  
DROP A COIN IN THE AISLE  
OF THE CHURCH  
AND AS YOU BEND DOWN  
TO PICK IT UP  
LOOK BETWEEN YOUR OWN LEGS  
AND YOU WILL SEE WITCHES  
AND OTHER CREATURES”

– TRADITIONAL INSTRUCTIONS  
FOR EXPOSING WITCHES AND VAESSEN







nation's enemies. Spies infiltrate foreign powers to gather information and prepare for armed conflicts.

Scientists no longer view mental illness as a sign of demonic possession; instead they establish mental institutions with modern means of curing the sick. These new treatments are often painful and tend to make matters worse: a very high-pressure jet of water is blasted at the sick person's head; patients are strapped to rotating chairs and spun until they faint, and many believe in cure through fright. Sometimes they will even hide body parts in patients' beds – one of many forms of abuse and sadistic treatments practiced by medical professionals.

## IMPORTANT CITIES IN NORTHERN EUROPE

Your player characters and the people they encounter may be well-traveled individuals with roots outside Upsala. Described below are some of the major cities of 19th century Scandinavia.

### STOCKHOLM

The capital of Sweden is home to roughly 100,000 people, but the population is growing fast due to urban migration and high birth rates. The city suffers greatly from starvation and disease, and one in three children die before the age of one. The first railroad station has

been built, with routes to Gothenburg, Upsala, and Scania. Recently, the city has also constructed waterworks, gasworks, and power plants. Gas lights illuminate the streets where horse-drawn trams and buses move about at a leisurely pace. The king and the royal family reside in a luxurious palace.

### CHRISTIANIA

Christiania is the capital of Norway. The population is soaring, and the city is the center of the first Norwegian railroad and steamship lines. Timber and ore flow in from the wilds and are shipped throughout Europe.

### COPENHAGEN

The capital of Denmark is marked by political debates. There is great dissatisfaction with the absolute monarchy. Copenhagen is the commercial hub of northern Europe, and the city is rapidly expanding. Many of its new, hastily constructed residences are cramped and dark, with tiny alleys and yards. Cultural life is flourishing. Several theaters and zoological gardens have recently been built.

### HELSINKI

The Finnish capital is a relatively young city with few inhabitants, half of which speak Swedish. It has recently seen the addition of numerous buildings, including a railroad station and the Uspenski Cathedral. The city center is called Kluuvi, and is now composed of wide boulevards and vast plazas. In Kallio, the workers are crammed together in simple wooden houses. At the edge of town lies Lapinlahti Hospital, the largest mental hospital in the country.



“The whole parish is whispering about the bear that attacks people instead of animals. My son Nils and his hunting party were in Långastrand to track it down when suddenly it grew late and dark, so with lanterns lit, they turned back through the woods. But the creature was waiting at the ford of the Sälle River, and launched itself at them as if it was the hunter and they the prey. Three grown men lost their lives, and even though it was shot many times, the beast didn’t seem weakened at all. Only when Nils pressed the crucifix he was wearing around his neck against the creature’s right hindleg did it wail and disappear into the woods. Nils said it wasn’t a bear, but a manwolf. He showed me the place where it had waited for them and there was some snuff behind a tree, as if a human had stood there, biding his time. Nils told me he’s looking for a man with a limp on his right leg, and when he finds him, he will get the priest from Törboda and ask him to bring the cross of the church itself to drive the wolf away.”

– ÅLA-SVEN, PEASANT FROM JÄMTNÄS

## LIFE IN THE COUNTRY

In the countryside, wealth is measured in animals, tools, and houses. All work is done by muscle power – either that of humans or animals. The villages are strictly divided between the landowners and the vast majority who work for others, and who depend on their goodwill. As the population grows, the number of landless laborers increases dramatically.

Churches are important social meeting points and priests usually the only source of news. It is illegal to engage in any other faith than the form of Christianity practiced in the churches. The priest preaches “truths” and condemns those who deviate from the norm. Everyone knows everything about everyone. A person’s reputation, and the reputation of her family, can be ruined by a single ill-considered action.

Local county administrators are in charge of tax collection and law enforcement, sometimes also serving as prosecutors. They are assisted by part-time police officers and bailiffs. Children who cannot be cared for are placed in orphanages run by the Poor Care Board.

In rural areas, people’s diet consists of whatever can be caught or grown nearby. Food is preserved by salting and smoking, and the seasons have a supreme impact on life – particularly during the cold, dark, and hungry winter. People make most of their belongings themselves: clothes are locally manufactured; fabrics are colored with dyes from plants; leatherware and metal are in high demand, but expensive and hard to come by.

The beginning and end of the harvest are often celebrated with a feast, where people dance the waltz, schottische, hambo, and polka. The violin is a common instrument. Songs, dances, and other cultural expressions have persisted from the time before Christianity’s ascendance. In some cases, pagan traditions have been mixed with Christian teachings.

It should also be noted that, in the 19th century, large parts of Scandinavia are struck by crop failure and famine. In Sweden, this time is referred to as Storsvagåren (“the Years of Great Weakness”), while the Finns call it Lavåren (“the Lichen Years”) as many



are forced to eat bark bread and porridge made of lichen. The winters are extremely cold and long. Ice covers ponds, lakes and waterways, while animals freeze to death in their stables.

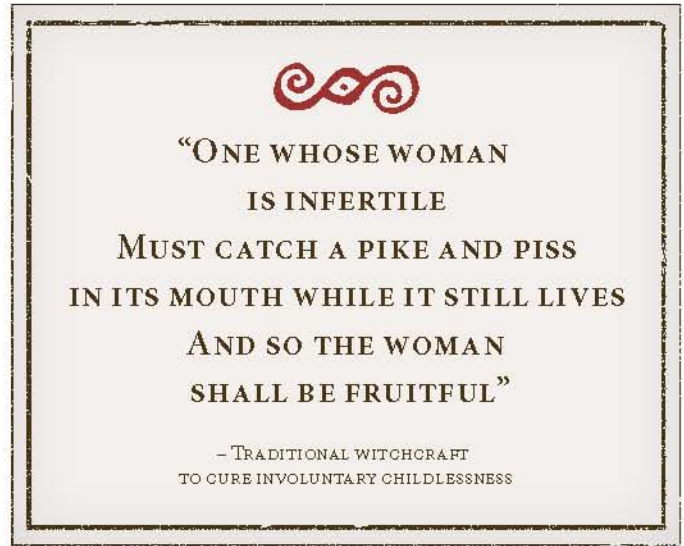
Some summers are almost as cold as the winters. One year, Stockholm is three degrees celsius at the end of May, and in many of the northern provinces the ground remains frozen well into June. The ice prevents freighters from reaching cities on the northern coast. Emergency committees are established. The press spreads appeals for help to people in the cities. Charity concerts and other spectacles are hosted to raise funds for the starving. Other summers are so hot that fields become parched and crops are scorched by the sun.

## TECHNOLOGY

It is up to the gaming group to decide how far technology has come in your particular game world, and there is certainly no need for consistency – although you will of course have to create a world that feels believable to you. In one mystery you might visit a remote location where the technological development seems to have stagnated, while the next mystery takes place in a city with technology from the end of the century. Some thoughts on 19th century technology are presented below.

One of the most important inventions of the industrial age is the steam engine. It powers the machines in the factories and the trains which allow for quick travel across Europe. Steamboats carry goods and people through freshly dug canals.

Newspapers become increasingly common thanks to improved printing presses and typewriters. People can communicate through telegraphs. The chemical indus-



try produces a series of revolutionary substances like dynamite and new kinds of paint. The match is invented. Vaccines are spreading, making it possible to combat diseases that were previously thought to be terminal. The camera becomes more and more advanced. A number of scientific expeditions are mounted to explore the world, including the North and South Pole.





In the 19th century, unpredictable flintlock rifles and muzzle-loading muskets are replaced with breach-loading cap lock rifles. These new firearms are reliable and quick to load. In battle, a bayonet is fixed to the rifle.

The rapier is used by nobles as an ornament, a weapon, and a marker of class. The lower estates favor the knife, while peasants use axes and scythes. Muskets and crossbows are still used in rural areas.

## TITLES AND NAMES

Titles are important when addressing other people. Miss is used for unmarried women and missus for married ones. Mister can be used for men. Many professions come with a title as well, such as bailiff, or father for Catholic priests. Teachers in higher education are called adjunct or lector. Soldiers and officers are addressed with their rank.

## TRAVEL IN SCANDINAVIA

Traveling takes time. The player characters will usually go by boat, train, or coach. Most people they encounter have only left their villages a few times in their lives. Despite the growing industrialization, Scandinavia is still an agrarian society.

### VEHICLE SPEEDS

| VEHICLE                  | km/h  |
|--------------------------|-------|
| Coach (including breaks) | 8–10  |
| Train                    | 30    |
| Steamboat                | 25    |
| Sailboat                 | 10–20 |
| Horse (including breaks) | 10–20 |
| Walk (including breaks)  | 3     |
| March (including breaks) | 4–5   |





## UPSALA — SCIENCE AND FAIRYTALES

Upsala is located just north of the Swedish capital of Stockholm—on the border of Norrland, where cities and villages are few and the wilderness endless. The city is best known for its university. But it is also a place deeply rooted in the pagan world. Upsala was one of the last outposts of the old Norse religion when the country was Christianized. Just outside the city lie the Mounds of Upsala—barrows where mighty kings were buried in the sixth century.

Upsala was recently struck by an extensive fire that killed one fifth of its population and devastated much of the city itself. It was on the brink of complete destruction, but rose from the ashes and has since undergone a significant transformation, with lots of new buildings, a great influx of uneducated workers for the factories, and students and scientists from across the globe flocking to the university.

The streets of Upsala are lit by gas lamps. Paperboys cry out the latest headlines. Through the city center runs the Fyris River which flows into Lake Malar. There are several bridges over the river, including the Cathedral Bridge and the Iron Bridge. The poorer sections of the city are plagued by cholera. Robbers hide in the alleys, and policemen move around with drawn sabers in search of burglars and speakeasies.

The presence of brick clay has given rise to an entire brick industry, and there are several textile factories on the outskirts of town. The city's main source of income, however, is the production of aquavit—liquor money, legal and illegal, is paying for many of the city's establishments.

The campus is massive, thanks to the Gustavian patrimony. In the 17th century, King Gustavus Adolphus donated 400 farms and their land to Upsala University. There are numerous grand and beautiful buildings. The students gather in student unions, singing songs and discussing science and philosophy. Some groups favor the romantic ideals, with focus on emotions rather than reason, idealization of the

exotic, and an interest in mysticism. Other groups believe in the natural sciences and despise the sublime. They wish to uncover truths through carefully performed experiments. Conflicts and confrontations are constantly raging between these groups.

Upsala is a divided city. Farmers, industrial workers and servants live side by side with students, nobles, and clerics—the latter enjoying extravagant luxuries in huge villas and apartments, while the former tend to their every need, bowing and scraping, until their bodies are all worn out. Open conflicts rarely arise between the two groups, but when they do, it tends to happen at illegal night clubs and brothels, where the distinction between rich and poor is less clear.

The Church holds great power. The Archbishop of Sweden, Henrik Reuterdaahl, has his seat in Upsala. The gothic cathedral is one of the largest in Scandinavia, with a bell called Storan which can be heard throughout the city. The altar cross contains a relic of the True Cross, and a new gigantic pipe organ takes up an entire wall inside the cathedral.

### UPSALA UNIVERSITY HOSPITAL

Upsala's hospital is one of the most modern in Scandinavia. The building is brand new and resembles a multistory castle with beautiful turrets and ornaments. Patients are distributed between 16 wards, each managed by a chief physician. There are operating rooms, autopsy rooms, session rooms, a chapel, a library and offices.

There have been health facilities in the area for hundreds of years, and it is rumored that people who died

#### UPSALA UNIVERSITY HOSPITAL

The player characters can be admitted to the hospital and have their wounds and illnesses treated. They can also use the autopsy rooms to learn more about vaesen. The hospital may be used as a setting for a mystery.





# UPSALA

- |                        |                       |                    |
|------------------------|-----------------------|--------------------|
| 1 UPSALA CASTLE        | 4 CASTLE GYLLENCREUTZ | 7 UPSALA ASTEM     |
| 2 UNIVERSITET HOSPITAL | 5 UPSALA CATHEDRAL    | 8 BOTANICAL GARDEN |
| 3 UPSALA UNIVERSITET   | 6 CENTRAL STATION     | 9 OLIMPUS          |



on their sickbeds are bound to the place, haunting the new hospital. These creatures are said to torment the patients and scare doctors and nurses into madness.

### UPSALA ASYLUM

The city's mental asylum is encircled by a black iron fence. Patients arrive at the brick building in wagons, but rarely leave except in a casket. It is a place for half-wits, lunatics, and people who have caused outrage in the parish. Patients are divided into first and second class, depending on their financial situation. Wealthier patients are treated well and have meals brought to their rooms on a tray.

Lower-class patients are starved, shackled, and put in confinement boxes. They are treated with laxatives and emetics. Their skin develops ulcers after being smeared with irritant substances. Insanity is attributed to mucus, and so the patient must be cleansed. All treatment is supervised by Doctor Niklas Frejd, a man of small stature and good humor, who is convinced his treatments are effective. He is supported by a large group of orderlies, guards, and physicians.

### THE POLICE STATION

The city's police wear blue uniforms with golden buttons and helmets, and are armed with sabers. The force is corrupt and violent. The police station is cramped, water-damaged, and badly infested with vermin. The wooden floors are creaky, and the entire building smells of filth. The station consists of offices, cells, and courtrooms. One end of the building is occupied by

#### THE POLICE STATION

The player characters can come to the police station as suspects of a crime, or to obtain information on people and events in the city's underworld. The police chief can serve as their invitation to mysteries.

a special detective branch responsible for more complicated investigations. A laboratory has recently been installed in the basement, where chemical tests are now conducted to facilitate the hunt for criminals.

The newly-appointed police chief, Oscar Stierna, is one of the few people in the force who cannot be bought. He is trying to purge his organization of corruption. Some officers idealize him and have stopped working with shady elements. Others hate him.

### THE POORHOUSE

Begging, vagrancy, and poverty are illegal. Those who are found guilty of such crimes are confined to poorhouses. Upsala's poorhouse, located in Kamphavet Square, is packed with paupers, reduced to poverty by years of crop failure. The master of the poorhouse is Doctor Per Dubb. Together with the local police force, Dubb runs an extensive network of informants with the aim of tracking down and apprehending thieves and beggars. Those who are forced to live at the poorhouse lead miserable lives plagued by starvation, lice, and abuse.

#### UPSALA ASYLUM

The player characters can be admitted to the asylum for treatment of madness. They can also come across people who have encountered or been afflicted by vaesen and are thought to be insane.

#### THE POORHOUSE

Some people who have the Sight cannot cope with their ability to see vaesen. Sooner or later they end up at the asylum or the poorhouse. The player characters can contact them to obtain information about vaesen.

## WELLSPRING STREET 59

There are plenty of brothels in Upsala, the most famous being Wellspring Street 59 run by Madam Tekla. Said to be a crofter's daughter from the small town of Vänge, Tekla is now a wealthy woman, well-connected with both the university and elite members of the clergy. Her employees are treated very badly. Many have contracted syphilis and pneumonia, and most have given birth to children who died or were killed. Beatings are common, as are various forms of substance abuse. People who make their living selling sex are registered as prostitutes in the prostitution ledger, forced to undergo regular medical examinations, and can never again hold a normal job.

## WELLSPRING STREET 59

Many of the women working at the brothel have had traumatic experiences, and several have gained the Sight. They can provide information about vaesen or invitations to mysteries.



*"Mushrooms have a special function for many vaesen, and scholars regard them as 'fruits of evil'. The garden contains all manner of species, some of which are particularly interesting to certain vaesen and anyone versed in the magical arts."*



### THE UPSALA GAZETTE

The journalists can provide invitations to mysteries in the form of articles or interviews, although they probably have not realized that they are writing about vaesen.

### THE UPSALA GAZETTE

In a smoky, noisy building called Olympus, 22 journalists are working around the clock. The newspaper's editor-in-chief, Felicia Lipschitz, is an ambitious visionary who welcomes the modern age with opened arms. The paper was founded by students as a liberal counterbalance to the conservative publications of the time. The editorial team call themselves the pioneers of Upsala radicalism. The newspaper comes out three times a week, mostly reporting news from the city and its surrounding communities. Occasionally a strange or entertaining story from the countryside will find its way into the paper.

### UPSALA BOTANICAL GARDEN

Professor Fries can be a source of information for the player characters. He can share secret books and documents on vaesen. Fries has contacts with the university and the local government, and can make a powerful ally. He can also serve as the catalyst for a mystery by encountering or seeking out vaesen. The botanical garden can also be of interest because of its large collection of mushrooms. Mushrooms have a special function for many vaesen, and scholars regard them as "fruits of evil". The garden contains all manner of species, some of which are particularly interesting to certain vaesen and anyone versed in the magical arts.

### UPSALA BOTANICAL GARDEN

The botanical garden of Upsala University was founded in the 17th century by Olof Rudbeck, but is best known for being the workplace of Carl Linnaeus in the 18th century. Linnaeus transformed the garden into one of the finest in the world, with thousands of different plants. Today the garden is run by mycology professor Elias Fries, renowned for his book *Systema Mycologicum* and his relentless efforts to introduce mushrooms as food items. A few people know about his traumatic trip to Värmland where he was badly injured by a bear. Fewer still are aware that Elias thinks the animal that attacked him was not actually a bear, but a "terrible beast," and that since the incident he has seen strange creatures moving unseen among humans.

### THE JUNTA

The student movement known as the Junta was established at the end of the 18th century as a political protest movement against restrictions on the freedom of the press and other civil liberties. Several of its members were musicians of the Royal Academic Orchestra. In the year 1800 they put on a concert for the king; some refused to play, while others performed the piece so poorly it caused a scandal. The musicians were severely punished, and the Junta was dissolved.

Or so the official story goes. The truth is that the Junta went underground and was joined by more members. It is now a secret revolutionary organization with ties to enemy nations.

### THE JUNTA

Exactly what the Junta is up to is for the Game-master to decide. They could be republicans, have ties to groups fighting for Norwegian independence, be paid by Danish spies, or represent political ideologies such as liberalism, socialism, or nationalism. One of the player characters could be a member – or maybe the Junta is an enemy of the Society?



