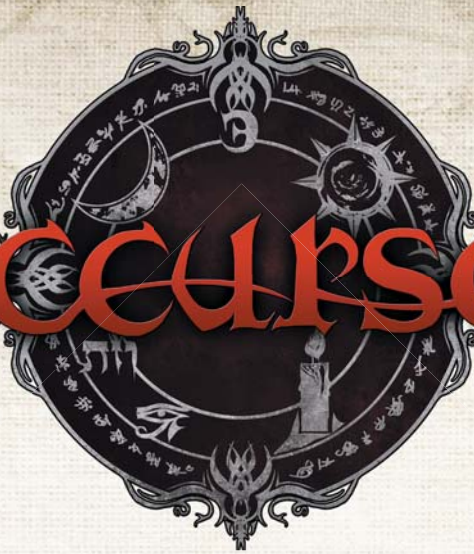


Accursed



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The Setup

A bloody assault on a mountainside church in the Highlands near the border of Blackroot Wode has horrified the valley! Distant clan-cousins paid a visit on the small sept who made their home in Whitetarn Village on the shores of the Cloven Loch in western Cairn Kainen, and discovered instead a scene of horror. The village has been sacked and the villagers slaughtered. The trail of destruction leads to the ancient church of St. Vitus. The cousins fled home and reported their findings to their village chieftain, Angus MacDuncan, who saw the hands of Witches in the matter. Rather than take his discovery to the Morrigan, MacDuncan sought the local Enochian priest, Father Dhugal, who in turn has called a village meeting to seek aid.

Ill-Met by Torchlight

The PCs may be local to Cairn Kainen or they may be traveling through when they see the blazing torches in the town square. If they investigate, they find the Enochian priest on the platform at the head of the town, begging for aid from the assembled villagers. Most of them turn aside in fear, calling it “witch’s work”, saying that they need to prepare their town’s defenses against the possibility of a similar atrocity. However, a striking woman steps forth to volunteer her services. Her name is Svetlana Karlssen, and she is both a Dhampir and the leader of the small sect of Adherents of Aliyah here.

The townsfolk have little trust in her (though Dhugal has been a strong proponent of the notion that the Accursed can regain divine favor). He spies the PCs at the fringe of the crowd, and calls on them to aid their “kinswoman.” It’s obvious Svetlana does not want the PCs’ help, but the crowd urges them to help—by threatening them, as need be. Dhugal promises to speak for the PCs to the local bishop, extolling their virtues, should the PCs agree to help. Should the PCs not accept, the townsfolk run them out of town. If the party does accept, the townsfolk will outfit them with basic supplies—including food, water, camping provisions, and ammunition.

As the party travels the half-day to Whitetarn, they discover that Svetlana is ambitious and charismatic, though not exactly likeable. She has a dream of helping to restore an old abbey in the Outlands, abandoned in the Bane War, and establishing a bishopric for her allies. She is occasionally intense and given to dark moods when thwarted. Upon arrival at Whitetarn, it becomes apparent that the ruined village was the scene of unspeakable horror. The entirety of the village lies slaughtered, yet not a drop of blood speckles the ground. The trail of destruction leads to the church,



an ancient place constructed into the living rock of the mountain itself.

Father Saunders’ body lies draped across the altar as a sacrilegious offering. Svetlana informs the PCs that he was a great hunter of the night, and that he used his mountain fastness to harry the creatures of Valkenholm and Cairn Kainen alike (she denies that he ever threatened her). She gently and reverently removes the body from the altar. The church’s relics were left largely intact (unlike the windows), but a clean space on a dusty lectern shows that a large tome was removed. A plaque at the base of the lectern describes it as *De Mysteriis Vitae In Solem*. [About the Mysteries of Life in the Light] It’s almost as if someone came here looking specifically for this book...

All signs point to the slaughter and desecration as the work of Sanguinara’s minions. Svetlana suggests that this was an attempt by the countess to remove Fr. Saunders, one of her implacable foes in the Morrigan’s kingdom as a first, covert sortie.

In Light of Day

In reality, Svetlana lied about whether Saunders had ever persecuted her. He was a purist, an extremist, and he had vowed to end her when he had the chance. In order to remove the threat to herself and her friends, Svetlana contacted leech-men of Valkenholm



and told them where to find the book and their foe. She did not think that the leech-men would slaughter the villagers, and her guilt is beginning to overcome her.

The deeper truth is far more insidious. The abbey in the Outlands was abandoned before the Witches' armies swept across Morden because of a deep corruption that swelled beneath that church and filled its worshippers' minds with madness. Saunders' book was a relic of his triumph over that corruption. Svetlana has deluded herself into thinking that it was a tome of light.

She had hoped to frame the leech-men, capture them, and retrieve the book in order to prove her piety in the eyes of the Enochian church. As the PCs begin to investigate, she will have to cover her crimes and paint a picture for the PCs to convince them to aid her in returning that book to the abbey in the Outlands. Her curse is overtaking her mind, though she maintains a careful outer control of it, and if the PCs are not careful, they may be swept up in this corruption as well.

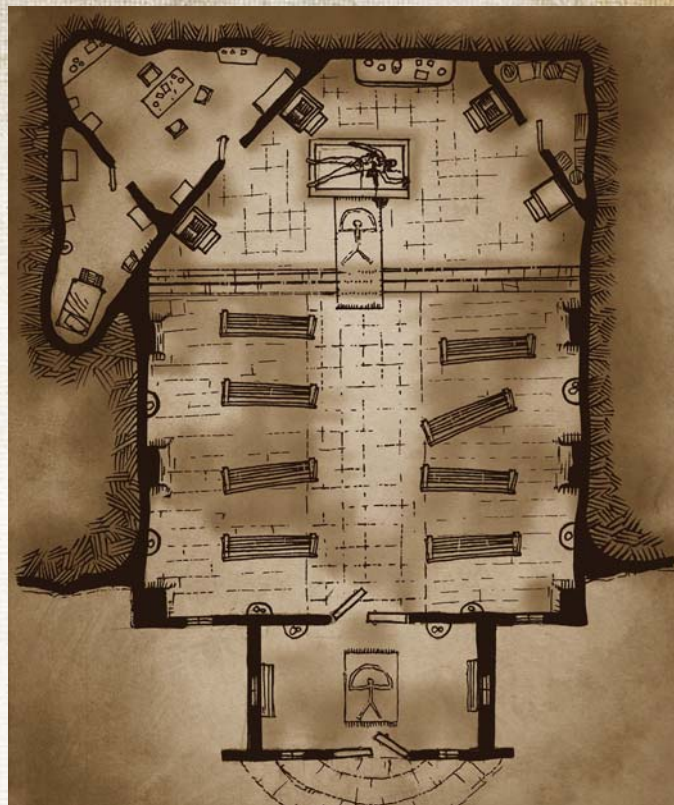
False Light

The first order of business is to search the church for clues. Should the party do this instead of immediately seeking a trail, they find Saunders' diary. In it, he describes his revulsion for unclean things, the spawn of the Witches, and the unholy beasts spat forth from the diseased minds of the Grand Coven. It seems unlikely that he would have borne Svetlana much love, but this is not enough to convict her of anything.

If the PCs seek the trail of the leech-men, it is easy to find. Those with knowledge of their kind know that the harsh mountain passes are too dry to maintain the leech-men's viscous skins for long, and so they'd likely be seeking a river trail. And though the leech-men have a day's head start on the party, they must travel slowly until they reach a broader tributary or risk drying out. Similarly, they must skirt the foot of the mountains around the north of Cairn Kainen before they can reach the safety of the Sunken Lands with their treasure.

The PCs should be able to find the leech-men before the marauders reach the safety of Sanguinara's lands. The band of ten leech-men (see page 117, Accursed Campaign Setting) fight hard, and Svetlana seems particularly keen on destroying the leader. If it takes her too long, the creature will recognize her and ask why she turns on them. Svetlana will try to play this as if it recognized a kinship in her, as both are creatures of Sanguinara.

But even if they can stop the leech-men and retrieve the book, Svetlana wants to take the book to the Outlands abbey, its rightful home. If the PCs stop to examine the book itself, they discover that it is a



thing of terrible, insinuating corruption dressed in the veneer of Enochian truth. It is a heretic's bible, and reading it leads the Accursed closer to damnation.

Other options exist as well:

- The PCs can expose the leech-men's incursion to the Morrigan's ravens, potentially sparking a broader conflict.
- They can expose Svetlana to Father Dhugal if they have uncovered enough evidence against her (though they may choose to remain silent). If they do expose her, Dhugal can no longer support the Adherents, and if they do not, they are complicit in a lie (and thus tempted toward damnation again).

SVETLANA (DHAMPIR)

Svetlana Karlssen's curse has corrupted her and driven her mad through its depravities. She still seeks a path toward redemption for herself, but she has lost the ability to distinguish between good and evil. Instead, she has simply decided that appearances are all that matter.

Attributes: Agility d10, Smarts d6, Spirit d10, Strength d10, Vigor d8

Skills: Athletics d8, Fighting d10, Guts d8, Intimidation d8, Notice d8, Persuasion d12, Streetwise d6, Subterfuge d8, Taunt d10

Charisma: +3, **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 8; **Toughness:** 6

Acceptance: Stage 2

Edges: Acrobat, Charismatic, Dirty Fighter, Improved Dodge, Improved Sweep

Gear: Rapier (Str+d6)