

# THE FROG PRINCESS

A Kapcon 15 Scenario Design Contest Entry

by Luke Walker

SYSTEM

**BLUE ROSE™**

by

Green Ronin Publishing

# CONTENTS

Introduction	pg 2
The Frog Princess	pg 3
System	pg 6
Setting	pg 8
Running the Frog Princess	pg 10
Act One: Once Upon A Time...	pg 11
<i>Encounter One: Blood on the River</i>	<i>pg 12</i>
<i>Encounter Two: Dreams and Nightmares</i>	<i>pg 13</i>
Act Two: Ivan	pg 14
<i>Encounter Three: Midnight Rantings</i>	<i>pg 16</i>
<i>Encounter Four: The Hackshop</i>	<i>pg 17</i>
Act Three: Koshchei	pg 18
<i>Encounter Five: Ambush!</i>	<i>pg 20</i>
<i>Encounter Six: The Ferryman</i>	<i>pg 20</i>
Act Four: Vasalisa	pg 22
<i>Encounter Seven: Infernal Affairs!</i>	<i>pg 24</i>
<i>Encounter Eight: Siege of Mistwold</i>	<i>pg 25</i>
NPC Statistics	pg 26
Handouts	pg 29
<i>Handout One: Setting</i>	<i>pg 29</i>
<i>Handout Two: The Frog</i>	<i>pg 30</i>
<i>Handout Three: Mission Accomplished</i>	<i>pg 30</i>
<i>Handout Four: Opening</i>	<i>pg 31</i>
<i>Handout Five: Vasalisa's Plan</i>	<i>pg 32</i>
<i>Handout Six: Song's Vision</i>	<i>pg 33</i>
<i>Handout Seven: Dreams and Nightmares</i>	<i>pg 33</i>
Player Characters	pg 34
<i>Alysha Jarlane</i>	<i>pg 34</i>
<i>Connor Rayne</i>	<i>pg 36</i>
<i>Palin Muran</i>	<i>pg 38</i>
<i>Mara Selka</i>	<i>pg 40</i>
<i>Song</i>	<i>pg 42</i>
<i>Ronan Heath</i>	<i>pg 44</i>

# INTRODUCTION

The Frog Princess is a scenario set in the world of Blue Rose by Green Ronin Publishing. Blue Rose is an OGL product and uses a simplified variant of the D20 rules found in Dungeons and Dragons. The scenario is designed to be run as a one shot in three hours.

**Blue Rose and all distinctive logos and terms are trade marks of Green Ronin Publishing. © 2000-2005. All rights reserved. This scenario may be printed and/or reproduced for personal use only, and this copyright notice must be left intact. No part of this text may be reproduced without permission of the publisher, except for short excerpts for review purposes.**

The scenario is inspired by the Russian fairy tale called the Frog Princess. The tale forms a romanticised version of background for the scenario as understood by Ivan.

The scenario centres around three NPCs: Ivan, Vasilisa and Koshchei. Ivan is the Lord of Mistwold. Vasilisa is a deceitful fey-like woman. Koshchei is a twisted treant lord. These NPCs form a triangle of hate. Ivan hates Koshchei, Koshchei hates Vasilisa and Vasilisa hates Ivan. During the first half of the scenario, Koshchei is presented as the villain of the three, Ivan the hero and Vasilisa the victim. However, the true state of affairs is quite different. By the story's end, Koshchei and Ivan will be the victims, Vasilisa the villain and the PCs the heroes.

The PCs are a group of the Sovereign's Finest sworn to protect Aldis, Kingdom of the Blue Rose, and perform Queen Jaellin's will. Despite their role, the PCs are not all squeaky clean and there is a healthy amount of friction between them. However, deep down, even these scoundrels have hearts of gold and are ultimately altruistic. Good inspirations for these PCs are Han Solo from Star Wars or Malcolm Reynolds from Firefly.

Before the scenario begins, the PCs enter the neighbouring hostile Theocracy of Jarzon to extract a prophet of Maurena, the elder Twilight Goddess of summer, agriculture and community. The PCs are successful and are now desperately fleeing back to the safety of Aldis through the treacherous and twisted Veran Swamp, which lies of the border of the two nations. The scenario begins just after the PCs realise that escape by speed alone is not possible. Instead, the PCs decide to seek refuge in Mistwold, a small village lying on the northern end of the swamp.

Whilst in Mistwold, they are embroiled in the schemes of Vasilisa and then Ivan. Ivan, as Lord of Mistwold, approaches the PCs and offers his protection and aid from their pursuers in exchange for the PCs dealing with Koshchei, an evil Sorcerer who has kidnapped his true love, Vasilisa, and whose corruption promotes the vile swamp that destroys the village. However, Vasilisa has plans of her own. She has secretly infiltrated the PCs so she can return to Mistwold. She hopes to bring about the destruction of Ivan, Koshchei and Mistwold.

## THE FROG PRINCESS

The Frog Princess is a Russian fairy tale. The tale can be found in many different forms. It is most commonly found in the form of the Brother Grimm's "The Frog Prince". That version does not capture the intended feel of this scenario as well as the original Russian tale, of which we the relevant parts are included below and amended to suit the specific detail of this scenario. The original ending has been removed as there has been no "happily ever after" so far.

In this scenario, the tale forms the inspiration as well as Ivan's romanticised idea of what has happened so far, minus his own failings and infernal practices. The true story of what is going on is set out after the tale.

*Once upon a time in a faraway land, there was a Lord who had three unmarried sons. The Lord wanted them all to marry and carry on his line. He told them, "Each of you must go out to the field beyond the palace grounds and shoot an arrow into the air as far as you can. You must marry whoever lives at the place where your arrow lands."*

*The three sons did as their father had asked. The arrow of the eldest son landed in the courtyard of a nobleman and the nobleman's daughter picked it up. The arrow of the middle son fell into a merchant's yard, where the merchant's daughter found it. The youngest son, Prince Ivan, shot his arrow into a swamp. When he went into the swamp to find it, he found a frog holding the arrow in its mouth. Being a dutiful son, he did what his father had asked, and all three sons married their brides.*

*Of course, the first two sons never tired in the days that followed of laughing at their younger brother and his frog-wife. Prince Ivan was very sad, but he kept his bargain and treated the frog as if she were a princess. At least she was a frog who was able to speak.*

*One day the Lord called his three sons to him and said, "I want each of your wives to sew me the best possible shirt she can by tomorrow morning."*

*The first two sons went off to tell the Lord's command to their wives, while Prince Ivan went home looking very sad. When the frog asked him what was wrong, he said, "My father wants you to sew him a beautiful shirt by tomorrow." "Oh, don't worry, Prince Ivan," the frog replied, "just go to bed. Morning is wiser than evening."*

*That night when everyone was asleep, the frog turned into a beautiful princess named Vasilisa the Wise. She clapped her hands together and said, "Come, my maids and servants, sew me a shirt like the one I saw at my dear father's!" In the morning Ivan woke to find a beautiful shirt lying on a chair and ran happily with it to the palace. The Lord did not like the shirts of his other daughters-in-law, but loved the one Ivan had brought.*

*A few days later, the Lord said to his sons, "I want your wives to bake the finest bread for me by tomorrow." Of course, the same thing happened; the frog made the bread that pleased the Lord best. Then the Lord told his sons, "Dear sons, tomorrow I will hold a feast at the palace. I want you to bring your wives dressed in their finest clothes." Prince Ivan went home and told the frog about the feast. She told him, "Don't worry, Prince Ivan, go to the feast by yourself. I will come later."*

*Next day Ivan went to the feast alone, and his brothers and their wives started to laugh at him, saying, "Where is your frog-wife?" All of a sudden everybody heard a thunderous sound approaching the palace. A golden carriage drove up to the entrance, the door opened, and Vasilisa the Wise descended from the carriage. To everyone's astonishment, she took the hand of Prince Ivan and walked in with him to the feast.*

*At the dinner table Vasilisa, after eating the main course of baked swan, put some of the bones up her sleeve, drank some wine, and poured the rest from the glass up her other sleeve. Her sisters-in-law saw her and repeated what she had done. When everyone got up to dance, Vasilisa, dancing with Ivan, waved with one sleeve and a lake appeared, then waved with another sleeve and several white swans appeared on the lake. Her sisters-in-law also waved with their sleeves, but they only splashed the guests with wine and threw bones all over the dance floor.*

*Prince Ivan was so overjoyed to have such a wonderful wife that he ran home while everyone was still at the feast and burned his wife's discarded frog skin so that she would remain beautiful. When Vasilisa returned home and could not find her frog skin, she became sad and said, "Ah, Prince Ivan, you have no idea what you did. If you had waited three more days, I would have been your real wife forever. But now I must go live as the prisoner of Koshchei the Deathless. My father, Koshchei, turned me into a frog for three years, because I was wiser than he." Then she disappeared and Ivan wept sorrowfully for his wife.*

So what is actually going on?

Koshchei is a treant that has been twisted by the encroaching northern edge of the Veran Marsh. Despite this deformity, he is aligned to neither the Light nor Shadow. His interests are much more pragmatic. In many ways, Koshchei is the incarnated soul of the wilderness surrounding Mistwold and he considers himself father of all the things who reside there. He has as many names as the swamp has midges.

Vasilisa is a Vata'sha, a dying ancient race, who grew up in the Theocracy of Jarzon. Her race's natural aptitude for Arcana and her night black skin meant she was severely persecuted and had an atrocious upbringing. All she loved were taken from her by Jarzoni Knights of Purity. She learned to survive with only her natural talents. She found ways to subtly influence the minds of others. She used this talent to escape into the northern Veran Marsh. Unfortunately, her tortured life had made her cruel and vicious. She spent many years living nearby Mistwold tricking the inhabitants. She lured them close and then whispered Arcane Suggestions that they would carry out for her. Vasilisa has now become a legend and many speak of her as if she was some kind of dark fey or even Shadowspawn.

Vasilisa's presence came to Koshchei's attention. He approached her to request she restrain her current ways. Always suspicious, Vasilisa refused to listen. Koshchei decided to punish her for being an upstart. Using Fleshshaping, he transformed her into an ugly frog, knowing that in such a form she would both repulse everyone and be unable to speak and use her power of Suggestion. Vasilisa sees that the only way to remove the curse is to kill Koshchei. However, she now realises that this would require a being of immense power (or some foolhardy PCs) to achieve this end.

After years of misery, Vasilisa eventually mastered the Arcana of Mind Touch, allowing her to use her Suggestions without speech. Then, as fortune had it, the Lord of nearby Mistwold began to suffer from insanity. He decided that his successor would be the son of his who completed a number of trials. Vasilisa wheedled her way into the company of the most gullible and youngest son Ivan (who also turned out to be an unwitting Shadow Cultist with an eye for the repulsive). Despite being hideous, Vasilisa was able to use her status as Ivan's "bride" to manipulate several young housemaids. She seduced Ivan (embarrassingly easily) and his father through those maids. Now under her thrall, she helped to make Ivan, Lord of Mistwold and encouraged him to use his knowledge to summon a dreaded Darkfiend Soldier, a being capable of killing Koshchei.

However, Ivan proved incompetent and his desire for Vasilisa made him impatient. On the night of the coronation feast, Ivan asked his brother Olav to try and destroy the frog, hoping that it would somehow bind her forever into the body of those beautiful young women she seemed to possess. It didn't. Instead, Vasilisa was beaten unconscious. Olav was driven out of his mind by Vasilisa's mental anguish and pain. Out of guilt and failure, he buried the evidence deep in Veran Marsh, encasing Vasilisa in a prison of water and mud.

Ivan assumes that the reason why Vasilisa disappeared is that Koshchei had managed to retake control over her. After all, Vasilisa had told Ivan that she needed to kill Koshchei to be free. This idea was spurred on by Olav desperate to hide his failure. However, Ivan can not bring himself to confront Koshchei as he is a coward. He believes that Koshchei the Deathless is (strangely enough) unable to die by any means he is currently willing to conjure without Vasilisa's help. So he set himself to hire someone powerful (and brave) enough to attack Koshchei. Someone like the PCs.

Vasilisa found herself buried in the Veran Marsh. She is now frustrated by Ivan, even more so than Koshchei. Her anger has led her to a homicidal rage. Though she needs to complete her plan with Ivan to free herself from Koshchei, she has now added another element. Along with a Darkfiend Soldier, Vasilisa will influence Ivan so he unwittingly summons a much more powerful Darkfiend Devourer. This creature will destroy Ivan, his village and the entire swamp (including the PCs).

It is just at the birth of Vasilisa's new plan that the PCs enter. Mara has used Shaping Arcana to allow the PCs to travel through the Veran Marsh to Mistwold more quickly. This caused an earthquake and uncovered Vasilisa, still in frog form. Vasilisa found Alysha and immediately made mental contact. She planted a number of memories into Alysha by Suggestion that should allow her to make her way back to Ivan. However, she fails to realise that she is now meddling with the one thing that may spoil her plan: the PCs.

# SYSTEM

This scenario uses Blue Rose, which is published under the Open Game Licence. As such, its system is a simplified variant of the system used in Dungeons & Dragons 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition. Though the system is known to many RPGers, this scenario contains an even more simplified version of the Blue Rose system that is suitable for convention use and those who aren't familiar with the system at all. If the rule system doesn't suit then it shouldn't be difficult to modify the scenario to use any system the GM is comfortable with or even to run the scenario without a system.

All rolls in the game are d20 + a modifier. When a PC or NPC wishes to perform an action, the modifier is normally the appropriate Skill or, if the PC has no Skill that applies, the appropriate Attribute (Strength, Dexterity, Constitution, Intelligence, Wisdom and Charisma) modifier. If the result equals or exceeds the Difficulty Class (DC) set by the GM, the action succeeds.

If the PC or NPC is attempting to avoid or resist something then the modifier is normally the appropriate Save. Fortitude is used to resist harm such as poisons and diseases. Reflex is used to resist being hit by things such as falling rocks and explosions. Will is used to resist mental influence such as hypnotism or fear.

The general guideline for setting DCs are:

Very Easy = 5  
Easy = 10  
Moderate = 15  
Difficult = 20  
Very Difficult = 25

Where two PCs and/or NPCs are contesting against each other then rather than using DCs, the winner is simply the one who rolls the highest.

Each PC and NPC also has a number of special abilities which should be self explanatory from the information set out on the character sheets.

**Combat:** Combat presents a few additional complications. Time is broken into rounds of 6 seconds. Should it be required to determine who acts first in a round, it is suggested that the PCs and NPCs act in the following order:

- |                          |                         |                        |
|--------------------------|-------------------------|------------------------|
| 1. Spectre +7            | 6. Song +2              | 11. Soldier +1         |
| 2. Vasalisa +5           | 7. Darkfiend Soldier +2 | 12. Rostov +0          |
| 3. Connor +4             | 8. Alysha +1            | 13. Koschei +0         |
| 4. Mara +3               | 9. Ronan +1             | 14. Palin -1           |
| 5. Darkfiend Devourer +3 | 10. Ivan +1             | 15. Spectre's Spawn -1 |

Each PC and NPC can take one action on their turn.

Attacks and Defences by PCs are performed like any other roll i.e. by rolling a d20 + the Attack or Defence modifier. The DC is the target's Defence or Attack. The NPCs in this scenario have all been presented as a series of DCs for ease of use. The GM should not need to roll any dice.

If the Attack roll succeeds, the PC rolls Damage against a DC equal to the target's Toughness. If the PC is successful, the target is down and defeated.

If the Defence roll fails, the PC rolls Toughness. Each NPC has a damage track which will indicate the relevant injury the PC has suffered.

† **Hurt:** If the Toughness roll fails, the PC is Hurt. Each Hurt reduces further PC's Toughness roll by 1. A PC may have multiple Hurts and the effects accumulate.

† **Wounded:** If the Toughness roll fails by 5 or more, the PC is Wounded. A Wounded PC must miss his or her next round and suffers -2 to all rolls.

† **Disabled:** If the Toughness roll fails by 10 or more, the PC is Disabled. A Disabled PC must miss his or her next round and may only move at half speed and take no actions. If the PC does take an action then he degrades to Dying.

† **Dying:** If the Toughness roll fails by 15 or more, the PC is Dying. At the start of every round, he or she must roll Constitution DC 10 or die. If he or she succeeds this roll by 10 or more then he or she stabilises to Disabled.

If a PC takes a Damage Condition (except for Hurts which accumulate) that he or she already has then the next Damage Condition is taken instead.

Hurts heal at the rate of one an hour. For Wounded, Disabled and Dying, the PC may try and recover from the worse condition he or she suffers from. For Wounded and Disabled, a PC may roll Constitution DC 10 to recover at the end of the Act in which they were suffered. For Dying, the PC must roll Constitution DC 10 every round or die. If the Constitution roll exceeds by 10 or more then the PC recovers to Disabled. Palin's Heal skill can be used in replacement of the Constitution roll for recovery. Alysha can use her Arcanum: Cure to allow a PC an automatic recovery roll or to eliminate all Hurts. If the recovery roll fails, she cannot use her Arcanum again for one hour.

**Arcanum:** Arcanum effects should be freely interpreted by the GM. Arcanum cannot be used in a direct attack, except for Sorcerer's Grasp (Ivan) and Psychic Blast (Vasalisa). Arcanum can be used freely but it can be fatiguing. Every time an Arcanum is used the user must roll Will Save DC 15. A failure means that the user suffers a -1 to all further rolls (including Will Saves) due to fatigue. This penalty accumulates with multiple failures. If the penalty ever reaches -4, the person falls unconscious until recovered to -3. A PC may roll Constitution DC 10 every hour to recover from one level of fatigue (i.e. a -1).

**Conviction:** Each PC has 3 Conviction points to spend in the adventure. It is advised that these are represented by 3 glass beads and handed to the GM when spent. These can be spent to:

† **Re-roll:** Re-roll the result on any d20. The PC must take the second result, but if it is under 10, the result is considered to be 10.

† **Extra Action:** The PC may take an extra action. This can be done at any time, even before the PC's turn. A GM may also allow Conviction to be spent to interrupt other actions, especially when the interrupt involves heroic sacrifice.



## SETTING

This scenario is set in the world of Blue Rose published by Green Ronin Publishing. Knowledge of this setting beyond what is set out in this scenario is not required to run it. Blue Rose is a romantic fantasy setting. Inspirational authors include Robin McKinley, Greg Keyes, Mercedes Lackey, Tamora Pierce and Diane Duane. A full summary of the genre by one of the authors of Blue Rose can be found on the official website here:

[http://bluerose.greenronin.com/blue\\_rose\\_devlog\\_entry.php?id=54\\_0\\_15\\_0](http://bluerose.greenronin.com/blue_rose_devlog_entry.php?id=54_0_15_0).

**Geography:** Blue Rose differs from most fantasy settings in that the dominant country, known as the Kingdom of Aldis, is one of enlightenment and tolerance. Racial, religious and sexual discrimination are rarely within its borders. Nobles are elected after completing a rigorous set of trials. Magic (called Arcana) is openly embraced. The technology level is that of late medieval Europe.

Despite the brightness in the centre, the world does have darkness. To the east of Aldis lies the Veran Marsh, once the home of a long dead and evil Sorcerer King, now twisted and impassable. Beyond the Marsh lies the Theocracy of Jarzon. The Jarzoni feel that Aldeans perpetuate the follies of the past that allowed the corrupted Sorcerer Kings to rise to power. To ensure that the likes of the Sorcerer Kings do not rise again, Jarzon pursues religion and piety with an intense fervour. To the north lies the Kingdom of Kern ruled by the Lich King, the last surviving Sorcerer King. To the west lies the Khanate of Rezea, a sometimes ally of Aldis. Neither Kern nor Rezea are that important for this adventure. For more details on the setting, please feel free to check out:

<http://bluerose.greenronin.com/>.

This scenario is primarily set in one location, the small town of Mistwold. Mistwold resides on the northern edge of the Veran Marsh that lies between Aldis and Jarzon. Mistwold is a small rustic village similar to those found in medieval Eastern Europe. It is ruled ruthlessly by Ivan, who has recently succeeded the role of Lord from his father. Due to the dangerous and verdant marsh, passage to Mistwold is perilous.

Mistwold has a chilling reputation as a place best avoided. It is for this very reason why the PCs head to Mistwold. They are trying to shake the pursuit of a skilled and persistent Jarzon Knight of Purity called Rostov. Rostov is trying to bring the PCs to justice and recover the prophet Palin. With little other choice, Mistwold seems the PCs best hope for survival.

As with the rule system, the setting of Blue Rose is not vital to this scenario. In fact the scenario can be converted to pretty much any fantasy setting that the GM is comfortable with. If the setting is changed then the following should be taken into account:

† Song, the Rhy-Wolf, could be any race especially those connected to nature or the arcane such as an Elf.

† Vasalisa, the Vata'sha, could be any race especially those connected to the arcane and evil such as a Dark Elf or even a Fae.

**Style:** The question as to how much focus to give “romantic fantasy” is left to the GM. Several opportunities are created through the PCs and NPCs but none are vital to the scenario. The GM should judge the appropriate level from the players and encourage where needed. The “romantic fantasy” elements can add a lot to the scenario, taking it from a simple action adventure to one of complex relationships and stressful decision making. In particular potential for “romantic fantasy” elements include:

† **Heroines:** Alysha appears to be the stereotypical heroine of the genre. Her strive to help others should be a source for driving the PCs into action. How does she react when she realises she helped Vasalisa, albeit unwittingly. Besides Alysha, Mara is actually closer to being a stereotypical heroine of the genre. She is young, desperate for a place in a community and struggling with her new found powers. Though Mara’s struggle should be a personal one, it will also involve all the PCs. The reaction of the Veran Marsh is a very physical way to get this across. Don’t be afraid to use it.

† **Romance:** Connor and Alysha are both primary PCs and they are developing feelings for one another. This romance is a difficult one for the PCs and all the PCs have an opinion on it. The more the PCs devote themselves to it will only make the external tensions in the scenario better. However, there is an even more central romance to the story – Vasalisa and Ivan. Vasalisa may be deceitful but Ivan’s feelings are genuine. The finale of this scenario is left open but due to sympathy of Connor and Mara, the PCs may try to redeem the NPCs rather than just defeat them. This sort of resolution is encouraged as it will make the climax multi-faceted and ultimately be more satisfying for many of the PCs on a personal level.

† **Defeating Evil:** The world of Blue Rose has many shades. However, behind this, there is true evil as well as true good. A common analogy is that of the Star Wars universe. The only true evil in this scenario is the Darkfiends. Vasalisa seems to be evil but she should be really an unfortunate victim in need of help. This redemption needs to be started by the PCs and can be finished by Ivan, should he himself see the error of his ways.

## **RUNNING THE FROG PRINCESS**

The Frog Princess is designed to be run in three hours including an introduction of the rules and setting. The scenario is roughly broken into four Acts. Each Act, except the opening Act, revolves around one of the three NPCs. In order: Ivan, Koshchei and Vasilisa. Each of the four Acts should take no more than 45 minutes each. At the beginning of each Act, there is a section headed "Mechanics" which summarises the Act in bullet points.

In order to maximise flexibility for the GM both in terms of the length and the challenge of the scenario, there are a number of optional Encounters presented within each Act. Each of these Encounters begins with a summary as to what exactly it adds to the overall scenario. Should a GM feel the need to change the length of the scenario or emphasis certain story elements then it should be easy to remove these Encounters without jeopardising the integrity of the greater story. Also, a GM can add additional or replacement Encounters to achieve a different flavour.

The scenario was play-tested with all Encounters except Encounters Two and Five, which were not needed. Rostov remained a distant threat and so Encounter Eight was only briefly covered.

## ACT ONE: ONCE UPON A TIME...

### **Mechanics:**

1. Introduce to the players to the setting and rules.
2. Allow the players to introduce their PCs to each other.
3. Introduce the PCs' predicament. They are being chased by Rostov's men and they have decided to take refuge at Mistwold.
4. Begin scenario.

**Background:** Before beginning to introduce the setting hand to each player **Handout One** which includes a map and a short lexicon of terms. The GM should talk to this Handout to assist the player's to become familiar with the necessary specifics of the setting.

The tensions between Aldis and Jarzon have always been high. Though Aldis has no designs for Jarzon, it is constantly shocked by the level of persecution and repression practiced by the Theocracy in the name of the Gods of Light. Jarzon's focus on the God Leonoth and the subtle demotion of the elder god Maurena as his Consort gives justification for the suspicion of the heresy behind Aldis' tolerance of Arcana and sex equality.

Recently, a theologian called Palin came to realise the subtle fallacy in Jarzoni's Faith and devoted himself to restoring Maurena. Unfortunately, the Church of the Pure Light saw this as heresy and imprisoned him and his followers. This news travelled through various means to Queen Jaellin of Aldis. On hearing the news, she knew that Palin needed to be rescued. She asked a dear friend, Alysha, a Rose Knight, to organise the extraction using all the resources the Sovereign's Finest had available.

Alysha relished in the dangerous task given to her. She knew the hardest part would be to pass through the Veran Marsh and remain hidden whilst in Jarzoni. After some enquiries as to a guide, one name rose to the surface: Connor. Connor is descended from Jarzoni refugees. Despite being a member of the Sovereign's Finest, he is a loose canon and works the Veran Marsh with his own team, waging his own private war. On appointing Connor as the leader of the expedition, things have gone remarkably well. However, on fleeing Jarzoni with Palin, things got worse.

The Church of the Pure Light sent forth one of its most ruthless Knights of Purity, Rostov, to hunt down the PCs before they managed to escape, and to retrieve Palin. Rostov has the reputation of always catching his prey. The PCs traded several blows with Rostov before finally delving deep into the Veran Marsh. Due to the PCs many talents and a bit of luck, the PCs have avoided capture so far. However, Rostov's determination has grown and the PCs know he is hot on their heels.

The Veran Marsh is a huge marsh. It lies on the ruins of a vile Sorcerer King's kingdom. It is almost a living organism and is resistance to any attempts to shape it through Arcana. When the Sovereign's Finest tried to close a path through the Marsh with such Arcana, it caused a large earthquake killing several adepts. For rules on the Marsh's reaction to Arcana use see Act Three.

**Opening:** The scenario opens with the PCs together on the Far Horizon. Rostov and his forces are hot the PCs' tail. Things are looking grim and escape by running is not an option. Thinking laterally, the PCs have developed the unusual plan of seeking refuge in the village of Mistwold. Mistwold lies deep in the northern Veran Marsh. It is both difficult to find and widely considered to be cursed. Despite Rostov's fearsome reputation, even he would have difficulty getting to Mistwold. Fortunately, Connor knows that by risking Mara's Shaping Arcana, a passage to Mistwold can be opened. He suspects that it isn't a permanent solution but it will at least delay the otherwise inevitable.

How a GM opens a scenario depends very much on his or her style. Some like to open with dialogue and others with action. The exact nature of this scenario is left open, though Encounter One suggests a specific beginning which the GM should find useful. Alternative openings could include the PCs struggling with the difficult navigation of the Veran Marsh (and the ominous quakes caused by Mara's Shaping Arcana) or just a group discussion of the plan of what to do once Mistwold is reached. It is also possible to skip straight through to the start of Act Two with the arrival at Mistwold, especially if the GM wishes the adventure to feel like it is based around a single location.

**Vasilisa's Frog:** One other salient event has occurred before the opening of the scenario is that, whilst going through the Marsh, Alysha came into contact with a frog. This is no normal frog. It is Vasilisa who has been freed by the quakes caused by Mara's Arcana use. **The GM should give Alexia's player Handout Two when handing out the PCs.** The information contained in that Handout is the suggestions made by Vasilisa through Mind Touch. Many of the ideas are inexplicable but there is no way that Alysha can determine what is true and what is false as they all feel like her ideas. As such, the GM should treat the ideas as a normal "secret mission" handout and avoid actually lying to the player if possible. Simply, let the player discover that things don't quite add up.

The most important thing is that, for the sake of the other PCs, Alysha believes she must keep the frog secret. This can provide the GM with a tool for livening up any encounter during Act Two. Simply have strange movements, noises or even odours noticed by the other PCs. If played properly, Alysha should scramble to cover these up. It is important that the GM doesn't give the game away too early so it may pay to do these events only when the PCs are otherwise distracted such as during the combat in Encounter One or the madman's rantings in Encounter Three. **Also, due to the Rhybond with Song, if Song attempts to use his Vision Arcanum, the GM should hand to that player Handout Six.** This gives him some additional information regarding the entire situation.

**Encounter One: Blood on the River:** This encounter starts the scenario with a bang and gives a lot of initial momentum to the scenario. It also helps establish the Rostov's pursuit and the danger the PCs start in. This should discourage the PCs from just trying to leave Mistwold when things get a little rough later on. If this Encounter is used then it is recommended that the GM doesn't spend much time on the combat rules in the introduction. Instead, this Encounter can be used as a quick tutorial of the basics.

The scene begins with the PCs on board the boat Far Horizon. The Far Horizon is a stalwart vessel that has stood all the PCs in good stead. So, what better way to start the scenario than the boat being crippled? **Hand to each player Handout Four.** This Handout sets the scene clearly with all necessary information. It also includes opportunity for each player to describe his or her PC in action. The Handout should help in easing the players into the session, which when followed by combat should see them full immersed by its end.

An advance boat of Rostov's men has followed the Far Horizon through the gap in the Marsh that has been Shaped by Mara. It has intercepted them and the crew has boarded. Everyone is now fighting for their lives. Rostov's men have managed to chop through the rudder. Connor and Alysha are fighting back to back on the deck (how romantic!) repelling 2 soldiers, being the main force of the attackers. Ronan stands on the deckhouse's roof (the most conspicuous position he could find) flinging insults, obscenities and soldiers to the other boat which has also been severely damaged by the quakes caused by Mara's Shaping Arcana. Another soldier is backing away from him. Mara has fled below deck and is now cornered by a leering soldier. Song is currently wrestling with a soldier who is trying to give another the time he needs to destroy the rudder. Palin shouts a warning as he tries to stop the last soldier from sabotaging the rudder.

This melee is run freeform. The attack should be challenging without disabling any of the PCs. The Far Horizon is badly damaged by the soldiers' sabotage but the boat is not destroyed.

The PCs may be able to capture one of the soldiers for questioning. The soldier will know very little. He will initially try and intimidate the PCs with the impending threat of Rostov. However, if the plan of going to Mistwold is revealed then the soldier will be scared. Mistwold is reputed to be a place from where you don't return. This is a good time to get that idea across to the PCs in game.

**Encounter Two: Dreams and Nightmares:** This Encounter is useful if the GM wishes to aim for a finale that is of a romantic fantasy style i.e. with the possible redemption or tragic demise of Vasalisa. It provides the players with a basis with which to sympathise with the ultimate villain, Vasalisa, when her evil plans are finally revealed. It will also assist the players in having an understanding of the scenario as a whole rather than relying solely on Alysha to pass on her knowledge of Vasalisa's possession of her.

On the night before arriving in Mistwold, the PCs all have a troubling dream about being pursued by Jarzoni Knights of Purity. **Hand to each of the players Handout Seven.** Despite being a common dream, this dream is a little strange as it intermingles with Vasalisa's own memories of her persecution.

This Encounter can also be easily adapted to be the opening of the entire scenario, especially if the GM wishes to avoid the fight and start straight with arriving at Mistwold.

## ACT TWO: IVAN

### **Mechanics:**

1. Arrival at Mistwold.
2. Organise dinner, place to stay and repairs.
3. Approached by Lord Ivan with an offer of help and protection if the PCs deal with Koshchei the Deathless.
4. Vasalisa is handed over to Ivan.

**Mistwold:** Mistwold is a small village. It has somewhere around 500 residents. It used to be a vibrant village sitting north of the Veran Marsh on the Tath River. However, over time the village went into decline as the Veran Marsh pushed north. The forest gave way to the Marsh as it slowly began to claim the village bit by bit. The land on either side of the river began to sink and soon Mistwold found itself in a bog. What little travel Mistwold had, ceased.

Mistwold now only attracts two kinds of people. The first are hunters of rare and exotic marsh dwellers. Many of these hunters harvest body parts of their catch for useful applications. The bog provides plenty of dangerous (and rare) sport. The second are people fleeing Jarzoni and smugglers. The dangers of Mistwold can be managed by a very experienced boatman, especially with a cautious use of Shaping Arcana. The refuge of Mistwold proves to be invaluable to those crossing the otherwise closed borders. So, Mistwold is now a dank and dark village with many abandoned buildings. Those that are used cater for the two remaining types of travellers. Seedy taverns, warehouses, apothecaries and hunting stores thrive.

Mistwold is the central key location for this scenario and its description will be instrumental in setting the right tone. There is very little colour in the town except black and dark green. The swamp itself seems to invade the town and weeds and plants grow everywhere. Everything is slick and oily; lights seem weak and unable to provide much comfort. Windows are grimy and the buildings are made from heavy damp wood. There are some signs of extravagance and prosperity but they are all in an advanced state of decay.

No map of Mistwold is provided as most of the encounters set here are fluid as to their exact position. Geographically, the town of Mistwold is located on a hill. At the top lies the Lord's Manor in which Ivan resides. It is large and gothic in style. Next to the Manor sits the old town square, which is no longer used. The central ring of the town is made up of abandoned buildings, mainly residences and shops. The bottom ring, which adjoins the surrounding swamp, sees the most activity. This ring includes the docks and warehouses on the south side. The northern side houses the taverns and remaining shops. With the old square out of use, most shops are centred down a single winding road, called the Shambles.

**Arrival at Night:** The PCs arrive just as night falls. From a distance, Mistwold looks like a dark black mound with only heavy smoke and flickering lights indicating that it is in fact a village. The docks look tenuous but they are one of the few areas that still get much use, so they are actually in good repair. There are no other boats of significance in town. The PCs are greeted by the harbour-master, Jeb, a ruddy skinned fellow wrapped in a well-used oil skin coat. He doesn't offer much conversation and seems to be bothered by a persistent cough. As with most other harbour-masters, he is greedy and only the thought of profit makes him more animated. This serves only to make him more unpleasant. Jeb can assist in answering any questions the PCs have including who to talk to for repairs and where to go to get a meal. See Encounter Four for suggestions as to both of these answers.

**Ivan's Visit:** Wherever the PCs settle for the night, the PCs are approached by Ivan, the Lord of Mistwold. On first appearances, Ivan is an attractive young man who shows competency and confidence. It is important to present him as trustworthy in his first encounter.

Ivan arrives dressed in fine but not ostentatious clothes. He is accompanied by several capable looking men at arms. The men at arms seem suspicious of everyone including the PCs. However, Lord Ivan is determined to talk with the PCs. He approaches the PCs with his tragic tale. He will not tell the entire tale but will tell of an evil sorcerer killing his beloved and wishing to seek revenge. He finishes the tale saying that Koshchei the Deathless (in a diplomatic moment, he may decide to drop the title "the Deathless" when trying to recruit the PCs to kill him) is also the force behind the invading swamp that is destroying Mistwold. As a dutiful Lord, he wishes to save his town from the same threat that took away his one true love. Ivan is not beneath using Aldis' altruistic reputation to his own advantages. He stresses that if Aldis and Mistwold allied then Aldis would have more options when dealing with Jarzon.

Connor will know of Koshchei but only by means of folklore. He is believed to be a reclusive Sorcerer who has obtained immortality through the sacrifice of innocents that he lures into the Veran Marsh. Ivan can provide a description of Koshchei, directions and resources. Ivan knows that Koshchei lives at a place unreachable by most boats. He is also willing to pay the PCs by fixing their boat, in coin and provide them support should Rostov come to Mistwold. Feel free to be generous as Ivan doesn't expect them to survive.

**Just after the meeting begins, the GM should hand to Alexia Handout Three.** Vasilisa's earlier suggestions compel Alysha to hand the frog to Ivan so she can restart her plan. Depending on how paranoid the PCs are at this stage, this may be a good moment for the existence of the frog to become more than just hinted at as Vasilisa is more concerned by urgency than secrecy. The Handout takes the view that Alysha should be reasonably open about the handover. This should cast suspicions on her and her timely gift, rather than the frog. The Handout will also provide Alysha with some useful memories of Vasilisa that may make Ivan's offer even more attractive. Ivan will be confused and take the frog. However, he won't realise that the frog is in fact his Vasilisa until after he has recruited the PCs.

**Alternative Courses:** If the frog is intercepted before it reaches Ivan then all is not lost. First, Ivan will beg that it not be hurt. He does not think it to be Vasilisa but he can't bear to see the little critter hurt, especially after what he thinks happened to Vasilisa. Failing that, the frog can escape later. Failing this, Vasilisa can try and Dominate Alysha and use her to try and force the transfer. **If this occurs, then the GM should consider handing to Alysha Handout Five now instead of Act Three.** This will allow the PC to understand the goals of Vasilisa and continue to play as if possessed by Vasilisa. As Vasilisa, the player will be a strong proponent of seeing the frog in Ivan's hands.

If the PCs decide to drop everything else to pursue the frog and decline Ivan's offer, then Act Three and Four will need to be changed. The GM should consider having Ivan summon his Darkfiend Solider earlier to hunt the PCs. He will also use Mistwold's resources to protect Vasilisa. Rostov will continue to try and find a way into Mistwold, pressing the PCs on all sides. Vasilisa will continue her plan to trick Ivan into summoning a Darkfiend Devourer so she can take revenge on everything, including the meddling PCs. Koshchei becomes one of the few allies that the PCs may seek to recruit and he may well approach them in order to ask them to help him save his swamp. The PCs will eventually learn of Vasilisa's plan and will need to decide how best to deal with it.



If the PCs don't intercept the frog but don't seem keen to take Ivan's offer then he will give them until morning to make their decision. It is suggested that Encounter Five be used to bring home the very real danger the PCs are in from Rostov. This should convince the PCs that Ivan's offer is a good one after all.

**Encounter Three: Midnight Rantings:** This Encounter allows the GM to foreshadow the underlying story, giving a sense of the real threat before the twists in Act Three. It also provides the right tone for Mistwold by thrusting an insane and corrupted beggar at the PCs straight after they dock. However, if the GM is worried about the PCs being overly paranoid then this Encounter may make the PCs reluctant to accept Ivan's proposition and therefore the scene should be avoided.

On making arrangements for the boat and going ashore, the PCs encounter Olav. Olav is Ivan's eldest and only surviving brother. Olav was driven mad by the last mental pleas of Vasalisa as she was attacked and then buried alive. Olav is now so mad he no longer remembers any of these details of his past.

The PCs will encounter Olav in a dark street. He is a black shape at first, groaning and stumbling towards them. If the PCs try to evade him, they can do so. The GM may wish for the PCs to think they have got away only to spring Olav on them by surprise again at a later stage. His rantings will alternate between gibberish, foretelling doom, a corrupting worm, crying and hearing screams in his head. It is possible for him to mention a frog but this is probably too much at this stage. He is dogged by a vision of a corrupting worm (the Darkfiend Devourer) that sits at the centre and rots all around it. This is a glimpse at Vasalisa's plan. However, the players will probably believe that the worm lives in the mound on which Mistwold sits. The GM should neither confirm nor deny this with vicious grins followed by innocent looks.

Should the GM think appropriate, the PCs may notice a family resemblance between Olav and Ivan, preferably after Act Two, on seeing Ivan in the throws of his dark ceremony. Olav may also be used in Act Four as an ally or antagonist for the PCs.

**Encounter Four: The Hackshop:** This scene provides the PCs with some colourful NPC interaction and further detail as to the inhabitants of Mistwold. It is also a good opportunity for some humour, albeit black humour. In Act Three, Hagrid may also be used to allow the PCs to make further preparations and obtain some forewarning about what to expect on their journey into the Marsh.

The PCs will know (or Jeb can tell them) that the best tavern to arrange board, meals and repairs is Hagrid's Hunting Store (or affectionately known as the "Hackshop"). Though not palatial by a long shot, Hagrid's Hunting Store is a known quantity. Hagrid is a retired hunter of some reputation. His tavern matches his personality with hints of a trophy room and abattoir thrown into the décor. He owns perhaps the largest harpoon known to man which he calls "Bessie" and proudly displays above the bar. Everything in his bar is made from animal parts.

The GM may wish to include a various oddities around the bar as a discussion pieces or even for purchase. Should the PCs investigate then Hagrid may disclose all kinds of bits of information. In particular, he has a bone knife which he believes was owned by a fey-like creature called Vasalisa. He will tell the story of Vasalisa's plaguing the village as if it were a gruesome fairy tale.

In the bar is a carpenter called Karl. He is the only man in town with the parts needed to fixing the Horizon's rudder and his asking price is high. He has a particular dislike of magic and women, and the PCs are likely to be the target of his animosity if they don't act incognito. He will probably be unbearably insulting to Mara. He has a group of fellow employees who work for him and are loyal to him. Any disturbance caused by the PCs at this stage should be interrupted by men at arms and the introduction of Ivan (see Scene One).

## ACT THREE: KOSHCHEI

### Mechanics:

1. PCs make preparations for their swamp journey.
2. Travel to Koshchei's domain.
3. Deal with Koshchei.
4. Koshchei reveals Vasalisa's treachery and the complicity of Ivan.

**Veran Marsh:** This Act begins with the morning after the arrival of the PCs in Mistwold. It is assumed that the PCs will have agreed to Ivan's offer to set out into the swamp to deal with Koshchei, even if Encounter Five is used to help them along.

Finding Koshchei should be difficult. Exactly how difficult is up to the GM. There should be a sense that finding Koshchei requires either a guide or a test of the PCs' survival skills. The swamp is a mass tangle of twisted plants crawling to get at the sun. The mist will distort images and sound. Strange creatures will be glimpsed from the PCs' peripheral vision. There is the opportunity to turn the journey into a hazardous one, full of traps for the PCs to overcome. However, the journey is not really dramatically important. Encounter Six details one possibility for the journey that is short, creepy and thematically consistent for this scenario. Other possibilities could include swamp alligators, assassin vines, leeches and sink holes.

No matter what happens on the journey, Koshchei is to be found close to the centre of the swamp not far from Mistwold. Koshchei's domain is a verdant bowl-shaped clearing with edges made from densely matted plant life. In several places the plants seem almost to form body parts and replicants of Koshchei. These macabre plants are not actually dangerous; they are simply waiting to replace Koshchei should he die.

Using Earth, Plant, Water or Wind Shaping Arcana in the Veran Marsh is a very risky business. If Mara uses any of her Arcana while in the swamp, the GM should roll d20 +2 for each Arcanum use in any one hour period and apply the corresponding result. The effect of being sucked into a sinkhole is over to the GM. It should at the very least immobilise the PC reducing his or her Defence to 5. At the most, it may require the PC or an assisting PC to make a Strength check to avoid being drowned.

1-9	The Arcanum succeeds. The ground trembles slightly.
10-14	The Arcanum succeeds. Everyone within 20ft must make a Reflex DC15 or fall prone.
15-19	The Arcanum fails. Everyone in 20ft must make a Reflex DC15 or be sucked into a sinkhole.
20-24	The Arcanum fails. Everyone in 40ft must make a Reflex DC15 or be sucked into a sinkhole.
25+	The Arcanum fails. Everyone in 60ft must make a Reflex DC15 or be sucked into a sinkhole.

**Koshchei:** Koshchei the Deathless is not the wicked sorcerer he is commonly perceived as. Instead, he is a twisted treant. In many ways, he is the heart of this part of Veran Marsh. Despite not being a sorcerer, neither is Koshchei an altruistic or benevolent creature. He is not human and has no human morality. His emotions are primal. He protects his swamp and wishes to see it expand. He takes revenge on those who do him wrong. Koshchei uses his affinity with the swamp to lure in travellers and he has no compunctions in killing these people. He is presented as a creepy and obvious antagonist. This Act is designed to provide the GM and players with a challenging interaction. Koshchei has alien thoughts and there is potential to scare the PCs.

When the PCs first approach Koshchei, he is currently entertaining one of Rostov's soldiers who he found wandering a little too far into the swamp. Koshchei lured the man with promises of help finding the way to Mistwold. What the soldier didn't realise that he would not return to tell anyone. The soldier is close to death and hanging from vines. His lower half is covered in moss and is rapidly decomposing in the earth. The soldier is of little consequence except to let the PCs know that Rostov continues his pursuit and that Koshchei can be particularly unpleasant.

Koshchei doesn't know who the PCs are and will see them only as intruders unless they give him reason to believe otherwise. He has little sympathy for the PCs or their goals. He only desires to expand the Marsh and to punish Vasilisa. There are many different ways the PCs can attempt to deal with Koshchei. The most direct is to try and kill him. Koshchei is a difficult foe to defeat. His effective immortality should also be deterrent to the PCs from relying on force.

**The Big Twist:** The GM should look to create an opportunity for the PCs to talk with Koshchei. Koshchei is aware that the PCs are the puppets of Vasilisa as the scent of her possession of Alysha is strong. Astute players may also be concerned that things don't add up so far. Any revelation of the PCs' knowledge of Ivan or the frog will be sufficient; as will any interrogation of Koshchei as to his plans. Even if Koshchei is killed then he can still communicate to the PCs via the various body parts strewn about the clearing.

When the opportunity arises, Koshchei will reveal to the PCs his side of the story. He tells of Vasilisa being an upstart Vata'sha who caused trouble with her manipulative ways. He will suspect that she is up to no good. To help prove what he says, he unlocks Vasilisa's memories in Alysha's mind, imprinted with her Mind Touch. **The GM should hand to the player Handout Five.** This will show that Vasilisa has a plan which threatens the lives of everyone, including the PCs, and she must be stopped. The only detail that is not yet known is the exact nature of what Vasilisa intends to do to cause such destruction. Koshchei, Hagrid or Palin will know that a Darkfiend Solider is evil and dangerous, but it is not a force of destruction. Koshchei is willing to assist the PCs in helping to stop Vasilisa should they request it.

**Encounter Five: Ambush!:** This Encounter may serve one of three purposes. If the GM decided not to run Encounter One then this can serve to establish the growing threat of Rostov should the PCs start considering leaving Mistwold ("first purpose"). If the PCs are reluctant to take Ivan's offer then this may serve to encourage them to do so by showing them what is at stake should they not get aid ("second purpose"). Finally, this Encounter can simply serve as a reminder of Rostov's presence and a light action diversion for the players ("third purpose").

In the early morning, some of the Rostov's men find a way into Mistwold. Their main aim is to simply scout out the village and return with the details of the path. However, upon seeing the Far Horizon, they decide to push the opportunity for a small ambush.

The nature of this ambush depends on the purpose that the GM is using this Encounter for. If the GM is using the Encounter for the first purpose then the attack will be of a similar size as in Encounter One and possibly involve damaging the boat in the same fashion. If the GM is using the Encounter for the second purpose then this Encounter will be a main source of the action in Act Three, so the GM should feel free to throw a few more soldiers into the fray. If the GM is using the Encounter for the third purpose then the attack will be small and involve an attempt to kidnap one of the PCs as they are awaking. In all cases, if the PCs seem keen to pursue Koshchei then the Encounter should be short and not disable any PCs.

**Encounter Six: Three Pieces of Silver:** This Encounter is designed as one way to cover the PCs journey to find Koshchei. It is short in length, quite creepy and involves a tough negotiation. Finding Koshchei requires the PCs to travel into the very heart of the Veran Marsh. The PCs are all aware that this is a difficult proposition. The Far Horizon is too large a vessel to take them where they need to go and Shaping Arcana risks earthquakes.

However, there is a swamp dweller capable of taking them on such a journey for a price. How the PCs come across this idea can vary. Connor's own survival knowledge is a possibility. Hagrid could provide the information after being approached for advice or simply after overhearing the PCs conversation with Ivan. Hagrid's price for this information is, predictably, a body part of Koshchei to exhibit in his store. Finally, the Ferryman knows when he is needed and could just appear out of the mists.

The swamp dweller is called the "Ferryman". Finding the Ferryman is easy. He seems to know when he is wanted. He appears as an old man in heavy robe. He travels on a flat-bottomed boat whose bow is decorated with a wooden bust of a twisted visage. He pushes the boat with a long pole. Once on the water, the village disappears in the mist. The Ferryman's boat lies low in the water and seems to swiftly travel through it without causing a stir. At several points the PCs will notice shapes under the water, human shapes: his children.

The Ferryman is actually a spectre of a former boatman who died slowly and alone in the swamp many years ago. In order to exact his revenge, he now offers to take people into the swamp.

There is no chance to bargain with him before setting out. At the end of this voyage, the Ferryman will require payment for the journey. He is often capricious about what he accepts. The Ferryman is selective and knowledgeable. He wants something "thoughtful", not necessarily something "valuable". Essentially, he is trying to force his victims to empathise with his plight. If he does not feel his passengers are considerate enough, he will kill them slowly and make them one of his spawn to keep him company.

What exactly the PCs offer to the Ferryman is over to them. Obvious ideas include something from Hagrid's Hackshop or getting Ivan to donate an item. Any item from Ivan will be valuable but will reek of Darkfiends to the Ferryman. He will sense Vasilisa's former presence with the PCs and he may ask about the frog. If the PCs offer an item provided by Ivan, the Ferryman will refuse and get quite angry. The Ferryman will say the item is corrupted and little else. In the end, any item the players have put some thought into should suffice, after they have had a chance to sweat.

During the negotiation, the bloated undead progeny of the Ferryman will begin to try and get at the PCs and climb out of the water. Should the negotiations fail or go badly, then there is an opportunity for a melee. However, the real purpose of this Encounter is about tension and horror.

## ACT FOUR: VASILISA

### **Mechanics:**

1. PCs discuss plan of action.
2. PCs return to Mistwold.
3. PCs try and stop Vasilisa and the destruction of Mistwold or flee.
4. Darkfiend Devourer rises and must be dealt with.

**The Plan:** This Act should begin with the PCs in discussion with Koshchei in the centre of the swamp. If the PCs didn't leave Mistwold to pursue Koshchei then it will likely start in Mistwold instead. Either way, the PCs have a dilemma. They are aware that Vasilisa has used them and that along with Ivan there is a possibility of greater evil and destruction occurring. Initially, the PCs may not see any reason to interfere further. However, in fact, there are many reasons:

† Mass destruction and Shadow machinations should be thwarted on principle. The town of Mistwold is at stake. Though a miserable little place, it does have innocent residents. No one else is in position to stop what is about to happen.

† Vasilisa's plight may strike some sympathy with Connor and Mara who may wish to help her.

† The Far Horizon is still at Mistwold and they will need a boat to get through the Veran Marsh. Rostov still prowls around to the south in the Veran Marsh. Leaving is possibly not any better than staying.

† Vasilisa and Ivan have used and tricked the PCs. Their reputation has been tarnished. Also, the PCs' failure may very well bring Vasilisa's and Ivan's wrath on top of them.

Let the PCs have some time to decide what they want to do. There are a large range of possible plans and approaches, so the GM will need to wing events as best he can. The main options for plans should be to escape the situation, to enlist the aid of Rostov, Hagrid or Koshchei or (hopefully) to return to Mistwold and dealing with Ivan. Each of these will be dealt with in turn below.

**Plan One - Escape:** If the PCs wish to escape it is likely because they are scared of taking on a more powerful force or that they are not quite confident as to what is going. If the first reason is the case then Koshchei, Hagrid or Rostov could be useful allies to bolster their courage. See the "Recruiting Allies" section below. If the PCs are not confident they understand what is going on, Encounter Seven may be helpful in this regard.

If the PCs persist in escaping then Act Four can continue without too much change. The PCs are likely to want to return to Mistwold for the Far Horizon. This puts them in the path of a number of events in Act Four as well as Encounters Seven and Eight. If desired, Rostov could capture the PCs only to focus his questions on the infernal goings-on in the town. Rostov is not stupid enough to give the PCs priority over an event of infernal proportions. In this way, Rostov could be a vehicle to motivate the PCs back on track. After all this, if the PCs still wish to flee, then the GM can finish the scenario with an exciting flight from the Darkfiend Devourer as described in the Finale.

**Plan Two - Recruiting Allies:** The PCs may decide to try to recruit allies before tackling Ivan and Vasilisa. The usual suspects are Koshchei, Hagrid and Rostov (in order of likelihood).

† Koshchei is relatively easy to recruit provided he isn't dead. The PCs need to convince him that they intend to punish Vasilisa. It is possible for the PCs to convince him to change Vasilisa back into her own form in exchange for her ceasing to summon the Darkfiend Devourer that will harm his swamp. Koshchei will be reluctant to leave the swamp but can provide aid by way of a swift return to Mistwold and even promising to keep Rostov off their backs.

† Hagrid is also an easy sell. He will completely understand what is going on if someone explains that Vasilisa is involved. He detests the Shadow and will assist in any way that doesn't kill him or destroy Mistwold. He is a man of some physical ability and has a number of useful items around the place. He will be especially interested if the PCs offer him the pickings of any Darkfiend they happen to kill in the process.

† Rostov is a different story. He has been presented so far as the villain. However, the Jarzoni have less love of Darkfiends than even the Aldans. The PCs may be able to bargain Rostov's help, especially if they are humble about the approach and have proof of Shadow goings-on. Rostov will try and get Palin to agree to return to Jarzon in exchange for his assistance. Ultimately, the idea of stopping a Shadow Cultist and Darkfiends from hurting innocents is too much even for Rostov to resist and he will forgo his hunt of the PCs until this other matter is resolved.

**Plan Three - Return to Mistwold:** The return journey to Mistwold is uneventful. Koshchei is willing to help the PCs return swiftly, if they have befriended him.

On return to Mistwold, things are ominous. Several large quakes shake the town. The PCs will encounter several scared townsfolk who believe the sky is about to fall. This is a good time to make the destruction of Mistwold mean something, the death of hundreds of the scared residents. If the PCs do not appear to be ready to flee then the Far Horizon should be safe and repaired by Karl. It is on stand by for a last minute flight from the town, should it be required.

The higher up the hill the PCs go, the more obvious it becomes that something is wrong. The streets sweat slick moisture and something moves just under the surface. Close to the top of the hill sits the Lord's gothic mansion. It is dark and looms over the town. Ivan has rallied up his men at arms and they patrol the top of the hill keeping away intruders as required.

Shortly after arriving, the PCs see a group of people huddled around a woman. The woman is Maeve, a maid of Ivan. She has been expelled from the mansion due to her reaction of the (infernal) practices taking place. She can tell the PCs of Ivan and a young serving girl called Gilda engaging in unspeakable acts. She seems to suspect that Gilda is somehow possessed and that Ivan is being held in her thrall. Besides revealing more of the situation, Maeve is able to assist the PCs entrance to the mansion. She knows of a number of back entrances and is friends with most of the mansion's staff. The PCs will need to convince her that they intend to stop the events but that they will try and save Ivan if possible.



**Finale:** In the mansion, Ivan and Vasilisa work hard to summon the Darkfiend Soldier. Vasilisa has already sabotaged Ivan's summoning circle so that after the Darkfiend Soldier appears, the Darkfiend Devourer follows shortly thereafter. The strange goings-on in the town are due to the fact that Ivan is particularly weak and has made several failed attempts so far. This has successfully annoyed the Darkfiends waiting to come through. The ceremony takes place in the main library of the mansion. The library is large and gothic and has a huge balcony overlooking the swamp. The room is lit by the soft distorted light of many black candles.

When the PCs enter the library, Ivan will collapse exhausted. In the centre of the room, there begins to swirl a wicked shape. Gilda, the girl in thrall to Vasilisa, stands defiant, naked and covered in sweat. She looks to be waking from a daze and horrified by what confronts her. Astute players will look for Vasilisa as a frog. The frog is currently on the upper balcony. It can be reached by a narrow spiral staircase or a rolling book ladder. Vasilisa (and initially Ivan as well) will do anything in her power to stop the PCs, including using suggestion to have the servants attack the PCs and intercede.

The GM should run the Finale as the drama dictates. There are numerous outcomes and those involving some form of reconciliation between Koshchei and Vasilisa and making Vasilisa realise her folly should be encouraged and preferred. Ivan also is redeemable, though he is unlikely to ever become noble.

Vasilisa has sabotaged the ceremony so that it also summons forth a Darkfiend Devourer. The Darkfiend Devourer is essentially a licence for the GM to go wild and suit whatever time, energy and drama the scenario and players have left. Ivan has successfully completed his first summoning but it is followed by a creature he did not wish to summon. The Darkfiend Devourer is far more destructive than the Darkfiend Soldier. It will burst forth and destroy building and person with impunity. It is possible to add the Darkfiend Soldier into the mix if the PCs took a particular shine to Encounter Seven or are doing well. The Soldier can easily be devoured by the Devourer at a later stage.

Possible conclusions to the scenario include (roughly in order of suitability):

† The PCs can fight and defeat the Darkfiend Devourer. If they win, Vasilisa and Ivan may be redeemed by the PCs.

† The Darkfiend Devourer can try and destroy Vasilisa, forcing Ivan to dismiss it in order to save his one true love (much to her frustration).

† The PCs could slay, or the Darkfiend Devourer could eat, Ivan, breaking the Darkfiend's link to this world and making it unstable and disappear.

† Several PCs die, Mistwold is devastated and the Darkfiend Devourer escapes into the swamp (probably a little anti-climatic).

**Encounter Seven: Infernal Affairs:** This Encounter is designed to help jump the PCs into the final Act. Act Three finished with a big revelation and the PCs may take some time to realise what is going on and what they need to do. This Encounter can also be used to restate information or add any information that was missed.

Before leaving Koshchei's clearing, the ground shakes followed by a wave rippling through the swamp from the direction of Mistwold. Before the PCs can orientate themselves, a dark black smudge forms above them. The form seems to scream with a maddening noise, yet no sound can be heard. Slowly details appear. Sharp teeth, wicked looking weapons and spider like fingers emerge. Then a voice like death says: "I have come for you all."

This is the Darkfiend Soldier summoned by Ivan. However, Ivan has failed to do so properly. It remains insubstantial and before long will dissipate. The very appearance of the Darkfiend should help drive home what is going on in Mistwold. The Darkfiend will reveal that it has been summoned to kill Koshchei and the PCs and that something worse has yet to come. This may seem a little cheesy but the Darkfiend likes to see its victims fearful before killing them.

If the GM is interested in a more cinematic style of game, then a cut scene could be added just after the Darkfiend speaks its first line. The scene cuts to a gothic library where Ivan and a young woman are performing a ritual. Ivan looks exhausted. The young woman looks disappointed and says simply to Ivan: "You should rest and regain your strength. We cannot afford any more...failures." She picks up a frog, which she strokes affectionately, and goes over to a circle on the ground. She stands over a stick figure of a man with a spear. She writes something but her body initially blocks the view of it. When she finishes, she moves away and reveals that she has changed the figure to that of a large worm with multiple tentacles coming from its head. She whispers malevolently: "Rest my darling, for soon there will be no rest for the wicked." The scene then dissolves back to the PCs confronted by the insubstantial Darkfiend.

**Encounter Eight: Siege of Mistwold:** This Encounter brings Rostov into the final Act. If the PCs are making good time and seem to breezing through all the challenges so far, this Encounter could present them with a problem to solve.

When the PCs return to Mistwold, they find that it is surrounded by Rostov and his men. They have managed to find their way to Mistwold after all. Rostov was preparing to attack but then the strange events began to happen. Being a superstitious and cautious man, he has pulled his troops back and waits to see what happens.

For the PCs to get back into Mistwold or get to the Far Horizon, they must find a way to break this perimeter. There are several options: combat, stealth, subterfuge and negotiation. Rostov's men are trained soldiers and will not be easily defeated, especially in such numbers. This Encounter is meant to be difficult and build the drama substantially. Unless there is a reason to present Rostov as a potential ally, this may be a good time to give this antagonist a final send off in style. A mighty duel with Connor whilst the other fight for their lives would be excellent, time permitting.

## NPC STATISTICS

### SOLDIER (Rostov's and Ivan's)

**Initiative:** +1 **Fort:** 11  
**Attack:** 11 **Damage:** 19 **Ref:** 11  
**Defence:** 13 **Toughness:** 11 **Will:** 11

or below	3	4	to	8	9	to	13	14	to	18	19	or above
Dying		Disabled		Wounded		Hurt		None				

### LORD IVAN

**Initiative:** +1 **Fort:** 16  
**Attack:** 16/12\* **Damage:** 20 **Ref:** 16  
**Defence:** 15 **Toughness:** 14 **Will:** 15

or below	4	5	to	9	10	to	14	15	to	19	20	or above
Dying		Disabled		Wounded		Hurt		None				

**Special:** He may manipulate objects from a distance including his sword\*. His sword is a family heirloom. He can increase his Defence to 18 by reducing his Attack to 13/9\*. He may also attack with a Sorcerer's Grasp (+3 bonus to victim's Toughness) and summon Darkfiend. He gets a +4 to any action involving Vasalisa, who he believes is his True Beloved.

### FERRYMAN

**Initiative:** +7 **Fort:** 12  
**Attack:** 18 **Damage:** -1 Con **Ref:** 15  
**Defence:** 15 **Toughness:** 17 **Will:** 17

**Special:** Immune to mundane weapons. May only be harmed by Arcana or Purifying Light.

### FERRYMAN'S SPAWN

**Initiative:** -1 **Fort:** 10  
**Attack:** 11 **Damage:** 18 **Ref:** 9  
**fence:** 11 **Toughness:** 12 **Will:** 12

below	2	3	to	7	8	to	12	13	to	17	18	or above
Dying		Disabled		Wounded		Hurt		None				

### KOSHCHEI THE DEATHLESS

Initiative: +0

Fort: 20

Attack: 21

Damage: 24

Ref: 11

Defence: 20

Toughness: 19

Will: 17

or below	8	9	to	13	14	to	18	19	to	23	24	or above
Dying		Disabled		Wounded		Hurt		None				

### ROSTOV

Initiative: +0

Fort: 17

Attack: 20

Damage: 24

Ref: 12

Defence: 20

Toughness: 18

Will: 15

or below	8	9	to	13	14	to	18	19	to	23	24	or above
Dying		Disabled		Wounded		Hurt		None				

**Special:** He may ignore the first successful attack. He may intimidate his target who suffer -2 unless Will Save DC 20.

### VASALISA

Initiative: +5

Fort: 13

Attack: 14

Damage: 22\*

Ref: 14

Defence: 18

Toughness: 14

Will: 19

or below	6	7	to	11	12	to	16	17	to	21	22	or above
Dying		Disabled		Wounded		Hurt		None				

**Special:** She may attack with a Psychic Blast\*. Will Save DC 16 to get a +4 bonus to Toughness. If she taunts a target, the target must roll Sense Motive or Will Save DC 18 or be at -2. She has the Arcana of Dominate, Illusion, Mind Touch and Suggestion; Will Save DC 19 to resist.

### DARKFIEND SOLDIER

Initiative: +2

Fort: 16

Attack: 19

Damage: 21

Ref: 16

Defence: 16

Toughness: 16

Will: 15

or below	5	6	to	10	11	to	15	16	to	20	21	or above
Dying		Disabled		Wounded		Hurt		None				

**Special:** May grant a +2 bonus to the victim's Toughness and use poison. Fort Save DC 14 or -2 Str and -2 Str in 1 minute.

**DARKFIEND DEVOURER**

**Initiative:** +3

**Fort:** 20

**Attack:** 25

**Damage:** 25

**Ref:** 11

**Defence:** 17

**Toughness:** 21

**Will:** 17

or below	9	10	to	14	15	to	19	20	to	24	25	or above
Dying		Disabled		Wounded		Hurt		None				

## Handout One: Setting

### Places

**Aldis:** The Kingdom of the Blue Rose ruled by Queen Jaellin. This is the kingdom to which the PCs are loyal. It celebrates racial and sexual equality and tolerance of magic, race and religion.

**Jarzon:** The Theocracy of Jarzon suffered most during the Great Cataclysm. They are an insular people who look to religion to keep them safe. They fear outsiders and persecute anyone they suspect of bringing back the woes of the past especially Rhyfolk and users of magic.

**Veran Marsh:** Caused by the conflict of two Sorcerers during the Great Cataclysm, the Marsh lies between Aldis and Jarzon. It is a twisted impassable place. It reacts violently to any attempts to use magic to change it.

**Mistwold:** A small town in the north of the Veran Marsh that is difficult to find. The PCs decide to seek refuge from Rostov, the Knight of Purity.

### Gods

**Leonoth:** A God of Light who symbolises hard work, perseverance, faith and family. He is the head of the pantheon as understood by the Jarzoni Church of the Pure Light.

**Maureнна:** An elder Twilight Goddess who symbolises all things to do with nature and fertility.

### Magic

**Arcana:** The term used for magic.

**Sorcery:** Magic used for evil purposes that can corrupt the user.

### Races

**Rhy-Folk:** A race of intelligent animals who communicate through Mind Touch Arcana.

**Rhy-Bond:** A bond given by a Rhyfolk to the person he or she trusts and loves the most.

**Vata:** A race of fey-like beings aligned with nature and magic. They have white hair. Those with ivory skin are called Vata'an and those with ebony skin are called Vata'sha

### Organisations

**Rose Knight:** A member of the Queen's personal guard. Often entrusted with the most dangerous of tasks.

**Sovereign's Finest:** An agent of the Queen who travels the Kingdom helping others and fighting evil wherever it is found.

**Knights of Purity:** A templar of the Jarzoni Church of Pure Light.

### **Handout Two: The Frog**

You have a second mission to accomplish, besides the rescue of Palin. This mission is so secret that it was transmitted to you by means of Arcana. You are currently escorting a frog to the town of Mistwold. You know little about the frog except that its survival and secrecy (even from your companions) is vital to the wellbeing of Aldis and Queen Jaellin. You are beginning to suspect the frog may actually be an ancient Rhy-Folk who possesses long forgotten wisdom.

In Mistwold, you are to meet a contact to whom you are to hand the frog. You are not sure of the identity of the contact but trust that the Arcana that imbued you with this mission will also signal to you who is the right person. Be wary, trust no one and protect Aldis.

### **Handout Three: Mission Accomplished**

You sense the completion of your mission is at hand. Ivan is your contact and the true destination of the frog. He stands before you and you begin to sense that the frog will somehow play a part in the destruction of a dangerous sorcerer who threatens many people.

Though you have exercised discretion thus far, you are now overwhelmed with a desire to complete your mission by handing the frog over to Ivan. You know the others may see your actions as suspicious. After all, they are unaware of your secret mission. However, you are confident that you can simply explain away the matter. Perhaps it is a custom in these parts to seal a deal with a frog. Perhaps this is Sovereign Finest's business and the others should not interfere.

## Handout Four: Opening

**GM:** Between Jarzon and Aldis lies the Veran Marsh. The Marsh is a mass tangle of twisted plants crawling to get at the sun. A pervading mist distorts all sights and sounds. Strange creatures are glimpsed, only to disappear without a trace. Amid the Marsh, the ever-reliable Far Horizon makes a swift retreat from Rostov, the Jarzoni Knight of Purity, desperately making for Mistwold.

However, the boat is beset with trouble. The swamp itself has risen up in anger against the use of Arcana to shape a passage through the tangle. Alysha is thrown overboard and just manages to make it back onto the boat with the help of the others. Whilst this occurs, Rostov's men in a small boat tie themselves alongside the Far Horizon and board her. Things look desperate indeed.

**Connor:** On the main deck stands Connor facing the leader of the boarding party. Connor holds his sword out ready and, in a steely tone, requests that the attackers "surrender or die". **[Player to describe Connor here].**

**Alysha:** Covered in mud, Alysha moves to stand back to back with Connor. She holds another soldier at bay that has his sword out ready to attack. Her cloak opens to reveal her resplendent engraved breastplate. The soldier looks at her with rage and caution of Alysha's station. **[Player to describe Alysha here].**

**Ronan:** Above the main deck on the deck house roof, Ronan makes himself conspicuous to stand defiant. A soldier fearfully approaches him, dreading the idea of fighting this hulk of a man. **[Player to describe Ronan here].**

**Song:** At the back of the boat, things are more desperate. A soldier with an axe has taken a few swings at the rudder. He is viciously dragged off by Song, a large grey wolf, who holds his leg in his jaw. **[Player to describe Song here].**

**Palin:** Another soldier looks on, sneering at the "bewitched" wolf and preparing to assist his companion. However, he is interceded by Palin. Though Palin is unassuming, the soldier's eyes hold a mixture of respect and disdain for the priest. **[Player to describe Palin here].**

**Mara:** Frightened by the Marsh's reaction to her Arcana, Mara flees into the deckhouse. However, she is now cornered by a leering soldier who has entered the deckhouse. He approaches her and says: "Now, now girly. If you accept your punishment, you will be absolved of all your sins." **[Player to describe Mara here].**



### **Handout Five: Vasilisa's Plans**

Memories that are not your own flood your mind. Memories of a woman who subtly possessed and manipulated you. Her name is Vasalisa. She was the frog you carried. Your mission was all a lie; falsely created memories to have you carry the creature to Ivan in Mistwold where she now hopes to achieve something monstrous.

You can also feel Vasalisa's own memories mixed with your own. Vasalisa was a Vata'sha who grew up in Jarzon. Her natural aptitude for Arcana meant she was persecuted. All she loved was taken from her by Jarzoni Knights of Purity. She learned to survive at all costs and eventually escaped into the Veran Marsh.

Whilst there, she came to the jealous attention of Koshchei, a powerful yet twisted aberration of the swamp. It was he who shaped her flesh into that of an ugly frog, hoping the repulsive form would prevent her from being able to use her powers of Suggestion on others. She now believes that the death of Koschei will restore her to her old body.

After years of misery, she eventually developed her Suggestions so they could be transmitted by Mind Touch. She used the ailing sanity of the then Lord of Mistwold to ingratiate herself with his youngest and most gullible son, Ivan who, as turned out, was also able to summon infernal Darkfiends. Seducing him by possessing several young maids, she rid soon herself of the old Lord and prepared to have Ivan summon a Darkfiend, a being capable of killing Koshchei.

However, Ivan proved incompetent; driven to distraction with desire. On the night of the coronation feast, Ivan had his drunken brother Olav try and destroy her frog body, hoping that it would somehow bind her forever into the body of the lovely maids she possessed. It didn't. Instead, Vasalisa was beaten unconscious. Her mental anguish drove Olav completely insane and, out of guilty and failure, he then buried her body deep in the Veran Marsh.

However, she resurfaced thanks to the help of Mara's Arcana. She surfaced near you whilst you were in the water and mentally dominated you into unwittingly carrying out plan. Vasalisa is now bitterly frustrated with Ivan, even more so than Koshchei. She is filled with a homicidal rage. Though she still wishes to kill Koshchei, she has added another element to her plan – an element that she believes will destroy Ivan, his village and the entire swamp.

### **Handout Six: Song's Vision**

You stand in the mists of destiny and dream. You sit on a mound. Something is wrong. You should know what it is, but you can't seem to focus.

Distracted by this nagging doubt, you almost fail to see the snake's head rising behind you. Only then do you realise that the mound you stand on is a giant coiled snake. Rather than striking at you, you find yourself sinking into the coils and your life begins to be crushed out of you.

You desperately look for a way to escape and suddenly you see a sharp knife of bleached bone. You plunges it into the snake and it shrieks. There is a surge of muscle and your vision blackens.

### **Handout Seven: Dreams and Nightmares**

Dreams do not come easily tonight. Visions of fire and the flash of steel of your pursuers plague you. You hear the voices of the Knights of Purity preaching at you, wanting to punish you.

All you can think of is fear and death. Everything you love and have come to cherish dies before you. You plead for help but none comes. All you get is more pain for your trouble and so you stop your pleading.

Your impotent rage twists inside you. You want to lash out and survive. The very desire is the only light you see. You feed it until it becomes an inferno. They have no right. Everyone is against you. They all want to hurt you. They must all die.

# ALYSHA JARLANE

**A**lysha is the great, great granddaughter of Queen Fashi the Restorer. Alysha has received the best education, money and nobility could buy. She had the honour of being the second youngest person to become a travelling noble. However, she gave up that life to get closer to the centre of the action as one of the Queen's elite Rose Knights. It was shortly after her first mission that she met her faithful companion and friend Song, a Rhy-Wolf. She believes that Aldis is the shining light that holds the darkness at bay. Alysha is a confident, spirited yet humble woman. She is responsible for retrieving the prophet Palin from Jarzon. Though courageous, she is no fool. She knows that she needs someone capable to assist her and she finds that capability in Connor and his crew.

---

**STR:** -      **DEX:** +1      **CON:** -      **INT:** +2      **WIS:** +1      **CHA:** +2  
**REF:** +4      **FORT:** +3      **WILL:** +4

---

**SKILLS:** Concentration +8, Diplomacy +9, Gather Information +9, Handle Animal +9, Knowledge (History & Nobility) +9, Notice +8, Sense Motive +8, Ride +8.

---

## ADVANTAGES:

**Arcanum:** Cure +9. Heal herself and others.

**Favours:** Use Diplomacy to call in favours from people she knows.

**Inspire:** Inspire people and grant either a +2 to any Skill a +1 to Attack, Damage and Will.

**Mounted Combat:** No penalty for fighting on horseback.

---

## COMBAT:

**Attack:** +3 (Rapier)

**Damage:** +2

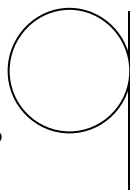
**Defence:** +9 (Breastplate)

**Toughness:** +3

---

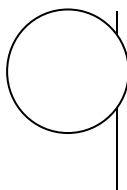
**Hurt:**

Each Hurt imposes -1 to Toughness.



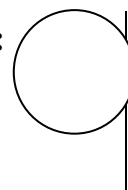
**Wounded:**

-2 to all actions.



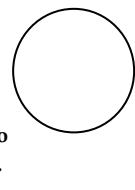
**Disabled:**

No actions and move at half speed.



**Dying:**

Must roll each round to avoid Dying.



**ROLE:**

Alysha is the hero. She recognises Connor’s ability to lead in this situation and is wise enough not to challenge it. However, the group looks to her for courage and inspiration. Her role is to show the others the right and most successful course of action. She is the living embodiment of Aldis.

-----

**MOTIVATION:**

Since she first met Connor, her feelings for him have grown. He is not the kind of person she expects to have affection for, but beneath his gruff exterior is a man of quality and virtue. If he could just be shown the worth of Aldis, he could become a valuable ally and companion.

The mission at hand occupies Alysha’s mind and she is optimistic of success. However, she is not too busy to help others, inside or outside of the group, should the opportunity present itself.

-----

**OTHER PCs:**

**Connor:** Connor is an intriguing man. He is uncompromising and has true strength. His skills are the one thing that has kept everyone alive so far. However, he is conflicted and his strength seems diverted away from his true loyalty to Aldis.

**Palin:** Palin is a wonderful man. Alysha often seeks his wisdom before making a final decision. She would do anything to stop him falling back into Jarzoni hands.

**Song:** Song is Alysha’s brother. He is her constant guardian and friend and she is not sure what she would do without him. He can be a little too protective at times but she knows he puts her safety before all else.

**Mara:** Mara is a test to Alysha’s “Aldan tolerance”. Mara is obviously gifted in Arcana and trusted by Connor. However, Alysha can’t help but feel that Mara’s is somehow “affected” by a troubled past, made worse by her use of Arcana.

**Ronan:** Alysha has had little to do with Ronan. Despite their differences, Connor and Song actually seem to working together to keep Ronan away from her. He seems a fun loving fellow, if a little primal, unpredictable and enthusiastic for bloodshed.

# CONNOR RAYNE

Connor grew up in a community of refugees fleeing from religious persecution in Jarzon, who reside just west of the Veran Marsh in Aldis. Though he appreciates the good intentions of Aldis, who fostered his community, he considers them naïve. To preserve freedom, action is needed.

Connor joined the Sovereign's Finest to make a difference. He appreciated their goals but quickly became disillusioned with their methods. Connor eventually returned to his home to continue his own private war against Jarzon.

He knows the Veran Marsh and the Jarzoni like few others in the Sovereign's Finest. However, his reputation of being fiercely independent and difficult means that he is rarely called to provide aid. Connor is a ruggedly attractive man in his early thirties. He has an honest intensity and values loyalty and freedom above all else.

---

**STR:** -      **DEX:** -      **CON:** +1      **INT:** +1      **WIS:** +2      **CHA:** +2  
**REF:** +2      **FORT:** +7      **WILL:** +6

---

**SKILLS:** Bluff +10, Handle Animal +10, Intimidate +10, Notice +10, Sense Motive +10, Sneak +8, Survival +10, Swim +8.

---

## ADVANTAGES:

**Diehard:** Always stabilises to disabled when dying.

**Improve Demoralise:** Intimidate a target in combat to impose a -2 penalty.

**Improvised Tools:** Never suffers a penalty for not having proper tools.

**Track:** Use Survival to track.

**Wild Empathy:** Use Handle Animal to interact with animals.

---

## COMBAT:

**Attack:** +4 (Longsword)

**Damage:** +3

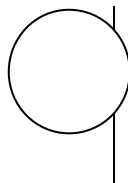
**Defence:** +6 (Leather)

**Toughness:** +5

---

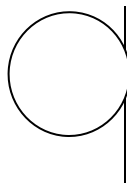
### Hurt

Each Hurt imposes -1 to Toughness.



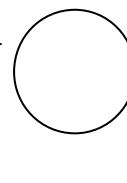
### Wounded

-2 to all actions.



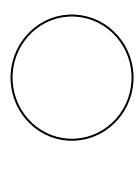
### Disabled

No actions and move at half speed.



### Dying

Must roll each round to avoid Dying.



**ROLE:**

Connor is the leader. The group is his responsibility and he will not fail or abandon its members. He is also prepared to make the hard decisions when they need to be made, as Aldans tend to be unable to do so despite the best of intentions.

---

**MOTIVATION:**

Connor has fallen in love with Alysha, the Rose Knight. In many ways she is everything that he dislikes about Aldis but her beauty, conviction and spirit have begun to make him doubt his own opinion. He has decided to keep his feelings secret and focus on the job at hand. People could die if he lets this whim distract him. His self-denial manifests by reinforcing his usual grumpy demeanour and his ire at those who question his orders or motives.

---

**OTHER PCs:**

**Alysha:** Alysha is a true gem of a woman. She is everything that Aldis tries to uphold. However, she is also infuriating as her very existence shows Connor the naivety of his own views of Aldis.

**Ronan:** Ronan is an old friend. Despite that, Connor doesn't fully trust him, knowing his opportunistic nature and his joy for rivalry. However, Ronan is reliable and enjoys himself in whatever he does.

**Mara:** Few people understand why Connor protects Mara the way he does. He sees her as a kindred spirit: someone of the "real world" beneath the lofty ideals. Her strange ways are merely scars that show her suffering.

**Palin:** Connor approves of Palin's views but sees him as just another example of idealism gone too far. However, since he is in Connor's protection, Connor will do so with his life. Hopefully, Palin is worth it.

**Song:** Song is a faithful companion to Alysha and Connor guesses that he is the most reliable person on this mission. However, Connor can't help feel a little jealous of the bond he shares with Alysha.

# PALIN MURAN

**A**ldar was born in Leogarth, the capital city of Jarzon. As a young child, he began to show his genius and piety. His teachers soon turned his talents toward the important things in life, such as theology and religion.

Palin had the respect of his elders, his family and peers. However, he soon began to suffer doubts. He became aware of a discrepancy in the teachings of the Church of Pure Light. Leonoth, the God of hard work, perseverance, faith and family was not the centre of the pantheon. His consort, Maurena, was actually a much older God who embodied summer, agriculture and family. Her correct place was either above or at the very least at the side of Leonoth.

These ideas caused Palin much strife. Soon, he and his followers had been taken into custody for heresy and things looked bleak. Suddenly, Palin was rescued by a group of Sovereign's Finest from Aldis. They offered religious freedom and Palin took it.

---

**STR:** -      **DEX:** -1      **CON:** -      **INT:** +3      **WIS:** +3      **CHA:** +1  
**REF:** -      **FORT:** +1      **WILL:** +11

---

**SKILLS:** Concentration +11, Diplomacy +9, Heal +11, Knowledge (Religion) +14, Knowledge (Local & History) +11, Notice +11, Perform +9, Sense Motive +11.

---

## ADVANTAGES:

**Favoured Foe:** +2 to Attack Darkfiends.

**Pure Hearted:** +4 to resist evil and Corruption.

**Purifying Light:** Wield pure light as a weapon (damage +3) or ward against aberrations, darkfiends, shadowspawn & unliving.

---

## COMBAT:

**Attack:** +3 (Staff)

**Damage:** +2

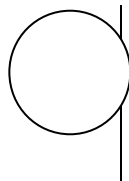
**Defence:** +4 (None)

**Toughness:** +3

---

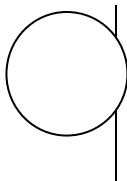
**Hurt:**

Each Hurt imposes -1 to Toughness.



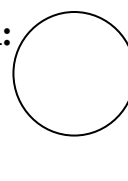
**Wounded:**

-2 to all actions.



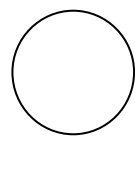
**Disabled:**

No actions and move at half speed.



**Dying:**

Must roll each round to avoid Dying.



## **ROLE:**

Palin is the soul. Though an outsider, he is the reason the group is together. Palin is grateful of what the group is doing for him. However, he is always vigilant that they don't move into Shadow.

---

## **MOTIVATION:**

Though Palin has been rescued from the Church of Pure Light, he is not sure whether he has jumped out of the fire and into the frying pan. As he is unsure of his own path, he does not wish to preach to the group, like Jarzoni priests tend to do. Instead, he sees the group as his new flock and he must be ready and open to any moral dilemmas they have. If he sees someone straying too far, he will help them and even enlist the aid of others in the group when doing so.

He is a little unsure and suspicious of why Aldis has taken the effort to rescue him. He doesn't want to see his talents misused for some nefarious purpose.

---

## **OTHER PCs:**

**Alysha:** Alysha is a marvellous woman. She is receptive and respectful. However, her zealousness is reminiscent of the Knights of Pure Light of Jarzoni. If aimed in the wrong direction, it could be a force for evil.

**Connor:** As a Jarzoni refugee and a man of great calibre, Palin thinks highly of Connor. However, he seems plagued with doubts and Palin knows he could help him if only he could get him to open up.

**Song:** Palin is finding it difficult to deal with Song. Jarzon does not accept their kind but they would seem closer to Maurena. Palin hopes to speak more to Song to understand just what he is and what his religious views are.

**Ronan:** Palin doesn't like Ronan. He is a bully. However, he is clearly from a people who highly respect Maurena. Palin feels the need to strongly guide this one to a more pious frame of mind.

**Mara:** Mara is the one person on the boat that Palin does not get on with. Not only does she wield Arcana but she is also a Roamer and unstable. She is a disaster waiting to happen and Palin is prepared to deal with her, if required.



# MARA SELKA

**M**ara was born a Roamer. Roamers love dance, music and the open road. They are expert traders and know a number of ways to convince others out of their coins. Mara vaguely remembers her early life being full of colour and joy.

It was at the age of five that her caravan was attacked by Knights of the Skull, servants of Jarek, the Lich King of Kern. Mara and the rest of her family were made slaves and forced to cross the Ice-Binder Mountains. There they worked as miners. The work was so terrible that few survived. Mara managed to survive thanks to her Arcane abilities.

On returning to Aldis, Mara was a lost soul. She took many years to adjust. Whilst causing trouble, she came across Connor who had been sent to investigate her actions. Rather than being harsh handed with her, he seemed genuinely willing to help.

Mara is a swarthy young woman. She is very private and does not handle social situations well.

---

**STR:** -1      **DEX:** +3      **CON:** +1      **INT:** +2      **WIS:** +2      **CHA:** -1  
**REF:** +3      **FORT:** +1      **WILL:** +5

---

**SKILLS:** Escape Artist +8, Sleight of Hand +8, Sneak +8, Survival +7.

---

## ADVANTAGES:

**Arcana:** Earth Shaping +7. Move, soften, craft and shake earth.

**Arcana:** Plant Shaping +7. Heal, grow and craft plants.

**Arcana:** Water Shaping +7. Lower, raise, shape and splash water.

**Arcana:** Wind Shaping +7. Direct and change speed of wind.

---

## COMBAT:

**Attack:** - (Dagger)

**Damage:** -

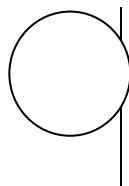
**Defence:** +8 (None)

**Toughness:** +2

---

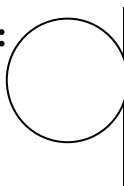
**Hurt:**

Each Hurt imposes -1 to Toughness.



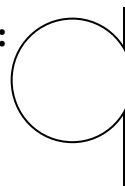
**Wounded:**

-2 to all actions.



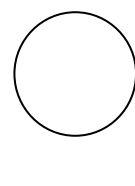
**Disabled:**

No actions and move at half speed.



**Dying:**

Must roll each round to avoid Dying.



**ROLE:**

Mara is the child. Though she does not act in a childish manner, she is very much the innocent. Having been wronged, she shows the others what their failure may entail. She is also capricious and her power can make others uncomfortable.

-----

**MOTIVATION:**

Mara wants a sense of family. Connor has provided her some of that and she sees him as her father. She enjoys being near the others in the group but suffers flashes of jealousy when they occupy Connor's time. Though Mara likes to be the centre of attention, she is never sure how to go about doing so. Her attempts are normally over-powering and downright scary.

Mara takes comfort in her Arcana. The natural world is her friend and her Arcana allow her to interact with it. She resists any attempt to restrain her Arcana or to make it a bad thing. Mara is concerned about Veran Marsh. It resists and even protests against her Arcana. She only uses its full power when she needs to, as otherwise everyone may suffer.

-----

**OTHER PCs:**

**Connor:** Connor is a mixture of Mara's father and her immature infatuation. Mara respects what he does and says and is only willing to fight because he says so.

**Ronan:** Mara is drawn to Ronan's wild nature and sense of fun. He reminds her of her old family. She doesn't trust him but Connor has accepted him, so she has as well.

**Alysha:** For all her nice words, no Rose Knight every rescued Mara's family from Kern. She seems like a nice person and Mara is somewhat intimidated by her social confidence.

**Song:** Mara wants to like Song. However, when he looks at Mara he seems to look directly into her soul and this unnerves Mara. She mostly keeps her distance.

**Palin:** Palin seems like a nice person. However, she doesn't care much for him and ignores what he says most of the time.

# SONG

**S**ong was considered to special by his pack mates ever since he was a pup. He seemed to have a nose for knowing things other didn't. In particular, he could see the mark of destiny on people.

Song met Alysha in the Pavin Weald, on her first mission as a Rose Knight – naïve and brash yet powerful. She had a long way to go but Song knew that one day she would make a difference. Song immediately knew that it was his responsibility to make sure that she would become the woman he saw. He let nothing come in the way of this destiny.

Song is now the bonded companion of Alysha. Her current mission is a dangerous one. However, thanks to some carefully chosen Sovereign's Finest it looks like things may turn out fine. However, Song cannot shake the pessimistic feeling that there will be a price for this success.

---

**STR:** +1      **DEX:** +2      **CON:** +2      **INT:** -      **WIS:** +3      **CHA:** +1  
**REF:** +5      **FORT:** +3      **WILL:** +9

---

**SKILLS:** Intimidate +13, Notice +9, Perform +7, Sense Motive +11.

---

## ADVANTAGES:

**Arcana:** Mind Touch +6: Contact another's mind.

**Arcana:** Visions +8: See visions of the future.

**Fascinate:** Use Perform to fascinate people.

---

## COMBAT:

**Attack:** +2 (Bite)

**Damage:** +3 (Surprise Attack: -1 Str & Trip)

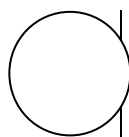
**Defence:** +4 (None)

**Toughness:** +3

---

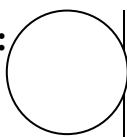
**Hurt:**

Each Hurt imposes -1 to Toughness.



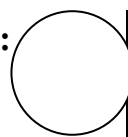
**Wounded:**

-2 to all actions.



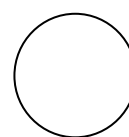
**Disabled:**

No actions and move at half speed.



**Dying:**

Must roll each round to avoid Dying.



## **ROLE:**

Song is the guardian. He looks out for all the other members in the group. Song is pessimistic in nature and sees this role more as cleaning up after the mess the “two legs” make, rather than leading them to safer paths.

---

## **MOTIVATION:**

Song believes it is his destiny to ensure that Alysha reaches hers. Song is worldly wise enough to realise that destiny can work in mysterious ways. As such, he tends to be suspicious of anyone he and Alysha encounter, without stopping her doing whatever she wants to do. In the group, Ronan is the most outwardly dangerous due to his unpredictability. However, Connor also smells like trouble.

---

## **OTHER PCs:**

**Alysha:** Alysha is the soul of the heroes of Old Kingdom. If Aldis is to regain its former status and glory, it will need people like Alysha. Deep down you harbour resentment that her destiny has meant your own path has been sacrificed. However, you know your place and bury this deep down, channelling it into your pessimism.

**Connor:** Connor is a man of skill and competence. However, he is also a flawed man. He has wounds that run deep that will cause problems before they heal. Alysha has taken a secret shine to him and Song needs to be cautious.

**Palin:** Palin is one of those conundrums. His existence has put Alysha in danger. However, he has also allowed Alysha to grow in experience and stature. As always, Song is reluctant to interfere but he is not prepared to see Alysha die for this man.

**Ronan:** As an animal of the wild, Song recognises one of his own. Ronan is a strong man with good intentions. However, Ronan’s survival instincts are strong and he will take all the opportunities that are presented to him.

**Mara:** As an outcast of his own pack, Song has sympathy for Mara. However, he is also jealous of her as she has found a new place in which she is happy. She is very much a loose canon in need of a guiding hand or paw.

# RONAN HEATH

**R**onan was born in Rezea, a land to the west of Aldis. It is known for its wild prairies, horses and wandering tribes. Ronan was taught to be a hunter from a young age and in this role he excelled. However, this did not prepare him for the attack on his people by the dark twisted men from the north.

Ronan has since come to know that there is evil in the world. However, rather than defend against it or be victim to it, he hunts it. In order to do so, he needs to understand it and become like it. He walks on a knife blade between the two worlds.

Ronan became one of the Sovereign's Finest at the request of Connor, a man he greatly respects. Since then he has done much good. However, he does not rest and remains ready to seize whatever opportunities present themselves.

---

<b>STR:</b> +3	<b>DEX:</b> +1	<b>CON:</b> +3	<b>INT:</b> -	<b>WIS:</b> -1	<b>CHA:</b> -
	<b>REF:</b> +1	<b>FORT:</b> +6		<b>WILL:</b> -1	

---

**SKILLS:** Climb +8, Jump +8, Ride +6, Survival +4.

---

## ADVANTAGES:

**Rage:** Rage to gain +2 Attack, Damage, Fort. and Will but -2 Defence. Afterwards, Ronan is suffers fatigue (-1 to all rolls).

---

## COMBAT:

**Attack:** +5 (Longspear)

**Damage:** +6

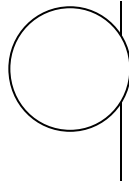
**Defence:** +7 (Hide)

**Toughness:** +6

---

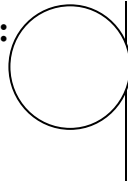
**Hurt:**

Each Hurt imposes -1 to Toughness.



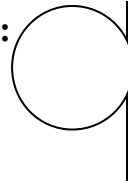
**Wounded:**

-2 to all actions.



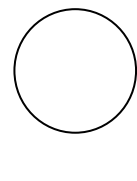
**Disabled:**

No actions and move at half speed.



**Dying:**

Must roll each round to avoid Dying.



**ROLE:**

Ronan is the warrior. However, he is also a force for change. He is there to keep everyone on their toes and doing their best. He is dangerous yet full of joy and humour.

---

**MOTIVATION:**

Ronan respects Connor because he knows he also uses his “Shadow” to make himself stronger. If Connor ever shows weakness then it is Ronan’s duty to make sure that Connor is taught the consequences of that weakness.

Ronan is suspicious of Alysha and her influence on Connor. However, he is aware that Song is watching him closely. Ronan is looking forward to this careful game of cat and mouse. Finally, though Ronan does not trust Mara, he does know that she is a potential tool and diversion, should the need arise.

---

**OTHER PCs:**

**Connor:** Connor is Ronan’s leader and he is both capable and down to earth. With him, Ronan has done much good to fight back the evil. However, he senses Connor’s doubts and he is concerned they will weaken Connor’s resolve.

**Mara:** Mara is an example of Connor’s willingness to dip into the darkness for weapons. Mara is a crazy Roamer but she is powerful. Ronan would not want to be on the wrong side of her but he is happy to manipulate her to his own ends.

**Song:** Song is dangerous but Ronan is confident that he is not a physical threat. Ronan must be wary of Song but not get distracted trying to outwit him.

**Alysha:** Though full of good intentions, her unrealistic methods mean that she is dangerous to those around her. Ronan did not sign up to do the likes of Alysha’s bidding.

**Palin:** Palin is trying to fight back the night but he fails to do so. What’s more he is endangering other fellow warriors by being unable to look after himself.

