

naiveté is occasionally rewarded by finding an amulet that causes crops to flourish or a figurine that repels vermin. Others are not so lucky.

Shadowgates

Many shadowgates survived the Shadow Wars, when the Sorcerer Kings summoned hordes of darkfiends through them. A few shadowgates have been active since their creation, while others have been dormant for centuries. The most dangerous gates open every few days, allowing darkfiends to pass through. Other gates only open when specific events, like thunderstorms or a new moon, occur. A surge of natural arcana in the land or a person nearby can even reactivate a dormant gate. When darkfiends pass through the gates, they are of various species, although some gates draw only certain kinds of the fiends. Darkfiends often adopt the area around their gate as a lair. When these are discovered, champions are mustered to destroy them.

No one knows where all the gates are located. The Sovereign's Finest are tasked with finding them, and the sovereign offers a substantial reward to anyone else who discovers one and reports it. Finding the gates is easier said than done, however. The Sorcerer Kings cloaked many with illusions, and others are in remote ruins or far underground. Some are also protected by powerful wards. Once a gate is found, the Sovereign's Finest and Rose Knights are sent to destroy it. If a gate is too powerful to be destroyed or sealed, guards and arcane wards are placed around it, and its location is not revealed to the populace, if possible.

Except in Kern, where shadowgates are coveted, attitudes about shadowgates are the same throughout the world, even in nations as different as Aldis and Jarzon. Defeating darkfiends and destroying shadowgates are the kinds of tasks that generate rare cooperation between the Sovereign's Finest and the Purist priests of Jarzon. Some of them have learned mutual respect and even admiration after working together against Shadow.

Sorcery

Despite its extensive use of the arcane arts, even the Kingdom of the Blue Rose is wary of sorcery. The Shadow Art has the potential to corrupt even the most innocent soul, so every adept must guard against its siren call.

The most conspicuous forms of sorcery pervert the natural order. They include the secrets of summoning darkfiends and creating the unliving. Generally, sorcerers willing to do these things have already gone over to Shadow, although there is the occasional naive adept, trying to explore the bounds of the arcane arts, certain he is the exception. Arcane masters learned long ago that trying to fight the forces of Shadow with their own weapons is a fool's errand.

More dangerous than the overt forms of sorcery are the subtle ways it creeps into the other arcana. The use of the arcane arts to alter or influence others against their will is also sorcery, and many arcana can be used in this way.



Adepts are tempted to misuse their gifts, to try to exert control over the world the way Anwaren did, and they pay the same price in corruption and madness.

Despite the best advice and the wisest teachers in the arcane arts, every once in a while, the call of sorcery lures an adept into experimenting, or an eager student goes further and faster than is wise. There are always those few with arcane talent and a thirst for power or revenge. Although Aldin healers do their best to treat the emotional wounds where the Shadow Art may fester and grow, some manage to slip through the cracks. To the Aldins, sorcerers are to be pitied for their fall from grace, but they are also feared for their power. While envoys prefer to redeem and heal sorcerers when they can, the safety of the kingdom and its people must come first. In Jarzon, the Purist priests strike first to root out corruption, then ask questions about where the sorcerer learned the forbidden art.

Almost a century ago, King Rannath ruled the study of sorcery was no longer a crime in Aldis, saying it is not sorcerous knowledge, but its use, that constitutes a crime. This decision heightened tensions between Aldis and Jarzon, which bans sorcery in any form. This point of Aldin law has allowed some sorcerers to operate in the kingdom's shadows. Some on the Noble Council want Queen Jaellin to reverse Rannath's decision and ban even the study of the Shadow Art, saying it creates a needless danger to Aldis. The queen is reluctant to do so, since she agrees with Rannath's view and fears the consequences of banning knowledge and study of any kind. Once some knowledge is declared forbidden, what would be next? Debate on this issue remains heated. Even among Light-aligned nobles, tempers often flare when the issue of sorcery arises.