
THE MIDNIGHT GAZETTE

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BY KELFECIL'S TALES

The streets of dark Isenia whisper...

*The city falls silent as the undercity screams with
the anguish of those who still breathe.*

Isenia is a city where mud clings like memory and silence weighs more than stone. Its streets sink into the marsh even as its towers reach skyward, and every ward bears scars of rituals meant to bind what should never rise again. Lanterns burn with unease, graves rattle in their cages, and the faithful whisper prayers not of hope but of endurance. To walk Isenia is to tread on a threshold between the living and the remembered, where each shadow might belong to a soul that refuses to sleep.



A DARK LIKE NO OTHER BEHOLDS THE TOWN OF ISENIA. THE CITY MOVES IN WHISPERS

THE BELLS OF THE TRI-CATHEDRAL NEVER RING THE SAME TONE TWICE,
YET PRIESTS INSIST THE NOTES FORM A HIDDEN HYMN.

WELCOME TO THE MIDNIGHT GAZETTE

The Midnight Gazette is an original content line by **Kelfecil's Tales**, guiding readers through the hidden corners of the *Starlight Chronicles* setting.

Made in collaboration with Tactical Maps.

Each issue explores a different city or settlement, blending atmospheric storytelling with compelling encounters, narrative hooks, and vivid worldbuilding, all delivered through the ink-stained eyes of traveling chronicler Tiberius Orzo.

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-TRUTH BEYOND THE TORCHLIGHT-

AN INTRODUCTION TO ISENIA

I write these words with ink that refuses to dry, as if the city itself wishes to keep my quill damp. Isenia is not a city one visits, it is a city that takes you, holds you down in its mud, and whispers in your ear until you learn to listen. The bells here do not call the faithful, they toll like warnings. Each peal lingers in the fog, carrying a weight of remembrance and threat. I swear the mist itself listens, and it does not forget.

My first steps into the Undercity left me with the taste of mildew on my tongue and the stare of a hundred unseen eyes pressing against my back. Its alleys twist too tightly, the shadows too thick, as if the streets themselves were designed to close in on intruders. Higher up, the Gold Ward glitters faintly, yet even there, laughter feels desperate, like the drowning who sing before the water fills their lungs. And northward, where the Bone Ward sprawls in endless graves, the ground hums with the restless dead. I stood among cages fixed over tombs and felt the bars tremble, not from wind, but from within.

Do not mistake me: Isenia is alive. Its heart beats in defiance of the swamp that yearns to reclaim it. But that heartbeat is irregular, fevered, and close to failing. The priests speak of stars, but their prayers fall into catacombs that breathe heavier than any living congregation. If you come here, come knowing that you will leave marked. Perhaps by mud on your boots. Perhaps by a scar that will not close. Or perhaps by the memory of a bell tolling your name when no one else dared to speak it.

Compiled, scribed, and cross-inked by
Tiberius Orzo, Traveling Chronicler
of Latakar



WINDOWS IN ABANDONED HOUSES ARE FOUND OPEN EACH DAWN, NO MATTER HOW MANY TIMES THEY ARE BARRED SHUT AT NIGHT.

From the Journal of Tiberius Orzo

CITYSCAPE OVERVIEW

WHEN RAIN FALLS IN ISENIA, IT SMELLS FAINTLY OF INCENSE, THOUGH NO ONE AGREES ON WHAT PRAYER IT RECALLS.

A NEW PLACE A FEW WORDS

The first glimpse of Isenia is less an arrival than an intrusion. A city raised on a muddy mound, hemmed in by swamp and decay, it rises like a carcass too stubborn to sink. Its three cathedrals claw at the clouds, their bells tolling through mist that never fully lifts. The outer palisades lean like gravestones, their wood dark with mildew, their stones veined with cracks where moss festers. The very air clings damp to the skin, heavy with rot and incense smoke, as if the city itself exhales a slow, choking breath.

Every ward of Isenia is walled not just against what prowls outside, but against each other. The Undercity crouches at the city's base, streets drowned in mildew and hunger, its crooked towers leaning together like conspirators. Gold Ward struts higher on the hill, its nobles wading through endless revelry to forget the fog pressing in.

Bone Ward lies open to the swamp, a cemetery vast as a kingdom, where cages over graves rattle when the wind moans through. At the peak stands Star Ward, its three cathedrals radiant in form yet dark in heart, each window lit with color that bleeds more shadow than light.

The city's foundations are older still, remnants of a greater civilization swallowed in the Astral Conflict. Its ruins form the veins beneath Isenia's streets: sewers large enough to swallow caravans, catacombs that echo with remembered screams, crypts where the walls seem to breathe. These depths remind the living that the soil itself is cursed, steeped in magic and marrow. In Isenia, walls are not built to protect, but to delay the inevitable.

This is no city of safety. It is a place where even the stones rot, where the poor burn their dead in shallow pits, where the wealthy cage corpses like dangerous beasts, and where the living walk each day with the certainty that the earth beneath them remembers.

CITY SCENARIO OPTIONS

MARKET STALLS IN GOLD WARD DISPLAY FRUIT THAT ROTS THE MOMENT
IT IS SLICED, YET NOBLES STILL DEVOUR IT WITH TREMBLING HANDS.

SCENES OPPORTUNITIES FOR EVERY ADVENTURER

SCENARIO 1: THE BELL THAT WOULD NOT STILL

A cathedral bell begins to toll at midnight, though no hand touches its rope. Its sound spreads through Star Ward, rattling windows and stirring dread in the streets.

- **Setup:** The bells toll without cause, drawing fearful crowds who whisper that the dead are restless.
- **Encounter:** A half-buried ghoul awakens clutching a reliquary and claws its way from the crypt floor. The fight spreads through pews and shattered stained glass.
- **Complication/Reward:** The reliquary may hold a forbidden blessing, but accepting it invites whispers that will not fade.



LANTERNS BURN DIMMER NEAR THE BONE WARD, AS THOUGH SHADOWS THERE
DRINK MORE GREEDILY THAN ELSEWHERE.

SCENARIO 2: LANTERNS IN THE MARSH

Workers vanish from the fields when strange lantern lights appear deep within the Marsh of Sorrow. The swamp is said to hunger for voices to add to its silence.

- **Setup:** The lights sway like processions, calling those who watch too long to follow.
- **Exploration:** Players must navigate sinking bogs, rotting planks, and half-submerged shrines to find the source.
- **Complication/Reward:** The lanterns lead to a half-flooded altar where swamp witches conduct a rite. Intervening may rescue captives but risks being bound into the ritual.

SCENARIO 3: THE BEETLE’S MARK

A black beetle with crimson-dotted wings is discovered in a merchant’s purse, a sign left by the Nicrophorus. It means the eyes of the Undercity are upon them.

- **Setup:** The insect is more than a message, it is a summons.
- **Social Challenge:** The party must bargain with sewer-dwelling gangs of children who demand secrets instead of coin.
- **Complication/Reward:** Success earns access to forbidden tunnels under Isenia, while failure brands the players with a mark the Guard will not ignore.

SCENARIO 4: PROCESSION OF ASH

In Bone Ward, a line of mourners drifts through the mist. Each carries a mask of bone, hollow-eyed and cracked, instead of any coffin or urn.

- **Setup:** The masks glow faintly from within, and whispers echo though no mouths move.
- **Exploration:** Joining the procession leads through crumbling mausoleums where cages tremble over fresh graves.
- **Complication/Reward:** Those who walk with the mourners see visions of Isenia’s forgotten dead. The knowledge they offer is useful, but such visions rarely depart willingly.

SCENARIO 5: FEAST IN GOLD WARD

A noble house invites strangers to a midnight banquet, where wine flows black and laughter grows wild. Behind every smile waits the scent of rot.

- **Setup:** The revelry seems desperate, nobles dancing as though time were short.
- **Social Encounter:** The players may choose to play along, questioning their hosts in whispers, or test their strength against nobles who reveal their ghastly nature mid-feast.
- **Complication/Reward:** Exposing the truth grants political leverage, though survival depends on silencing every witness.

GM Notes: These scenarios are meant to flavor the rhythm of life in Isenia. They highlight themes of decay, silence, spiritual unrest, and the burden of memory. Each encounter can stand alone, or together they form a path deeper into the city’s wards, revealing how close Isenia always drifts toward collapse.

The Song Beneath the Bells

*THOSE WHO HUM THE TUNE
FIND THEIR DREAMS INVADED...*

Priests of the Star Ward speak quietly of a hymn no longer sung. Its verses were struck from the cathedral records, its melody forbidden. Yet some nights, when the fog lies heavy, a faint echo of the hymn drifts through the bells. Listeners claim the sound is not carried by air, but by bone. Those who hum the tune afterward find their dreams invaded by choirs of faceless singers.

The hymn has earned many names: the Grave Canticle, the Silent Psalm, the Burial Song of Stars. Some believe it was written to bind something beneath the city, others that it was the final lullaby of a choir swallowed whole by the catacombs.

The last priest to follow the sound was discovered kneeling before a cracked altar, ears bleeding, mouth sewn shut with reeds. Across the stone he had scrawled a single line: “The city sings for its own burial.”

Now, when the bells toll off-key, citizens glance at one another in silence, each wondering if the song has begun again, and if this time it will not stop.

TIBERIUS HAS WALKED THESE STREETS.

VOICES IN THE CITY

Children in the Undercity play with beetles, daring each other to let them crawl into their ears.

SPOKEN SECRETS A NEED TO KNOW

EVERYDAY POWERS OF ISENIA

The Unwavering Houses

The ancient noble lines of Isenia remain bound to their ruined prestige. They clutch their power through rigid ceremonies and strict control of inheritance. Their halls are filled with revels and rot, where masks hide hunger for influence and necromancy is whispered as inheritance. They are proud, desperate, and often blind to the decay pressing in from the swamp.

The City Guard and Rangers

Once viewed as protectors, they now resemble gaolers. They keep wards penned in behind gates and patrol more against their own citizens than outside threats. The Rangers who linger near the Marsh of Sorrow speak little and return from patrols stained with blackened mud. Rumors whisper they sometimes guide the swamp’s creatures instead of hunting them.

The Keepers of Astral Mysteries

A brotherhood of priests and scholars who serve in the tri-cathedral of the Star Ward. They preach of the suns, moons, and stars, but their sermons bend closer to ritual bindings than to faith. Their vaults are sealed with runes that tremble when spoken aloud. To the faithful they offer guidance, but to the city they are a reminder that Isenia’s faith is chained to fear.

The Nicrophorus

A gang of children grown into a secret order of thieves. They leave beetle marks as warnings and summons. In the sewers and alleys they control passage, enforcing rules of their own making. The poor see them as guardians of secrets; the wealthy call them vermin. Few dare to speak their name too loudly in the Undercity.

The Extended

Criminals and heretics who fled death sentences in other cities find refuge in Isenia. Here they live in makeshift enclaves, offering services no one else will; flesh, poison, false prayers, and forbidden lore. They are tolerated only because their skills are necessary for the city’s survival.

Street Rumors (d8)

1. A masked priest was seen locking the cathedral doors from the outside and walking into the fog.
2. The Rangers return from the Marsh with fewer members each week.
3. A beetle crawled from a corpse’s eye socket in the Undercity market.
4. Nobles in the Gold Ward drink wine that congeals into blood when left standing.
5. Bone Ward graves tremble when bells toll at night.
6. A child claims to know a path into the Star Ward vaults.
7. Lanterns in the Marsh sing in voices that sound like drowned kin.
8. The Guard has begun sealing doors of entire streets, claiming “infestation.”

*“THE GRAVES HAVE STORIES
TO TELL THAT NO OTHER
GRAVEYARD IN LATAKAR CAN
EVEN COME CLOSE TO...”*

FACES YOU’LL MEET

Vadeck the Pale

Neutral Evil / Magistrate of the Undercity
(Use Noble stat block)

Vadeck rules portions of the Undercity with a mixture of fear and bureaucracy. His skin is drawn tight and bloodless, and he dresses in fine robes that never seem to stain despite the mud. He uses decrees as weapons, binding the poor with paper as much as chains. Those who serve him whisper that he keeps a ledger of names destined for the Bone Ward.

Sister Avarra

Lawful Neutral / Keeper of Astral Mysteries
(Use Priest stat block)

Sister Avarra tends the runic seals of the Star Ward vaults. Her devotion is iron, her voice sharp as the bells she rings at dawn and dusk. She is rumored to know the old prayers that keep the city’s foundations from cracking. Yet in private, she fears that the runes are failing, and the stars themselves are beginning to look away from Isenia.

-TRUTH BEYOND THE TORCHLIGHT-

Rettin of the Masks

Chaotic Neutral / Leader of the Nicrophorus
(Use Bandit Captain stat block)

Rettin was once a sewer rat, now he is a king of shadows. His mask, carved from beetle shell and bone, never leaves his face. He speaks through child runners and seldom shows himself, though his influence shapes every deal in the Undercity. Some say he knows passages into the catacombs that no priest or guard has dared to walk.

Lady Thereyne of House Callivor

Neutral Evil / Gold Ward Noble
(Use Mage stat block)

Lady Thereyne is a jewel among the Unwavering Houses, her smile polished and cold. She hosts feasts that taste of poison and sponsors hunts in the Marsh of Sorrow where few return. Her ambition is to bind the church and nobility together under her control. Whispers claim she drinks only from cups of black glass, and that her shadow sometimes moves before she does.

Garran the Ranger

Chaotic Good / Veteran of the Marsh
(Use Scout stat block)

Once a decorated protector, Garran now roams the edges of the Marsh of Sorrow. His cloak is ragged, his weapons rusted with swamp water, but his eyes are steady. He has lost comrades to things that should not have walked, and he carries guilt like a second blade. Garran is one of the few Rangers who still warns travelers rather than leading them to silence.

CITY IN MOTION

Isenia does not rest. Its streets swell with the sounds of bells, murmurs, and the restless shuffling of feet across mud-slick cobbles. Lanterns sputter against the damp, smoke drifting low as if afraid to rise. Markets teem with hungry eyes, not eager to buy but to survive, and alleys echo with whispers of debts and threats. Life here is lived in ritual and repetition, every act shadowed by decay, every joy tainted with the certainty of its end.

IN THE MARSH OF SORROW, REEDS BEND
AGAINST THE WIND, ALWAYS LEANING TOWARD
THE CITY LIKE SUPPLICANTS IN PRAYER.

Urban Sparks (d8)

1. A procession of priests passes, dragging chains that carve marks into the street.
2. A coffin breaks open in transit, and its occupant gasps before falling still.
3. A cloaked child slips a beetle into a player's pocket and vanishes into the crowd.
4. A lanternlight flickers green, then bursts, spilling sparks that hiss like whispers.
5. A noble's carriage wheels crush bones beneath the mud, though no burial ground lies nearby.
6. A Ranger staggers into the square, muttering that the swamp "knows their names."
7. A funeral bell tolls though no funeral is underway.
8. Merchants argue over spoiled food that rots the moment it is touched.

LINKED TROUBLE ARC:
"THE SILENT PROCESSION"

Stage 1: The Shattered Homes

One by one, entire streets in the Undercity are found sealed, the doors barred from the outside by the Guard. Families cry from the windows, begging to be released.

- **Skill Check:** Persuasion or Intimidation (DC 14) to confront the Guard and learn why the streets are quarantined.
- **Consequence:** The party earns suspicion from the authorities, making movement through the wards more difficult.

Stage 2: The Stirring Below

At night, muffled chanting echoes from beneath the sealed homes. Lanterns gutter and beetle marks appear on the walls. The Nicrophorus insist the Guard is hiding something foul.

- **Optional Encounter:** Shadows seep through the cobblestones (use Shadow stat blocks) and assault anyone attempting to unseal a door.
- **Clue:** Survivors whisper that the chanting repeats a phrase: "The swamp keeps what it takes."

Stage 3: The Procession of the Bound

The doors burst open. Families emerge, gaunt and barefoot, eyes glazed and mouths sewn shut with swamp reeds. They walk silently toward the Bone Ward.

- **Encounter:** Treat as a mass of Wights guided by a priestly figure wrapped in funeral cloth.
- **Resolution:** The party can fight to break the ritual, attempt to cut the reeds to restore voices, or follow the procession to uncover who orchestrates the binding.



-TRUTH BEYOND THE TORCHLIGHT-

SCENE STARTERS (D6)

1. A crowd gathers at the gates of the Gold Ward, demanding release of imprisoned kin.
2. A child runs through the streets screaming that their parents are buried alive.
3. A rainstorm floods the Undercity, carrying bones through the gutters.
4. A priest collapses mid-sermon, his blood forming runes on the floor.
5. A Ranger begs the players to accompany them on one last patrol into the Marsh.
6. A masked noble invites the party to a feast, their voice trembling with both fear and hunger.

ENCOUNTERS & CHALLENGES

Lorveil does not provoke conflict directly. Instead, it lures the curious toward consequences. Its challenges are best approached with care, humility, and sharp perception. Use the following encounters as story pivots, arc escalators, or moments of reckoning when players reach too far or dig too deep.

Combat Encounter: The Bone Ward Awakens

In the Bone Ward, cages rattle above fresh graves as a midnight fog rolls in. The ground trembles, and skeletal arms claw through the mud, dragging rusted chains with them.

- **Setup:** The party stumbles into a section of the cemetery where lanterns have gone out, only to find graves breaking open.
- **Mechanics:** Treat as x4 Skeletons and x2 Shadows rising together. The fog grants partial cover, and characters must succeed on a DC 13 Perception check at the start of each turn to avoid disadvantage on ranged attacks.
- **Twist/Complication:** The battle stirs a caged corpse that reveals itself as a Wight, breaking free mid-combat to command the dead.
- **Resolution:** Victory clears the ward for now, but the cages remain restless, hinting at something deeper below.

Skill Challenge: The Flooded Catacombs

A section of the Undercity catacombs has collapsed into the sewers, filling with black water that carries bones from the Marsh of Sorrow.

- **Setup:** The party must navigate this half-flooded ruin to rescue trapped survivors.
- **Mechanics:** A group skill challenge requiring 6 successes before 3 failures. Athletics (DC 14) to swim or drag others through currents, Perception (DC 13) to spot stable footing, Religion (DC 15) to ward off grasping spirits, or Survival (DC 14) to chart a safe path.
- **Twist/Complication:** Failures summon a swarm of Quippers and force a DC 15 Constitution save against disease from the tainted water.
- **Resolution:** If successful, the survivors provide rumors of a sealed vault; if failed, the waters claim more lives and the party risks infection.

STORIES FROM THE STREETS

WEAVER IN THE MARSH

THE WEAVER IS SAID TO BE OLDER THAN ISENIA ITSELF.

Fishermen whisper of an old woman who sits on a reed raft deep within the Marsh of Sorrow. She spins strands of swamp grass into thread finer than silk, her fingers dripping with black water. Those who find her may ask for a garment woven from their own memories, but the price is steep: she takes a memory of joy for every thread she weaves. Some who return from her raft wear cloaks that shield them from sight, yet their eyes are hollow, emptied of warmth.

The Weaver is said to be older than Isenia itself, binding grief into fabric so the swamp will never forget. Travelers tell of meeting her on nights when the mist is thickest, her raft drifting soundlessly toward them as if summoned. She asks no questions, only begins to weave, humming a tune that drowns out the croaks of frogs and the cries of marsh birds. Those who refuse her gift claim she smiles with teeth of reed and mud before vanishing into the fog. Some say the Weaver once crafted the funeral shrouds of the Unwavering Houses, and that she remembers every face she ever clothed, long after their bones have sunk beneath the mire.

Roleplay Encounter: Feast of Masks

The party is invited to a clandestine gathering in Gold Ward where nobles don bone masks and dine on meals that bleed when cut.

- **Setup:** The feast is a test of loyalty, with each guest expected to pledge themselves to Lady Theryne’s cause.
- **Mechanics:** Persuasion or Deception (DC 15) to blend in, Insight (DC 14) to uncover which nobles are enthralled, or Performance (DC 13) to appease their hosts.
- **Twist/Complication:** Midway through the feast, one guest begins choking, revealing their body is already half-dead. Panic erupts as masks crack and true natures surface.
- **Resolution:** The party may gain Theryne’s favor, expose her plots, or end up hunted by her household depending on their choices.

ECHOES & THREADS

Isenia does not speak often, but when it does, its words last. These fragments of letters, messages, and quiet confessions have been gathered from chalkdust, saltblown steps, and tideworn pages. Let them flavor your session with secrets half-told and names almost remembered.

Letter 1: From a Widow in the Undercity

To whoever finds this: the Guard sealed our door three nights ago. My children sleep but their mouths bleed reeds. I hear bells from beneath the floorboards. If I do not answer when you knock, it is because the mud has already taken my voice.

Letter 2: Pinned to a Lantern Post

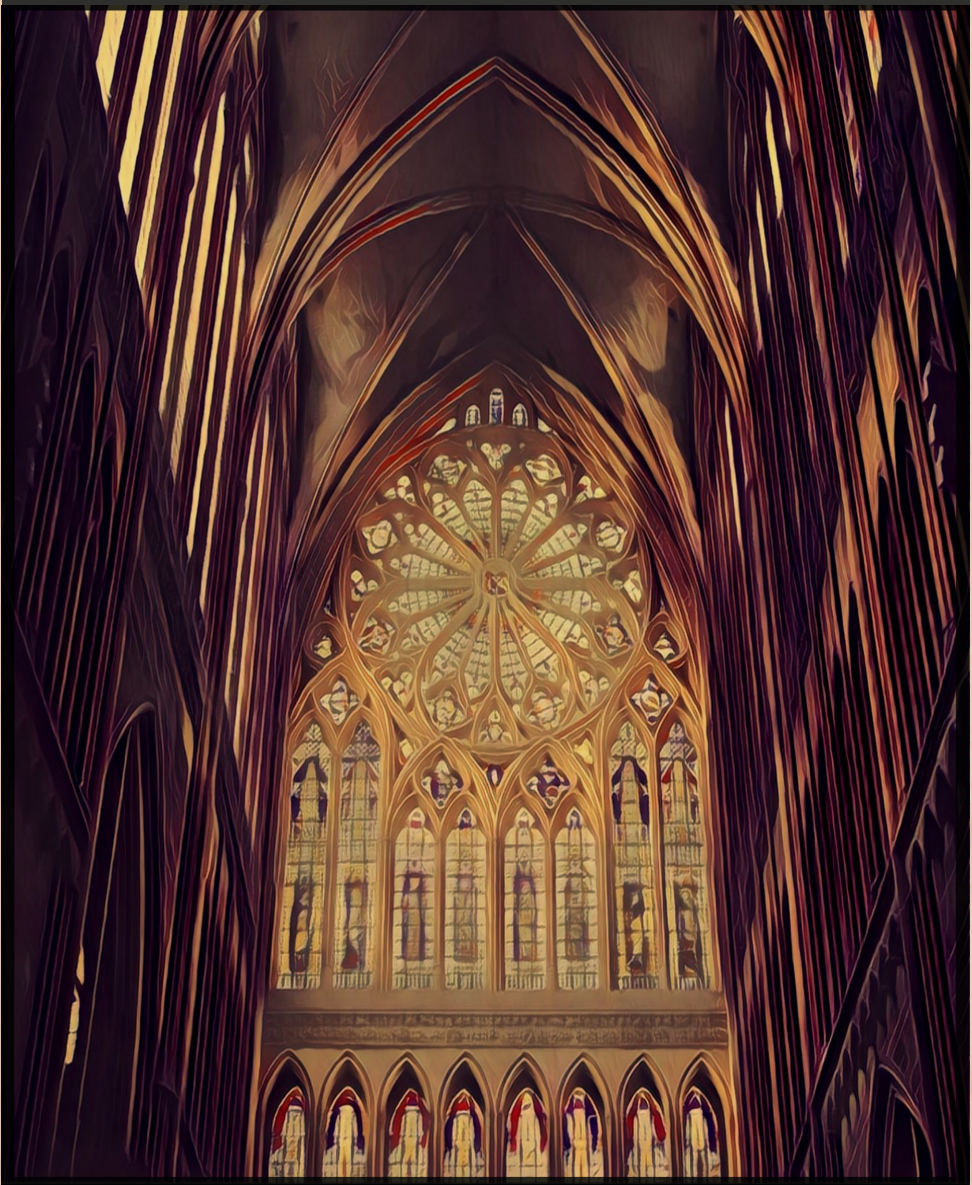
The light is not ours. It breathes in rhythm with something beneath the stones. When your lantern flickers, do not trust it to show your path. Snuff it out and walk blind, for the eyes in the flame are not your own.

Letter 3: A Noble’s Handwritten Note

We dine tonight with Lady Theryne. Masks provided, wine decanted. Should you hear the laughter change to screams, do not intervene. This is tradition. This is loyalty.

Letter 4: Scribbled on Bone

I dug to find my father. The cage was empty, though the ground still shook. What I found was not a corpse, but a ledger etched into the marrow of a femur. Every name on the street was written there, mine among them.



GRAVES RATTLE IN THEIR CAGES DURING STORMS, THOUGH THE WIND BLOWS NOWHERE NEAR THEM.

-TRUTH BEYOND THE TORCHLIGHT-

MAP-BASED TABLES & TOOLS

The gothic stonework and hushed corners of Isenia conceal more than silence. Strange phenomena ride the breeze, and even mundane routes can unveil ancient patterns, whispered names, and unfinished promises. Use these tables and services to enrich exploration and flavor wandering moments with meaningful tension.

Lanternlight Generators Strange Occurrences (d6)

- A lantern burns with black flame that casts no shadow.
- The light flickers in rhythm with a heartbeat no one can place.
- Motes of ash drift from the flame instead of sparks.
- The lantern shines only when a prayer is whispered.
- Its glow bends away from graves, leaving them in darkness.
- The flame reflects faces not present among the living.

Street Atmosphere (d6)

- Fog rolls in thick enough to muffle all sound.
- Drips of water fall endlessly from rooftops though the sky is clear.
- The air smells of iron, sweet and sharp.
- Crows gather on eaves, watching in silence.
- Cobblestones glisten with a sheen that never dries.
- Whispers echo as though from beneath the earth.

City Services & Supplies The Ledger's Rest

This tavern squats within the ruins of a collapsed archive, where toppled shelves now serve as tables and mold-furred tomes line the walls. The proprietor, a hunched man known only as Wrynn, claims to have catalogued every cursed scrap that drifts into his hands. Patrons come to drink bitter ale by candlelight, but many also buy pages torn from forgotten books, each page sold as a ward against ill luck. The Ledger's Rest is a place of half-truths and uneasy laughter, where bargains are sealed with ink and whispers.

Ashveil Mortuary

Ashveil's undertakers are famed and feared. Their practice is not only burial but binding. They stitch reed-thread sigils into coffins, promising families that the departed will never claw free. The air is heavy with incense and salt, masking the stench of embalming fluids. Some whisper that the undertakers charge extra to perform forbidden rites, binding not just corpses but memories, ensuring that certain names are never spoken again. To commission Ashveil is to admit you fear not only death, but what comes after.

The Gutter's Light

Tucked into a crooked alley in the Undercity, this lantern-maker's shop glows with flames of unnatural hue. The owner, a gaunt craftsman named Odrik, insists that each lantern holds the last breath of a dying soul. His lanterns burn in colors no natural fire has known: blue that hums, red that weeps, green that whispers. Thieves and wanderers prize them for the silence they bring, claiming that the glow of these lights makes footsteps vanish. Odrik keeps a ledger of whose breaths he has bottled, and it is said he refuses to sell a lantern back to the family of the soul within.

GM Notes:

These services and shops deepen the wards of Isenia. They highlight themes of rot, remembrance, and the commerce of fear. Each can serve as a point of entry into darker storylines: a cursed scrap sold in the tavern that binds to a player's hand, a mortuary rite that silences an NPC's history, or a lantern burning with the soul of someone the party thought still lived. These tables and services add texture to the wards of Isenia. They create a sense of unease, layering atmosphere with occult detail. The GM can use them to reinforce the city's theme of rot and ritual, ensuring that even a casual stroll feels haunted by watchful eyes and smoldering secrets.

Unresolved Case: The Hollow Choir

In the Star Ward, a faint chorus drifts from beneath the cathedrals each night, though no choir practices after dusk. The voices echo in perfect unison, yet no words can be understood. Some describe it as mournful, others as triumphant, but all who hear it claim the sound lingers in their bones long after the bells fall silent.

Clergy insist it is the reverberation of old stone and water channels, nothing more. The Rangers claim the swamp winds play tricks, carrying voices that do not exist. The Nicrophorus whisper that the choir belongs to those buried without rites, singing until someone answers them.

When workers attempted to trace the sound through the catacombs, three returned deaf and one has not been seen since. The only clue found was a cracked hymn book, its pages blank except for a single phrase written in dried blood: "We sing so the mud remembers."

GM Note: This case has no fixed solution. The GM may decide the Hollow Choir is a haunting of the unburied, a magical ward unraveling, or a secret congregation still alive below the city. Whatever its truth, the sound should remain unsettling and unresolved, a reminder that in Isenia not every mystery can be silenced.

STORIES FROM THE STREETS

TALE OF THE LANTERN CHILD

HER PRESENCE GREW INTO A LOCAL LEGEND.

Once, in the Undercity, a child was born with a faint glow in her chest, as if a candle burned inside her ribs. Her parents tried to hide it, but lanternlight always dimmed when she entered a room. The Nicrophorus claimed her as one of their own, saying she was the soul of a forgotten lantern come to life. When she laughed, shadows writhed in pain; when she cried, the dead stirred in their cages.

Her presence grew into a local legend. Merchants left coins at her family's door, hoping to buy good fortune from her glow, while priests muttered that she was a living omen of divine wrath.

Children followed her through the alleys, daring one another to step close enough to feel the warmth of her light. Yet with each year the glow grew dimmer, as though something unseen was drawing it away. One night, the light in her chest guttered out entirely, and she was gone.

Some say her breath fuels Odrik's brightest lantern, still flickering in the Gutter's Light. Others whisper she walks the Marsh of Sorrow with a lantern held high, calling lost souls toward the city with a voice like a dying flame.

MAP ENCOUNTERS

THE COBBLESTONES IN STAR WARD ARE SLICK WITH MOSS THAT GROWS EVEN IN CANDLELIGHT, AND SOME CLAIM THE MOSS SHAPES ITSELF INTO LETTERS WHEN STARED AT TOO LONG.

REPORTAGE STRAIGHT FROM THE STREETS

AT 1. ON THE MAP: THE SHATTERED BELFRY

At the edge of Star Ward, a half-collapsed belfry leans dangerously into the street. Its bell is cracked, yet each dusk it tolls a hollow hymn that resembles the echoes of the Hollow Choir. Windows nearby shudder at the sound, and the stones beneath the tower are streaked with soot.

- **Exploration Encounter:** Religion (DC 14) to identify runes carved into the bell’s rim; Athletics (DC 13) to climb the unstable rubble. The tower reveals glyphs once used to bind the dead.
- **Roleplay Hook:** A Keeper of Astral Mysteries begs the party to silence the bell before the next new moon, offering forbidden knowledge in return.
- **Complication:** The toll draws 1d4 Shadows from the Bone Ward, hunting the living who disturbed it.

AT 2. ON THE MAP: THE FLOODED CROSSROADS

In the Undercity, an entire intersection lies drowned under black water, the lanterns above flickering as though beneath a lake. Stalls and homes sink deeper each day, as if pulled by unseen hands.

- **Combat Encounter:** Swarms of Quippers and an Ochre Jelly surge from the depths if the waters are disturbed.
- **Skill Challenge:** Survival (DC 14) to resist being pulled into the current, Strength (DC 15) to save drowning victims.
- **Reward/Clue:** Carved beetle sigils mark the walls. A Nicrophorus child claims the water “leads to their mother’s voice” and offers to guide the party down.

AT 3. ON THE MAP: THE FEAST HALL OF HOUSE CALLIVOR

Gold Ward’s grandest hall reeks of incense and rotting lilies. Black candles drip wax that never cools, and masked nobles dine upon meat that bleeds when cut. The air vibrates with false laughter.

- **Roleplay Encounter:** Insight (DC 15) to see which nobles are enthralled by Lady Theryne’s will; Deception (DC 14) to pass as her allies.
- **Social Hook:** Lady Theryne demands each guest drink from a black glass. Doing so risks a DC 15 Constitution saving throw or falling into a half-undead stupor.
- **Complication:** Midway through the feast, a servant collapses, revealing hollow eyes and bone-dry veins. Panic spreads, giving the party a chance to intervene or escape.

GM Note: These locations tie Isenia’s themes of ritual, rot, and silence to physical landmarks. They reward curiosity with grim revelations and punish carelessness with haunting foes. Use them to make the city map breathe with dread and memory, ensuring that each ward and bridge has a story waiting to be uncovered.

MAP ARTWORK BY TACTICAL MAPS

GET THE MAP WITHOUT ANY GM NOTES [HERE](#).



AT 4. ON THE MAP: THE CAGES OF BONE WARD

Dozens of rusted cages sway in the wind, suspended over fresh graves. Tonight they are full, though no one remembers seeing the prisoners placed there. Their voices blend into a single moan, low and desperate.

- **Combat Encounter:** A Wight disguised as a mourner arrives to silence intruders, commanding Skeletons to defend the cages.
- **Exploration Challenge:** Perception (DC 14) reveals the prisoners are not wholly alive, their hearts beating only once every few minutes.
- **Resolution:** Freeing them earns the party desperate allies but draws the attention of Vadeck the Pale, whose name is etched beneath each cage.

AT 5. ON THE MAP: THE LANTERN-MAKER’S ALLEY

Near the Gutter’s Light, a line of lanterns burns in unnatural hues: green that whispers, red that weeps, blue that hums. They flare when strangers enter, harmonizing in unison.

- **Mystery Encounter:** Arcana (DC 14) reveals each lantern holds a soul’s last breath. Persuasion (DC 13) or Insight (DC 15) may sway Odrik to reveal who he has captured.
- **Roleplay Hook:** One lantern hums with the voice of Garran’s lost comrade. If shattered, the soul escapes, but Odrik demands payment in blood for the theft.
- **Complication:** If the lanterns are disturbed, 1d3 Wraiths manifest, drawn from the bound souls.

VESSKA AND THE SEVERED

HUNTERS OF THE SANGUINE ROT

REPORTAGE STRAIGHT FROM THE STREETS

Isenia stands silent, but the silence is not always peaceful. Beneath its chalk-scribed vows and mist-veiled rooftops, rumors coil like smoke around a name long spoken in hunter’s circles: Vesska Wyrn. Once a revered slayer of monsters and breaker of forbidden oaths, Vesska vanished from the central reaches of Latakar after the collapse of her order. Only fragments of her story remain: echoes in shattered tomes, claw-marked journals, and the black-stained cloth left at the edges of cursed battlefields.

It is whispered that Vesska came to Isenia not as a conqueror or penitent, but as a seeker. The town’s vow rituals, its chalkbound memory rites, and the quiet endurance of its people offered her what no city of coin or conquest ever could; absolution. Some claim she dwelled within the Upper Hollow for years, guiding lost pilgrims, sealing away cursed relics, and laying the foundations for something darker.

From her silence rose the Severed, an oath-bound order of masked hunters whose minds no longer hold their names. They do not speak, but they remember. They wear symbols etched in ash and blood, and their presence is felt whenever a monster leaves behind not just scars, but questions. It is said that when the bell of Isenia tolls without a hand to ring it, the Severed march. No one invites them. No one thanks them. But they leave a place cleaner than they found it, often at terrible cost.

The elders of Isenia rarely speak of the Severed. But there are ledgers in the Chalkspire that show columns of names with lines struck through them. Some are local. Some are not. All were witnessed by Vesska Wyrn.

GM Note: If using Vesska Wyrn or the Severed in your campaign, Isenia provides a perfect site for initiating quests involving vow magic, suppressed histories, and the dangerous line between cleansing and erasure. Vesska herself may be dead, ascended, or simply watching. The Severed, however, are real, and growing.

APPENDIX

Factions and Institutions

- **The Unwavering Houses:** Noble families of Isenia, desperate to preserve influence through revels, feasts, and hidden dealings.
- **The City Guard and Rangers:** Keepers of order who often act more as jailors than protectors, patrolling gates and the Marsh of Sorrow.
- **The Keepers of Astral Mysteries:** Priests and scholars who maintain the tri-cathedral and its runic wards, guiding faith through ritual and binding.
- **The Nicrophorus:** Sewer-born thieves who leave beetle marks and trade in secrets, their influence stretching across the Undercity.
- **The Extended:** Exiles, criminals, and heretics who offer forbidden services tolerated only for survival.

Notable Figures

- **Vadeck the Pale:** Magistrate of the Undercity who binds the poor through decrees.
- **Sister Avarra:** Devout keeper of runic seals, fearful of their weakening hold.
- **Rettin of the Masks:** Leader of the Nicrophorus, always hidden behind a beetle-shell mask.
- **Lady Theryne of House Callivor:** Ambitious noble of the Gold Ward, master of feasts and dangerous alliances.
- **Garran the Ranger:** Weathered veteran of the Marsh of Sorrow, burdened with guilt and grim warnings.

Key Locations and Services

- **The Ledger’s Rest:** A tavern among broken archives where cursed scraps are sold as charms.
- **Ashveil Mortuary:** Undertakers who bind the dead with reed-thread sigils and forbidden rites.
- **The Gutter’s Light:** A lantern-maker in the Undercity who bottles dying breaths as flames.

GM Note: The Appendix serves as a quick reference, drawing together Isenia’s major factions, NPCs, and locations introduced throughout this issue. It provides anchors for roleplay, encounter design, and narrative continuity.

ARTWORK BY ANEL





A HEARTFELT THANK YOU TO ALL OF YOU

To everyone who reads, shares, and supports Kelfecil's Tales, thank you from the bottom of my ink-stained heart. It is your passion, feedback, and generosity that make projects like The Midnight Gazette not only possible but a joy to create. Your support keeps the stories flowing, the maps rolling, and the quill forever moving.

Isenia may drown in its sorrows and the shadows of its own creation but there is always light to be found in the people that inhabit a city.

~ *The Editorial Circle of the Midnight Gazette*

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RESOURCES

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- [All Releases](#)
- [DriveThruRPG Store](#)
- [Setting Lorebook](#)
- ["How to adapt to the Starlight Chronicles setting"](#)
- [YouTube: Narrative Design Videos](#)
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