



THE PARTISAN MARKET

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Scenario Overview

The Partisan Market :

GM Preparation Checklist

Before running this scenario:

THE SETUP

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PASSIVE FEATURES:

Debt Accumulation:

Reality Flux:

Partisan Whispers:

ACTIONS (GM triggers 1 per scene):

Forced Bargain:

Stall Collapse:

Portal Shift:

REACTIONS (Triggered by player actions):

When traveler refuses fair deal → *Market's Displeasure* (Disadvantage on next roll)

When traveler makes generous offer → *Market's Favor* (Advantage on next roll)

When traveler lies → Reality hiccup; everyone nearby notices the deception

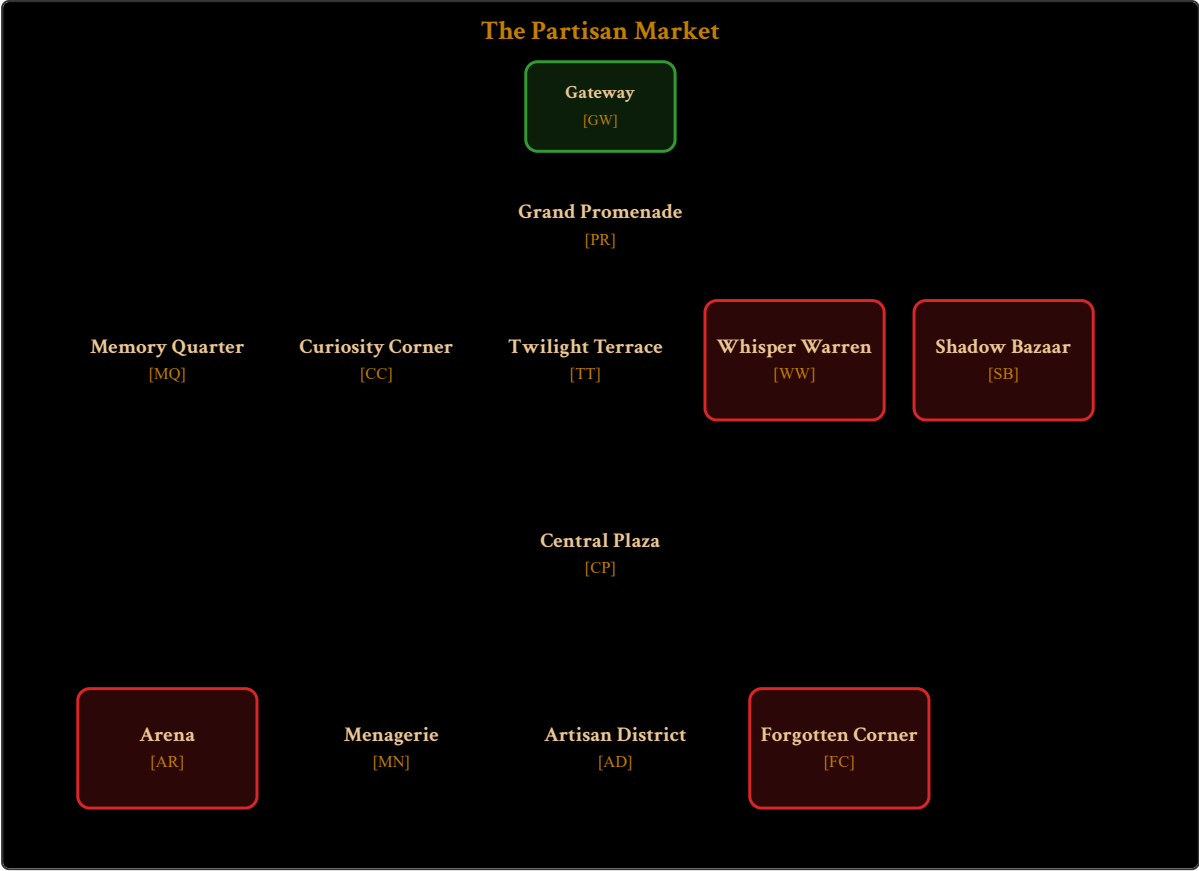
IMPULSES (GM Questions):

- What does The Market covet from these travelers?
- Which merchant is actually a manifestation of the Market itself?
- What happens if someone tries to steal instead of trade?

Interactive Market Map

Click on any district to view details. Dashed lines show connections between areas.

The Partisan Market



☐ Entrance Room Special ☐ Danger

SCENE ONE: ARRIVAL

The portal deposits the travelers in a cobblestone square. Above them, the sky ripples like water—multiple suns and moons overlap in impossible configurations. Around them, stalls and shops materialize and fade like breath on glass.

The Count The Count stands beside them, impeccably dressed, one hand resting on a leather-bound ledger.

"Welcome to The Market. Here, every transaction is recorded, every debt honored. You have questions. Good. Questions are valuable. Spend them wisely."

GM Guidance: First Impressions

Give each player a chance to describe:

What they notice first about The Market

How their character reacts to crossing worlds

What Essence they feel stirring (Forma, Anima, Umbra, or Reverie)

This establishes their relationship with the setting and their primary Essence. Reward descriptive answers with small details: a merchant nods at them, a symbol glows on a nearby stall, etc.

Tiered Observations (Investigation Check)

Players can investigate their surroundings with **Drop + (Any Essence)**:

REGULAR SUCCESS (10+):

- Notice overlapping suns/moons creating impossible shadows
- See stalls phasing in and out of reality
- Observe The Count's ledger glowing faintly with their names
- Hear Partisan whispers offering deals in unknown tongue

HARD SUCCESS (15+):

- All Regular info PLUS:
- Identify which Essence each stall resonates with (guide later choices)
- Notice temporal inconsistencies (same merchant in two places simultaneously)
- Spot one stall that appears specifically drawn to a party member

EXTREME SUCCESS (20+):

- All Hard info PLUS:
- Glimpse your own name written in a distant stall's ledger (foreshadowing)
- Recognize an object from your past displayed for sale
- The Count pauses writing and glances at you knowingly

GM Questions: Personalizing The Market

Answer 1-2 of these during arrival to make The Market feel alive:

- What object in a stall calls to a specific traveler? Why?
- Which merchant shares a physical feature with a PC? (Uncanny)
- What smell from home do travelers detect? Where's it coming from?
- What's The Count writing in the ledger before they see it?

KEY NPCs

THE COUNT

Type: NPC - Authority / Tier: Beyond Rating / Domain: Ledgers & Debts

Appearance: Elegant, ageless, with a crown tattooed on their forearm. Speaks in riddles but always truthful. Eyes like liquid gold.

FEATURES:

Ledger Sight (Passive): Sees all debts, promises, and obligations as glowing threads

Truth Binding (Passive): Cannot lie; recognizes all lies spoken in their presence

Debt Enforcement (Action): Can call debts due at any moment (triggers scenarios)

Motivation: Maintain balance of debts across all domains

Knows: Everything about The Market, portal networks, Partisan language basics

Doesn't Know: Anything about travelers' home worlds (finds this fascinating)

Secret: The Count is bound by rules even they don't fully understand

MIRELLE, THE WORD-TRADER

Type: NPC - Merchant / Tier: Standard / Domain: Memory & Language

Appearance: Wrapped in scarves covered in shifting text. Eyes like ink wells. Voice echoes with multiple languages at once.

FEATURES:

Memory Weaver (Passive): Can see travelers' strongest memories as colored auras

Partisan Fluency (Passive): Speaks all languages; words shimmer with reality-warping power

Empathy Drain (Action): When accepting a memory, experiences it fully (shows emotion)

Offers: Partisan words in exchange for memories

Motivation: Collecting "home" memories to remember her own origin

Secret: She's from The Null—imagined into existence by previous travelers; has no true home

Knows: How Partisan words reshape reality; The Market's true nature as living entity

Wants: A memory powerful enough to anchor her permanently to reality

BARGAINING RATES:

- Minor memory → 1 Partisan word + Debt 1
- Significant memory → 1 word + its "echo" (emotional resonance) + Debt 2
- Defining memory → 3 words + permanent Market access token + Debt 3

SCENE TWO: THE FIRST DEAL

The Count leads the travelers to Mirelle's stall. She offers to teach them the Partisan word for "**Passage**"—essential for navigating portals—in exchange for a memory of home.

GM Guidance: Facilitating the Bargain

This scene should take 15-20 minutes. Encourage players to describe the memory before they trade it. This creates emotional weight and sets tone for future debt-based decisions.

Signs players are engaged:

- ✓ Debating which memory to offer
- ✓ Asking about Mirelle's backstory
- ✓ Trying to negotiate better terms

If players get stuck:

- Have Mirelle offer a hint ("Memories of *home* are particularly valuable...")
- The Count can ask a leading question about their past
- Another traveler arrives and makes a deal, modeling the process

Mechanics: The Memory Trade

Players must decide: **What memory do they offer?**

This is their first entry in The Count's Ledger:

Minor memory (a favorite meal, a childhood song): Debt 1

Significant memory (first love, a parent's voice): Debt 2

Defining memory (why they left home, their greatest fear): Debt 3

The Count records this in their Ledger. The memory isn't erased—it becomes distant, dreamlike.

What You Receive:

- The Partisan word "Passage" (allows portal navigation)
- Understanding that words shape reality here
- First-hand experience with debt accumulation

Tiered Trade Outcomes (Investigation)

If players investigate Mirelle's reaction or the trade itself with **Drop + Anima**:

REGULAR SUCCESS (10+):

- You learn the word "Passage" and feel its power
- Your memory becomes hazy but not lost
- Mirelle seems satisfied with the exchange

HARD SUCCESS (15+):

- All regular info PLUS:
- You understand the word's deeper meaning and emotional resonance
- You can use "Passage" to sense portal destinations before entering
- You notice Mirelle experiences your memory fully—tears in her eyes

EXTREME SUCCESS (20+):

- All hard info PLUS:
- You glimpse Mirelle's hidden truth: she has no memories of her own origin
- Gain permanent advantage when dealing with Mirelle in future
- Learn two additional Partisan words from emotional overflow

Alternative Paths to Learn Partisan

Not all players may want to trade with Mirelle. Offer these alternatives:

PATH 1: Ancient Texts (Exploration)

- Search The Market for Partisan dictionaries or scrolls
- Drop + Umbra (Challenging) to find hidden text dealer
- Cost: Debt 2 (less personal but still costs)

PATH 2: Market Whispers (Creative)

- Listen to Market's Partisan whispers and decode meaning
- Drop + Reverie (Risky) to understand alien language
- Success: Learn word but it's unstable; Disadvantage on first use
- Cost: No Ledger Debt but Market takes interest in you

PATH 3: Steal Knowledge (Dangerous)

- Attempt to steal Partisan word from another traveler
- Drop + Umbra (Risky) contested by target
- Cost: Market's Displeasure (Disadvantage on all Market rolls)
- Consequence: The Count marks you as "untrustworthy"

Sample Memories and Their Impact

Help players by offering examples:

Minor Memory Examples:

- The taste of grandmother's cooking
- The sound of rain on your childhood roof
- Your favorite song's melody

Significant Memory Examples:

- Your first kiss
- The day a loved one died
- Winning your greatest achievement

Defining Memory Examples:

- The moment you chose to leave home forever
- Your deepest regret
- The face of someone you betrayed

Mirelle values *emotional significance* over factual importance. A simple memory felt deeply is worth more than a major event felt distantly.

SCENE THREE: THE UNRAVELING STALL

As the travelers explore, they hear a commotion: a merchant's stall is **unraveling**—literally fading from existence. The merchant, **Kael**, is panicking. His debt has come due, and he cannot pay.

Kael: *"Please! I need three tokens of Forma—anchor-weight—or I'll fade with my stall! I owe The Market itself!"*

KAEL, THE FADING MERCHANT

Type: NPC - Victim / Tier: Helpless (currently) / Domain: Forma (weakening)

Appearance: Half-transparent, flickering between solid and ghost-like. Items fall through his hands. Voice echoes as if from far away.

CONDITION: Debt-Induced Fade (Stage 2 of 3)

- Stage 1: Translucent, stuttering speech (happened yesterday)
- Stage 2: (Current) Half-present, items fall through hands, losing memories
- Stage 3: Complete erasure from reality (will happen in 3 rounds if not saved)

FEATURES:

- Desperate Plea (Action):** Advantage on social rolls to gain help
- Fading Knowledge (Passive):** Knows Market secrets but forgets mid-sentence
- Debt Anchor (Passive):** Tied to his stall; cannot leave Market until debt paid

What He Owes: 3 Forma tokens to The Market (payment for permanent stall license)

How He Failed: Gambled his anchor-weight on bad deal with time merchant

CLUES HE PROVIDES (Tiered):

Regular (Automatic if saved): Portal tampering started three cycles ago

Hard (Drop + Anima 15+): Saw shadowy figure near exit portals at odd hours

Extreme (Drop + Anima 20+): The tamperer's essence felt "familiar but wrong—like memory of future"; had distinctive feature matching a PC

Environmental Hazard: Fade Radius

FADE RADIUS (Active Environmental Feature)

Difficulty: Tricky | **Range:** 10 feet around Kael

EFFECT:

Anyone within 10 feet of Kael must make **Drop + Forma (Tricky)** each round or gain *Translucent* condition.

TRANSLUCENT CONDITION:

- Disadvantage on all physical tasks (hitting, lifting, grabbing)
- Advantage on stealth and phase-related checks
- Items have 50% chance to fall through your hands
- Lasts until you leave The Market or Kael is saved/fades

This creates urgency: players must act quickly or risk partial fading themselves. Even if they leave Kael behind, the experience teaches them about The Market's dangers.

GM Guidance: Kael as Tutorial

This scene teaches consequences of debt. Consider different player approaches:

IF PLAYERS HELP IMMEDIATELY:

- They're compassionate; future NPCs trust them faster (+1 to social rolls)
- But they may miss investigating WHY he's fading (miss deeper clues)
- Time pressure: 3 rounds to find Forma or enact solution

IF PLAYERS INVESTIGATE FIRST:

- They learn about debt mechanics organically
- Creates tension (Kael fades in 3 rounds while they investigate)
- Reward with higher-tier clues about portal tampering

IF PLAYERS IGNORE:

- Kael fades; The Count notes this coldly
- Market NPCs become warier; social checks +2 difficulty
- BUT players learn some debts can't (or shouldn't) be saved
- Portal tampering clues available through other means

All outcomes are valid. Don't punish inaction—show consequences and move forward.

Multiple Solutions: Saving Kael

The travelers can help Kael through various approaches. Reward creativity!

PATH 1: Direct Aid (Exploration + Forma)

Action: Search The Market for anchor-stones/Forma tokens

Check: Drop + Forma (Tricky) to identify genuine Forma sources

Time: Takes 1-2 rounds of searching per attempt

Cost: Time pressure (Kael fades in 3 rounds total)

Success: Find 3 Forma tokens; Kael stabilizes immediately

Reward: Kael's Gift—Forma Charm (+1 Forma for one future roll)

PATH 2: Social Negotiation (Anima)

Action: Convince another merchant to lend Forma tokens

Check: Drop + Anima (Challenging) to persuade skeptical merchant

Time: One round of negotiation per merchant

Cost: Incur favor-debt to lending merchant (future complication)

Success: Merchant loans tokens; Kael saved; you owe favor

Reward: Merchant ally for future Market visits

PATH 3: Debt Transfer (Sacrifice)

Action: Take on Kael's debt yourself

Check: No roll required—automatic success if willing

Time: Instant

Cost: +3 Ledger Debt (transferred from Kael to you)

Success: Kael saved immediately

Reward: The Count respects selflessness; Kael eternally grateful

PATH 4: Creative Solution (Reverie)

Action: Imagine Kael's stall stable and anchor it with willpower

Check: Drop + Reverie (Risky) to impose imagination on reality

Time: One round of intense concentration

Cost: Spend 2 Reverie; take 1 Harm from mental strain

Success: Temporary stabilization (1 hour); Kael must find permanent solution

Failure: You partially fade (gain Translucent condition)

Reward: Kael owes life-debt; teaches secret about Market's nature

PATH 5: Shadow Investigation (Umbra)

Action: Investigate Kael's original deal; find loophole to void debt

Check: Drop + Umbra (Challenging) to uncover hidden contract clauses

Time: 2 rounds of intense investigation

Cost: Time pressure (may fade before you finish)

Success: Find technicality; Market grudgingly releases Kael

Failure: No loophole exists; must use another method

Reward: Learn how Market contracts work; Advantage on future deals

GM NOTE: Accept player-proposed solutions outside these paths! If their approach makes narrative sense, assign difficulty and let them try. Reward ingenuity.

SCENE FOUR: THE EXIT PORTAL

With their business concluded, The Count leads them to an exit portal. But as they approach, it flickers unstably—someone has been **tampering with portals**.

A shadowy figure flees into the crowd. The Count's expression darkens—the first sign of genuine emotion they've shown.

The Count: *"Portal instability. Dangerous. And expensive to fix. This will cost you."*

Environmental Boss: Unstable Exit Portal

Type: Environmental Hazard (Elite Threat) | Difficulty: Challenging | Rounds Until Collapse: 5

PASSIVE FEATURES:

Temporal Bleeding: Glimpses of past/future destinations flicker through portal

Reality Tears: Random objects pulled through from other domains (3d6 damage if hit)

Essence Drain: All travelers within 20 feet lose 1 point of their highest Essence per round

ACTIVE THREATS (GM rolls d6 each round):

1-2: Gravity Reversal → All travelers make Drop + Forma (Tricky) or "fall" upward 10 feet (1d6 damage when gravity returns)

3-4: Memory Flash → Target traveler makes Drop + Anima (Tricky) or lose focus (Disadvantage on next roll; see traumatic memory)

5-6: Future Echo → Glimpse your own death through portal; Drop + Reverie (Challenging) or gain Fear condition (Disadvantage on Reverie checks until scenario ends)

STABILIZATION REQUIREMENTS:

Must succeed at **3 of 4** essence-based checks within 5 rounds. Each PC should tackle one approach:

Forma (Physical Anchor): Drop + Forma (Tricky) - Use material objects to weight portal edges; prevent reality tears

Anima (Emotional Calm): Drop + Anima (Tricky) - Soothe portal's chaotic resonance; stop memory flashes

Umbra (Find Source): Drop + Umbra (Challenging) - Trace tampering to its origin point; reveals who/what caused instability

Reverie (Imagine Stability): Drop + Reverie (Risky) - Impose mental image of stable portal onto reality; most powerful but dangerous

OUTCOMES:

SUCCESS (3-4 checks passed): Portal stabilizes; gain clue about tamperer; +1 Debt to Count

PARTIAL (2 checks passed): Portal stabilizes but damaged; random destination; +2 Debt

FAILURE (<2 checks): Portal collapses; must find alternate route; +3 Debt; lose 1 day

GM Guidance: Running the Portal Crisis

This is the scenario's climax. Make it feel urgent but not impossible.

PACING (5 Rounds):

Round 1: Portal flickers; Count explains situation; roll for threat

Round 2: Players declare approaches; begin stabilization checks

Round 3-4: Continue checks; escalate threat rolls; describe worsening conditions

Round 5: Final checks; reveal outcome dramatically

TIPS:

- Describe threats vividly: "Reality ripples like water; you see your childhood home through the tear, then it's gone"
- Let players coordinate: "I'll anchor while you calm it!"
- Even on failure, they learn something valuable about portals
- The Count should seem genuinely concerned—this matters

Revelation: The Tamperer's Identity (Node-Based Discovery)

Players need to discover **2 of 3 clues** to deduce the truth about the portal tamperer. This uses the Alexandrian "Three Clue Rule"—multiple paths to the same revelation.

CLUE NODE A: Mirelle's Stall (Essence Analysis)

Action: Return to Mirelle and ask her to analyze temporal residue on portal

Check: Drop + Umbra (Challenging) to identify essence signature

Reveals: "The essence signature matches one of you... but older. Worn. Desperate."

GM Note: Don't reveal WHICH PC yet—let players debate and deduce!

CLUE NODE B: Kael's Testimony (If Saved)

Action: Ask Kael for details about the shadowy figure

Check: Drop + Anima (Regular) to help him remember clearly

Reveals: Figure had [distinctive feature PC described in Session 0]—scar, tattoo, missing finger, unique gait, etc.

GM Note: Use something memorable from character creation. Make it personal.

CLUE NODE C: Count's Ledger (Investigation/Social)

Action: Convince Count to show Ledger entries OR sneak a peek

Check: Drop + Anima (Challenging) to persuade OR Drop + Umbra (Risky) to steal glance

Reveals: Entry dated "tomorrow" in handwriting matching one PC's style

GM Note: If players ask to compare handwriting samples, it matches perfectly

REVELATION SCENE (When 2+ Clues Connected):

The Count appears, having watched your deduction with interest:

"You've discovered something the Market hoped you wouldn't. The tamperer isn't sabotaging portals—they're searching through them. Desperately. Looking for something or someone."

The Count's expression is unreadable.

"The signature is yours, [PC name], but not from now. From when, I cannot say. Three cycles hence? Three hundred? Time is... negotiable in the spaces between worlds."

"Perhaps you'll ask them what they seek... when you meet your future self."

IMPLICATIONS FOR CAMPAIGN:

- Time travel exists in NOWHERE LAND (non-linear causality)
- PC's future self is desperate enough to risk reality breaking
- The Count knows more than they've revealed (as always)
- This hooks into future campaigns: "What breaks time?" "What are you searching for?"
- The identified PC gains "Temporal Marked" condition (plot significance)

GM Questions: The Future Self Mystery

Use these to develop the temporal mystery across your campaign:

- What is the PC's future self searching for? (Lost loved one? Erased domain? The way home?)
- How far in the future is this version from? (Days? Years? Decades?)
- What trauma has aged them so dramatically?
- Do they remember being their past self and doing this?
- What would make the PC desperate enough to break portals?

Don't answer these immediately. Let them simmer. The PC player may have ideas—incorporate them! This becomes *their* mystery to solve.

As the travelers step through the portal back to their world (or onward to a new domain), The Count offers final words:

SCENE FIVE: DEPARTURE & REWARDS

As the travelers step through the (now-stabilized) portal back to their world or onward to a new domain, The Count offers final words:

"You've taken your first steps. Your Ledger is no longer empty. Remember: every door opened is a debt owed. Every debt paid is a door closed. Choose wisely which you wish to remain open."

Tiered Rewards (Based on Performance)

Rewards scale based on how travelers handled the scenario:

OUTCOME A: Exemplary (Stabilized Portal + Saved Kael + Discovered Tamperer)

Count's Favor: Reduce Ledger Debt by 1 (rare gift)

Kael's Gift: Forma Charm (+1 Forma for one future roll)

Market Access Token: Permanent ability to return via memory/meditation

Knowledge: Understand that future-self's timeline is changeable

Reputation: Market merchants recognize you; +1 to social rolls in Market

OUTCOME B: Competent (Stabilized Portal + One Major Accomplishment)

Count's Acknowledgment: Respectful nod (no mechanical benefit but narrative weight)

Market Access: Can return but must find portals (no token)

Knowledge: Partial understanding of time travel mechanics

Kael OR Mirelle: One becomes recurring ally (if you helped them)

OUTCOME C: Survival (Basic Completion)

Count's Rescue: +2 Ledger Debt (Count fixed portal; service costs)

Partisan Word Learned: At least gained "Passage" knowledge

Alive: Most important—can try different approaches next time

Lesson: Clear understanding that choices have weight here

OUTCOME D: Complications (Portal Collapsed or Major Failures)

Alternate Route: +3 Ledger Debt; arrive at unexpected domain

Lost Time: 1-3 days pass; something changed at home/destination

Market Ban: If you stole or broke major rules; 1-month exile

But: Gained valuable (harsh) lessons about consequences

What Players Should Learn

By the end of this scenario, players should understand:

- ✓ How The Drop System resolves actions (with Advantage/Disadvantage)
- ✓ How Essences provide mechanical and narrative identity
- ✓ How The Count's Ledger tracks debts and consequences
- ✓ That every choice has weight in NOWHERE LAND
- ✓ That failure isn't game over—it's story complication
- ✓ That environments can be adversaries (The Market itself is alive)

Hooks for Future Sessions

Based on choices made, plant these seeds for ongoing campaigns:

IF HELPED KAEL:

- He sends word through Market about opportunities in other domains
- Future scenario hook: "Kael's Debt" where he repays favor in dramatic fashion
- He can provide Market gossip and intelligence

IF DISCOVERED TEMPORAL TAMPERER:

- Count mentions "The Chronomancer's Guild" in passing
- Future scenario: Meet your future self; learn what they seek
- Other time travelers may contact the "Temporal Marked" PC

IF TOOK ON EXTRA DEBT:

- Count: "Interesting. Most don't volunteer for burden..."
- "The Ledger's Weight" scenario comes sooner (10+ debt accumulated faster)
- Other entities notice your debt; some want to buy it

IF IGNORED Kael:

- Market NPCs are notably cooler toward party
- Future scenario: Must prove trustworthiness to regain Market favor
- Kael's family/friends remember what you didn't do

IF CONNECTED WITH MIRELLE:

- She whispers: "I remembered something about home... thank you."
- Future storyline: Help Mirelle discover her origin (she's from The Null)
- She becomes recurring ally and information source

ALWAYS PLANT (Regardless of Outcome):

- Mention of "The Five Domains" (Jungle, Desert, Mountains, Tundra, Ocean)
- Rumor of a "Trickster" who breaks rules even The Count respects
- Reference to "The Undreaming City" (foreshadow Ledger's Weight scenario)

POST-SESSION DEBRIEF

After the session, ask your players these questions to shape future sessions:

Character Reflection:

- What memory did you trade, and why does it matter to your character?
- How do you feel about the debt in your Ledger? Manageable? Concerning? Terrifying?
- Which NPC resonated with you most? Why?

Player Experience:

- What was your favorite moment in The Market?
- Did you feel like your choices mattered? How?
- Was there a moment where you felt genuinely uncertain about what to do?

Future Direction:

- What do you want to explore next in the domains?
- Are you curious about the temporal mystery? (If discovered)
- What questions do you have about The Count, The Market, or Partisan language?

GM NOTE: Use their answers to shape future sessions. NOWHERE LAND thrives on player-driven narrative. The domains should reflect what interests and terrifies your specific group.

DOWNLOAD SCENARIO MATERIALS

Includes: NPC portraits, Market map, pre-generated travelers, handouts with Partisan words, Count's Ledger tracking sheet, Environment Feature cards, Tiered Information reference

DESIGN NOTES FOR GMS

This scenario uses professional TTRPG design principles adapted from Call of Cthulhu, Daggerheart, Five Room Dungeon, and Alexandrian Theory. Key innovations:

Tiered Information: Every investigation offers Regular/Hard/Extreme success tiers, ensuring progress while rewarding excellent rolls

Environment as Adversary: The Market itself has Features (Passive/Action/Reaction) making locations feel alive and dangerous

Node-Based Design: Three Clue Rule ensures players can discover the temporal mystery through multiple paths

Multiple Solutions: Every challenge has 3-5 valid approaches rewarding different play styles (combat, social, creative, investigation)

Failure as Story: Failed rolls don't stop progress—they create complications and narrative branches

Structured Adversaries: NPCs use Daggerheart-style stat blocks with Types, Tiers, and Features for consistency

See SCENARIO_DESIGN_GUIDE.md for complete framework and apply these principles to your own scenarios.

Additional Resources

This complete scenario includes all acts as presented. Additional downloadable resources:

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