

The Mother

Your 72-year-old mother is dying in a small apartment in a high-rise building in Stockholm. You've been estranged ever since you ran away from home as a teenager. After all these years, you are coming back.

A fan-made scenario for KULT: Divinity Lost

Introduction

“The Mother” is a one-shot game for one player with character creation by questionnaire.

Content warnings: abuse within family, losing family members, dementia, murder, torture.

These notes are unofficial Fan Content for KULT: Divinity Lost, permitted under the Helmgast Fan Content Policy: <https://helmgast.se/meta/fan-content-policy>

“The Mother” is a work in progress. This is version 4.

If you decide to run this scenario, I encourage you to change anything you feel needs changing, and keep what you like.

Text in *italics* are examples of what the GM might say.

Themes

“The Mother” deals with death, dementia, and the inevitable loss of our parents. It is meant to be a sad. The main questions are:

- ◆ Do mother and child love each other—did they ever?
- ◆ Have they forgiven each other?
- ◆ What is the relationship between the mother and her old boyfriend?

These questions will be answered through play, and will determine what happens in the end.

Alternative setup

To speed up character creation, the game could be played with +1 to every attribute.

Leave out the options on “What makes your mother sad?” to simplify mechanics but keep the role play prompt.

Setting the stage

It's Monday 12 September 2023.

Your 72-year old mother lives in a small apartment in a high-rise building in Farsta, Stockholm. You've been estranged ever since you ran away from home as a teenager. After all these years, you are coming back.

Questionnaire

First a few basic facts of the character.

Name and gender and **looks** are all up to you.

Attributes. Assign +2, +1 and +0 to the passive Fortitude, Reflexes and Willpower. Assign +3, +2, +1, +1, +0, -1, and -2 to the other attributes. Any choice you like goes!

Who told you that your mother is close to death and you should go see her?

- ◆ Her home carer, who says that mother talks about me all the time
- ◆ Her parish priest, who is giving my mother spiritual counselling; this seems out of character
- ◆ A police officer, explaining that they found mother lost and confused, wandering the Metro; I am her only next of kin

What convinced you to go, despite everything?

What do you see in yourself that you hate in your mother?

- ◆ Her ability to woo and gaslight people into doing her bidding (**Forked Tongue**)
- ◆ Her harsh judgments of other people's character and behaviour (**Eye for Detail**)
- ◆ Her ability to always know when I was lying (**Intuitive**)

What about you makes your mother sad?

- ◆ My compulsion to lie and deceive (**Liar disadvantage**)
- ◆ My cold heart and numbness to emotion
- ◆ How I've sacrificed everything for what I believe in (**Fanatic disadvantage**)

What couldn't your mother protect you from?

- ◆ Her abusive boyfriend, who tormented both me and her until I ran
- ◆ A charismatic person that pulled me away from her, and ultimately let me down
- ◆ The raspy voice in the dark, that made me hurt mother and flee

How far from your mother did you run?

In what state are you expecting to find your mother when you come back?

What has happened

The mother was born in 1951. Working backwards from 2023, if the character is in their 40s, and the mother was in her 30s when she had them. If the ages of mother and child don't line up, don't treat it as anything out of the ordinary. The mother's time in Metropolis could cause some temporal discrepancies.

The mother was born in the Borderlands of Metropolis, Jordbro, Stockholm. On bad days, when her parents were yelling and throwing things, she could see the Eternal City from the window. After growing up, she was anchored more firmly to Elysium—she met her on-and-off boyfriend, and she had you. She was pulled in by the Principles, as are we all, but she never truly forgot about Metropolis.

You may never have known what your mother did for a living. As an adult you thought maybe prostitution or drugs, but you never saw johns or drugs around. She spent a lot of time in bed, drained of energy. The mother's boyfriend was a jack-of-all-trades, with some of those trades probably criminal in nature. Depending on the relationship with the boyfriend, she may or may not have enacted revenge on him, by bringing him into Metropolis.

As the mother grew older and dementia started to set in, the grip of the Illusion loosened again. She now watches the towering ruins of the City from her window, and has built a labyrinth in the park at Farsta strand, that allows her to enter Metropolis. The City may have changed her. She may even have gained power over small insect-like metallic creatures, and an azghoul who recognises her soul from the old days when humans controlled them.

At the same time, she has started to glimpse parts of a Purgatory, tailored for her. While she doesn't understand how it all fits together, she knows she prefers the City to that place, any day.

Beginning

Go through the questionnaire. The GM asks about the phone call, and how it made you feel.

How old are you?

When was the last time you talked with your mother?

They may also, at some point, need to ask:

Under what circumstances did you leave?

What was your relationship with your mother's boyfriend?

The contact

The police. The police (on the phone: Lisa or Markus Mörk) won't agree to meet with you to discuss how they found your mother; they consider the phone call to be enough. However, if you call them after you've found out that your mother is missing, the same patrol car and the same two officers (Mörk and Jan Petterson) come out.

They don't have much of a relationship to your mother, but they can tell you that she showed symptoms of dementia and confusion. She didn't know where she were, wouldn't say her name at first, but was identified from her identity card. After getting some water and some attention, she got clearer, and finally gave them the address voluntarily.

If the police come to the apartment, they will quickly conclude that there is no reason to suspect a crime, but sadly proclaim that it looks like exactly the same thing happened again. They will advice you to consider assisted living for your mother, and promise to radio this to all officers on patrol duty. They will suggest that you look yourself, anywhere you know that your mother used to move, maybe somewhere she used to live.

The carer. Hamid Nakouzi is a 20-something young man. He agrees to meet you after the end of his shift, at four o'clock in Farsta centrum. He's still wearing his work shirt with the company logo. He's muscular, clearly someone who goes to the gym frequently.

Relationship to mother:

- ◆ In case of the Harsh Mother, he will only agree to meet for a while and will try to make it short. In other cases, he will invite you to talk in the nearby cafe.
"With all due respect, I've done more than my part. Now this is on you."
- ◆ In case of the Gaslight Mother, he will be worried, and will tell you as much as he knows, and implore you to get help for her.
"I think she was a little sweet on me. Sorry, I don't know if I should say that. She's a nice lady, but you know, I wouldn't ..."

Clues:

- ◆ He knows that she's coming and going from her home, at any time during day or night, often forgetting to lock the door.
- ◆ He knows what the apartment is like, having been there many times.
- ◆ He knows that the mother likes walks on the boardwalk at Lake Magelungen.
- ◆ He might be able to quote things the mother has said about her longing for Metropolis and her history. He won't understand it, obviously.

The priest. The priest, Lena Hamberg, is a woman your age. She meets you in Farsta strand Church, in Farsta strand. It's this modern, blocky little brick building. She tells you how the mother shows interest in crucifixion, forgiveness, Jesus on the cross.

We had a good conversation about Christ on the cross ... of course, I can't share any details from our counselling. But I can say that your mother is quite the student of the scripture, and a good theological sparring partner. On her good days.

In case of any unpleasant interaction, she offers support.

We're open for everyone. For you too.

Relationship to the mother:

- ◆ Gaslight Mother: The priest likes her, believes that she has her heart in the right place, and wants forgiveness from her child. She thinks the mother is sincere but that she has doubts, and don't we all?
- ◆ Harsh Mother: The priest feels bad for her, and is trying to suppress anger and scepticism about you, who she believes has hurt the mother severely. The priest will preach forgiveness and reconciliation to you.
- ◆ Intuitive Mother: The priest is afraid of her, knowing in her heart that the mother sees all her faults, and that she is capable of anything. She may try to dissuade you from finding her, and side with you when it comes to running away.

Clues:

- ◆ If the boyfriend is in the picture, the priest knows that the mother is still obsessed about him, may think that she seeks reconciliation with him as well—or understand that she has ill will against him; the priest doesn't know that he is missing since ten years.
- ◆ The priest has gone for walks with the mother at the boardwalk at Lake Magelungen; there, the mother said something about the skyscrapers; the priest may interpret this as signs of dementia, but knows that this place is important to the mother and may suggest that you look there.

Trigger for visions: Looking closely at the altarpiece—which is a simple cross on a golden cloth background—either before or after talking with the priest, may allow you to glimpse the mother's purgatory, or remember the boyfriend or the raspy voice.

Searching for the mother

The apartment. The apartment is on the 7th floor of a 15 floor building. An address in Sweden—for anyone who doesn't have a protected identity—is never further away than a Google search. The priest, carer or police will give it to you regardless. Finding a phone number is harder, and you can't find any landline or mobile number for your mother. You've never been to this apartment before; needless to say you don't have a key. However, when you feel the door, it is open. Your mother is not there.

Rooms:

- ◆ The hallway. Nothing notable in here, but it gives a good view of the living room and kitchen right ahead. The bedroom, door ajar, is to the left, the bathroom to the right.
- ◆ The kitchen, more like a kitchenette really, with some really old turquoise paint on the kitchen cabinets. Messy, but not catastrophically so.
- ◆ The living room. Sparsely decorated and dusty. The dusty curtains are pulled aside, the blinds are up, and the brown sofa is facing the window, looking out towards the lake. There are dead, wilting and mouldy house plants on the window sill. There is an old picture of you in the bookshelf, surprisingly. There may also be a youthful picture of the old boyfriend at the time of his military service.
- ◆ The bedroom. A small bedroom with a bed, a bedside table and a lamp with an orange lampshade. The blinds are down and it's dark. This may be a place to glimpse purgatory, or to hear the raspy voice. It reminds you of the apartment where you grew up. You may find your mother's diary.

The mother's diary. The diary is disorganised, mixing memories with recent events, and sparsely dated. Among the entries, there are drawings of different objects in the park, with occult symbols. They provide a guide through the labyrinth.

The neighbours. The closest neighbour, across the stairwell, is a Syrian family. It says Ali on the door. The father opens the door. If you want a complicated conversation, the eldest daughter Sara comes to help out. She speaks impeccable Swedish. She will not be surprised that your mother is gone, and say that she is in and out of the apartment all the time, at any time of day, coming back or leaving in the middle of the night.

Relationship to mother:

- ◆ Gaslight Mother: She has a spare key, and asks you if your mother has forgotten to lock the door again. She expresses worry, and asks you to take good care of your mother.
- ◆ Other: She's concerned, but she doesn't like your mother. She tries to hide this at first. She complains of the thin walls in the building, and how your mother makes noise in the night.

The apartment in Metropolis. The apartment building exists in Metropolis, and if sufficiently distressed, you may See Through the Illusion in there. Outside the apartment, which looks mostly the same except even more bare, the building is just a shell of raw concrete, doors and windows are torn out, and the Metropolitan landscape is on full display outside. If the old boyfriend is in play, his dried blood is a tarp on the floor in Metropolis. This is where the Mother attacked him.

Mother's purgatory. The mother's purgatory can be glimpsed in the apartment. It takes the shape of an elongated corridor that leads either to the mother's current bedroom, or to the apartment where you grew up. You can become stuck in it, or leave through the door (where mother may have painted an occult symbol to help anchor her in the Illusion). Being killed or knocked out will take you back to the beginning.

- ◆ If you chose the abusive boyfriend, you see yourself as a child, crying, running away bruised. The mother (that is, when you visit the purgatory: you) can keep running after the child who is you, but never catch up. The apartment turns into long corridors, hospital rooms, a locked psychiatric ward. In the end, an exaggerated version of your mother's boyfriend meets you, and the only way to let the child escape is to allow him to beat you.
- ◆ If you chose the raspy voice, the purgatory has its roles reversed. The mother (that is, when you visit the purgatory: you) is small, like a child, and is hurt by an oversized version of you as a teenager. You hear your own voice turn into the raspy voice.
"Look at what you made me do!"
- ◆ If you chose the Fanatic disadvantage, you see yourself as a religious or political zealot, exaggerated, hurting her, and acting as one of the Illusion's guardians. The face is you, but not you, more like an independent realisation of you as an adult, what you might look like in the mind of someone who has never seen how you actually turned out. You call her (that is, when you visit the purgatory: you) "witch", "heretic", or similar things, and brandish a cane, a cattle prod, or similar.
- ◆ If you chose a cold heart, again, the mother will see you hurting her, but without the religious or political connotations. Instead, you are simply cold, heartless and cruel. If confronted this version of you blames her (that is, when you visit the purgatory: you) for what you turned into, both through nature and nurture.

The Metro. You can search the Metro station, or take the Metro to another part of town if you

are not driving. On the platform, you can see a man in rags, with a strong odour about him. He's Jonny, no last name. He and his friend Ewy know your mother, and know about her walking in and out of Metropolis. They are old friends from her youth, drifters and Borderlands walkers like your mother. They're not keen to tell you that part, but make contact and try to reassure you that the mother is fine, and that she is likely back soon.

"You're [Name's] kid, aren't you?"

Your old neighbourhood. One logical place to look would be where you used to live with your mother and her boyfriend. You can find the same house, the same stairwell, the same apartment, if you just wait to be let in. Everything looks and smells uncannily similar. That's not supernatural; that's just old apartment buildings. The same apartment is inhabited by a young couple. They know nothing.

Her old neighbourhood. Another logical place to look is where the mother used to live as a girl. You don't know the exact place, or even whether the building still exists, but you can travel to Jordbro. There, you may see the towers of Metropolis, if you are rattled and stressed enough.

Going back to the apartment. If you go back to the apartment, the door is open again, even if you locked it. You hear sounds from the kitchen. The mother is there, and when she hears you, comes out to see who it is. When she sees you, she starts crying—depending on the kind of relationship you had, honestly or not. If you hug her, you will feel something crawling on your back, like an insect. There's nothing there. The mother doesn't notice.

If you See through the Illusion, you may see the metal implants coming out of the mother's back, and the small, insect-like machines crawling on her.

"Can I make you some coffee? Or tea ... I don't know which one you like. May I hug you?"

If you stay overnight in the apartment, you may follow the mother as she leaves in the middle of the night to go to Metropolis, or you may be pulled into her purgatory. This depends on what state you are in, and how vigilant you are about the mother's behaviour.

The park by Lake Magelungen. There is a labyrinth in the park at Lake Magelungen, about 15 minutes walk away. The triangular patterns on boardwalk, the high rises in the background, the paths and street lights all form part of it. The mother has carved and painted discreet symbols around the park. They can be recognised from her diary. Before, entering the Eternal City required drugs or other shocks to her system; her progressing dementia and confusion just make the procedure easier.

The end

To Metropolis. By using the labyrinth, you can come with her if you follow her through the park and walk with her—either shadow her from a distance, or simply talk with her.

To use the labyrinth on your own is harder. You will not know where to go, and you would need to be in a state of serious psychological distress, or high, to break through the Illusion. There may be guidance in your mother's diary, in the form of drawings that correspond with symbols used in the labyrinth.

You may be guided by the raspy voice, who promises to finally show its face.

Getting stuck in the purgatory. You may get stuck in your mother's purgatory, and have to live through it over and over again. You may think of your mother, hoping that she might be spared, and that she dies in Metropolis.

The boyfriend. Your mother's boyfriend is old now, even older than her, going towards 80. If you investigate, he disappeared a decade ago, and is presumed dead.

In Metropolis, you find him crucified on a cross made out of steel bars welded and bolted together, with electric cables snaking his body, ending in hypodermic needles inserted into his skin. There's a flurry of motion, small metallic insect-like machines are swarming him, moving the needles around. Some of them contain glass vials with liquids, that they inject into his body. They scatter when you come closer, allowing you to see him is all his emaciated nudity.

If you have been abused by the boyfriend, your mother will have put him up there as an eternal punishment. If they had a good relationship, she might have put him up there to preserve him. The little machines are actually keeping him alive rather than primarily torturing him—the treatment is still agonising.

"Please. Please kill me. Before she comes back."

If the old boyfriend is not in play, the cross may just be there for the mother to contemplate, or it may be used to crucify you.

The azghoul. The azghoul is the raspy voice. If you've heard it before, you recognize it. It may taunt you, reminding you of your childhood, or it will simply attack. There is little chance for you to defend yourself. The azghoul is able to see any creature for what it is, and to intuit your

wishes.

The azghoul (see KDL p. 301 for description and statistics) can be controlled if you know its true name. Your mother may know it, but there's no other way you can easily learn it. If you explain the situation to your mother, she may give you control of the azghoul, to do what you want with, by telling you its true name.

"Kaltzsach."

"Mistress."

The mother. Lines that may be spoken by the mother, or read in her diary:

At that time, Stockholm was modernity and deprivation. They talked big about the welfare state as one big family, but just like in a family, you could just walk out, fall through a crack, and be abandoned. You know that.

You could join the mods, then the hippies, then the greasers or the punks, or the skinheads.

If you're a little girl, you can just walk into the Eternal City and disappear.

They pull you in with family, jobs, beauty standards, beatings. They make you a person, a woman, a mother. I wasn't ever really that.

[The Boyfriend], he wasn't some kind of monster from another dimension. He was just an ordinary asshole who liked how he felt powerful when I flinched.

I still loved you, you know. That was my undoing.

I hated you, you know. You were my undoing.

About death:

I know what awaits me ... But if I die out here, maybe my soul can remain. Maybe it will slip through the cracks, just like I did. Worth a shot. If nothing else, I like it better out here.

Getting back to Elysium. If the azghoul and other dangers in Metropolis can be avoided, coming back to Elysium is usually a matter of waiting. Over time, the Illusion will start re-asserting itself, and the landscape will fade to normal. The safest way is to go to the Metro station, which also exists in Metropolis. Johnny and Ewy may be there, giving a few words of advice. Then wait for the train, and eventually it will come.