Geist

The Sin-Eaters

Second Edition

A Storytelling Game of Second Chances

Nothing is born which
Death makes not subject
of his state.
– Bhartrhari,
"Of Time the Destroyer"

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For Lily.

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A Brighter Morning

— Prologue —

Two women sat at the candlelit dining room table with their hands on the spirit board, unaware of the figure that hovered above them. Oliver knew them very well. Like all his tenants, Oliver had given them a "grace period," a time to settle into the house before he made himself known. He took that time to learn all about them. He knew that the older woman in the ponytail and long white t-shirt was named Jade, and that the younger woman in the full pajama set who kept her hair long and untamed was named Trisha. They were the daughters of Hari Patel, who still slept in his room on the other side of the house, where Oliver's parents slept when they were alive.

The Patels had fascinated Oliver from the moment they moved in. Hari was a single father who lived entirely within Oliver's walls, running a business from the room that had previously been a nursery and worshipping at a household shrine tucked away in a small closet. Jade and Trish left the house far more often. On bad days, when Oliver felt compelled to wander the house and re-create his own death, he'd watch them leave for school instead. Jade went to a university downtown, Trisha to a high school a few miles away. The schools had names he couldn't recognize and the subjects the women talked about sounded more like things that belonged in the pages of Amazing Stories than the world outside his window.

What excited Oliver most about the Patels was that Trisha could sense him. He was sure that he saw her looking at him from the corners of her eyes and that she shivered whenever he was near. He broke the grace period early, touching the bathroom mirror while she was brushing her teeth. She saw the imprint of vapor that his hand made. While it was disheartening to see her scream and bolt directly into the bathtub, the makeshift séance before him now was an encouraging sign. After years of reaching out and driving people away, someone was finally going to reach back.

Below him, the women talked.

"It's here," Trisha said. "I can feel it."

Jade rolled her eyes. Trisha couldn't see it in the dim light, but to Oliver it was clear as day.

Trisha laid her fingers on the planchette. "Let's get started."

Jade said, "Trisha, if this is some kind of prank…"

"It's not a prank. You saw the picture."

"The hand on the mirror? Any one of us could have done that."

Oliver hadn't breathed in decades but his chest rose and fell as if he were hyperventilating. He grabbed at the planchette. Trisha lifted her hands from it, and Oliver's fingers phased through the plastic.

"I saw it happen, right in front of me!" Trisha said. "And it's not just that! Sometimes I can hear things."

"Like now!" Oliver yelled. "Right now!"

She knitted her eyebrows and looked up at where he was. Jade leaned over the table. The creak of the floor boards caught Trisha's attention. Oliver stiffened at the sound.

"Trish, it's an old house. It's going to make noises."

Jade moved back into her chair, making a louder creak. Oliver squeezed his eyes shut. He kept saying "No" to himself, each repetition less steady.

"I know what an old house sounds like!" Trisha threw her arms up, gesturing to the whole house. "This isn't it. You can't hear it?"

"What am I supposed to be hearing?" Jade stomped a foot into the floor. "This?"

Oliver clasped his hands on his ears. "Not now!"

Mid-day. August. School's around the corner. The whole family goes out for a drive but he's at home. Slept in. Oldest child but just can't keep routine. Feels bad, wants to make it up, starts making lunch for everyone. Sees a car roll up, rushes out to greet them. Only it's not the Packard like it should be, it's the shiniest Rolls Royce he's ever seen…

Trisha put a finger to her lips. "'Now.' That's what I heard, 'now.' Listen!"

Jade stood up. Another creak.

Four well-dressed men come out of the car. He knows them now, recognizes the leader with the grin that's far too wide. They're not just here for Father's money this time. Boy sees the shining glint of silver in the man's hands, and tries to run…

"It's just the pipes, Trish." Jade walked over to the sink with sure, steady strides. Creaks and groans rose from the floor with every step. She turned on the faucet.

"Dad told me about this. We just have to run the water for a bit and it'll settle out."

Trisha whispered. "I-i-it's not the p-p-pipes."

Jade turned and saw vapor rising from her sister's mouth. It glowed in the candlelight. Goosebumps ran up her spine.

They catch him. Beat him down and break all his limbs. They stamp every tender part of his body until he feels bruises forming down his torso, between his legs. The floorboards creak as they pull them up. They bring in a shovel, dig a hole right next to him.

"Your pa squealed about our little arrangement," the man with the grin says. He's still grinning, maybe even wider now. "So your kin's dead. They're gonna find them, but your pa loved you an awful lot. So I got something special."

The boy sees the silver thing. A hacksaw…

Jade took a step towards her sister. The dining room table flew into the air and fell over, slamming the spirit board into the wall. The kitchen cabinets all flew open at once and every dish flew towards her. One shattered on her head and she tumbled to the floor.

Every door in the house opened and slammed in a chaotic pattern. Hari ran out of the room, demanding to know what the girls had done. The circuit breaker behind him burst and he was silent. Jade rose from the floor to see her sister staring at a man standing before her, sliced into parts and held together by the thinnest viscera.

Trisha whispered prayers under her breath as Oliver shambled towards her.

"Help me," he said. "It hurts."

ON

Introduction

The dead are all around us. They walk beside us on the streets, reach out to us with invisible hands, shout their needs with voices we don't hear. We turn away from the very thought of them, mumbling platitudes like "he's in a better place" or "she's at peace now."

He's not. She isn't. He's here, among us, trying desperately to make sure his children are looked after. She's trapped in an endless labyrinth of gray stone, slowly leeching away into nothingness while the man who stole her life's research goes unpunished. And so, when a grinning stranger with pale eyes and a broken-winged angel on his shoulder blows into town, they turn to him for help.

The dead are speaking. It's time to listen.

Themes

Geist: The Sin-Eaters is a game about people. Some of them are alive, some of them are dead, and some of them stand between the two, but they're all people.

Geist is about giving a voice to the voiceless, about standing up for the marginalized, about power and privilege and the responsibilities they carry with them.

Geist is a game about death.

Geist a game about hope.

Empathy

Every ghost story is, at its core, a tragedy: Someone died with something unfinished, and now they linger on, in the world but ignored by it, trying with the often-limited tools at their disposal to make the living understand them. Sometimes, when that doesn't work, they lash out in frustration, just so that people notice *something* is going on, but no matter how frightening the apparition, how violent the manifestation, there's still a human being at the core of it.

Sin-Eaters are the ones who understand that. They live in two worlds: the world of the living and the world of the dead. As they struggle to understand their own identity and the cultural heritage of Sin-Eaters who came before, they act as intercessors and speakers for the dead, helping ghosts finish their unfinished business and laying tormented souls to rest. They come into a haunting and see not the monster making the walls bleed and lashing out at the living, but the frightened father who just wants his child back.

Self vs. Service

Sin-Eaters have powerful motivators to pursue their own personal desires: Their Burdens drive them to resolve their unfinished business and their bond with their geist drives them to reach out to it and ease its suffering. On the other hand, they also have dramatic, firsthand evidence of how awful and oppressive the Underworld is. Resolving your own issues grants peace and passage beyond this vale of tears, but if you're gone, who will take up the fight? On the flip side, no one can live for the Cause alone.

Hope and Joy

Yes, this is a game about death and the dead, and ghost stories all have a core of tragedy, but **Geist** is not an angsty, gloomy game. It's a celebration of the memories

Truth and Lies

Sin-Eaters Are Possessed

False. The Bargain creates a symbiotic link between a powerful ghost and a recently-deceased person, but the geist does not subsume or control the Sin-Eater's body.

Sin-Eaters Have Come Back From the Dead

Not entirely true. Though the Bargain restores their bodies to biological "life" (i.e. they breathe, eat, have heartbeats, etc.), from a metaphysical standpoint, Sin-Eaters are counted among the dead. This means, among other things, that magic that specifically affects the living does not work on them, and that ghosts do not regain Essence when remembered by a Sin-Eater.

Sin-Eaters Are Immortal

False (though easily mistaken for true). While a Sin-Eater's geist can bring her back from fatal wounds, flesh-eating diseases, or terminal deprivation, eventually old age claims even the Bound. In addition, Sin-Eaters can be slain by attacks that echo their original death, or that incorporate the bane of their geists.

Sin-Eaters Speak With the Dead

True, and more besides. To the Bound, ghosts are as visible and as solid as the living. Sin-Eaters also have an aura that allows ghosts to Manifest more easily around them.

Sin-Eaters Lead Death Cults

True, though the phrase "death cult" has a pejorative element to it. Most Sin-Eaters organize *krewes*, fellowships of living, dead, and those in between, to stand against the Underworld and accomplish their goals. Many krewes are religious in nature, ranging from wholly constructed faiths to fringe sects of more established religions.

Sin-Eaters Can Change the World

Absolutely true.

of people who have passed on, seizing the pleasure there is to be had in this life and the next, because whatever comes after this world is a mystery. When you're dead, even the smallest indulgence reminds you of how sweet it is just to exist.

Looking Back to Look Forward

Sin-Eaters aren't an ancient, monolithic culture; they've been around the mass graveyard of history, and there's old wisdom to be found there, but it's modern thinking, progressive morality, and the audacity to stand up and say "the system is broken, let's fix it" that's going to change the world.

Sin-Eaters consider "nothing changes" to be a fail state. They're agitators, radicals, and punks. There's a term for Bound who don't want to get out there and change things (even if not on a global/cosmic scale): That term is "Storyteller character."

How to Use this Book

Geist: The Sin-Eaters is a storytelling game of second chances. It's a complete game, with everything you need to take a group of Sin-Eaters from character creation all the way to the end of the road. You can find extended rules in the **Chronicles of Darkness Rulebook**.

This book also contains the *Chronicle of the Dead*. The dead — a term which here usually means "ghosts," but also encompasses Sin-Eaters themselves and occasionally other, stranger beings — are a prominent part of the Sin-Eater's world, and the Chronicle of the Dead helps provide your game with a thematic focus and clear goals for play. The dead are trapped in a metaphysical system that seems designed to exploit and destroy them: Ghosts are trapped in the state of Twilight in the living world, bound to Anchors and able to communicate with the living only with great difficulty. Sinister shades called Reapers stalk them, and living necromancers and ghost-eaters see them as nothing more than expendable tools or even fuel. When their Anchors are destroyed, they are hurled screaming into the Underworld: a cold, subterranean otherworld that seems to feed on their very Essence.

A game of **Geist: The Sin-Eaters** focuses on a *krewe*, a mystery cult comprising Sin-Eaters, living mortals, and ghosts alike, and follows their battles against this system. It can be a small, intimate tale of keeping your own little patch of turf safe for the dead, a grand mythic epic that tears down the very Underworld itself, or even just a personal story of finding closure for the things that kept you from moving on.

Chapters

Chapter One: The Quick and the Dead describes the five *Burdens*, the reasons that Sin-Eaters cannot rest easy in their graves, but struck their Bargain to return to the world of flesh, Bound to a powerful ghost called a geist. It also reveals the five *archetypes* into which most Sin-Eater krewes fall.

Chapter Two: The Road Back covers Sin-Eaters themselves, their world, their society, and the friends and foes they're likely to encounter in the game.

Chapter Three: One Foot in the Grave tells you how to create a Sin-Eater character, and describes their strange powers and abilities.

Chapter Four: Old Laws details the rules of the Storytelling system, the mechanics that drive all of the **Chronicles of Darkness** games. It also covers systems unique to **Geist**, such as the rules that govern the Underworld and krewe actions.

Chapter Five: Antagonists delves into the principal antagonists of **Geist**, including the Reapers, Eaters of the Dead, mortal necromancers, Kerberoi, and even rival krewes.

Chapter Six: The Quiet Places provides sketches of potential settings for your chronicle in a variety of times and places throughout the world. It also describes several Deep Dominions, strange places within the Underworld where a ghost can gain a reprieve from its hunger… for a time, and at a price.

Chapter Seven: Ghost Stories contains advice for Storytellers on running **Geist**, as well as mechanics for the various endgame stories that can bring your chronicle to a dramatic end.

Appendix One: The Absent gives you all the information you need to create and play a ghost as a main character.

Finally, **Appendix Two: Conditions and Tilts** collects the various Conditions and Tilts used in **Geist** into a convenient, easy-to-reference location.

Storytelling Games

If you're an old hand at tabletop roleplaying games, this section is old hat to you. Go ahead and skip down to the section on what players and Storytellers are responsible for.

If **Geist** is your first storytelling game, welcome! A storytelling game is a kind of improvisational, cooperative way of creating a story. A group of friends (we recommend between three and five, but you can play with as few as two or as many as you like) gets together around a table or an online conferencing tool or the like. Most of you will create and control a single character, one of the protagonists of the story. One of you, however, takes the role of *Storyteller*. The Storyteller controls everything else about the world of the story: antagonists, incidental characters, what happens outside of the players' characters' control, and how the world reacts to their actions.

A lot of the time, this is all done as a simple conversation. The players say what their characters do or say, the Storyteller says what happens in response, and so on. When the stakes are high and there's a possibility of failure or interesting complications, the game rules step in to help adjudicate whether characters succeed or fail. Do you successfully exorcise the Reaper, or does it escape your trap? Does the necromancer shoot you, or do you dive for cover in time? Like that. Usually you'll roll a number of 10-sided dice, determined by your character's *Traits* (ratings that describe how good your character is at various things, like computer hacking or raw physical strength): any die that rolls an 8, 9, or 10 is a *success*. Usually, even a single success is enough to succeed at what you're doing, and five or more successes means you did exceptionally well. There are a lot of permutations and specific rules for things like fighting, using magic, and so on, but you can almost always fall back on the basic rule of "roll dice, look for 8s, 9s, and 10s" if you're not sure what to do next.

While players other than the Storyteller will generally be advocates for their characters' success, planning ways in which they can succeed, a lot of drama and fun comes from when things don't go well for the protagonists. Think of a television series. The most interesting episodes are often the ones where everything goes wrong for the characters until they find a way to turn it around. That said, the Storyteller should make sure characters have a chance to bounce back rather than constantly dumping suffering on them.

The Storyteller is responsible for…

…bringing the Chronicles of Darkness to life through description.

…deciding where scenes start and what's going on.

…portraying characters who don't belong to other players.

…involving each player and her character in the ongoing story.

…putting players' characters in tough spots, encouraging interesting decisions.

…facilitating the actions players' characters take, while making sure there are always complications.

…making sure that poor dice rolls affect but don't stop the story.

The players are responsible for…

…creating their own individual characters as members of the cast.

…deciding what actions their characters take.

…making decisions that create drama and help keep the story moving.

…highlighting their characters' strengths and weaknesses.

…confronting the problems the Storyteller introduces.

…developing their characters' personalities and abilities over time, telling personal stories within the overall story of the game.

Everyone is responsible for…

…giving other players chances to highlight their characters' abilities and personal stories, whether that's by showing them at their strongest or weakest.

…making suggestions about the story and action, while keeping in mind the authority of players over their characters and the responsibility of the Storyteller to occasionally make trouble.

Inspirational Media

Here are some books and movies that capture the tone and feel of **Geist.**

Books

Greg Palmer's *Death: The Trip of a Lifetime*. A somewhat humorous look at death rituals around the world: excellent inspiration for Sin-Eaters' culture.

Any of M. R. James' work. James is hailed as one of the truly great authors of the ghost story.

Tim Powers' *Expiration Date*, although it treats most ghosts as barely-sapient recordings of psychic trauma, was a tremendous influence on the Eaters of the Dead and on the concept of Ceremonies.

Seanan McGuire's *Sparrow Hill Road* follows a hitchhiking ghost through the invisible backroads of America and fairly oozes **Geist** flavor. As with *Expiration Date*, the principal antagonist of the book is fantastic inspiration for the Eaters of the Dead.

Movies & TV

Mama (2013, dir. Andy Muschietti) is perhaps the most quintessentially **Geist** movie out there. The titular ghost is a perfect representation of a geist: recognizably human but distorted and warped, willing to lash out violently to protect her Bound charges, and ultimately granted peace only when she's reminded of the person she was. If you watch no other inspirational media, watch this film.

ParaNorman (2012, dir. Sam Fell & Chris Butler) is pitched at kids, but offers a good look at what it's like to be the only one in town who can see the dead. That the "monster" is defeated not by fighting or exorcising it, but by understanding and sympathizing with it, is also highly relevant.

Coco (2017, dir. Lee Unkrich) is also aimed at a younger audience, but its depiction of the afterlife is a perfect example of what Sin-Eaters might want to make of the Underworld. Watch for the brief scene where the characters visit a shantytown of forgotten spirits for a look at the River Cities of the Underworld as it exists now.

The Lost Room (2006, created by Christopher Leone & Laura Harkcom) isn't about ghosts at all, but its story about strange, indestructible Objects with bizarre powers and the obsessed people who will do anything to possess them is excellent fodder for Mementos and Memento cults.

Glossary

Abiding, the: The **Burden** of those who died without leaving a legacy behind.

Absent, the: Ghosts who trade memories and hustle to survive.

Archetype: A broad classification of philosophy or religion into which most **krewes** fall.

Avernian Gate: A portal from the world of the living to the **Underworld**, found in every cemetery in the world and also in places stained by death.

Bargain, the: The agreement between **geist** and **Bound** which ties them together and gives them power.

Bereaved, the: The **Burden** of those whom death separated from someone or something they love.

Bonepickers: A **krewe archetype** that exploits the dead for material gain.

Bound, the: Anyone who has made the **Bargain** with a **geist**.

Burden: The spiritual weight or unfinished business that prompted someone to make the **Bargain** rather than pass on.

Ceremony: A magical ritual, usually related to ghosts or the dead in some way. Anyone who learns a Ceremony can use it.

Chthonian: A "native" of the Underworld, never properly alive and of strange and alien mind. Their very touch is deadly to ghosts.

Chthonic Gods: The deities of the Underworld, worshipped by Reapers, some ghosts, and living cultists. They may or may not exist in a literal sense.

Crisis point: A moment that tests a **Sin-Eater**'s **Synergy** and may result in her **geist** lashing out.

Deathmask: A particular type of **Memento** created when a **geist** is destroyed. Ghosts who wear a Deathmask inherit the destroyed geist's power.

Deep Dominions: Bizarre realms deep in the **Underworld** guarded by **Kerberoi**. Ghosts in Deep Dominions are safe from Essence drain so long as they obey the **Old Laws**.

Eater of the Dead: Living people who consume ghosts to gain power and immortality.

Elysians: A **krewe archetype** that sees immortality as their right and power as their privilege.

Ferryman: A being (sometimes a ghost, sometimes one of the **Bound**, sometimes something stranger) who conveys passengers down the **Rivers of the Underworld**… for a price.

Furies: A **krewe archetype** focused on redressing wrongs and helping the dead find justice.

Gatekeepers: A **krewe archetype** that seeks to keep the world of the living and the world of the dead strictly separate.

Geist: A powerful ghost whose human identity has been largely subsumed by the power of the **Underworld**. Most got that power by drinking from a **River of the Underworld**.

Haunt: The principal mystical powers wielded by the **Bound**, fueled by **Plasm** and **Synergy**.

Hungry, the: The **Burden** of those who refused to leave behind something from their living days.

Kerberos: The guardians of the **Deep Dominions** and enforcers of the **Old Laws**. Most appear as bizarre composite beings, and their origins are mysterious (pl. **Kerberoi**).

Key: A powerfully resonant form of death, which the **Bound** can tap into to fuel **Haunts** or gain **Plasm**.

Kindly, the: The **Burden** of those who seek to make amends for sins they committed in life.

Krewe: A mystery cult led by the **Bound**, with both living and dead celebrants.

Liminal Aura: The aura possessed by all **Bound** that makes it easier for ghosts to Manifest around them.

Lower Mysteries: The deepest parts of the **Underworld**, home to the **River Cities** and the **Deep Dominions**.

Memento: An object imbued with the resonance of death. A Memento has both a **Key** and a strange but often useful supernatural property.

Mourners: A **krewe archetype** that chronicles the stories of the forgotten dead and ensures that those stories are told.

Necromancer: A general term for any living magician who interacts with (and usually exploits) the dead regularly.

Necropolitans: A **krewe archetype** that focuses on making ghosts' afterlives into comfortable, affirming existences.

Ocean of Fragments, the: The ocean at the bottom of the **Underworld**. Those who plunge into its waters are stripped of their identities and ultimately dissolved.

Old Laws: The arcane rules of the **Deep Dominions**. Breaking them calls down the wrath of the Kerberoi.

Pilgrims: A **krewe archetype** that focuses on helping the dead resolve their own unfinished business.

Plasm: The semi-physical residue of ghostly Manifestations, which fuels the **Bound**'s supernatural abilities.

Reaper: A ghost who worships the **Chthonic Gods** and, with the power of a **Deathmask**, seeks to drag the dead into the **Underworld**.

River Cities: Shantytowns in the **Underworld**, built by ghosts who dredge castoffs from the **River** for food.

Rivers of the Underworld: The innumerable waterways of the **Underworld**, whose tributaries begin at every **Avernian Gate** and which ultimately drain into the **Ocean of Fragments**.

Sin-Eater: A **Bound** who actively fights to protect the dead from the **Underworld**, **Reapers**, and similar forces.

Synergy: A measure of the strength of the bond between a **Bound** and their **geist**.

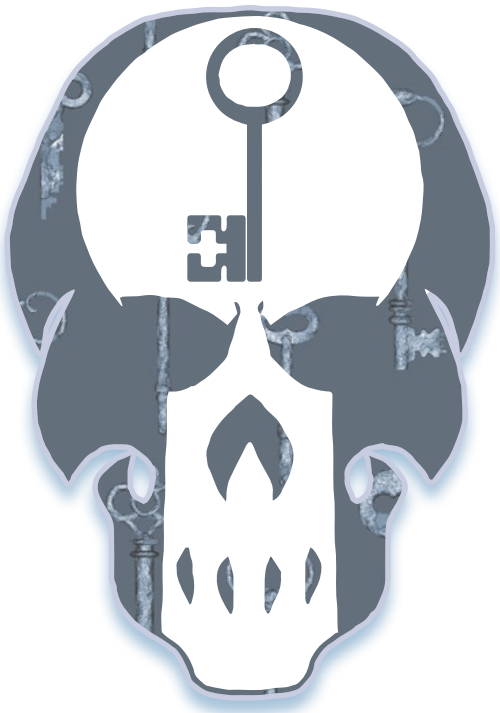
Thanatologists: A **krewe archetype** who see the dead as subjects for scientific study, nothing more.

Undertakers: A **krewe archetype** focused on preparing the living for death in the hopes of creating fewer ghosts to be trapped by the **Underworld**.

Underworld: The otherworld where ghosts go when they can no longer hold on in the living world. The Underworld leeches ghosts' Essence away until they are completely absorbed by the Underworld.

Upper Reaches: The "shallowest" parts of the **Underworld**, closest to the living world, home to small, desperate communities, strange ghost cults, and dead hermits.

Vengeful, the: The **Burden** of those who returned to see justice done for their own deaths.



A Brighter Morning
— Part I —

Leah wiped the sweat from her eyes and saw the Abandoned One standing before her. Long ago, when the riptide pulled her under, his large gray eyes and waxy skin had been a terror to behold. Now he was only a painful sight, both a reminder of better times and of her greatest failure.

The Abandoned One pointed toward the door. Leah put down the screw gun. Of course someone had come to see her in the middle of fixing the air conditioner. She stood up and popped her back.

She felt the sensation of a hard shove against her shoulder, the Abandoned One's way of asking if he should send the visitor away.

Leah mopped her forehead with a handkerchief. "No. I'll talk to 'em. Stay close."

She went to the door, the Abandoned One floating behind her. She looked over her shoulder and saw him smiling with his empty mouth. This was the first time they had spoken to each other for more than a moment in two weeks. She hadn't meant it to be that way, but the first week went by in a blur of crying fits and restless sleep, and in the second week she dived into fixing the house. Aidan's death seemed to have invited a myriad of problems into her home: The living room drywall cracked, the bed finally gave in, and now the air conditioner broke during the hottest part of the summer. The Abandoned One watched as she fixed these things, barely saying a word. Perhaps he was grieving in his own way, or feared that he would become his namesake if he left to take care of his own business.

Leah looked through the peephole. Mark wore his usual full business suit. The Open-Throated Saint stood beside him. He wasn't chatting over his phone's earpiece, which meant that this was serious.

She opened the door. Mark straightened his sweat-soaked tie. He smiled.

"Hot enough for you?" he said. The lacerations on the Saint's throat gurgled over, which was as close as she came to a greeting. Leah crossed her arms.

"Can we come in? Saint and I could really use some cool air."

"Air's broke," Leah said.

Mark's smile faded. He blinked the sweat out of his eyes. "Oh. Well. Do you want to talk about this in the car? It's probably boiling now, but after I start it up—"

The Abandoned One threw himself in front of Leah and loomed over Mark. The Open-Throated Saint growled and flexed her claws. He raised an arm to strike.

"That's enough!" Leah said to him. The Abandoned One looked at her, bewildered, and moved to the kitchen. The Saint glided forward. Leah glared at her, and she stopped.

"I'll just start over," Mark said. He raised his right hand, following traditional protocol. "As a High Priest of the Church of the Brighter Morning, I greet you, O High Priestess."

Leah sighed and raised her left hand. "I am honored to greet my follow traveler. What do you want, Mark?"

"We found someone. Old ghost, *real* old ghost. One of the parishioners knows someone who lives in his haunt. She got it to us before some con artist caught on. We need someone to help him pass on."

Leah grimaced. "You could have just called."

"You'd refuse if I did."

She nodded, too exhausted from the heat to lie. "You should get someone else."

"Leah, there isn't anyone else. The recruits barely know how to perform an exorcism, Oumil's taking a trip downstairs, I'm trying to make peace with Fifth Street, and Aiden's…"

Leah looked away from him. The Abandoned One reappeared in the entrance hallway. Mark cleared his throat.

"You're taking it better than any of us. You don't think so, but you put him to rest so quickly. I couldn't have done that."

"I wasn't going to let a Reaper take him," Leah said. "I'd never let anyone be trapped down there. Never."

"And that's why we need you. The word has to have hit the street by now, about the ghost, about what Fifth Street did to us. It's been so *quiet* lately, and the Saint's been telling me it's because no one's made a move. Not yet. If we allow one display of weakness, it's open season on everything we've worked for."

Leah wrapped her arms around herself. "Who is he?"

Mark pulled out his phone. "Kamala said that the witnesses didn't catch a name, but I did some research."

He swiped through websites and spreadsheets. "A lot of low-key hauntings that end in a huge outburst. The house is in Silver Star's old turf. They'd probably have taken care of it years ago, but no one's seen them since the Reaper attack."

He pinched out an obituary. "Here we are. The LaVoies all died in a car wreck, except for their oldest, Oliver. He went missing instead. Never found, foul play suspected but the case went cold. The old Krol family probably had a hand in it. Judging from the stories, I'd say he isn't very happy about not being found."

The Abandoned One rushed up, getting so close to the phone screen that his eyes took on a pale glow. The Open-Throated Saint inched forward but Mark motioned her to stay. The Abandoned One read the files with a wide grin.

"Kind of like you, huh?" Leah said to him.

The Abandoned One turned to her with expectant eyes. Leah's body was filled with a sad, nervous energy, but she felt a rising exuberance through her bones. She had to fight off the urge to smile. The last time he had felt so strongly about something that the feeling leaked into her body, she had been invited to join the Church. Following her geist's gut feelings was rarely a great idea, but what was there to gain out of denying him now?

"He wants to go, so I'll go," Leah said. "Any set time?"

"Tonight," Mark said. "The sooner we act, the better. Get your things together; I'll go make some calls." He clicked his ear piece on and walked towards his car. "I've got to negotiate the price with the clients. They've got to know we don't come cheap."

"Wait," Leah said.

Mark turned around, eyebrows raised.

"I need to pick up a new inverter. I'll give you the directions."

"Excuse me? Are you making me run your errand?"

Leah smiled. The Abandoned One took his place beside her, chest puffed up. "We don't come cheap, either."

– chapter one –

The Quick and the Dead

What makes a Sin-Eater? Dress the answer up however you like, it comes down to *Burden*. Each of the Bound died under the weight of something powerful. Responsibility. Greed. Loss. Regret. Rage. That weight draws a like-minded geist to her, inexorable as gravity, shapes her return from death, and drives her along her road.

The five Burdens are:

- **The Abiding:** Those who died with no legacy left behind. Abiding Sin-Eaters hold oblivion at bay until they can forge something that will last beyond them.
- **The Bereaved:** Those who lost someone dear to them — perhaps in the same incident that killed them, perhaps years before. The Bereaved scour the realms of the dead, seeking the fate of their lost loved ones.
- **The Hungry:** Those who left something behind they couldn't bear to let go. They haunt the remnants of their lives and accomplishments, protecting what remains and hunting down that which was stolen.
- **The Kindly:** Those who, in death, recognize a great wrong they did in life and return to make amends. The Kindly redress personal wrongs and work to dismantle systems of exploitation they once benefitted from.
- **The Vengeful:** Those who blame another — rightly or wrongly — for their deaths and seek redress for the wrongs done to them.

Sin-Eaters' brush with death leads them to found their own peculiar religions. Those faiths have been called many things: Mysteries, cults, churches, heresies — but since the early 20th century, spreading outward from Alabama and New Orleans to the rest of the world, the preferred term has been *krewe*.

There are very nearly as many krewes as there are Sin-Eaters, but they can be roughly divided by the broad strokes of their ethoi. The five *krewe Archetypes* are:

- **Furies:** Krewes that focus on balancing the scales of justice. They put right that which is wrong.
- **Mourners:** These Sin-Eaters remember the dead, especially those the living have forgotten. They bring light into the darkness of the Underworld and return with wisdom to share.
- **Necropolitans:** These krewes care for the dead, protect them from the depredations of the Underworld, and reunite them with loved ones across the veil.
- **Pilgrims:** To Pilgrims, death is a step along a journey to something greater. They help the dead release their Anchors and come to terms with their demise.
- **Undertakers:** Undertakers help the living get their affairs in order before they become a ghost's unfinished business. By changing how people perceive death and by understanding its metaphysics, they can change the game altogether.

The Abiding

"The world is my epitaph."

You could have been someone. Maybe you never were, maybe you had it and lost it. That doesn't matter. What matters is that you could have been. If you'd had a little more time. If you'd had a little more opportunity. If you'd had a little more guts.

Most people, the only mark they leave on this world is a name and two dates on a little slab of stone. You won't be one of those people. Not again.

The only real immortality is to create something greater than yourself: a skyscraper that will stand for decades, a political movement that shapes the culture of a nation, a criminal enterprise you can leave to your children. To be robbed of that is to be worse than merely forgotten; it's to be labeled *unimportant*.

The Abiding died wanting to change the world. They've bargained with death for the ultimate reward: a second chance to leave their mark.

The Weight

The Abiding left the world too soon, before they could secure a legacy for themselves or their family. They never made enough money for their family to thrive, didn't leave the world better for having lived in it, or just never got their name on a monument like they always wanted. Maybe they just put it off, or maybe they never had the resources to bring it to fruition, but either way, important work was left undone, and that's intolerable. The Abiding leave the dying to those who have accomplished all they wanted.

In death, a person can do things they couldn't in life. A failed politician in New Jersey has the chance to lift his family name out of the mud by lifting his old neighborhood out of poverty. A lonely writer never sold more than a handful of books before she died, but returns from the grave with a heart full of poetry.

Regardless of exactly how the Abiding die, it is always before their time, before they've been able to make a name for themselves, before they've left their mark on the world. One woman is crushed in a sudden sinkhole caused by a fuel line eruption beneath her on her way to the patent office. A social worker, trying to make an impact for the better, is stabbed by a drugged-out parent who didn't want to lose their daughter to the system. A mountain climber is trapped under collapsing rocks, left there to die of starvation and dehydration — all before he was able to set the record.

Others die with their legacy tarnished, maybe beyond repair. A professional athlete is accused of doping, but dies before she can disprove the accusations. A crooked prosecutor's illicit dealings come to light, putting the guilty as well as the wrongfully convicted back on the street. Going out as a disgrace is a huge motivator for many of the Abiding.

The ghosts drawn to an Abiding Sin-Eater are cut from the same cloth. They understand what it means to leave behind a lie or, worse, nothing at all. A man who choked during training for the national hotdog eating championships wants his record preserved for all time. The architect's shade wants her design for the Boreal Tower approved, not that hack Karnstein's.

The Bargain

With the power she gains from the Bargain, the Abiding can finally take life by the reins and change course, leaving a trail for everyone to follow along behind her. Death is unforgiving for most, but these Sin-Eaters know they have greatness within, something the world needs to know about or something they need to do to shape the world. This level of self-awareness draws a certain kind of geist.

Le Magistrat was once a powerful judge, appearing much like the Grim Reaper in long robes, and makes a great partner, giving the Sin-Eater a sounding board for the legal ramifications of their actions that will lead them to greatness. Likewise, the World Adventurer who speaks in multiple languages at once but never traveled the world like they truly wanted has equal interest in pursuing their own legacy, so joining with a Sin-Eater is a mutually beneficial partnership and can make for great stories to be told.

Other Abiding Sin-Eaters seem to draw geists with less ambition than themselves. The spirit is looking for a bandwagon to jump on, and the ambition the Sin-Eater oozes makes them the obvious choice. This kind of geist is easy to push around and manipulate, content to let the Sin-Eater take the credit for their deeds. As a matter of fact, their successes may prove only to push the Bound further in their own goals. An overrated and disgraced movie critic calling themselves The Voice of Reason may be just the geist to make a Bargain with an aspiring director who never got to put her vision on film. All the tricks of the trade he's learned can help her avoid pitfalls, while simultaneously validating his own opinions.

The Unquiet

The law offices of Espinosa and Bolton started small and humble, but Javier Espinosa had dreams of becoming a household name one day. Every day, he hoped for a national embezzlement scandal or celebrity murder to fall into his lap, but it never happened. Instead, he began investigating the local gangs in hopes of starting a class action. But bangers are notoriously concerned with crusading attorneys, and Javier ended up hung upside down by the gang's enforcers, bleeding from his throat. Bangers aren't concerned at all with what they say around the dead, however, so he came back with plenty of evidence after making a deal with the Watchdog, a geist who guards the local cemetery. Who knew all he had to do was die to land the biggest case of his career? Now Javier has all the tools necessary to make a name for himself.

Giorgia's Bistro in Positano received several critics' choice awards, and its owner, Giorgia Esperanza, made a fine name for herself. Giorgia had focused on her work so much, her family was left in shambles when she choked on a link of sausage while working late in the kitchen. Through the darkness of death, she was greeted by a gaunt thing in ragged finery called the Epicurean, who offered her a second chance. When she returned, her children were already squabbling over their inheritances from the fortune she had acquired. It would take time, but she was determined to put her family back together, while also working on a number of new recipes.

Rachel Amado competed for Brazil in Rio and walked away with a silver in gymnastics. It was the most beautiful moment in her life, but her glory was smashed when she was caught sleeping with an athlete from another country, and her photos were spread all over the internet. At first it was nothing, but the constant news coverage and slut shaming was too much after a while and she decided to end it all. Her geist, known as The Gold, offered her power, a way to reclaim her glory and inspire others, the very thing Rachel wanted. She stepped back into the world with renewed eyes, and renewed spirit.

The Faith

Necropolitans: The excitement of having a second chance, not to exact revenge or chase after lost loved ones, but to make the world better falls right in line with

the Necropolitans. The Abiding also have a vested interest in throwing the best, most flamboyant parties so their reputation among the Bound also rises. It never hurts to have a worthy legacy in both sides of your life.

Furies: Some Abiding Furies take up the tradition to mete out some personal justice, targeting any and everyone who might have a stake in ruining their legacy. Your competition for the upcoming promotion? There's got to be something she has to pay for. Your daughter's unemployed, loser husband? What dirt could you find on him to make her leave?

Mourners: Not only are the Abiding interested in their own legacy, but they understand the importance of others' legacies being kept in pristine condition. They pay close attention to crossing every "t" and dotting every "i," leaving nothing out that would change the story being told. Every story is worthy of being recorded so no one is forgotten.

Pilgrims: Helping the less fortunate is a great way of building one's reputation. If your legacy is broken in the land of the living, why not see about raising your reputation amongst the dead? It may not have been your original plan, but the Abiding are nothing if not flexible.

Undertakers: Sitting back and hoping things fall into place is not really the path of an Abiding. They prefer to take the clay — ghosts — and mold them into a better self. Successful Abiding Undertakers have learned to counsel others so they can mold their own clay.

The Epitaph

The Abiding's goal is to leave a lasting impression on whomever they interact with. This points to primary Social Attributes and Skills in most cases, usually with secondary Mental Attributes for help with creating social and marketing strategies. Socialize, Subterfuge and Persuasion are easy picks for the Abiding's Skills, but don't forget other utility-type Skills like Streetwise or Stealth that can give them an edge on the streets. Most Abiding have a high rating in the Skill that reflects their legacy: Crafts, Computers, Medicine, or Science, for example.

The Others

The Bereaved: Focus on more than just one person, and you'll see a whole world that needs your influence.

The Hungry: I try not to stand downwind of these Sin-Eaters; they reek of greed and self-importance.

The Kindly: And what do you think wronging that person did to your legacy? You've got to think about these kind of things.

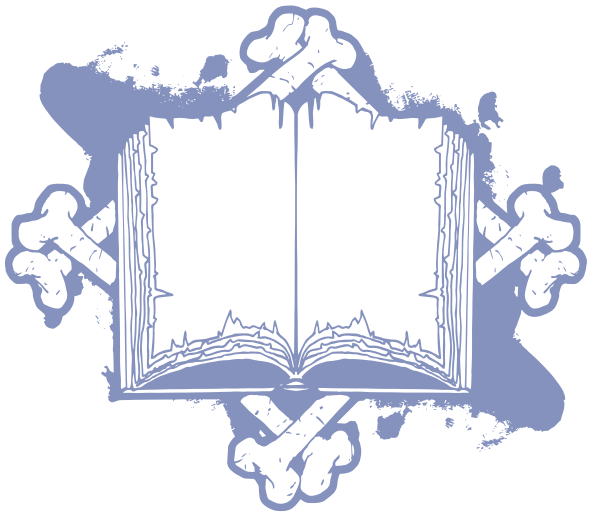
The Vengeful: Using anger as your primary tool only brings ruin to whatever you touch.

The Library Merit gives the Abiding an edge on long-term projects related to their legacy, while Striking Looks is very helpful for getting them noticed even before they show off their talents. Encyclopedic Knowledge lets them impress others, Iron Stamina helps them go farther than others, and Social Merits like Fame or Inspiring show the impact their legacy already has.

The Caul Haunt allows the Abiding to push their physical form beyond what a normal person can accomplish, which is often the first step to greatness. The Memoria allows the Abiding to conjure memories and phantasms, ensuring that she's remembered as she wants to be. The Tomb takes the idea of rebuilding one's life and applies it outward, letting the Sin-Eater fix what's broken, mending or recreating greatness in their wake.

Concepts: Alluring dancer, once-incompetent dropout with something to prove to his parents, outstanding but underappreciated stage magician, excitable therapist, irritatingly curious reporter

Haunts: The Caul, The Memoria, The Tomb



The Bereaved

"Have you seen this boy?"

When you die, you go into a warm, happy light where all your dead friends and relatives are waiting to greet you. That's what they say, right? Of course that's bullshit, and you found that out the hard way. There's only darkness and cold and the absence of them.

They might not be here, but they're out there somewhere, and not all the Rivers of the Underworld will keep you apart.

Have you ever loved someone so much, you'd run to the edge of the Earth for them? The Bereaved has come back from the dead for just that, the promise of a reunion with someone who meant the world to them but is now dead. Even in their own death, they can't help but despair at their continued loss and want a way out of it for themselves, and for those they have lost before.

The Weight

"Nothing makes a room feel emptier than wanting someone in it." Few people know what it means to truly lose. They might have lost a job, but they can just get another. Losing a family pet is heartbreaking, but humanity has also become accustomed to simply replacing the animal with a younger, cuter model. The same replacement method overtakes the institution of marriage when couples that should have never been together decide it's too hard to continue. Every so often, however, a person enters your life whose loss leaves it barren and unfulfilled, making it impossible to truly move on in any meaningful way. Whether it was the slow deterioration of a loved one or the sudden loss of a child, the Bereaved have experienced this special kind of hardship, and it is the thing that motivates their every action, their every breath, their every thought. It is the kind of pain that sticks with a soul for years or decades; it never truly fades, it's never truly forgotten. Even if the Bereaved finds temporary moments of happiness, it comes crashing down when they realize the person they would want to share that moment with isn't there.

Upon their death — which might be at the same time as the person who filled the hole in their heart, or long after — the offer to get that person back is put on the table. Some believe they'll simply go on to the next life and instantly be with their loved ones, but one glance at the black Underworld and the chaos of the multitude of wandering ghosts is enough to focus their attention to the matter at hand... finally reuniting with their beloved so they can be together in this new version of the afterlife. The Bereaved don't have a single method for how to effectively do this, however. At times, one Sin-Eater may simply help anyone also looking for their loved one in hopes that finding them will put them closer to their own goal. Others create elaborate plans on entering the Underworld to retrieve their beloved, but this can only happen after extensive investigation into which realm of the abyss they might be located. Of course, some simply hope against hope that luck will bring them together and rebuked death just for the chance of doing that. It should be noted that not all love is romantic in nature. Blood brothers, family members, and even best friends can all qualify for becoming the Bereaved's focus. Then there are those who mourn a metaphorical ghost, such as seeing the "death" of their hometown or simply not having the courage to face someone, spurring the death of that relationship.

The Bereaved would argue that they died the day their beloved was taken from them. In some cases, this is literal: Her car skids on black ice, flips, tumbles, and the last thing she sees is her family crushed by crumpled metal. In others, it's metaphorical: After his husband of 50 years passes on, it's as though a spark inside was snuffed out. He's dead within a year, maybe two. Many Bereaved, after the loss of the most important person in their lives, take their own lives to speed along their reunion, not realizing the often even longer road ahead of them this creates.

Death itself is a state where pain and anguish dominate, and ghosts often look for like-minded beings to

surround themselves with. A Sin-Eater fixated on their own personal loss is perfect for their purposes, often giving them the ability to see the pain of loss, the same pain they feel, in others. Every ghost is asked if they can help find the person the Bereaved misses, and most will help outright because they truly understand what it means to lose. When it comes to the Bereaved helping the ghost, however, it often becomes harder to do. If the search takes too long, they may not only lose hope for the ghost, but for their own journey. There is a delicate balance with hope and belief, and interacting with others sharing the same pain can often exacerbate it in one direction or another.

The Bargain

Making the Bargain with a geist holds many secrets to the Underworld for the Bereaved. The geist has stuck around and become powerful enough through experience and survival instinct, things that will undoubtedly become useful as they pursue their beloved. As much as they might want to, the Bereaved seldom draw geists who are as downtrodden or depressed as themselves. No, the geist usually has a spark of adventure, a self-confidence that the Sin-Eater may lack. They become two halves to a whole with time, developing the fortitude to overcome any hurdles that may present themselves. Promises made can be as simple as "I'll help you get your son back," or as complex as "I have a map of the Underworld and we could go there together for a price." Different Sin-Eaters require varying levels of proof, but they are often desperate enough to take the geist at their word if there's even a glimmer of hope — since hope is in such short supply for the Bereaved.

Of course, it's important for every Sin-Eater to realize that no geist enters the Bargain without wanting something in return. A geist of a Manipulative Parent may just want to be able to hold an "I told you so" over someone already emotionally damaged. They are drawn to the Sin-Eater, seeing their emotional dependency and using it to prop themselves up as the guide. Another geist embodying the concept of Grief may offer the Bereaved the Bargain as a way to fulfill both their goals at the same time. They may even demand help with their own deep sadness before they'll disclose a lead to the Sin-Eater's beloved, or teach the Bound how to utilize their Haunts more effectively by practicing them on someone with whom he has a personal ax to grind. This kind of emotional blackmail is especially effective on the Bereaved. After all, they'd give almost anything to be reunited.

The Unquiet

It was a hard road for Tamika Green, as her battle with cancer grew worse and worse by the year. At least she had years, though. Her cancer group support introduced her to Bethany, the brightest woman she'd ever known. The two became inseparable as they fought their cancer as a team. But teamwork is no match for squamous cell carcinoma, and the sickness claimed Bethany after just a few months. Tamika followed not long after, but she did not give in to death, making a bargain with the Goyet Man, a cannibal shade so ancient it might not even be an anatomically modern human. As a Sin-Eater, she is cancer-free but continues to attend survivor groups, which many ghosts who were not so lucky frequent. Maybe, one day, she and Bethany will meet again.

The Others

The Abiding: What good is a legacy after you are gone? It's the people that you should care about.

The Hungry: Some of us can be so selfish.

The Kindly: I wish I could do good for the sake of it sometimes.

The Vengeful: Show me a man who knows what justice is, and I'll show you a man out for revenge.

Xiao Hong cried herself to sleep almost every night after she was forced to give up her daughter. Her husband insisted it was her patriotic duty to have only one child, and they had yet to have a son to ensure their legacy. When she became pregnant again, it was too much to bear, and Hong killed herself to save the soul of the girl a soothsayer told her she was destined to birth. Together with the geist calling itself the Caregiver, Xiao Hong now scours the Underworld in hopes of finding the daughter she never met, if only to say how sorry she is. The Caregiver itself has amnesia, and often believes every child's soul is her lost child, dragging Hong with her in an effort to save them all.

When he was eight, Miles' mom left their family home and never returned. The police looked everywhere, and he and his father watched the news constantly, but she had just disappeared. This loss shaped the rest of the young boy's life, prompting him to become a private investigator, so he could help people and secretly continue the search for his mother. Being shot by a client's angry, cheating spouse didn't deter his need for the closure he'd wanted since he was a kid. The way he sees it, now he just has more places to look. His geist, the Bookie, always has an ulterior motive behind his assistance. If making a quick buck is what it takes to find his mom, though, Miles is on board.

The Faith

Necropolitans: Many of the events thrown by Bereaved Necropolitans are small, intimate gatherings, instead of debaucherous parties. The thought of their beloved is always in the back of their mind, making true enjoyment in the moment hard to accomplish most of the time. Those who can get over themselves may gather as many ghosts together as possible in hopes that one of them will be the person they are looking for.

Furies: A Bereaved's sense of justice is often muddled by their personal losses, but still they may attempt to follow the path of a Fury. They do become less bloodthirsty than other Burdens, knowing that the loss of life can be impactful, even if it's a supposed "bad guy's" life. They often find the path of peace the best course of action.

Mourners: Becoming a Mourner is an easy choice for a Bereaved. They have already encapsulated and recorded every memory of their beloved, usually kept in some kind of journal or other memento. As a Mourner, they can assist others with recording their memories as well, something that is both therapeutic and powerful.

Pilgrims: Wandering the earth to help resolve attachments and destroy Anchors that keep ghosts in this world is definitely a noble occupation. The Bereaved often gravitate to this krewe to help thin the herd, and hopefully get a better view of their beloved once the crowd is gone. Every soul they aid is one more ghost out of their way.

Undertakers: Many Bereaved become Undertakers for one very real reason: They are crazy enough to make interacting with ghosts a normal part of their existence, even if they do it in their own way. They recognize their journey is both completely separate and yet parallel to ghosts who may need their help, giving them objectivity when assisting ghosts. Their hands-off approach makes it easier to focus on their primary mission, as well.

The Epitaph

The Bereaved know what they want and have to be strategic about getting it. These characters overwhelmingly gravitate to Mental Attributes. Choosing either Physical or Social Attributes as their secondary Attributes is up to the individual, and helps to shape the methods they use. Skills like Academics, Computer, Survival, Empathy, Politics, and Persuasion will carry them a long way and make their job easier. They prefer to watch and learn before approaching if they can.

The Closed Book Merit succinctly describes how many of the Bereaved appear to others. Mental Merits like Trained Observer, Multilingual, or Indomitable make it hard to say no to them. The Bereaved also have a penchant for collecting Mementos, and it is not unheard of to spend the majority of a character's dots on that Merit alone.

As far as Haunts go, the Bereaved have an interesting mix. The Curse is great for hexing fools, usually to show someone what they have and how quickly it can be taken from them. The Shroud cloaks and hides the Bereaved, allowing them to remove themselves from the world of the living and sink into their own despair. They should be careful how often they utilize this power. The Oracle comes from their connection to death, not just their own, but that of their beloved. It grants particular insight into destiny itself, helping them to lay out their strategies with time to spare.

Concepts: Lost child looking for a new family, betrayed cop, grumpy taxi driver, sympathetic gravedigger, inquisitive forensic pathologist

Haunts: The Curse, The Oracle, The Shroud

The Hungry

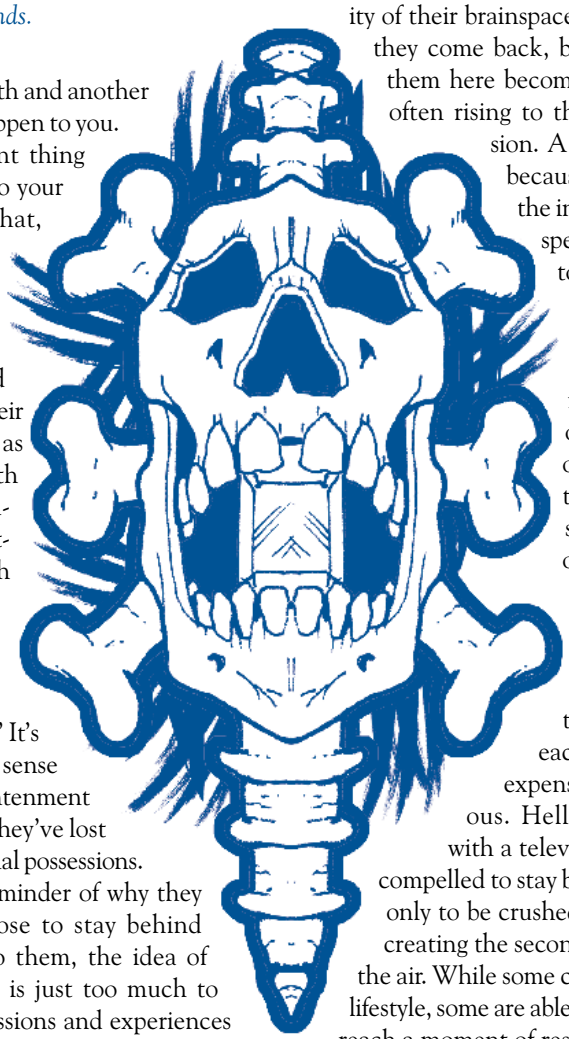
"Turns out they were right: you can't take it with you. Nobody said anything about coming back for it."

In the olden times, you would be buried with all your prized possessions. Your trusty sword, your favorite tools, maybe even your loyal hound. They knew, see, that you'd need them in the next life. You get that.

In the olden times, they also told stories about the unquiet dead, who would visit terrible curses upon those who stole from their grave mounds.

You get that, too.

It's one thing to respect death and another to acknowledge that it will happen to you. Then it's an entirely different thing to simply deny death's right to your soul. The Hungry do just that, ignoring death and returning to the life they once had, attaching themselves to the things they left behind. They are almost fully encompassed in their attachments, seeing their possessions and experiences as the very thing to stave off death itself. Obtaining even more allows them to remain a Sin-Eater and fills their new lives with intrigue and adventure.



The Weight

"You can't take it with you." It's a common saying those with a sense of pseudo-metaphysical enlightenment use to cheer people up when they've lost their home, car or other material possessions. For the Hungry, it is but a reminder of why they made their Bargain and chose to stay behind but split between worlds. To them, the idea of giving up what they've built is just too much to bear, enough that their possessions and experiences become a very real part of their being. Why would a world-traveling playboy want to leave their considerable wealth behind? Why would a genetic researcher leave before her world-changing vaccine was completed? What would you give for the chance to travel to Machu Picchu like you always wanted to, though you never found the time? The Hungry are attached to their old life, to the point of essentially disregarding death itself to return to what they have. The Hungry can't take it with them, but they sure as hell aren't going to leave it behind, either.

Few of the Hungry come back for the essentials like food, shelter, or other sensible things; they are instead obsessed with the things that probably took up the majority of their brainspace in life as well. Not only have they come back, but whatever it was that kept them here becomes the sole reason they exist, often rising to the level of destructive obsession. A Sin-Eater who stayed behind because she was never happy with the image she saw in the mirror may spend their time under the knife to perfect a body that is now powered by death. Another Bound who stayed behind to experience every culinary masterpiece the world has to offer may experience quite the opposite, gaining more weight than their body can reasonably support as they eat their way out of the majority of their problems. Even the Sin-Eater who simply wanted to travel to one place to fulfill their dream won't be happy until they've flown around the world, each destination becoming more expensive and increasingly dangerous. Hell, if sufficiently preoccupied with a television show, the Bound may be compelled to stay behind to complete the season, only to be crushed when it gets cancelled, thus creating the secondary goal of getting it back on the air. While some can get caught in this obsessive lifestyle, some are able to calm their active brains and reach a moment of resolution at times.

In many cases, the Hungry feel like they've been robbed of their life... which is why they feel empowered to take it back. Few die due to self-inflicted wounds, and instead are killed by outside forces. They aren't the kind to seek revenge for their death itself, however; a Sin-Eater may simply be blinded by her cravings for wealth to even notice the murderer creeping up behind them. To him, she

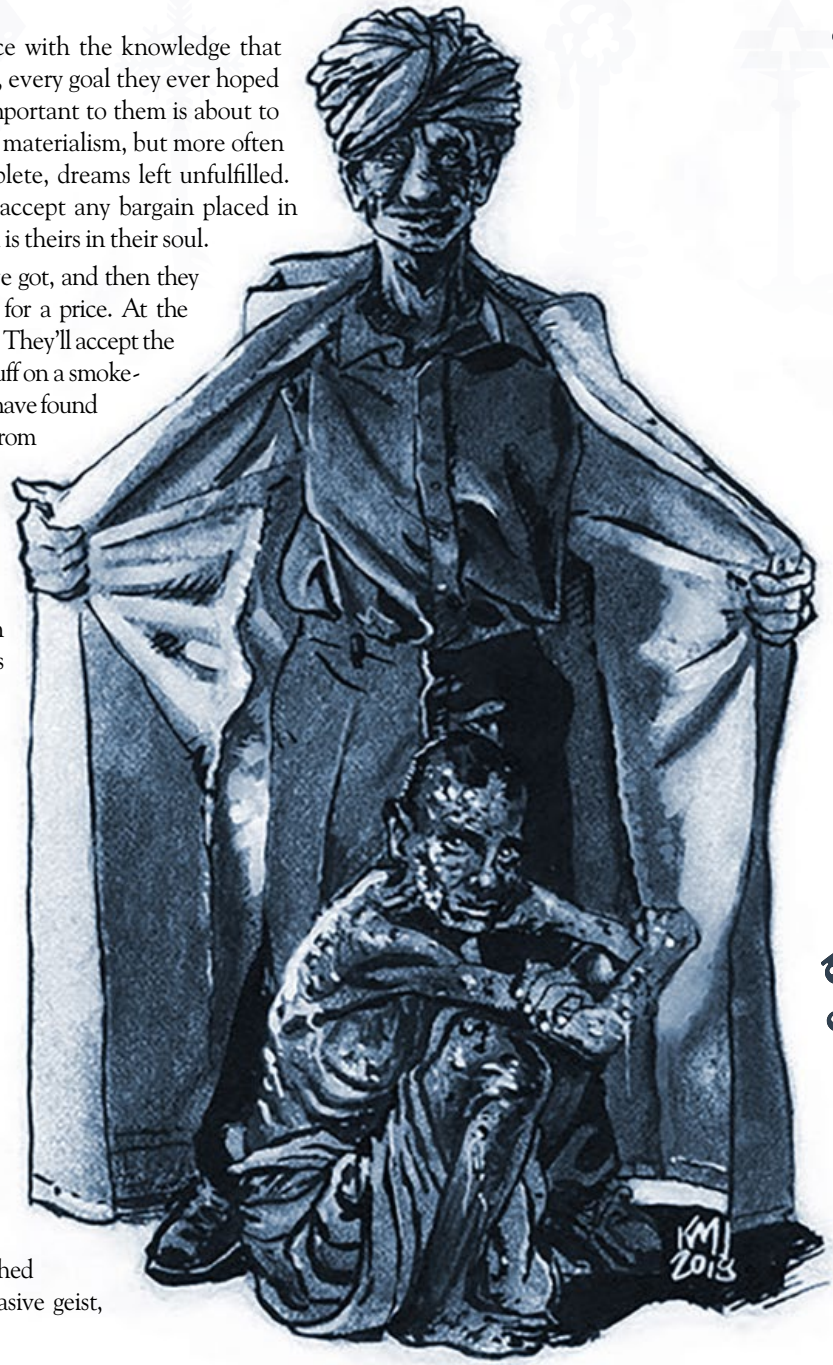
was the source of his misery, having stolen everything from him in her schemes to steal his promotion. To her, he was just jealous of the life she'd built for herself. Another timid Bound was thrown out of a party because he didn't fit the crowd, hitting his head on the way out and bleeding. His goal is not revenge, but to learn how to become more outgoing and expressive, a task many struggle with every day. Likewise, it could be that the Hungry died doing the thing he hoped for, such as dying during a plane crash on his way to his destination wedding. Sure he's saddened by the death of his wife, but it was the relaxing beaches of Hawaii that brought him back from the grave.

The Hungry attract the kinds of ghosts connected to what they've come back for, ranging from a ghost into the vintage cars the Sin-Eater has been restoring to a ghost haunted by the need to look young if the Bound returned to ensure they got the best picture taken of them for their gravestone. Sadly, whether the ghosts are helpful or harmful, they'll never truly register to one of the Hungry as they would to other Sin-Eaters. Ghosts are largely seen for how they can be used to get the Hungry more, and if they can't, they are summarily dismissed or helped as a way to get them to leave on a permanent basis. This is also a weak spot many Hungry have, as ghosts can sense their weakness and exploit it to manipulate the Sin-Eater into any number of different tasks. She may not want to break into a lab and steal a secret formula, but the ghost knows where to find the last limited-edition stamp that could finish her collection. The Bound is defined by what they want and their denial to give it up... and not always in a good way.

The Bargain

The Hungry stare death in the face with the knowledge that everything they've worked to achieve, every goal they ever hoped to accomplish, everything that was important to them is about to be undone. It may be about wealth or materialism, but more often than not it's about a task left incomplete, dreams left unfulfilled. They rail against this and will often accept any bargain placed in front of them to not lose what they feel is theirs in their soul.

They hold on with everything they've got, and then they hear a voice tell them they can stay... for a price. At the moment of death, one can't be too picky. They'll accept the Robber Baron's Bargain, sealed with a puff on a smoke-stack cigar. The geist is equally happy to have found a profoundly willing host, to keep them from oblivion. From that time on, though, the Hungry are often more linked to their geist than other Sin-Eaters. They are partners in whatever endeavor they undertake, neither ever wavering from the unified middle finger they have given to death itself. As long as the Hungry has been sated recently, they'll gladly give time to their geist to pursue whatever it is they want... especially if it is even more of the same. They can become a pair of intrepid adventurers, taking on anything from trawling the ruins of ancient Aztec cities to figuring out the intricacies of first-person shooting-game competitions to seeing how many sexual conquests they can rack up in record time. As long as they keep their souls aligned, there is little they can't accomplish together.



The Unquiet

Daan De Vries died in the woods, crushed by a tree he felled himself to build his dream home. He was approached by the Lumberjack, a crude but persuasive geist,

The Others

The Abiding: It's hard enough to keep what you have already, but these guys want to build something new. Good luck with that.

The Bereaved: I totally get them. If I lost what was most important to me, I'd be upset, too.

The Kindly: I envy someone caring about others so much... No, no, honey, I said on the rocks. *Sigh* It's just so hard sometimes.

The Vengeful: Letting someone get under your skin like that can't be good for you.

who offered another shot at his dream in exchange for defending the woods from trespassers. But when it was finally finished, that dream home felt hollow, empty. *Something* was missing, and Daan became obsessed with finding it. Over the years, he's built nearly a dozen cabins in his woods, but never captured that ephemeral something. Occasionally others try to occupy his cabins, but he returns to keep his pieces pristine — with the help of his trusty ax if necessary.

A decade of research and over a million dollars in funding, and Chetan Ghosh still hadn't cracked the secret to the HIV/AIDS vaccine. His team had come so close so many times, but the trials didn't go nearly as well as projected and getting grants wasn't becoming any easier. On his deathbed at 80 years old, Chetan felt he had failed his country by not completing his vaccine, but as the white lights came to him so did the voice of another scientifically minded geist, calling itself the Tattered Surgeon and offering to aid in finishing his work. He didn't hesitate one moment, and returned to his work in Pune a shriveled corpse of a man, in hopes of saving the world one day with the creeping voice of his geist whispering in his ear.

The glitz and glamour of Hollywood is often too much for anyone to resist. Once pulled into the limelight, like the movie industry's current darling Kristen Lopez was, even death is no escape, as the Tastemaker coaxed her from her white lights and back into the spotlight. Now, Kristen scours script after script looking for her next big role, not afraid to rip the heart out of any other starlet that stands in her way if her agent suggests it.

The Faith

Necropolitans: What do the Hungry not have to celebrate? Choosing to become Necropolitan is an easy choice for most Sin-Eaters ecstatic with the fact that they escaped death and proud to share their happiness with anyone else. In their efforts to make their own lives better, there is a trickle-down effect that others benefit from as well.

Furies: Hungry Furies come off as corrupt cops, vigilant for justice but willing to bend the rules. They are more keenly aware of what is not only unfair, but wholly unjust and being as flexible as possible eventually leads to the best outcome. It often happens that their targets seem to have something they want, as well, as they mix their justice with their vice. Even if justice is blind, it often has deep green eyes.

Mourners: The Hungry make fine Mourners, especially those with a high sense of empathy. They acknowledge that their deep needs differ little from what the dead want. They are often quite interested in what the dead have to say, delving deep into their wealth of knowledge and sifting through it in hopes of finding a nugget they can use to their own advantage.

Pilgrims: Helping ghosts get rid of their attachments, usually for a price. Hungry Pilgrims certainly care for their charges, but their relationship often becomes a matter of "do as I say, not as I do." This can cause some tension in their interaction, as the Sin-Eater plays with how they present themselves, but the end result is the same.

Undertakers: The Undertakers handle the dead in their charge much like a scared-straight program, showing them the horrors that come with obsessive personalities and helping them get over their own. They take a very hands-on approach, often not leaving the ghost's side until they are certain the lesson has been learned.

The Epitaph

While it sometimes takes muscle to keep what you have, seldom do the Hungry have an abundance of Physical Attribute dots. Instead, they usually have Mental and Social Attributes as their primary and secondary level respectively. As the Hungry are often less removed from the world of the living than other Sin-Eaters, they excel in Skills like Animal Ken, Computer, Drive, Medicine, and Socialize. These assets give them the tools to find what they need, get to it without too much trouble, and deal with many an obstacle when they get there.

Resources is likely an important Merit available to the Hungry, essentially gauging just how successful they'll be in getting some of the things for which they are known for sticking around. Money opens a lot of doors. Not to mention those Hungry who are completely defined by their wealth. Other helpful Merits include Good Time Management, Fame, Striking Looks, Fast-Talking, Taste, and other things that reflect their inborn abilities.

The Marionette allows them to handle their business without lifting a finger, levitating weapons and items on a whim. The Caul allows them to manifest their primary focus outward with powerful transformations. A Hungry attached to his money may be able to cause razor-thin paper cuts to his enemy, while one obsessed with Aztec culture may turn into a jaguar warrior ready to carve their target's heart from their chest. The Boneyard reflects the Sin-Eater's connection to things outside of themselves, allowing them to haunt locations and create wicked horrors the likes of which have never been seen before.

Concepts: Tightfisted treasure-hunter, grandmother who never got to live the life she wanted, patient dancer, accountant-turned-bookie, the one and only amusing auto mechanic

Haunts: The Boneyard, The Caul, The Marionette

The Kindly

"I'm not looking for your forgiveness. I do what I do so I can one day forgive myself."

So here you are. Dead. Look back at your life — did you live the best one you probably could? Probably not. Maybe you pretended not to have any spare change for that homeless person. Maybe you only voted in the big national elections. But maybe you did something worse. Something you devoted your life to making right, only to discover when you died that you hadn't even come close to balancing the scales.

What would you do to have another chance to fix it?

The Kindly did someone wrong in their past and were so overcome with regret that they'd make any kind of deal to make their wrongs right. They've accepted their death as part of a bigger design, but don't want to go until their affairs are put in order. Of course, some affairs are easier to fix than others.

The Weight

"Maybe all one can do is hope to end up with the right regrets." But what happens when the end comes too soon? When the tides of fortune don't go the way you want, or your fate is sealed before you get to say sorry. This is the karma the Kindly must deal with, faced with the knowledge that they've done something so incredibly terrible, so regrettable that they'll never be able to make amends. Or will they? The Kindly have a mission they have stayed behind to fulfill, one very personal to their soul, and one that tells a story about their place in this world before and after their death.

How they go about making their amends depends on what wrong they've committed and the Bound's disposition. A Sin-Eater who stays behind because he cheated on his wife and neglected his children becomes his family's protector, defending them from harm. One who murdered an innocent with her car after having one too many stays behind to help others who suffer from alcoholism to make better choices.

Most of the Kindly die suddenly and usually accidentally. They seldom have time to rectify all they've done wrong in their lives or say long-overdue words to loved ones. One suddenly loses her balance and falls off the third story during a roof party. Another drowns during a fishing expedition, never having repaid the money she "borrowed" from the company pension. Other Sin-Eaters are directly targeted by those they have wronged, their victims. The mother who lost all her money in the Bound's Ponzi scheme finally drums up the courage to pull the trigger on the one who ruined her family. The guy whose wife the Bound slept with gets his friends together to dole out some street justice. When the Kindly meets her death and her life flashes before her eyes, she continuously returns to this one niggling moment, her prime regret that she would give almost anything to alter.

This need to do good has a way of attracting ghosts of a similar vein. The ghost of a fire chief who wants to help families trapped in terrible situations leads the way to people in need. It becomes a time-management challenge for the Kindly, as they are constantly surrounded with people in need... but they know they ultimately cannot help them all. A sob story about the kid in danger the ghost left behind or a family who desperately needs the Sin-Eater to return a bag of money to them may just be enough to get the Bound to act on sentiment alone, but they can't do both. Dealing with others' problems too much can also lead to their own Aspirations falling to the wayside, so any Kindly Sin-Eater must be careful not to forget why they made their Bargain in the first place. They already have their goals and the goals of their geist to worry about, after all.

The Bargain

In their death, the Sin-Eater sends out the need to make amends for a Sin-Eater's crimes and misgivings like a beacon, a final plea to the universe to not let it end without making things right. Geists attracted to the Kindly also have their own wrongs to right, and seek a partner to help bring that mission to fruition... together. A Solemn Girl who feels guilty for the extreme cyber-bullying she committed on a girl who committed suicide may seek a Kindly to ally with, appearing as lines of code with just a saddened face, as might the Blank Badge, a police officer who shot an unarmed man in the heat of the moment, destroying his life and the life of his victim, appearing in his patrolman's uniform and with a featureless face.

The path to hell is paved with good intentions, however, and a Bound's hopefulness and positivity are tools a clever geist can exploit. One may be the wretched soul of a chess player who sees their Sin-Eater as a pawn, playing on her Burdens every step of the way. Of course, he is well trained in subterfuge and would never let his Bound know the real truth of their unique relationship.

While rare, Kindly Sin-Eaters caught up in an accident of extreme emotional attachment at their moment of death may even take on their victim as a geist. So, a Bound who murders her husband and then turns the gun on herself in an elaborate murder-suicide may see the ghost of her lover instantly return to make the Bargain, without either of them ever truly knowing what this choice entails. A club-goer may share his recreational drugs with the prettiest girl at the party, only to find out his stash had been laced with something much deadlier. Even though she was the first to go, he was soon to follow, but not before her ghost returns and pleads with him to make peace with her family. They may not actually know the true identity of their geist for some time, as they work through the Remembrance, but it can stir the soul when it suddenly becomes apparent who their partner really is.

The Unquiet

Dr. Jamal Gaines worked day and night and scoured every database, but couldn't find a replacement liver for his wife. In his eyes, her death was on his hands. He dove too deeply into his addictions, since no amount of good could alleviate his guilt. He just wished he could just do more as he slipped away into death from an overdose. On the other side, Jamal was greeted by the Empty Woman, who called to him to keep living. Now his days are spent finding suitable organ donors, willing or not, to make sure he never loses another patient to lack of availability.

The smiles of the children were enough to sustain Hanan Jouma in her hopes for spreading education to girls in her small village in Pakistan. It all went great until the Islamic State stepped in and shut down the school at gun-

The Others

The Abiding: You can't make deals with death... just put in the work for the sake of the work.

The Bereaved: I understand their loss; I lost myself a long time ago.

The Hungry: This level of attachment without the regret is commendable. Maybe one day I'll reach that level.

The Vengeful: So many of us give into their darker urges when they realize there is no glory in what we do. Ours is a hard road to walk.

point, threatening any teacher who dared come to work. Hanan watched her students' smiles turn to shame, and she knew she had let them down by not resisting. The soldiers killed her on the spot anyway. She joined forces with a geist called the Blessed Mind and now fights for women's rights in Pakistan, and protects her past students from harm whenever possible.

South Africa is rife with opportunities to make a political statement with a well-placed camera. Documentarian Annebe Finnis set out to do just that, even filming the beating and killing of several black people by police officers during a protest. Fear of retaliation from the government and police made her second guess her decision to release the tape, and the years passed and life went on, until she was killed by a random mugger on her way home from the market. The only regret she ever had was the work never done, and the men who would never see justice. A geist called the Eyeless Watcher came to her and signed on for its own reasons it has yet to share. Now she watches the tape every night, looking for clues to find the murderers and bring them down. No longer will she sit on the sidelines out of fear while atrocities occur.

The Faith

Necropolitans: Most believe the Necropolitans to be the perfect place for a Kindly, who goes out of their way to do good and bring joy. They help the living pay tribute to the dead, and look to save ghosts from themselves in many cases. Under the surface, however, is a being full of regret, just trying to forget it for a moment of peace, and that's the biggest thing the Necropolitans provide for the Kindly.

Furies: The Kindly look at themselves as the worst wrongdoers, and sometimes it takes one to know one. They make fine Furies, meting out justice when they see fit as a natural part of their existence. Becoming a Fury means they can do so with an air of authority other Kindly wouldn't be afforded.

Mourners: Those Kindly who become Mourners often take an introspective stance on their own crimes, hoping that finding and recording instances of the same wrongs can help another in the future. They often accumulate a wealth of knowledge on the law, both of the living and of the dead, which is helpful for any Sin-Eater.

Pilgrims: Often the best fit for the Kindly, Pilgrims offer the chance to help others day in and day out. Even though they are consumed with their own attachments and guilts, the Bound can release ghosts from this realm by direct involvement in their matters. They do have a track record of helping ghosts "for their own good," whether they want it or not

Undertakers: What could be more kind than helping another complete a task, but leaving the heavy lifting to them so they have a sense of achievement? Kindly Undertakers strive for being the perfect ear for ghosts to confide in, though they do become overzealous at times and need to remember that everyone's journey is different.

The Epitaph

The first thing players should consider during character creation is how easy they want their atonement to be. Read: It shouldn't be an easy journey. Giving a Kindly who wants to protect their child from harm primary Physical Attributes and Skills may make him more "effective," but choosing Social Attributes and Skills means he has the ability to navigate bureaucracy and deal with social workers and the courts. Both are fair avenues to pursue, so the best approach is to spread Attributes as evenly as possible, with a focus on Skills like Empathy and Investigation. Stealth may be useful for those who want to make their amends anonymously, while Socialize and Persuasion are key for seeking forgiveness directly.

Choosing Merits like Patient, Reconciler, or Sympathetic fit well into the Kindly Sin-Eater's repertoire, but may be a little on the nose for some concepts. In most cases, Anonymity is a great Merit to keep the Bound hidden in plain sight, especially while in close proximity to their charge. The Kindly are known for taking their Burden on themselves, so Merits like Allies and Contacts should be kept to a minimum. If anything, they'd put their trust in a single friend or supporter, so Retainer is the better choice.

The Shroud lets the Sin-Eater become more ghost-like. Even at low levels of ignoring the need for sustenance, it is a worthwhile Haunt to choose if the character is to be vigilant. Use of the Marionette reinforces the motif of the Kindly performing their works from afar, without having to directly engage and give themselves away. The Dirge, their ultimate tool, is key to manipulating the emotions of others, helpful for bringing forth or quelling the target's regrets.

Concepts: Helicopter parent from beyond the grave, peeping Tom who never got caught, irritatingly meticulous planner, groovy psychologist, debt collector for the dead

Haunts: The Dirge, The Marionette, The Shroud

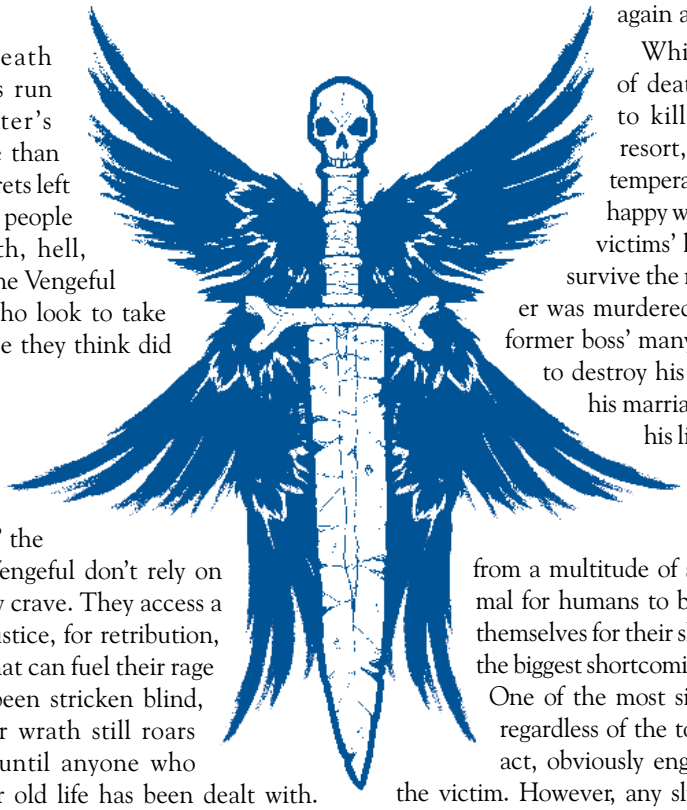
The Vengeful

"I left the realm of rationality a long time ago. No, now's the time for good old-fashioned payback."

Yours is the oldest story: the wrathful shade wrongly slain, the victim unburied, the one they thought they got away with. Funeral customs were invented to keep you away. Shamans, magicians, and exorcists exist to propitiate you. You are the thing they fear.

Show them why.

While on one's death bed, several emotions run through the Sin-Eater's mind... but none more than anger. Anger at the regrets left unsettled, anger at the people who led to your death, hell, anger at death itself. The Vengeful are these Sin-Eaters who look to take that anger out on those they think did them wrong.



The Weight

"An eye for an eye leaves everyone blind," the saying goes, but the Vengeful don't rely on their eyes for what they crave. They access a deep, base desire for justice, for retribution, for blood, something that can fuel their rage long after they have been stricken blind, deaf, and mute. Their wrath still roars beneath their breast until anyone who wronged them in their old life has been dealt with. Vengeful Sin-Eaters eat, breathe, and shit the need to quench their thirst, in hopes they'll be able to feel anything besides hatred and anger one day. Some are chaotic rampagers, bloodying the streets in broad daylight and inviting retaliation. They create a revolving door of brutality, but also lose the element of surprise in many cases. Others find the one who hurt them, grab the nearest weapon — a wrench, a sturdy desk lamp, a random piece of wood — and proceed to beat them to a pulp, regardless of the consequences.

Other Vengeful hone their cravings through meticulous strategies to get the most out of their prey. The mouse is only eaten once the cat has finished with its fun, and so too do the Vengeful torment their targets before finally putting the final nail in their coffin. Irony is a common feature of their justice: If they died through gun violence, their victims are left riddled with bullets, while a Sin-Eater killed in a hit and run may drag their victims miles behind their car, laughing maniacally along the way. Others develop a serial killer's penchant of ritual, always needing to perform the same vengeful act again and again.

While being an instrument of death makes it easy to turn to killing as a final and only resort, Vengeful with a calmer temperament are sometimes quite happy with simply destroying their victims' lives and leaving them to survive the ruin. Perhaps the Sin-Eater was murdered in an effort to hide her former boss' many affairs, and she sets out to destroy his company, his livelihood, his marriage, and his family. Taking his life as well would only alleviate his pain, and that's not really the point, is it?

The Vengeful are born from a multitude of situations, since it is normal for humans to blame someone outside of themselves for their shortcomings (and death is the biggest shortcoming of all mortal creatures). One of the most simplistic forms is murder, regardless of the tools used to carry out the act, obviously engendering animosity from the victim. However, any slight can evoke a parallel reaction, depending on the individual. A man who deeply resents and blames his spouse for his death at the hand of the sex worker he was "forced" to hire is one example, but an embezzler who stole all of the Sin-Eater's money so they had none to give to the mugger who did them in is just as likely. The only qualifier is that the need to seek revenge is greater than their wish for peace. There is no peace for a Vengeful until their job is complete. Sadly, it is in their nature to blame again and again, creating a domino effect with almost no end. Vengeance only begets more vengeance, and the cycle only ends when the Sin-Eater has reached a new understanding about their existence.

Ghosts hell bent on revenge encircle the Vengeful, as if they sense a kindred spirit in the Sin-Eater. They can, at times, be called forth to vent their wrath on the Sin-Eater's enemies, but more often than not, these ghosts

are just as selfish and angry as the Vengeful is, demanding help with their own personal crises before they'll depart. So many things stand in the way of the Vengeful's revenge, for one more to be added to the pile is just exhausting. It becomes a vicious cycle, with anger feeding anger feeding anger until something — an innocent bystander, a parked car, a whimpering puppy — is destroyed in a spontaneous and often misdirected violent outburst.

The Bargain

Revenge is as basic to humans as the need for food, water, and shelter. It is no wonder that more Vengeful rise every day, sometimes coerced by a geist taking advantage of a human's lowest moment. The geist of a Door-to-Door Womanizing Salesman may entice a Sin-Eater with knowledge on how to pass the time when they aren't seeking vengeance. Rare instances create situations where a masochistic geist makes a bargain with a Vengeful, knowing that eventually their hostile nature will spill over to them as well. He'll go to great lengths to second guess his Sin-Eater, just hoping she'll snap and lay into him with all the fury of the Underworld. Some Sin-Eaters sincerely thank their geists for the opportunity, while others can feel trapped by the cravings they had on their deathbed encompassing their every moment of existence so thoroughly. Yet another thing to enrage the Sin-Eater.

In other cases, the geist may simply be someone who knows the pain the Sin-Eater is going through. The ghost of a man killed by examples of "enhanced interrogation" methods may look fondly upon and make a Bargain with a Sin-Eater who was tortured by burglars. Especially if they held their own and didn't give up anything to the creeps. He is the Justice Seeker and Sin-Eater is his tool, filling the geist with glee to see justice come to someone, even if they cannot experience it for themselves. Not only does the Bound benefit from the synergy they have with their geist, but they also now have access to all the memories of what their geist went through, knowing exactly how far to push the bamboo under the fingernails or just how hard to slam kneecaps with a sledgehammer without the victim going into shock. Now, he can fulfill vengeance for both of them in expert detail.

The Unquiet

Lita Nunez is an ace driver in the San Juan underground circuit, and each win gets her one step closer to the top dogs who killed her and her brother. Lita is going to make sure they see her face again... right before she slits their throats. Until then, she gets off on the thrill of the chase and the horsepower of every race along her journey. Her geist, who calls himself the Speed Demon, latches on to her glory, loving the rush of excitement he always dreamed of when he was alive.

The Others

The Abiding: They attempt to build something lasting and beautiful. It'll take a few of their dreams tumbling down for them to get that it's all just a fantasy.

The Bereaved: We're all in search of something, whether it's something tangible like a loved one or something intangible like a fair shake. I tend to go for the easier of the two.

The Hungry: We all have unfinished business, but these guys take it way too seriously. And that's coming from me.

The Kindly: They seem like our opposite, but they make a lot of sense. That energy's gotta go somewhere, we just have different directions.

Despite working in the Wrigley Toys R&D department for over 40 years, Dennis Watkins was fired and his ideas stolen. His death was not the cleanest — a hit and run — but the driver was just one more person to screw him over. His geist, the Starving Child, recognized his rage at the injustices of his life as a mirror of her own. Returning for revenge on his former employer was an easy choice, and he builds a new toy every day, improving his skills for the day that he sends the perfect present to his old boss. One that he's sure to get a blast out of.

Vengeance comes in all forms, but none is more fitting for retribution than the pain inflicted on one's heart. Lucais knows this more than anyone, and so does anyone in Pays de la Loire and its surrounding regions. Lovers make their way to France every year, but so do the heartbroken... and many of them meet their end there as well. Lucais has become quite good at tracking down a ghost's ex-lover and ruining their life, just short of killing them. Spreading rumors, ruining credit, and destroying their social circles and family relationships are just a few of his methods. He's not in it for the blood... the pain is what he wants. Lucais' geist, The Strangler, whispers sweet nothings into his ear just to chastise him for his reluctance to go for the kill. It has become a dance between the two.

The Faith

Necropolitans: Vengeful Necropolitans may seem like an oxymoron — filled with hatred but exuding joy — but it happens more than one would think. It is a favorite to join for Vengeful who need some kind of anger management to keep them from going off the deep end, acting as a set of rules they can use to keep themselves in check. Those who cannot contain themselves turn their rage on the Underworld itself.

Furies: Fury krewes are an easy choice for many Vengeful, as they fall in with their existing objectives: hunt down wrongdoers and bring them to justice. Sometimes a Vengeful may take it a bit far, but becoming a Fury gives them a lens with which to focus their rage and make a difference for others, not just themselves.

Mourners: Some might think a Vengeful Mourner to be an odd fit, but nothing could be further from the truth. Many ghosts are sticking around because they've been screwed over, and these Sin-Eaters are those who help them get a sense of closure, especially if the reason for the ghosts' deaths were covered up. Nothing stays buried forever, not if these Bound have a say.

Pilgrims: Vengeful Pilgrims are usually a work in process. They recognize they are holding on to many attachments, but using the lessons taught by the Pilgrims they can start checking names off their list and detaching themselves. In the process, they can help others understand and appreciate the journey they are on, creating a sense of camaraderie with fellow Sin-Eaters.

Undertakers: The Vengeful are usually act-first-think-later types, but subscribing to the Undertaker mentality gives them the ability to pause. In a way, it is easier to help a ghost deal with their own baggage, but their instinct is to jump in and destroy in most cases. It is a balancing act they struggle with, but not one that is insurmountable.

The Epitaph

The Vengeful are known for their ability to take out their aggression on anyone they see as a target, meaning a focus on Physical Attributes is usually a good idea. Following that up with secondary Social Attributes means the character has the foundation to intimidate their way out of a fight they don't think they can win. Likewise, Physical Skills like Brawl and Firearms play into their archetype, but Skills like Larceny, Investigation, and Intimidation are important for finding the right target.

Merits like Retribution or Fleet of Foot are fine if players want to further focus on their physical output, but we encourage thinking outside of the box about the methods the Vengeful use to exact their revenge. Allies and Contacts are always helpful to track people down and get tools to help one's cause, while Resources is a way to make a small-time revenge operation take on a great role in the story. Likewise, having the Safe Place Merit is wonderful for having a place to bring one's target back to for interrogation or death without prying eyes.

For Haunts, the Vengeful are set up as the perfect hunters. The Curse cripples their victims and is generally useful for making their lives miserable. The Memoria helps the Sin-Eater to understand their vengeance and allow their prey to understand (and experience) it, too. The Rage is what the Vengeful brings out when it is time to relieve the victim of their wretched existence.

Concepts: Torturer's favorite toy, ghost out for her own blood, ex-cop looking for justice, criminal mastermind with a new tool in his box, gangbanger with time on his hands

Haunts: The Curse, The Memoria, The Rage

Furies

Justice is thine, sayeth the Bound.

"There's a feeling you get when you witness an injustice — for me it's this tingling pressure in my head, coming from right behind my eyes. Some ghosts are made of that feeling. It's all they are. It's not enough to care or to understand: We are the only ones who can do something about that feeling. The people who need our help most, no one else can help. No one believes them, no one cares about them... or if they do, they're afraid to do what needs to be done. Not me. Not us. If you join, not you."

Injustice can take many forms, and it's usually a little more complicated than some motherfucker shooting you so he can steal your car. Actually, let's look at that case. You're driving down a dark street and a man walks up to you, points a pistol through the window glass, and orders you out. He shoots you, leaves you to bleed out in the street, and drives off in your car as your ghost looks on.

If all you cared about was revenge, you could track this guy down, tell him what he did wrong, and shoot him in the head. But Furies don't just care about revenge: They care about justice. A Fury would find this guy and ask him what happened in his life or his neighborhood to drive him to violence over a physical object. A Fury would organize their congregation to investigate the city planning and politics that led to that guy's neighborhood becoming a food desert or a crime haven. A Fury would investigate the corrupt, selfish politicians who underdeveloped that neighborhood, exposing them to voters before their reelection campaign.

And yes, sometimes, when it turns out someone did wrong by a ghost for completely selfish, personal reasons they won't recant, then sometimes the Furies shoot that someone right in the goddamn face. But the best retribution is to teach someone a lesson that changes them. It means nothing to kill someone for something they did wrong, only to make them a confused, unreachable ghost. The Furies want true justice: a wrongdoer taught a lesson, brought face to face with their transgressions, and made to understand why they and the Furies must now commit their energies to making it right.

The Works

Furies must learn to decide, quickly and incisively, whether something they witness is just or unjust. Fury ceremonies often let celebrants practice these decisions. A senior ritualist leads the assembled like a lecture class or seminar, setting forth a case or problem and helping them come to a conclusion about it that makes sense to most of those present. To a Sin-Eater used to the rigid ceremonies of a different kind of krewe, the Fury ritual might seem casual, purposeless — in fact, it might not even look like a ritual at all.

Elevated to the level of ritual, these discussions frequently resemble Platonic dialogues, Confucian analects, or philosophy symposia. Sometimes, though, it's a matter of art. The storytelling rituals that many Fury krewes engage in, sharing trickster stories and folktales about vengeful and ill-behaved figures such as the Tortoise of Yorùbá myth, are more than just entertainment: They are parables. These stories underlie the Furies' most audacious and most famous exploits, orchestrating the haunting or the downfall of a villainous figure who has harmed many ghosts who deserved better.

Even a seemingly simple question may take time, as the krewe must function as judge, jury, and executioner in the case of many injustices. Since the job is so large and multifaceted, celebrants specialize early, apprenticing themselves to elders who focus on one part of this process. Some watch, gathering information and evidence and feeding it back to the krewe. Some collate that information to determine whether an injustice has occurred. Finally, some evaluate that injustice and measure out a punishment or response that both offers peace to a wronged ghost, and resolves the root cause of their suffering.

A significant minority of the cases that come to the Furies involve mutual wrongdoing. These are the most difficult to address, and often involve talking through the problem with both angry, sometimes violent, parties. These quarrels further cement the importance of the aforementioned discussion-based learning rituals. Through a combination of soft power, intimidation, and the secure knowledge that they'll be able to kick the problem's ass back to the Underworld if it gets out of hand, Furies can handle even the most confusing feuds. Hopefully.

Finally, battle is a ritual. Martial practice and strategy are meditation, but Furies ensure that moments of reverence are central: the kalaripayattu practitioner's salutation towards the altar, the Shingon mudras which focus the shugyosha, and the capoeira player's mandinga stance-step.

The Faith

In a lot of ways, being a Fury is a lot like being a doctor. You know your job is essential. You perform it aggres-

sively, secure in the knowledge you're helping others. But ultimately, you wish you lived in a world where you weren't needed.

For this reason, many Fury krewes' ceremonial obsession with law and order reflects a grander-scale desire for an accessible set of rules, a clear and easy system of moral imperatives, which ideally would obviate Furies. This is a tall order: Formulating such a set of rules is the work of millennia. Moreover, even when you hand them down on stone tablets, people still debate them endlessly, or perform actions you think are obviously wrong — crusades, terrorism, etc. — secure in the knowledge that your rules justify their actions. But when it comes to justice, prevention is much easier than cure, even when prevention is difficult and becomes a topic of widespread scholarly debate.

By the time someone has died, they've lost much of the agency that might allow them to avert injustice. But what if it weren't that way? What if death brought you face to face with the good or evil of your actions, judgment and justice, like entry into the Egyptian afterlife? Again, just assigning someone suffering because they've done wrong doesn't actually alleviate others' suffering, not unless the deterrent effect is stronger than most of us believe it is. A Fury-run afterworld confronts souls with not only the suffering they caused, but also the good they did in life, so they can best understand their impact on the world. Their afterlives would then let them make amends for, apologize for, or work against their transgressions. The final product might not look too different from the process Pilgrims send individual souls through, but automating it would be pretty great.

In the case of both these topics, everything works better as it gets better personalized to individual cases. A $100 speeding ticket might be the result of the same transgression for a rich person and a poor person, but it's a far more severe punishment for the poor. Likewise, moral judgments work better when applied carefully and surgically to specific cases, and the same process of redress might have wildly different effects for two different people.

The Heresy

The Furious path to heresy is in some ways the clearest. To many people, it turns out, doing harm feels good. Cathartic. Satisfying. The harm you're doing need not even have anything to do with violence. We live in a highly structured society, surrounded by strictures and norms that limit the range of choices we can make about how to deal with our problems to a few pre-selected options, most of which involve taking your problems to a higher temporal authority. Many Furies experience a rush such as they've never experienced before the first time they end and devour an intractable ghost, or fill up with effervescent glee when they see a villain suffer exposure or imprisonment. The feeling can become addictive quickly.

Stereotypes

Mourners: I understand what they're doing and why they're doing it, intellectually. But the idea of spending all my time doing it sounds about as satisfying as spending an afterlife haunting the DMV.

Necropolitans: I can't fault their aggressive attitude towards problem-solving. Between them and us, we probably have most of this business covered. Also, they always buy the first round.

Pilgrims: A lot of frustrated ex-Pilgrims wind up as Furies. A lot of frustrated ex-Furies wind up as Pilgrims. If one doesn't work for you, it's probably worth trying the other.

Undertakers: Slowly reshaping the deep mythic structure of human society is important, I'm sure, but for some problems, you need to open up a bottle of pills and pour all of them down someone else's throat.

Even without that rush, it's still easy to go overboard with righting wrongs and ending injustices, harming individuals peripheral to the problem or hurting someone in ways that can't be undone. This kind of thing tends to leave a mess that's hard to clean up before normal folks notice.

Some Fury krewes have even taken it upon themselves to police not only other Bound, but also other Sin-Eaters, especially fledgling krewes without much guidance. This process is sometimes a helpful kind of oversight, but under other circumstances they'll punish krewes for honest mistakes, or their methods will drive a krewe into actual evil since they're being treated as evil anyway.

Like Necropolitans, Furies can sometimes be vulnerable to charismatic figures who take advantage of their power and zeal to target personal enemies. Furies who don't think through their orders may find their substantial powers and resources pointed at innocent enemies.

Moreover, Furies need to operate a pretty extensive intelligence and surveillance network in order to find their targets and dispose of them quickly and efficiently. The width of the net they cast requires them to find and retain information on others who are not actually guilty sometimes. A Fury krewe that becomes dominant in a city can turn that city's ghost world into a kind of surveillance state. For this reason, many other krewes are deeply wary when a Fury krewe rolls into town, unless of course their problems are so large and so violent that they can't deal with them themselves. If and when that threat disappears, the Furies might find their welcome withdrawn.

The Mysteries

The **Bizango** shares a name with a coalition of Haitian vodou clergy who take it upon themselves to punish the wicked. The name could indicate that the two groups are formally aligned, that the krewe (which is almost certainly younger, if anything) has appropriated the name, or something in between — but they're secretive enough that they aren't clarifying. Its members quietly investigate and punish criminals against ghostly society, especially Bound with extreme antisocial tendencies. Subtle in the extreme, they operate through ghostly surveillance and judiciously applied (though rarely fatal) poison, and have a special hatred for religious intolerance.

Le Quatrième Etat is a renegade investigative journalism outfit. With contacts in krewes of many other archetypes (especially Mourners), le Quatrième Etat specializes in not only researching, but also exposing individuals who have wronged the dead. These exposés range from simple newspaper columns or blog posts to grand performative works of vengeance that echo through the living world and the dead one: tableaux of ghostly Plasm manipulated to reenact someone's crimes in a macabre puppet show, or giant mural versions of damning photos on the sides of office buildings. Journalists in le Quatrième Etat live dangerous lives, often incurring retribution from powerful living figures. Recently, the Quatrième Etat has sparked controversy by exposing the wrongdoing of one of its longtime contacts, a Necropolitan who used his social connections to cover up a side business in human trafficking. Everyone was happy to see their target go down, but at the same time, many krewes who used to cooperate with le Quatrième Etat are worried they might be investigated next.

The **Sodality of the Door** occupies a strange niche within Bound society: it neutralizes conflicts in the physical world that threaten violence against other krewes, even when those threats come from strange supernatural creatures. Usually this process involves talking people down from violence. They use the mysterious, confusing, and fearsome nature of Sin-Eaters' supernatural powers to defuse tensions and cut deals. If that doesn't work, well, there's ghost powers and baseball bats.

The Congregation

Finesse is probably the most important Attribute for the Furies, followed closely by Power. You can't eliminate a threat if you can't find it, or if it sees you coming. Among Merits, Contacts are important for finding and keeping tabs on targets, Council of Faith provides due diligence and prevents misaimed retribution, and Anonymity allows you to strike unexpectedly and fade away without attracting retribution yourself.

Ceremonies: Ishtar's Perfume (•), Skeleton Key (••), Black Cat's Crossing (•••)

Mourners

I've heard the last words of an idea. I never want to hear it again.

"Imma make this quick, because in fifteen minutes I gotta be in the River Cities with my boys. Homegirl inna picture frame propped against the wall, behind all them flowers and Hallmark cards? She was five blocks away from recording the illest mixtape of the decade before she had the misfortune to fit the description of someone who held up a bodega. Now I don't know what you fucks with when it comes to poetry or music, but if you ever read, heard, played, or watched something that changed your life, I think you'll unnerstand why we finna do what we finna do. Are you in or are you out?"

Do you ever wonder what it might sound like to hear the poetry of Miyamoto Musashi, or to piece together broken shards of pottery to make Sappho's verses whole again? To watch Aristophanes' *Banqueters* or *Babylonians,* or Sophocles' *Oedipus*, in their original form and before 1,000 reinterpretations? To build the devices detailed in Nikola Tesla's notes, burnt in his laboratory on Fifth Avenue? To watch all the lost episodes of *Doctor Who*? To learn the secret techniques of the Koka ninja, which died with Fujita Seiko in 1966? Would you have learned the language of the Susquehannock, whom the Paxton Boys slaughtered in 1763? Do you wonder what Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. or Mahatma Gandhi or el-Hajj Malik el-Shabazz would have said on the day after they were assassinated?

The living come and go, as they have for billions of years. The body's breakdown, the soul's sublimation: These we cannot avert. But the things we create might live forever. If individual humans are the cells of the human race's body, then poems, philosophies, songs, and stories are its immortal soul. So long as our ideas pass to the living before we pass on, we live, and humanity lives. But what if we die with our ideas unspoken and unshared? What if our deaths go unwitnessed, unremembered? Enter the Mourners. The living, when they die, cannot return. But an idea can be brought back from the dead, that it might live forever.

Mourners find the forgotten. They aid ghosts who died unknown and unremembered, carrying their stories forward to the next generation. Without Mourners, the things they save would never appear again.

The Works

The Mourner approach to life, death, and work makes many of them traditionalists and conservatives in a fundamental sense: They're interested in conserving endangered traditions, not necessarily because those traditions are superior, so much as because someone has to. This kind of excitement can range from cold, academic remove (transcribing passionate revels' dance steps in Laban notation and filing them away) to overenthusiasm (adopting rituals from a dozen long-forgotten religions into your krewe's ceremonies). Krewes in the latter vein, if they don't tear themselves apart internally in debates over cultural appropriation, often pride themselves on their innovatively ancient cocktail of practices. In the same way that academics joust for dominance through name-dropping and intellectual acrobatics, Mourners often maintain a vigorous intellectual rivalry with nearby Mourner krewes, competing to find and display the most obscure and forgotten ceremonial relics.

Underneath, though, every Mourner krewe is dead serious about finding what's lost. That quest begins with lost ghosts. Mourners reach out to living families who have lost someone and don't know where they are, then send search parties through both the living world and the Underworld in order to find them. They can't often bring them back, and they can't always share how they've learned what they've learned, but to record the truth of someone's last moments, the ending to their story, can satisfy as well as finding an unfinished novel's unwritten last chapter — and any Mourner will tell you it's just as important. They read, recite, and copy them over with all the reverence of monks illuminating manuscripts or transcribing sutras.

Mourner krewes also function as custodians for information. They operate Bound libraries, museums, and server farms. Many krewes from geographical regions with strong oral traditions, places like West Africa or Greece, train members as griots or rhapsodes. Even krewes with less rigorous traditions of intellectual retention expect their celebrants and leaders to reflect the things they learn in arts and letters, choreographing dance dramas or writing epic poems about the information they've found — and especially the stories they learn that haven't been recorded yet.

Mourners also take it upon themselves to become explorers, surveyors, and cartographers of the Great Below. Lost ghosts are found, and even if they can't be brought back to the vale of tears, perhaps their stories can be

recorded. If not that, then perhaps the next Sin-Eaters to explore this part of the realm can have the benefit of a map and some documentation.

The Faith

Necropolitans and Mourners find common ground in hopes for a world where the living and the dead maintain frequent, productive contact. Again, they look to tradition for a model: Ancestor worship in societies across the world provides a functional blueprint for what Mourners hope to establish. Imagine a world where no lost child is ever truly alone, where hope and answers and information are a prayer away.

Right now, humanity's means for storing data leave something to be desired. Clay pots shatter, and can't hold much data. Technological means seem permanent, but have short shelf lives. Twenty percent of the Viking 1 and 2 mission data died when NASA scrapped its magnetic tape readers. Servers degrade alarmingly quickly, and computers might not even read USB sticks anymore in five years. And we're all waiting for one ill-tempered AI to devour everything we keep in the cloud. Hell, if you die in an accident, everything you've ever password protected is gone. Mourners, however, research Underworldly means to store data, less expensive than laser-etching nickel tablets or coding it into tree DNA, and a few krewes have actually been compounding interest long enough that laser-etched nickel and digital vellum looks viable.

Mourners are all about redundant storage systems, though — and their favorite option is cultural exchange. Encouraging normal people's interest in the same topics Mourners research allows Mourners to "outsource" more mundane topics to living universities, art institutions, and record collectors. Better organized and interconnected mundane records help Mourners find what they're looking for.

They pursue new ceremonial technology in order to link these priorities. Access to a print library and a computer system isn't as good as a print library with information about computers as well as a computer system that can search the print library. Mourners develop ceremonies permitting their various information-storage methods to talk to one another. Imagine high-speed wireless Internet access from deep in the Underworld. Imagine viewing the depths of the Underworld on a remote camera from high in an office building. All information recorded and categorized. Free flow of information across the veil. This is where it's all headed.

The Heresy

It's easy for Mourners to turn selfish and petty. When your krewe ethos is explicitly and enthusiastically competitive, sometimes a spiteful soul can take it too far: academic sabotage, withholding of important information from people who need it but who may or may not credit you, and other ivory-tower shenanigans.

Stereotypes

Furies: I appreciate the fact that they're willing to stand between our community and the threats no one else can handle. I really do. I still wish they'd listen to our advice about minimizing collateral damage to ideas as well as individuals.

Necropolitans: Goddamn party animals care more about your feelings than they do about saving something precious. Oh, and in half an hour I'm going to a board game night at their clubhouse if you want to come.

Pilgrims: They scare me, more than anyone else outside our outfit. The Pilgrims are the only ones who actually value destroying your attachments to what's gone before — hell, they even value destroying the things to which you might get attached. I wonder sometimes if anything we create matters — if they'd wipe it all out if they had the power.

Undertakers: If they didn't intercede with mortals for us, we'd probably have to do it ourselves. I'm grateful, because collecting and retelling mythology and making new mythology yourself aren't always overlapping skillsets.

On more than one historical occasion, Mourner krewes have crossed the line into mercenary information brokering, or worse. Access to secrets no one else can reach opens one up to a spectacular new world of blackmail and manipulation. Corporations, politicians, and krewes with skeletons in their closets sometimes make use of greedy Mourner moonlighters to find and destroy information about them that they don't want revealed.

The Mysteries

The **Musæum of Alexandria** claims an unbroken chain of membership dating back to ancient Egypt. They take the name seriously: Some of the krewe's elders refer to their geists without irony as Muses. Heirs of the great library that burned, the Musæum's goal is to catalogue all information. No more qualifiers. That's it. All. Information. The Musæum maintains a network of libraries, server banks, and other repositories and backups in the real world and the Underworld. Imagine Borges's Library of Babel modeled in the Underworld, books and scrolls that become infinite fractal libraries within themselves, using the Underworld's unreal geometry to fold impossible volumes of information into convenient (if unsettling) spaces, with creeping bookworms that read your intentions when they wriggle over your fingers and bring you the exact tome you need. They lead research into new technologies for the efficient and permanent preservation of human knowledge — living and otherwise. If some cataclysm erases all of humanity from the Earth, the Musæum wants to give our ghosts the benefit of everything they knew while living — or, at least, wants the Mourners among whatever beings come after us to keep our thoughts alive.

Another venerable krewe, the **Society for the Preservation of Endangered Martial Arts** is something of a niche interest, even for the Mourners. Yet over centuries of existence, they've never been able to accomplish their goal to completion: the retention of every fighting style and combat technique ever practiced by humans. They reason that, in a world increasingly dominated by apocalyptic superweapons, flying death robots, and cyberwarfare, one can expect the slow extinction of advanced methods for throwing spears at your enemies from horseback (although the Mourners did manage to snag the last copy of that book). But a great deal of historical and cultural information is coded into the way people fought during history, and many of the past's lessons on how to fight remain applicable to combat in the Underworld, especially with Reapers and Kerberoi. Given martial artists' dangerous lives during much of history, the Society has had its work cut out for it catching up to practitioners of rare styles before they die in some duel or other.

Originating in World War II's European theater, the **Unknown Soldier Cult** have taken their mission to war-torn areas around the world. With ceremonies and rituals that echo the ancient cult of Mithras, the cult preserves artworks, texts, and personal narratives from war zones. Soldiers usually work in pairs: one embedded on each side of a conflict, passing information back and forth via Ceremony to identify targets and extract as much high-value information as possible before it becomes collateral damage. The cult is well aware that members commit treason against their respective nations; it takes a particularly dispassionate temperament to know a missile is about to strike a location under your protection, and yet do nothing about it because you're not supposed to know.

The Congregation

Resistance is important here: It takes serious dedication to do the kind of often-stultifying research that a Mourner krewe lives and breathes. The Merits Safe Place, Resources, and Supernatural Membership are crucial to that same mixture of long-term archiving and information-sifting. Also, if your Mourner krewe concept doesn't involve a Library, we're not sure what's going on with you.

Ceremonies: The Diviner's Jawbone (•), Gifts of Persephone (••), Bloody Codex (•••)

Necropolitans

Welcome to the afterlife. Drinks to the left, snacks to the right, dance floor straight ahead. I'll hold on to your keys.

"Most of the time, when someone wants to know what we're about, they've heard we're the most fun. That's true! We're proud of it. We have fun, we make friends, we lighten the mood. But compassion motivates us. You may come for the fun, but you'll stay for the surety as you fall asleep that you saved a soul today."

They'll tell you a lot of unkind things about Necropolitans. They'll tell you that Necropolitans make light of death and the dead. That they're social butterflies. That they're shallow. That they're selfish. Necropolitans laugh off all these labels, or jokingly assent to them — except for that last one. Necropolitans are the krewe of compassion.

Death scares us because it ends everything good and joyful about life: the feeling of sun on your skin, the satisfaction of sex, the confidence you'll get to learn how your favorite anime ends. But what if you needn't give up all these things? The idea has some positive history: We know heaven's temptation and hell's threat have legs. A Necropolitan brings love, joy, and hope to those who thought they had lost such things forever. In the process, the satisfaction of altruism brings them the same.

Necropolitans tend to be extroverted, open, and accepting. Argue all you like whether religion is a force for good or evil, or whether such and such a deity is real or what, but you can't deny the emotional and even financial rewards of a social safety net made of people who think like you. Loneliness plagues not only ghosts, but also the living driven away from others by their paranormal abilities. With no one to turn to, despair sets in. Enter the Necropolitans. No matter who you are, no matter how lost or scared, if you want to be known and have friends and engage with society, Necropolitans will be there for you.

The Works

Ever been to an Alcoholics Anonymous meeting? Or any meeting on the popular 12-step pattern they've set out? They're pretty affecting. The strict rules for speaking and sharing. The shocking honesty. The widespread belief in a higher power — often God, but not necessarily. But at the end of the meeting? Whether or not you felt at home, whether

or not you want to come back, whether or not you believe this strange method will work, every single person at that meeting who doesn't have to dash off early gives you their contact information. It seems casual and friendly, but make no mistake: This is an important ritual. Each name, each number is a bulwark against suicide, self-harm, backsliding, and lost hope. One of them can't stave off all the darkness alone. But if not, perhaps the next one can, or the next after that, and so on. Necropolitan krewes follow the same principles.

The business of Necropolis begins with networks. Krewes function because they bring people together, divide and specialize responsibilities, and ensure support flows in every direction. Accordingly, Necropolitan rituals and norms emphasize trust, open communication, and forgiveness. A Necropolitan krewe might teach communications-based leadership methods associated with positivity-obsessed corporate cultures, pairing them with a Catholic confessional's guaranteed forgiveness. There are no mistakes, only opportunities, and any transgression can be forgiven as long as it's related honestly. The public space of these practices aligns many Necropolitan krewes with socially and politically focused religions from the Afro-Atlantic diaspora and China. It's rare that the rituals leave you alone with your faith. Someone else is always there with you.

As the neophyte in a Necropolitan krewe, expect senior members to assign a lot of homework, much of which involves tracking down other members of the krewe outside of rituals. You'll connect with the living over the internet or approach them during free moments at their workplaces. The process is often intimidating, as it makes you feel like you're inconveniencing them, but accustoming yourself to that feeling is part of your training, since you'll have to use those same social skills to reach out to ghosts who think they don't want or need to be helped.

Necropolitans also walk an odd line when it comes to those in need of social cachet, and those who have it. On the one hand, they want to help those in greatest need: introverts, ex-convicts, and others society has shunned or forgotten. On the other, they need the networking power wealthy, successful Sin-Eaters bring to the table, à la an American university's balance between the financial necessity of recruiting athletes and the moral imperative to help those who need and deserve it most.

The problem with this approach, from other krewes' perspectives, is that so much of it happens in public. You may not think anyone's listening to you talk about ghosts and the Underworld over drinks, but Reapers can be subtler than you hoped. Moreover, Necropolitans often frame themselves as the social mortar that unites disparate krewes. It's important to them to keep talking to krewes outside their own viewpoint, and to keep information flowing between Sin-Eaters who otherwise wouldn't talk. But a lot of krewes would really prefer just to be left alone, no matter how friendly and charismatic you are.

Necropolitans like to borrow and combine rituals that point people at one another, especially when they involve physical action or contact. Even at their most staid, you're likely to see something like the Catholic kiss of peace, with members gently embracing or shaking hands in the middle of a service. The joined hands at the beginning of the séance are for the celebrants' benefit, not the ghost's. The sumo wrestlers crash together, miming grappling with the gods. And of course, there is music and dancing: Pentecostal-style sacred steel guitars, the dervishes' endless whirl, bhakti-yoga by way of northern Indian kathak, and — of course — New Orleans jazz funerals.

Stereotypes

Furies: Have they no one to talk to? Not the ghosts, the Furies.

Mourners: This is cool, but you gotta remember to tell people about it. The Mourners need us, and we need them.

Pilgrims: I wish I could tell you more about Pilgrims, but none of them have responded to my social media invites.

Undertakers: I love that they help our society relate to the living world. I hate that they think they know how to do it better than we do. Even if they're right.

The Faith

For most of human history, Sin-Eater society has been secret society: secret handshakes, pins with strange iconography, hidden doors leading to dark catacombs and windowless rooms. Necropolitans aren't down with that. They're evangelists. The wider-cast the net, the lower the barrier to entry, and the more successful they'll be. So where are they going with this?

Generally speaking, they want to create a society of the living and the dead where no one ever needs to be alone. This approach is crucial to safety as well as to satisfaction: Necropolitans envision a dense and multivalent network as a safety concern as well as a practical one. If a Reaper, ghost-eater, exorcist, or other threat comes for one of them, raising the hue and cry should — if nothing else — alert other friendly souls that something is wrong. So safety and friends are where it starts.

After that, Necropolitans have lofty aspirations. We all hope for a pleasant, positive, or at least peaceful afterlife. If the Underworld is more mutable than the real world — if it responds to what we want (or, at least, to what Sin-Eaters want) better than the real world, which continues to slouch towards Babylon — why can't we seize it and remake it into what we want? A paradise Underworld is within our grasp.

The loftiest goal, though, has nothing to do with remaking the Underworld. They're all about networks, right? You have to see this coming. Necropolitans want a world where the living reconcile with the dead, where ghosts' existence is no taboo. The fact that normal people don't acknowledge the existence of ghosts — a known quantity, a presence in every mythology, which everyone has the faculties to understand — is a tragedy for both living and dead. This very goal makes the Necropolitans most dangerous, most fearsome to secretive Sin-Eater society.

The Heresy

A "missing stair" is an abusive member of a close-knit community whose peers make allowances for them instead of correcting their behavior. The most dangerous missing stairs tend to be shrewd and charismatic, ingratiating themselves easily with those surrounding them, making themselves seem socially and emotionally indispensable, and rendering others dependent on them.

Individual Necropolitan missing stairs can use this position of privilege to devour ghosts on the sly, pressure others for money, or lean on everyone nearby for emotional labor. While a Necropolitan who's physically or sexually abusive will probably run afoul of Furies or even Reapers when they alienate enough others, Necropolitans who perpetrate low-level abuses, the kind of things that hurt other people but don't make big waves, may continue to perpetrate them for years. The emphasis on admittance of missteps and corresponding forgiveness within Necropolitan krewes sometimes works against this tendency and sometimes aggravates it. At best, the cycle of admittance and forgiveness allows Necropolitans to correct wrongdoing early and often, training new members in best practices and allowing them to learn efficiently from their mistakes. For this reason, confession and penance often become explicit elements of many Necropolitan ceremonies. But at worst, this tendency encourages celebrants who recognize wrongdoing in their leadership to continue to tolerate it, silently forgiving and absolving someone who needs more than just forgiveness.

Several prominent Necropolitan krewes have become — or come from — outright criminal organizations. The Chinese diaspora's Triads, for example, evolved from folk-religious secret societies whose clandestine rituals of ancestor worship attracted many Sin-Eaters. But fraternities like the Triads are far more reputable than the drug-dealing outfits which some krewes become to support their wild macabrays and indulgent habits. Liquor and LSD start out as means to a ceremonial end, but become mass addictions forced on new celebrants, or on the financially and socially vulnerable societies which support the krewe. From there, it's a short way to fall to get into gun running, money laundering, or other practices that start out as little side gigs to keep the krewe in the black and support Sin-Eaters' dangerous lifestyles. But then business gets really good (or really bad), and all of a sudden every krewe in the area is afraid of pissing off the heavily armed drug kingpins who have become the mortar between Bound society's bricks: a missing stair problem writ large. Of course, no one can go to the authorities even if they want to snitch, because that kind of heat is likely to threaten nearby krewes as well as the major offenders. Situations like these breed famous last words like "maybe we should ask the vampires to help with this problem, just this once."

The Mysteries

Le Krewe LaBas of New Orleans popularized the term "krewe" in modern parlance. They formed in the aftermath of a 1920 rumble between two Mardi Gras Indian tribes, the Red Magnolias and the Burning Arrows, which turned lethal. During the melee, officers on both sides were slain — but they immediately returned as Bound, laughing and embracing to both krewes' confusion. Mardi Gras societies' organization, infrastructure, and secrecy founded a united krewe which forced white American Sin-Eater society to recognize black issues and black membership. They're still around today, mostly made up of elder statesmen, but still recruiting actively. They have business in the Underworld, but much of their contribution to the community is in organizing and supporting fledgling krewes with financial aid and mentorship. LaBas's relationship to other krewes in the Necropolitan matrix is a macrocosm of an individual Necropolitan's relationship with other Sin-Eaters, ghosts, and celebrants in their krewe.

Formed in the 1990s (of course) by some Bound with shared interests in adventurous sports, **X-Treme Unction** is generally accepted to have the worst name of any krewe in history, but its members are really enthusiastic about it. XTU is organized like a large sports club. It has a Bound manager, team captain, and trainer; the celebrants are its athletes. Their rituals involve intense and enthusiastic physical practice, driving themselves to the very edge of injury to become acquainted with the fear and sensation of oncoming death. XTU launches rescue missions into the deadliest climates of the real world and the Underworld, contacting ghosts trapped on mountain peaks or sunk at the bottom of coral reefs.

alt.gothic.ghost started on Usenet a very long time ago, but now uses a proprietary social-networking program that has desktop and mobile clients designed to look like other programs if someone sees it over your shoulder. A lot of Sin-Eaters who've heard of alt.gothic.ghost wouldn't consider it a real krewe, which suits alt.gothic.ghost just fine. Many Sin-Eaters who belong to this internet-based group specialize in finding and contacting ghosts with technological affinities, who can speak only through electronic means or who are tied somehow to programs, servers, or even memes spreading through the internet. Many alt.gothic.ghost posters have mobility impairment issues from disability, age, or institutionalization — yet these same members, due to their proximity to the dead and dying, are invaluable to Sin-Eater society.

The Congregation

When you build your krewe, remember Necropolitan philosophy's altruistic focus. The krewe you're building is as much for the individual members as it is for powerful Sin-Eaters. Given the emphasis on safety and support networks, Necropolitans tend to prioritize Resistance first, then Power and Finesse in equal measure. Given how wide-ranging Necropolitan networks get, Merits can go in many different directions, but you're more likely to wind up with a widespread network of low-level Allies and Contacts than one high-Status individual. Good Time Management and Anonymity, unsurprisingly, are rare.

Ceremonies: The Lovers' Telephone (•), Crow Girl Kiss (••), Dumb Supper (•••)

Pilgrims

Come with me, and we will both become our perfect selves.

"To be frank, I'm not interested in pitching our krewe to you. If you're like most Bound, you won't give us a second thought, and you'll head off after one of your other options. One day, years from now, if you survive and so do I — and perhaps even if you don't — maybe I'll see you again. You'll have tried something else, perhaps a few something elses, and you'll be tired of not getting any results. You'll want something difficult, scary, but sure. Your heart will crave a beauty we can only find in the most fearsome dark. I can help you with that... and what's more, I can help you teach it to others."

The world is a prison. The Underworld, more so. Indeed, they are prisons of our own making, the result of millennia of attachment, selfishness, and fear. We live, we die, we cling to our Anchors with desperate grasp, and we fail. Our essences bleed away into the Underworld's fabric, and we are unmade. But we don't pass on, not necessarily — our suffering becomes the suffering of the world itself. The Underworld builds itself on our pain and failure, like a coral reef builds itself on its own corpse. Now it's huge, depressing, and dangerous. But what if ghosts and their Bound shepherds could find self-improvement, truth, or even beauty in the Underworld? What if their passage transformed from the deer's frightened flight into the monkey's journey west, fraught with devils and temptations but promising enlightenment?

Most Bound dislike what they find in the Underworld: this is gross, this is bad, this isn't as it should be. But a select few find the Underworld as it is fascinating, even educational. Maybe they have a researcher's mind, or an explorer's. Maybe they just have a morbid character. At any rate, they feel the motivation to explore, survey, and understand. These Pilgrims expertly guide the dead along the Underworld's pathways and watercourses, helping them understand their Anchors with an arduous way through the hellish marvels awaiting all of us when we pass on.

The fears of death, oblivion, and nothingness motivate every Sin-Eater, in some way. But Pilgrims charge the void like bulls. Why would it make sense, others wonder, to force ghosts to engage with everything hateful and wrong and harmful about the Underworld? What value is there in taking the rivers like a whitewater rafter, or picking through forests of bone and screams like a birdwatcher? This way lies madness, others think. And the Underworld is mad indeed — but the madness is part of its beauty. Just you wait. Just around one more corner, there's something that'll help you see....

The Works

A plurality of Pilgrim krewes are explicitly and officially affiliated with the Buddhist sangha. Two millennia of practice, structure, and ritual aimed at exactly the end which interests the Pilgrims are hard to beat. Taken together, these krewes make up a negligible fraction of the world's Buddhist monks. No senior national or religious Buddhist leadership will probably ever recognize them — which is, of course, the way they like it — but they're there. These Pilgrims lead highly regimented lives, ritualizing basic practices such as sleeping, waking, cleaning, and eating. They spend much of the day in lecture, meditation, or chores. They often bury the dead and perform funeral services, a convenient opportunity to connect with ghosts who could use their help with passing on.

The emergence of Western psychoanalysis provided Pilgrims outside the sangha with exciting new structure. Judeo-Christian mystics, ascetics, and anchorites were important influences on the Pilgrims as well, but the importance of God, and love for God, in these traditions often conflicted with Pilgrims' goal of annihilating attachment. However, psychoanalysis and psychiatric therapy supplied a psychonautic framework and a way to explain the Underworld that jived with their philosophy.

Many Pilgrim rituals are all about exploration and celebration. The Underworld isn't a threat, it's a challenge, a lost horizon waiting to be delved and explored. Preparation for exploring the Underworld starts in the living world. Krewe elders lead neophytes on exploratory walks through parts of the real world selected for how "scary" they are: bad neighborhoods, dark woods, abandoned houses and buildings, nighttime graveyards. These practices train newcomers' instincts and confront their fear of the fearsome surroundings on the other side of the veil. The next step after that is leading others: for example, leading a blindfolded superior along a root-strewn trail or through a similar wilderness site.

Pilgrims also study the Underworld itself. They memorize lists of terms and discuss geography, physics, and other mechanics with their superiors in classrooms and on otherworldly field trips. The threats the dead face in the Underworld are an important topic here; while Pilgrims prefer not to fight their charges' battles for them, marauding Reapers and Kerberoi aren't any help in resolving Anchors. Pilgrims research their enemies' natures and habits in order best to avoid them. Stealth and speed are their first bulwark against Underworldly predators, but Pilgrims consider individual ghosts' journeys important enough that they will close ranks to fight off a

Reaper or Kerberos if it's a choice between that or letting their charge get devoured.

Living necromancers with selfish agendas are another target. When a Pilgrim encounters a necromancer, in either the living world or the Underworld, they report back to their krewe, which then approaches the necromancer and asks politely whether the necromancer might prefer not to torment ghosts, and might prefer productive membership in their krewe or another. If this approach doesn't work, Pilgrims escalate to outright threats — and if that doesn't work, well, there's nothing for it. If a necromancer won't relent, sometimes there's only one way to keep them from harming others.

The Faith

Pilgrims' vision of a peaceful future for the living and the dead begins with the end of Reaper activity. Reapers are both conceptually abhorrent and practically responsible for much of the Underworld's structural suffering and abuse. Given that the Pilgrim approach to ending ghosts' suffering often takes much more time than other krewes', their charges are particularly vulnerable to Reapers' depredations. Many Pilgrims consider the fate a soul suffers at a Reaper's claws the ultimate failure.

Pilgrims accept what's already present in the Underworld — or, at least, are more okay with it than members of many other types of krewes. Their training and ritual teaches them to appreciate the existing nature and mechanics of the Underworld. Some even view it with a sort of religious reverence: if it's there, then the dead are meant to interact with it. The difficulties and privations they encounter are there for a reason: to help them resolve their Anchors, to understand who they are and where they came from. So the structure of the Underworld doesn't necessarily need to change.

Others want to see the Underworld aid in the journey. What if the Underworld itself taught you what you needed to know to move on? What if the mechanics of Anchors and passing weren't a mystery to the ghosts they torment? What if the Underworld clearly informed ghosts they had to confront and resolve their Anchors?

If some Pilgrims seek to scour away attachments and expectations, while others seek to understand and accept them, the middle way is an Underworld that develops naturally and organically from the minds and souls of the living and the dead. This way, the path for the dead to take will remain arduous, but productively so, free of unnecessary fear or hardship born of hate and misunderstanding. The result will be an afterlife of journeys, gates, and meaning, a quest that validates the dead and brings them into productive contact with their own anchors.

Particularly visionary Pilgrims embrace the idea of having control over the shape the Underworld takes. These dreamers imagine painting the canvas of the Underworld with their will and imagination like a fiction author dreaming up a setting. Novels aren't quite the right model, though — it's really more participatory, since ghosts will actually be traveling through it in order to learn things and overcome personal challenges. But imagine working together

with other members of your krewe to plot out a journey for others that's just difficult enough for them to be able to learn, struggle through it, and enjoy a feeling of triumph at the end, before they pass out of it. That's the Pilgrim goal.

The Heresy

Pilgrims who forget that enlightenment must go hand in hand with compassion risk treating ghosts with cruelty. It is normal and common for ghosts to have little to no understanding of the mechanics of resolving Anchors or passing on; their own existence, to say nothing of the Underworld, baffle them. Yet a Pilgrim who is too strict with their erstwhile student, ignoring the most efficacious route in favor of the most spiritually rigorous and orthodox, risks that ghost's safety and peace of mind, especially with Reapers abroad.

Fascination with the Underworld, a most tempting attachment for the unattached, is not a widely appreciated viewpoint. Both Mourners and Pilgrims value exploring and mapping the Underworld, but many Mourners still find Pilgrims' fascination with what the Underworld is, rather than what it should be, morbid and unsettling. Necropolitans and Furies don't understand the utility of waiting for someone to make themself happy when you could just get involved and do it for them with far less work.

Moreover, the Underworld doesn't just change in response to us: it also changes us. When we gaze into the abyss, the abyss gazes also. Some Pilgrims' fascination with the mechanics of the Underworld extends to a fascination with Kerberoi, necromancers, and even Reapers.

It's technically impossible for one of the Bound to become a Reaper. Reapers are ghosts, not humans. But some krewes still share horror stories, usually second- or third-hand, of the Pilgrim who became too much like a Reaper in order to embed themselves among the Reapers, and who never made it back. One day, their krewe-mates looked from Reaper to Pilgrim, Pilgrim to Reaper, and could not tell the difference.

The Mysteries

The **First Church of Persephone, Architect** are Sin-Eaters interested in building and urban planning, who explore the Underworld's urban areas. Traditionally, Pilgrims set courses through the Underworld's "natural" areas, which are not densely populated and which bring a ghost into little contact with other ghosts. But the structures other ghosts build fascinate these Pilgrims. Drawing on Gothic literary theories such as the house as metaphor for the mind, they plot their charges' journeys through river cities and cemetery towns. These are often a good choice for more extroverted shades, who would descend into paralyzed loneliness in an actual wilderness with no one but themself and a creepy Pilgrim around. In the process, the Architects do some of the archival work which normally falls to Mourners, mapping fallen Underworld cities and sharing notes on architectural features.

The **Convivial Society of St. Christopher Souterrain** specialize in exploring and traveling the Underworld's waterways. A Sin-Eater may work as a Ferryman, taking ghosts and others down these rivers in exchange for a fare. But the Society has greater and deeper aspirations. They ply the waters of the Underworld in ritual-built vessels which travel not only on the surface, but underneath it, seeking the mysteries, answers, and possible educational routes which might lie below. Their goal is to render the depths of the Underworld as viable as the surface for travel, as well as to explore the fluid dynamics of these strange waters. This practice also takes them to underwater locations in the living world where ghosts may be trapped: shipwrecks at the bottom of oceans, underwater rivers, and the like.

The **Temple of Dogcatchers** got their name from their deadly fascination with Kerberoi and other fearsome denizens of the Underworld. Dogcatchers specialize in stealthy exploration and observation of the most dangerous parts of the Underworld, the gateways to the Deep Dominions and the doings of the Chthonic Gods and their servants. Dogcatcher exploits have led to some of our most useful information about the Reapers' and Kerberoi's nature, strengths, and weaknesses, but it's about as dangerous as you expect. Dogcatchers have also developed some interesting methods and rituals of camouflage and stealth.

Stereotypes

Furies: I feel like I've spent a lifetime and a half learning why this method of solving problems doesn't actually solve any problems. You can't fault Furies' enthusiasm, but I have to wonder whether they're really listening to the people they say they'll help.

Mourners: Our closest kindred spirits. They recognize the value of a good map, and the things they do (if not the things they think) work well with the way we appreciate the Below.

Necropolitans: There's so much more joy and beauty, if you just look a little further past the names and the voices....

Undertakers: Do they really hope to chart all humanity's course, where every religion has failed? It's challenging enough to guide the dead.

The Congregation

Krewes on a more traditional Buddhist model tend to emphasize Power and Resistance: the conduct of ceremonies with large numbers of celebrants in attendance, and strict adherence to the rules and strictures of membership and the sangha. Emplaced monasteries need a Safe Place, enough Resources to support a large number of monks or nuns, and almost certainly a Council of Faith. Libraries prove invaluable to the active part of the Pilgrims' mission: information about the Underworld's layout and secrets always helps.

Ceremonies: Dead Man's Camera (•), Gifts of Persephone (••), Bloody Codex (•••)

Undertakers

I'm dying right now. So are you. We all are. Death is all around us, always. It's time we stopped being afraid.

"Hey, are you Geraldine? I'm Doctor Nzimande. I heard you have an imaginary friend, and I was wondering if I could talk to you about them. No, I know the other kids give you a hard time about it, but I believe you, I promise. It's basically my job. So I want to hear all about the... Ribbon Princess, is it? Tell me how you met, tell me how you contact her, tell me how she contacts you. It sounds like she's lonely and needs friends. It's hard when there's only one person who will listen to you. With your help, maybe we can change that."

The Underworld is too strong to confront head-on. The innumerable failed revolutions of Sin-Eaters past prove that. That's why the Undertakers want to win the chess game against death before the pieces hit the board. They study Sin-Eater history, from the Chinese cults of the Three Kingdoms Era to the New Zealand Railway Battalion of the 1950s. They explore the Deep Dominions to try to understand what birthed them, relating to the living what went wrong. They confront the fear of death, the threat of Anchoring, and the lore surrounding ghosts and the Bound in living hearts and minds, guiding humans towards peaceful passing to thin the ranks of ghosts feeding the Underworld. When the quick slip through the cracks and fall into the Underworld, Undertakers are there to bring them back. All these efforts point towards a more perfect legend written on the line between life and death. Let the living look toward death with equanimity and confidence. Let death be not proud, but kind.

An Undertaker's job is part therapy, part public relations, part community organizing. They head off ghost problems before the ghost comes into being in the first place by easing the day's journey into night. Like Necropolitans, Undertakers create structures and establishments to support the living and the dead; but the Undertakers' interest extends into the realm of myth itself. What stories and mythologies do ghosts and Sin-Eaters create? How do the living react to those mythologies? Do they make the world an easier place to be dead? Are the Chthonic Gods' servants involved? And when the mythologies of the Bound cross over with the mythologies of other supernatural beings, what is to be done?

The Works

Even the most skeptical living recognize Undertakers' rituals. All the accoutrements of funerals, meant to comfort and soothe the living, are Undertaker business. In Tibet, monks carry cadavers into the mountains for exposure to vultures in sky burial. In Ghana, event planners order beer kegs and pore over playlists of the deceased's favorite songs for a wake. In Uruguay, doctors meet with families whose elders have just entered hospice care. None of these things are hidden, but all of them are relevant to Sin-Eating.

More esoteric Undertaker rituals familiarize individuals with death's nature and trappings in an environment where they aren't ugly surprises. They also spend time among the dead and those close to death in senior centers, war zones, and dangerous neighborhoods. Handling parts of corpses or the possessions of the dead shows up in many rituals: a ritual leader describes a disease's progress, the moment of passing, and then the ghost's installation in the Underworld in a low-lit room as ritual participants pass around human bones or left-behind jewelry. The process involves a lot of crying, fear, and sadness.

The next major aspect of Undertakers' work is curating and sharing stories. Wherever supernatural mythology breeds, the Undertakers go to work. They've been interested in speculative-fiction publication for a long time, but the decline of the print industry has turned their attention to fanfiction collectives, neo-pagan circles, and especially new religions that spawn outside of krewes.

As part of the myth-manipulation process, Undertakers take charge of damage control when Sin-Eater business leaks to the outside world in a way that absolutely needs to be locked down. Sometimes these phenomena are useful, true, but other times it just needs to stop: everything from personal information about vulnerable Bound to media sightings of ghost activity can do more harm than good. Undertakers take it upon themselves to destroy information or, under extreme circumstances, even intimidate witnesses into keeping what they've discovered to themselves. It's not pretty, and many Sin-Eaters — even many Undertakers — don't like or agree with this part of the work, but fear of backlash or exploitation encourages them to work on a smaller, more secretive scale.

But the Undertakers reap their most important crop from the Deep Dominions. Here, amidst the remains of Sin-Eaters' past struggles, they discover which myths failed and fell, and which had potential. From these scraps and strands they weave new possibilities, syncretizing concepts and figures into new, promising gestalts and bearing them back into the light. Where Mourners are content to record and observe, Undertakers refine and redistribute, like scavengers on the forest floor.

The Faith

Lofty and high-concept as their mission may be, Undertakers are practical, even cynical when it comes to long-term goals. Their quests into the Deep Dominions to find their predecessors' mistakes and lessons keep their process grounded in empiricism and evidence. They're crafting something better, yes, but they pattern it on what they know has yielded results in the past. Some Undertakers claim the invention (or at least popularization) of eulogies, grave goods, and even funerals is the fruit of ancient Undertaker labor.

Other krewes tend to see the integration of human and Bound society as a consummation devoutly to be desired, but consigned to the distant future. Conversely, Undertakers plan like it could happen tomorrow. One loose cannon is all it takes to blow the lid off supernatural phenomena in the public eye and bring a literal crusade down on Sin-Eaters and the celebrants who support them. If and when it happens, Undertakers won't be caught off guard because they imagined humanity would never figure them out.

Undertakers' backup plan grows more viable if the Underworld becomes a normal, expected part of human life and afterlife. Its gates are open to the living, carefully guarded to ensure that monsters on one side — on either side — don't wind up where they shouldn't be. It wouldn't even have to be that different. It would just have to be reachable. With Sin-Eaters as guides, humans could cross the veil and confront the thing they fear most. Death wouldn't be the final frontier anymore. Something would lie beyond it, something that was its own kind of alive, something not Hell or oblivion or the kingdom of an irrational deity. The living could plan not only for retirement, but also afterlife, preparing places for others who would come after them. In life, they could study the mechanics of passing on, so that they would have a trajectory, a plan. Those who use death as a threat or a tool — the executioners, warmongers, and murderers — would lose much power, as the true effects of what they do became clear and present. For once, humanity might agree on a direction.

Undertakers' hopes will lead to salvation for the living and the dead both. They will transform mainstream society and banish the fear of death forever.

The Heresy

Much of other krewes' fear about Undertakers originates from their belief that while stories are important, some stories should be told and others just shouldn't. Like Furies, Undertakers sometimes take it upon themselves to dictate policy to other krewes; but where errant Furies mandate or punish transgressions against law or morality, overstepping Undertakers instead demand that other krewes shape their interactions with the living according to a party line which supports their chosen mythology.

Greed sometimes claims Undertakers who liaise with other supernatural beings in the living world. It starts out innocuously: you want to maintain good relations with the local vampires, so you hire yourself out to do track down information in the Underworld or interview a ghost. But Sin-Eaters' mobility through the Underworld and their powers of stealth, observation, and fear can be turned to less innocent aims — and those are the ones that pay better.

Undertakers' predominance over interactions with mortals can also position a greedy Undertaker to control normal humans via fear and misinformation. With a wide-ranging information network and some carefully chosen factoids and evidence, the Undertakers are capable of gaslighting and manipulating ordinary people who have no other contact with the world of ghosts. These Undertakers's human victims find themselves enlisted as foot soldiers in conflicts with other Bound, or ushered into post-mortem power structures which favor the unscrupulous Undertaker when they meet their own ends.

Finally, spending so much time in the Deep Dominions can be hazardous to your health. Undertaker krewes saturated in their predecessors' psychological and practical failures sometimes take on the negativity that surrounds them. Their treatment of one another and the world around them begins to reflect the pride, hatred, or selfishness which crashed the Catabasis and created the Dominion. The worst-hit begin to spend more and more time in the Deep, less and less in the real world, coiling on the dead riches they find there like dragons. They grow greedy and territorial, lashing out at wayward ghosts or Sin-Eaters who venture too close to their hoards.

Stereotypes

Furies: I think they call this "broken window policing" in America, yes?

Mourners: As much time as we spend rooting around in the Deep Dominions together, I have to say, sometimes it's easier to create something new and useful instead of digging it out of the Temple of Doom or whatever. Some stories straight-up shouldn't be told.

Necropolitans: Our closest allies, but the incessant positivity can get a little grating. Hanging with them all the time would be like working at Disney World.

Pilgrims: How's this for philosophy: You can't get where you're going without understanding where you've come from.

The Mysteries

Based in northeastern Luxembourg City's Kierchbierg district, **Schultheiss and Company** is an internationally successful public relations firm which happens to specialize in ghosts which haunt organizations, from the classic theater ghost to those occupying fiber-optic networks or somehow attached to concepts such as "Freemasonry" or "the World Taekwondo Federation." They have special needs ordinary ghosts may not share — as do the hapless, bewildered organizations they bother. Since it needs to groom Bound talent early and often, Schultheiss's agents often reach out

to Sin-Eaters who accepted the Bargain in childhood. Even the most skeptical parents are often too starstruck by the prospect of a venerable and munificent corporation underwriting their child's academic development to notice that the Schultheiss-selected "tutors" are teaching the kid ghost powers. Also, they can probably buy their parents a house after their first annual bonus.

The **Romsa Ludographical Institute** is a nascent academic department at the world's northernmost university, Norway's University of Tromsø. The Institute's several Sin-Eater faculty (rather idealistically) see Nordic-style live-action role-playing as the perfect means to seize control of the mythological narrative surrounding the Bound. Their short-form, minimalist games evoke real-life experience with death, dying, and grief, often (and controversially) incorporate in-game versions of indigenous Sami as well as Norwegian Lutheran funerary customs. Well-known for their tendency to draw players' out-of-character emotion into in-character experience, these games disperse Undertaker-style ritual and the process of willingly grappling with death during life through the next generation of gamers. Recognizing that their favorite mode of play is kind of a niche interest, the Institute now reaches out to recruit new blood through academic and gaming-theory channels across the globe, inculcating an increasingly diverse set of analog and digital gamers with Undertaker ideas.

Dispatches from Beyond the Veil got its start as a conspiracy theory zine in the late 1980s. Out of love of tradition, they still publish a black-and-white printed and mailed version of their publication, but they've also grown into a distributed network of believers in the world of ghosts and the Bound. As a zine no one of import is likely ever to take seriously, *Dispatches* has the luxury of being able to talk honestly and openly about certain aspects of the Underworld, though they haven't gone into detail about what distinguishes a Sin-Eater from other individuals with ghosts following them around. When a story about the Bound leaks into the ghost-hunting community, *Dispatches* sends Sin-Eaters to perform a "follow-up report." They find out what's actually going on, attend to the ghost's needs, and set up defenses against Reapers or Kerberoi whom the activity might attract. Then they figure out the angle on the story that will cast Sin-Eaters in the best light — and the Chthonic Gods' servants in the worst.

The Congregation

Talking about serious mythology with non-serious living folks requires a great deal of Finesse: subtle influence, a few words here, a repeated and edited story there, that kind of thing. Power is next most important, but the krewe members' close ties to the mortal world mean that Resistance is sometimes difficult for an Undertaker krewe to come by; the members have other priorities which are just as important. Merits tend to focus on information gathering: Supernatural Membership for talented psychics and mediums, Resources, and especially wide networks of Contacts.

Ceremonies: Death Watch (•), Crow Girl Kiss (••), Dumb Supper (•••)

A Brighter Morning
— Part II —

Leah Washington arrived at the Patels' in the dead of night, heralded by silent and soft flashes of lightning. The Abandoned One kept watch from the top of her sedan. He phased through the roof and into the left-side backseat, right next to where Emptyface would have sat, had she still been bound to Aidan. Leah tried not to think about where she could have gone after the life faded from his eyes, his own geist unable to raise him. Her nightmares did the thinking for her. She would see Emptyface in chains at the bottom of a great ocean. Sometimes Aidan was with her. He screamed into the water, curses rising as bubbles.

The image of a thick, dark stretch of woods popped into Leah's mind, the Abandoned One's way of warning her of incoming danger.

She pulled up the hood of her black ceremonial cloak. The hood ended in a sharp point and had large white circles painted on both sides. "We'll have to deal with it when it comes."

The door was already open for her. The celebrants that Mark had wrangled had already scrawled the mixture of Enochian, Zaum, and Kobaïan words on the walls needed to keep the ghost calm. They had also spread aged rum in the corners of every room in the house to attract him to the scent. Everything had been executed perfectly, save for the presence of the Patels. Hari sat on the couch with a scowl. Jade and Trisha sat at his sides.

Hari stood up. "You are the 'High Priestess?'"

"I am the Cradle of the Lost," Leah said, "High Priestess of the Church of the Brighter Morning. You were told to leave."

Hari scoffed. "I have paid you to make a mess of my house. Were it not for a very close and persuasive friend of mine, I would not have let any of your people within my home. You work for me and my daughters. I will make sure that you do. You may begin your magic trick at any time."

Despite the temptation rising in her throat, Leah chose not to tell Hari that the Abandoned One had coiled its flexible Corpus around him like a python, staring at him with hateful eyes. Her gaze flicked over to Trisha. She squinted at her father, as if she could almost see the thing that ensnared him. Leah hummed in approval. Perhaps when this was over, she could talk her into joining the church.

"Very well, sir," Leah said. "Please return to your seat, and we will begin. No sudden movements."

Hari sat back onto the couch as the Abandoned One uncurled himself. He lost his footing and tumbled onto the cushions. Leah glared at her geist. He made the closest sound to laughing he could: a wheezing burst of air from his open mouth.

The celebrants, dressed in simple gray robes, gathered in a circle around her.

"My lady," one of them said, "None of us have felt the ghost's presence."

Leah pulled a flexible branch from her cloak. "We'll draw him out."

She raised the branch into the air. The celebrants began singing a wordless song. She drew hexagrams with the branch in each cardinal direction. In every corner of the house, thick, gray-yellow ooze grew from the rum-splashed surfaces. The ooze stretched out across the house and onto the branch. She let go of it and it hung into the air. The mass engulfed the branch, and beat like a heart as it expanded.

The Patels moved closer together. Trisha mouthed, "Holy shit."

"This is a trick," Jade said. "Something with mirrors or glue or…"

Hari said nothing. He balled his fists and pressed them into the couch.

Leah raised her arms to the sky. The Abandoned One embraced her from behind. "Now," she said.

He eased himself into her body, and a pleasant numbness ran through her. She opened her eyes, now a solid gray like her geist. He guided her hands to the ooze and placed her fingers where they needed to go. Together, they molded the material like clay, coaxing it into the shape of a human male.

"That's him!" Trisha said. "That's the ghost!"

Hari gaped at the figure. "He's just a boy. He couldn't be any older than you, Trisha. He did all this?"

The Abandoned One pulled himself out of Leah's body. Again in full control, she reached for the vial of *cachaça* in her cloak. She poured it all into her mouth, and spat it at the sculpture.

Oliver's eyes snapped open. He touched his forearm. He pulled away his fingers and strands of ooze flew off. He rubbed his hands over where he had been cut apart and found them smooth. He took in the room around him, now that he was able to see it with solid eyes. He smiled at Trisha. She raised a hand in greeting, her face caught between awe and terror.

Leah extended an arm to him. "Oliver LaVoie."

Oliver's eyes widened. "You know me?"

"What's keeping you here, Oliver?"

"I…" Oliver pointed to the kitchen. "I'm under the floorboards. I don't want to be there. I need to find my family. Can you help me?"

"Yes, Oliver. We know where they're buried, and we will put your body with them. Take my hand. You've earned a rest."

He reached out to her, then stopped before grasping her hand. "What about my family?" What if they're like me?"

"If they're still out there, we'll find them and put them to rest."

Oliver's chest rose and fell, as if he were taking a deep breath. "All right. I'd like to say something before I go."

Leah smiled. "Of course."

Oliver turned to the Patels. "I just want to say—"

All at once, every window in the house shattered. Leah crouched down and covered her head with her hands. A dry wind howled through the new openings. The celebrants stopped singing.

Oliver's body shuddered. Bits and pieces of it dripped to the floor, revealing the butchered ghost within. He grabbed parts of the melting ooze and tried to spread it on his Corpus, but doing that made it run thin.

"You *lied* to me!" he cried.

Leah motioned to the Abandoned One. He vanished from her side.

"I meant everything I said, Oliver." She reached out her hand out to him again. "There's still time! Take my hand before it finds you!"

Hari stood up. "It? What is this 'it?' I thought you had this under control!"

Leah opened her mouth to say something. A painful tightness grasped her heart, and she fell to the floor screaming. The Abandoned One was fighting something and losing. Her flock rushed to her aid, but an unseen force tossed them away from her, through the walls and broken windows.

Trisha grabbed her father and rushed for the door. A groaning came from below the house. She stopped in the middle of turning the knob, transfixed by the world outside.

"Trisha," Jade said, "Open the door!"

"I can't," Trisha said. "We're sinking."

The floorboards burst apart, revealing an empty void. The house split in two and tumbled inside.

— chapter two —
The Road Back

No, I don't feel death coming.
I feel death going,
having thrown up his hands,
for the moment.
— James Baldwin, "Amen"

You're not born expecting death. You can't even grasp the concept until you're a few years in, and it's even longer before you think to apply it to yourself. Understanding your own death means understanding you're vulnerable, that all the worst rules of the world apply not just to some faceless other, but to you. It means accepting that everything you spend your life building has an expiration date. Someday, whether or not you're ready, it ends.

The big reveal, the one not everybody lucks out enough to get, is that stopping for death isn't your only option.

The Living

Death waits behind every veil humans hang to hide it. No matter how well we block it out, we never forget it's there. We know what's at the end of the road, and at our best, we live rich, defiant lives in spite of it. At our most desperate, we hunt for detours, bridges, anything to tell us that the chasm we're heading toward isn't as finite as it looks.

Read sacred texts, classic epics, folklore, and you'll find death. Next to death, you'll find ghosts, immortals, and an infinite variety of people going to the ends of the Earth to dodge the natural order of living. The stories change, depending on who tells them, but common threads cross the world. The pious receive eternal life as a reward for good behavior, while trickster heroes steal theirs from unwitting gods. Lone divine warriors slaughter armies. Ageless hermits emerge from their hidden places to teach, or to warn. Immortality belongs to the remarkable and the worthy, and if you're lucky, you might brush shoulders with one of the blessed.

Some of these stories made their way into the modern era as myths, others as religions. People enjoy the former and live by the latter, but most agree that, if eternal life exists, it has nothing to do with the material world. Immortals don't walk among humans — if eternal life exists, it comes after death, and it plays out in a world far from this one.

People think they know what that world looks like, or what they'll look like in that world. They do what they believe they must to guarantee a place in that world for themselves, and try to teach others to do the same. Some don't expect a world after this one, and find other ways to

occupy their time. People leave one another alone about it, or they don't.

But no matter what specifics people believe, they're not likely to imagine cheating mortality the way their ancestors did. If they believe in anything other than the finality of death, they believe that it comes to us the same way death does, in a crawling marquee. They don't outsmart or defeat death. They meet it as it comes, and prepare for whatever they believe comes next.

For Sin-Eaters, reality falls somewhere in the middle. There are ways to claim immortality without dying first, but the Bound don't concern themselves with those. Death is inevitable. However, death is not a freefall into the dark, and it's certainly not the passive reception of an eternal gift. For the Bound, death comes with a choice.

The Sin-Eater

Before Sin-Eaters were Sin-Eaters, they were human beings, too. They went to sleep too late and woke up groggy. They laughed at their own jokes. They got irritated with the people they loved, and tried to forgive them. They thought about their own mortality, or tried not to. And, like all of the living, they died.

If the way a person thought about the end of their life stayed constant from birth, they'd never actually become aware of it — their thoughts on the meaning of death come from a string of influences and experiences throughout their lives that are entirely unique to them. Experiences after death matter just as much. Every moment of revelation tempers the mind, whether or not the body is along for the ride.

This is the same way people shape their thoughts on the meaning of life.

The Bound must blend these two understandings together in a way they likely never have before. Death ceases to be a static event — it can evolve, just as life can, and it bends to choice. The nascent Bound view this new development through the lens of their beliefs, their memories, and their convictions. Some accept the change and move forward. Others reject it and hold fast to their human ideas. No one lived experience marks a Sin-Eater, and no one manner of death guarantees someone will choose to Bargain their way back to life.

If anything unites Sin-Eaters, it's the deep-seated feeling that something is *wrong*.

A Sin-Eater looks at the state of their worlds, that of the living and that of the dead, and wants change. They see a ghost wreaking havoc and want to *understand* it, want to make contact with the vestiges of a person in pain and help settle their score. They feel the weight of their Burden and seek to lift it through action.

The Catholic priest views the ghosts he interacts with as confirmation of his dogma, and embraces his new role

as a guide for lost souls. The trauma surgeon sees caring for the dead as an extension of her history caring for the living. The victim of a hate crime sees his own pain reflected in the pain of the dead, their suffering unseen by the world around them, and finds his own peace in bringing peace to others.

Not all of the Bound become Sin-Eaters, after all; the former is a state of being, but the latter is a way of thinking. Sin-Eaters want to solve problems, heal pain, end suffering. Someone who spent their life aware of the flaws of the world carries that awareness into the next phase of their existence — they are uniquely attuned to imbalance, injustice, and unfinished business.

In myths and scripture, humans brush death and rejoin the living as changed beings. They find the weak points in inevitability and use their wisdom to reshape the mortal world. Not every ancient hero came to their understandings the same way, and not all Sin-Eaters begin their new lives with the same motives. But Sin-Eaters share one conviction: If human will can turn back death, it can accomplish anything.

The Dead

Life never lasts.

Death hovers just out of earshot and in the backs of our minds. It fills our stories, our poetry, our simplest language, but we still avoid eye contact with the end. When we force ourselves to see it, the picture isn't often pretty. So, throughout life, people build up a relationship with death — avoidant, ambivalent, even romantic toward the many endings around them. It builds toward an idea of our own end, but few resolve that feeling. Fewer can maintain it when their own death comes into focus. When death comes, questions arise. Doubts remain. Fear shatters the uncertain, and what's left lingers. In short?

Dying very often sucks.

On Loss and Having

Life is a promise to death. It's the foregone conclusion of living, except for the rarest and oddest of the world's denizens. When you were born, you were guaranteed to die. As part of that promise, death has lain in wait for you to meet it. Given any opportunity, it reaches out to take its due — every slip, every sickness, every accident. You feel it tugging at your heartstrings. You thrill in dodging death, in close calls, in little horrors and fantastical violence. Meanwhile, you're careful. You eat healthy. You take care of yourself. You pray.

But like any constant, from stable, frozen stillness to all of our creations, life fails. Death is as certain as physics — our return to equilibrium.

Every imperfect death is its own mystery, a puzzle for many kinds of coroner to solve. Did the deceased have a love letter saved on a flash drive somewhere, unsent and unanswered? Did he have a wedding band in his back pocket and a condom in his wallet, both now lost in the evidence room of a city too overwhelmed to sort out one little bar fight? Did the newly dead owe somebody money? Did she cheat on her taxes? Did the shock of death strike her with the full fury of its absurdity? To the surprise of the newly dead, few of us die clean.

No matter the reason, those who face death often find it wanting. They reach out to avoid the sudden lurch of that loss. They grab tight for fading sensations, but something in them *tears*. Something wrenches. Something breaks loose. Life falls away in a deluge of heartbeats, failing chemistry, body heat, and the dragging weight of meat and bones. Hanging on halts that freefall, denies the gravity of death. But without gravity, the dead are left to hang, out of reach of solid ground.

Needful things keep unliving ephemera bound to this world of heavy matter. These needs become the chains that bind them. Anchored to this world, but ephemeral, they lurk in Twilight. The sad truth is that, of all the things to do wrong, dying might just be the easiest. Cities strain with unseen citizens. Would *you* be ready?

Death is not the end, but that doesn't make it any less inconvenient.

Out of Sight, Out of Mind

The world teems with ghosts. Anyone with doubts, hidden sins, or unfinished business might find themselves bound to the bones of the earth, tethered to Anchors. Some take ephemeral form right away. Others form around their most familiar Anchors over days or weeks. It's not uncommon to see the dead try to continue their lives, unaware and ineffectual. They haven't felt the difference yet. And why not? Being dead is like being alive, only out of touch.

To Twilight eyes, the dead resemble the life they left behind. Some bear marks of their deaths — open wounds, lingering sickness, trails of meaty smoke. But they're still *people*. Just dead people. They're a mosaic of memories, culture, class, and milestones, just like the rest of us. Ghosts capture both a moment and a lifetime, and are captured by them in turn.

The body is a familiar place and a common seat for their bad choices or old traumas. From that vantage, they feel the call of other Anchors, but cannot travel freely from one to the next. To step away from an Anchor is to slowly come undone, bleeding out Essence with every step. To get to another Anchor, another answer, another chance, might not be worth the risk. Most shades stay near the Anchors they can reach to stave off bleeding away what little's left. Graveyards form hubs of souls tied to little but their own corpses, waiting for the last flakes of bone to fall apart. With a bit of luck, they can watch the world walk right through them.

Weaker ghosts can't even process their own deaths. They exist in echoes, repeating the events of their deaths

or unresolved desires like a one-track playlist. No one else knows why they're dancing, crying, screaming...or still. Even if they reach their Anchors, there's little chance they could make a difference. They'll move from Anchor to Anchor, scene to scene, a story that someone else has to read and resolve. Often, no one's even looking.

Those strong enough to maintain lucidity look through a foggy window at a life they can barely touch. It isn't a whole existence — gaps linger around a life and death that left them incomplete. Lost memories haunt the dead with truths they need to know but still fear knowing. They walk Twilit streets, rushing like the rain is coming down — washing them out, draining their Essence, their sense of self and memory — chasing Anchors and a little hope. When the hope runs out, they turn to melancholy. When melancholy's not enough...well, there's always rage.

Some ghosts find comfort in the persistence of the living. Life goes on without them. It always does. Others find their vigil bittersweet at best. They wouldn't have stayed if things were fine, after all. Death might trap the dead, but it's hell on the survivors, too. Murders go unavenged and even punishment isn't closure. Loved ones face loneliness and stacks of unpaid medical bills. It's no surprise that more ghosts lurk in ghettos than at garden parties, more unmourned stories are found among the ignored and overlooked. That much hasn't changed at all. The Twilight mists are diverse, reflecting the biases of life expectancies by cruel demographics. The wealthy dead face a different problem — often a first (or second) taste of true powerlessness.

A ghost is a silent witness to its own loss, but just watching isn't enough. How could it ever be? Sorrow, fury, need, or outrage stir up the ephemeral essence of a ghost. When the indifference of the heavy world becomes too much to bear, the ghost Manifests its unfelt weight. The first few times, it's violent. Dramatic. Unplanned. Uncontrolled. It's an outburst, like a sob or bare knuckles into brick. With practice, it becomes a conscious tool. A ghost's power is a scream into the void that finally, sweetly resonates. Essence shivers and congeals into thick, raw Plasm.

Plasm is fingerprints on the walls and footsteps on the creaking stairs. Plasm is fresh blood leaking from a cabinet full of lies. Plasm is what lifts the knife. Plasm is what throws it. Nails that dig warnings into glass with the screech of sharp claws. Steam, brackish water, or unidentifiable sludge that congeals out of Twilight. Plasm gives the ghost what it thought it needed — a sight to be seen, hands that can reach, power to affect the world. People finally *react*. And when they do? They react in horror, denial, or worse: They react with hurried flight from a ghost's cry for help.

To most, it's easier to sleep and wait for a reason to stir. Too bad the dead can't rest so easily.

It Gets Worse

The dead don't grow. Sure, they interact with each other, and you can force changes upon them, but the bonds that kept them here were the last vestiges of an identity that's uniquely theirs. To go beyond that conscious vestige of their past lives requires desperate measures.

Old ghosts hoard what Essence, secrets, tricks, and friends they can to stave off being unmoored. The haunts of the comfortably dead might be endless parties, philosophical salons, or celebrations of the lives and deaths around them. Some watch knife fights like the Super Bowl. Some just host watch parties of shows they can appreciate, dropping the temperature in some poor stranger's house. Some grow powerful, trading lost lore with mediums or stranger things. A ghost may not become a new, different person, but benefits from better circumstances. Do the living really change that much, if we're being honest? Is how we change really all that different?

The dead wander in a state of Twilight, without matter but full of need. Death is a mist, a maze, a blurry haze of weak connections imposed on them by the weight of hidden things. Being mourned — or even just remembered — helps keep them moored to the Earth. It keeps them strong and sensate. Without an outside force to act on them, the dead won't see another sunrise, even if they hang around another 100 years. They won't find any new horizons, no matter how hard they look. As their Anchors and surviving remnants face the living world, they find themselves comforted, resolved, confused, or further lost. As those Anchors die or crumble, they feel another call, another gravity. Death is not the end, but you can see it from there.

The dead may not grow, but another way can open up beneath them — puckered, dark, and ever hungry. Gates lead to a place meant only for the dead. For those with nowhere else to go?

The Underworld awaits. But that doesn't mean that it lies dormant or patient.

Sometimes, it *takes*.

Hitting Bottom

Avernian Gates hide like riptides in Twilight — unseen by those above the surface, but keenly felt by the people fighting to stay afloat. When a Gate opens, it *calls*. But the Underworld isn't always content to take only the curious or the desperate. Sometimes, ghosts come back out. A few have their own business, but the ones that linger in the memory of even the most fractured ghost are the men, women, and others in monstrous masks. They come with hooks and chains. They come with dark Numina and inexplicable power. They come back to the living world, but not to live. They come to take the dead back down with them.

Those called Reapers may be ghosts, but they're not the friendly kind.

Down strange roads into stranger depths, the dead find a world all their own. Some wander in, looking for something, anything, better than a Twilight existence or a slow second death bereft of Essence. Others are taken. The caves offer shelter from the loss of Essence, countless lost treasures, and maybe answers that the living world can no longer provide. A shame it's a trap.

Below, weakened, forgotten masses fight with a frantic need for every shred of discarded hope or memory, thirsty for fresh Essence that the world above once provided. Those cruel enough to sustain their strength or those rare few still remembered after leaving the sunlit world can carve out a place of power. Ruling a tiny slice of twisted death, reigning over prisoners and the half-aware, doesn't appeal to nice people, but few nice people make it to the top of the huddling heap.

There are strange fruits down below, and stranger rivers. If a ghost drinks deep, he can grow, but not as he is or was. The Underworld itself grows inside him, changing who and what he was into something older, something darker, something further lost. A ghost might become something distinctly other, freed from those last worries, but if he does? He'll lose as much as he gains, if not more. No one will recognize him, but they'll fear him all the same. These "lucky" few become geists, and in doing so, surrender something that they'll long for as long as they persist.

Stranger things even than geists lurk down in the depths, more than willing to give gifts. Those who accept become enforcers of a broken purgatory, empowered to leave it as they will. Fall hard and deep enough, and you become a hunter of the dead, a tool of darker powers.

What About the Light?

The idea of "moving on" is complicated and remains perhaps the last great mystery. It seems to have little to do with unfinished business — ghosts who find peace with their Anchors often linger well past their epiphanies. The rare ghost can close their eyes and fade into a puff of contentment, but most require the aid of the sympathetic living, or the next best thing. Letting go is antithetical to the dead. It's a struggle to persist, built upon a refusal to dissolve.

So what's on the other side? Where are they going? Could anyone return? Answers vary along lines of faith, conjecture, and propaganda. Some think they skip the mire of the Underworld and go on to the afterlife they're due. Some think that the void can't be dodged forever. No matter the result, moving on is a one-way door, even for the dead who once came back again.

Some doors don't re-open.

The Bargain

If death is being bound to Anchors in a formless, weightless world, dying is a moment of severance. Weight. Warmth. The sense of connection between people and

What's Spot Doing Here?

As any anyone who's looked along Twilight roads or down the depths of the Underworld can tell you, death is neither clean nor anthropocentric. Twilight is littered with the ghosts of structures and objects, half-gleaming or pointedly ruined. Not all once-living ghosts are human, either, maybe not even most considering how prolifically rats live and die. The circumstances may differ — how emotionally unfulfilled is a heart-shot deer? — but the result is the same. Sudden deaths, deprivation, or horrid conditions create ephemeral imprints in flesh, stone, or steel. Proximity to an Avernian Gate will do it, too. Sometimes you don't even have to fully die to leave a ghost in Twilight.

The Underworld is full of pale beasts and swarms of vermin. Dead crows feed on their own eyes. Loyal pets may follow their masters farther than they ever should. Purged predators still stalk their territories, using simple Manifestations to wreak havoc on hunters and trespassers alike. Rumors of bestial geists or prized hunting hounds of gods below are older than the ghosts who tell them. And of course, nothing kills a cockroach, not even death. What keeps them crunching underfoot?

It might be better not to know. What would it say about you?

points in time. It all starts to fall away. What if, in that moment, in the desperate, reflexive reaching out for Anchors, something *else* reached back through your skin? What if you felt that other pull you closer?

Would you hold on?

A Short Drop

The immaterial exclusion of Twilight and the depths beyond Avernian Gates are never truly far, but getting there is no guarantee. Many, but not most, of the dead just die. Quick or slow, in sudden gasps or shallow rattles, they pass on and they recognize that end. They accept it. Maybe they saw it coming. Maybe on some level they felt they deserved to die or were owed some kind of rest. Some of us have the grace to leave the world behind. Either they're at peace, or they soon will be. Survivors often say that their lives flash before their eyes, a visual calculus of how they arrived at the end. For some people, the math adds up. It might not be fair. It might not be convenient. It just... *is*.

Not so for the rest of us, destined for the land of the dead. The flesh is resolved, but passions aren't. There's always more to do, always more to say, a few more crimes to answer for or to commit. Everyone leaves someone behind — even if it's just a version of themselves they'd rather not see. If the moment of death is the calculation of a life, then for the unquiet dead, the end doesn't add up. The end's an anticlimax or an ironic cruelty. For deep or petty reasons, the dead can't handle it. Most of the time, that means clawing their way back from the brink as a ghost.

Sometimes, though, that dissatisfaction draws attention. That rejection of a foregone conclusion echoes to those all too familiar with the raw deal of unresolved death. That rejection, that human response to the final "no," resonates with those who've been there. The Bound are lucky.

When they shout against the void, something unexpected answers.

And a Sudden Stop

While they may walk down dead roads and empty avenues, the Bound are not dead. Or if they are, they're dead without most of the drawbacks of dying. Lamenting their death to a ghost isn't going to garner much sympathy. They aren't out of touch. At the cusp, they didn't die alone.

Perhaps the tone and texture of their lingering Burdens drew attention. Perhaps they died lucky, the way people are born lucky every day. Perhaps we're never really alone in a world with a Twilight haze just beyond our fingertips. That's not what matters. What does matter is the geist. A bleak angel lingered over you as you start to slip across that final, one-way threshold. You died.

And for reasons of its own, it reached out and took hold. It grasped your sinking shade. You *lived*.

Imagine that moment. Were you lying in a cooling pool of blood? Were you in a soft, sweat-sticky bed? A moving car? When time went wan and still, were you alone? Some get a sense of premonition or have had brushes with Twilight realms before — mediums, the haunted, and the like. These people tend to have a sense for when death is done waiting. For others, this is their first glimpse of death. The world loses color, texture, its essential gravity. Feeling fades.

In its place, the geist looms before you or hovers overhead, a proximal horror, a nightmare in the corner of the eye. Their unknowable will or alien curiosity holds you in your own skin. They do not belong in the scene of your end, nor do they seem to care. One tracks your blood across a floor no living eye will ever see. Another takes a careful inventory of your mourning loved ones — their clothes, their tears, the contents of their pockets. Geists are ghosts, but more than ghosts: They're strange shapes and elemental fury, leaking wounds and brilliant light. They are invaders in your most private, intimate moment, and yet, they mean you're not alone.

This is the first echo of your geist's Remembrance, a sense that even through the impossibility of its form and presence, it is not unfamiliar. It is not your enemy. The same grip that keeps you in the moment reminds you that you're being held.

The bite of clove smoke spills from its gaps and down your hungry throat. You feel its eyes in every reflective surface, keeping you in clear focus. This is the first taste of a bond between the geist and the dying, and that first taste is an *offer*.

Beyond that hold is a vast unknowability. You cannot see what lies ahead, but its edges are not comforting. You aren't yet gone from what you had, but you already feel how far away it is. Few people die alone, and the geist is just the beginning. How many people have died right where you lie? How many ghosts linger around you at the moment of your death? The geist holds you in place, but it does not hide you from Twilight or Twilight from you.

Some of the Bound are given a chance and refuse. Does the Underworld catch the scent of their longevity and steal away these dead? Do they just fade away? Are they consumed by a rejected geist, a mere pause on their long, dark road? Whatever happens, they're not around to tell anyone the price of saying no. No Bargain begins in a place of fairness, but that's not what matters yet.

What matters in the moment *is* the moment. Time strains at your edges. The geist's grip is there, but thin. The sense of something needful and not whole fills the space widening in your flesh. To some, it's instant. To others, it's the grueling climb of gangrene or frostbite. To a rare few, it's gentle arms, a welcoming back home. If you are a Sin-Eater, you've accepted or been accepted.

You may have been saved, but you haven't exactly survived.

Hanging Around

Time passes. You walk familiar streets through an unfamiliar filter. The roads are more or less the same, but the change is palpable and ever-present. It's not the world that's changed — it's your perception of it. You breathe, but you notice flavors in the air you'd always missed before. You walk and you tire, but there's a certain vividness to the energy and to the exhaustion and to so many doors you've never opened, never walked through, never even considered. You eat. You sleep. You drink. Maybe you spend time with a lover or take care of your cat. You can do anything you did before, but it's never quite the same. In many ways, it's better. It's all *intentional* now. You may not be dead, but you've died and now you live the difference. Sensations are more present and valuable, but one new feeling is certain: You're never doing anything alone. You are *Bound*.

Bound to your geist, yes, but you're also bound to the living world. To your new awareness of the many dead, who have little or none of what you have. You're strapped into your own skin and to a world half in Twilight, and you are not allowed to forget it.

Your geist isn't always present (which in itself can be unnerving), but it often observes your life. Dormant and resting. Active and impatient. Curious and inquisitive. It looms over aspects that call out to its mood or memory. It may not offer color commentary, but you'll get an idea of its interests. When the force keeping you alive wants something, you have no choice but to feel it. And sometimes, the geist pulls. It aches to act through you. When you rein it in, you feel echoes of the old offer. You feel time inch down again. You feel your bones get distant. But when you let it go, when you tune in to its thirst or its fury, you get to feel two kinds of alive.

The results are often horrifying. It's funny how feeling alive brings death closer to the surface.

The geist isn't the only tie that binds the Bound. More than ever before, connections come to the fore. With eyes open to a world of the lonely dead, alive with a sense of the sheer depths beneath your feet, you learn to treasure the links that keep you from sinking further. Is it the fetter-call of a ghost inhabiting the flesh, or is it a psychological response to the trauma of death? Is it some mystical awareness given to those who've crossed a threshold or a simple ache to understand — yourself, your place, your geist, your role in the bigger picture? Again, it doesn't matter. What matters is that each Sin-Eater finds herself bound to this liminal experience. Who? What? Why? First and last, what can you do for your bonds to justify your existence? How do you own it?

Drink a toast for the dead. Dig up a grave or two for a grim, forgotten ghost, delve into the Underworld and maybe even right some of the wrongs that accumulate in the bleak depths. But you mustn't forget to live. That would defeat the point of it all. Don't waste your Bargain.

Not everybody gets a second chance.

In Good Company

Perhaps the greatest privilege of a Sin-Eater is that while they might get lonely, they'll never be alone. The pull of the Burden may ache or inconvenience, but it's a vivid reminder of the joys of life and the distance that can come with death. You walk the world, but a call to the unfamiliar familiar still haunts you. It's the same world out there that it ever was, but now you can see it.

The dead themselves are affected by a Sin-Eater's awareness. Imagine for a moment, screaming for hours, for days, unheard and unanswered. Imagine trading memories with huddled masses, making the most of not much at all. Imagine, then, that someone looked right at you — someone unexpected or irritating, an open hand or a shakedown. Even at its worst? It's *new*. To walk among the dead is to walk in a position of power, standing as a fulcrum for a ghost's limited leverage. Place and purpose linger at every Sin-Eater's fingertips, but also haunt their nights.

How many hard luck stories will you pass by on your way to your morning coffee?

Of course, not everyone who sees your situation is desperate. Cunning ghosts with decades or more of experience working their hustle will not be impressed. Necromancers, rival krewes, con-artist mediums, and others seek to exploit you and the dead with equal gusto. Twisted eaters of the dead might see your geist or your friends as dinner. Things born below might not even

The Twilight Network

How does one Sin-Eater find another? Do they lurk around the graveyard, ask a passing ghost, or place a wanted ad on Craigslist: "Dead Alive, seeking same?" In the distant past, Sin-Eaters could go for years without meeting another of their kind unless they ventured into the Underworld or just got lucky. Symbols and messages visible only in Twilight were left for fellow Sin-Eaters, used to mark territory, to warn against dangers in the region, or just to say "Sin-Eater here." Those old forms still see use, but over the centuries, transportation (and communication) has modernized, making contact between cities, states, and continents commonplace. Online chat rooms, blogs, and websites globally connect krewes from Auburn, Alabama to Ahmedabad, India.

The internet empowers krewes to found multiple branches around the world, connecting through Skype, sharing gigs of encrypted occult files in a Dropbox, and using remote-control-over-IP drones to investigate areas previously unreachable. This freedom of information has its own risks, but it has enabled new Sin-Eaters to easily find answers and connect with others of their kind.

understand or care that you know pain, so long as you satisfy their visceral urges.

The Bound are never alone, but that doesn't make you safe.

Killing Time

Many who die never make it home. Some answer the pleas of one ghost and find themselves stuck on an endless path of savior stories, a boulder just as sure and heavy as Sisyphus'. More find themselves knee-deep in the business of a krewe, raising old gods and exploring older tunnels. Others follow their geists' needs and urges, seeking to know the strange shade that shares their skull. The Bound have many reasons they tell themselves, but the honest reason is that digging into the land of the dead is often easier than going home.

If your death was expected or inevitable, how do you explain your miraculous survival? The vagaries of the Bargain might leave a Sin-Eater confirmed dead and gone before a surprising recovery. Worse, what if your end wasn't an accident? Do you tell your rivals that you're alive again? Do you come home to the place that might have killed you? If you got lucky, will your enemies move on? Will they pick somebody more vulnerable? And perhaps saddest: Some Sin-Eaters don't die alone. The Bargain doesn't seem so sweet if it means coming back to an empty home. Or worse, another haunting. Are those the ghosts you'd want to face? Changing towns, finding a krewe, and hunting down a geist's story are all ways to embrace life. Most Sin-Eaters know exactly where their Burden is. Not everyone's in a hurry to face it.

You've got a living world, a Twilight shadow, and an Underworld to contend with. Even those who've lived, died, and lived again can believe that they've got *time* to put the big things off.

Sometimes, they're even right.

The Carnival

Community defines humanity. Even our initial moments of existence are awash in community, be it mother and child, a midwife assisting during childbirth, or a partner holding the newborn as they arrive into this world. Birth involves a community of people supporting each other. Humans, living or dead, strive to be part of something: It is natural, innate, primal.

Science says the urge to form groups derives from two needs: survival and acceptance. Prehistoric humans needed to form groups for food, sharing daily duties, and to protect themselves against larger creatures. The unspoken need was for acceptance in some form, either visible or intangible, creating a level of belonging. The yearning for community makes us human. Sin-Eaters understand that drive more than most; each Sin-Eater represents a mini-community unto themselves.

Born In Death

The Bargain requires death. Not merely the death of the Bound, though of course that's part of it — but in order to haul a human being back from the pit, a geist needs a significant source of power, more even than the Essence they feed on. The Bargain draws on *resonance*, a sort of background radiation created by death. It needn't be large in scale, but it must be intense. A fatal, three-car pileup could birth a krewe's worth of Sin-Eaters. A serial killer's ritual kill room might poison the world for blocks around, enough that a geist can seize hold of it and merge with the old man dying of cancer around the corner. The larger the event, the more powerful the resonance, and Sin-Eaters explode into the world in massive numbers. But where that resonance doesn't exist, the Bargain can't be struck. The history of the Bound, then, is one of tragedy, but also of discontinuity. Their societies are born in plagues, in wars, in terrible fires and floods. But even the once-dead aren't immortal, and so as the plague dies off, as the peace treaties are signed and mother nature's fury quelled, they flicker and fade, leaving behind cryptic writings and half-remembered myths and legends.

Without a contiguous society before them, the Bound bring their own life experiences and those of their unusual, unsilent partners to the search for answers. Out of the ashes of history and whatever remnants of their own faith survived the sudden shock of death, out of the fever dreams of their geists and the mysteries of the Underworld,

they forge meaning out of their second lives. They scrape together bits of everything that fits, discard what doesn't, and build a doctrine out of the end of their world.

Finding Religion

A Sin-Eater's traditions and lore are drawn from their life experiences, beliefs before the first death and faint whispers from the Underworld. They can never go back to the life they had. A pale imitation? Yes, but never the old life. Their understanding has expanded and can't easily be sealed away again. Customs are whispered from dead to dead, each slightly altering the tale. They're personal and individual, but when you get enough people with similar traditions together (or one person persuasive enough to bring others around

Pebbles and Avalanches

For as long as Sin-Eaters have recorded their own history, their societies have followed the same pattern. Arise in the wake of a massive uptick in deaths, then fade as the tragedy that birthed them does. Some lasted mere decades, others a century or more. Most of these societies were geographically isolated, though that had more to do with fewer travel opportunities for ancient peoples than anything mystical.

Sin-Eater society got its first taste of globalism with the age of colonialism, when Europeans brought disease and slaughter to the rest of the planet, but it wasn't until World War I and the influenza epidemic that followed it that the Bound really began to see themselves as a worldwide phenomenon. Easy transoceanic communication and travel allowed for Sin-Eaters from New Orleans to New Zealand to exchange ideas and share practices — and just when that wave of Bound might have started to die off, World War II kicked off and started the whole cycle again.

Since World War II, Mourner krewes have noticed a curious thing: That old limit on the Bargain no longer seems to apply. Optimists say that the sheer weight of human population has reached the point that even the normal daily mortality rate across the globe creates enough death resonance to fulfill the Bargain. Pessimists say the Underworld is gaining power and will soon swallow the world of the living just like it swallows the dead. And the cynics just point to the near-constant brushfire wars, police brutality, and hate crimes the world over with a "what did you expect?" shrug.

to their way of thinking), you get a religion — or, in Sin-Eater parlance, a krewe.

Krewes form for all of the reasons that humans group together: for survival, acceptance, knowledge, the acquisition of power, whatever. In the past, most krewes were secret societies, gentlemen's clubs, and ladies' leagues, shrouded in secrecy for fear of retaliation for their beliefs or to protect the living from the dead (or vice versa). In modern times, the same holds true to some extent, but the internet, 24-hour surveillance and Big Brother have made that secrecy a commodity that gets harder to retain with every passing day. There is power in the shadows and being unseen.

Modern krewes take all those forms and more. A mahjong group that meets weekly. A cell of DEA agents in a bust that went sideways. A fantasy football league. An after-work jazz band that always seems to meet but has never played a venue. These days, krewes can even be scattered around the world and connected with technology. Some even practice their faith openly, either as a fringe sect of a larger church, a "revival" of an old religion, or an entirely new doctrine. Even in countries where religious freedom is nominally the law of the land, though, faiths outside the mainstream (or worse, that seem "foreign" to the people in power) are often targeted for harassment, so openly religious krewes have to tread carefully.

Finite Eternity

Sin-Eaters are practically immortal for a short time. Death does not come for them, but the drives of two beings motivate them to come to terms with Remembrances and make peace with Burdens. Duties to one's krewe must be upheld. It's a constant struggle for balance between forces, plagued by the dead for help and the constant pull of the Underworld that longs to break their souls. But though the struggle seems endless, there is light at the end of the tunnel.

The Bound are held to this world by chains of need. Their own Burden calls to them, dragging them back from the grave with every breath. Their geists, too, are prisoners of their own fragmented memories. Together, they can break those chains, lay down their Burdens and piece together their shattered identities. Sin-Eaters call this **Catharsis**, and consider it a victory, at least of a personal sort. It allows the Bound and her geist to move on, to take that final step beyond this vale of tears that she's guided so many ghosts to.

For some, the small scale, the personal, isn't enough. If one of us is unfree, none of us is free, as the saying goes. These Sin-Eaters throw themselves into the mysteries of death, exploring the Underworld through the lens of their own mythology until they understand what's broken. Undergoing their own **Catabasis**, a sacred journey into the Underworld, they confront the Chthonic Gods in a ritualistic challenge and change the very nature of the Great Below forever. The fact that the Underworld has remained unchanged as far back as the Bound have records, and that the corpses of failed Catabases litter the Lower Mysteries, speaks to the difficulty of this task.

Finally, for some, the path out is that of power. Though it's a road few Sin-Eaters walk, some of the Bound seek not synergy, but dominance. Force-feeding their geists from the Rivers of the Underworld like foie gras geese, they bloat themselves with unwholesome power and become one with the Underworld itself. Some say this **Cabeiros** transforms them into Chthonic Gods, while others insist that this is just one more trap the Underworld lays to snare the unwary.

The Underworld

Necromancers blessed with dry wit deride ghosts as psychic echoes, mere shells thrown off by the trauma of life and death. Those necromancers are insulated by the warmth of biochemistry, divorced from the fate that awaits them by electricity sparking around lumps of fat grown proud and arrogant by evolution. But the separation from their final destination is temporary. A ghost thinks and feels, and someday a ghost will be all that's left of the necromancer.

All that's left of anyone.

And they all go to the same place, eventually.

The Lands of the Dead

Scholarly Bound and academically inclined necromancers have catalogued the Underworld for as long as human society has explored it. While deep cultural variations and subtle elemental distinctions exist depending on the author, most divide the Underworld into several distinct areas:

- The *low places* or *cenotes*, areas of Twilight that contain an Avernian Gate and are keenly attuned to the energies of death. On the other side of the Gates lies...
- ...the *Upper Reaches*, or the liminal stage between the living world and the...
- ...*Rivers of the Dead*, a vast series of waterways that contain small gatherings of ghosts plagued by Reapers, and that cut through the Lower Mysteries, which contain...
- ...the *Dead Dominions*, or dry areas of the Underworld subject to peculiar Old Laws that grow more numerous the deeper you go, enforced by and subject to the rule of their Kerberoi, lords of their dead realms. Yet all Rivers lead to...
- ...the *Ocean of Fragments*.

On the dead side, Avernian Gates shine with a dim and coruscating light, scattering rays across forgotten tunnels like beams of sunlight broken by the ocean's surface. Brackish water seeps and flows from cracks in the Gates, even if they lead to the hottest parts of Death Valley or Gilf Kebir. This same water flows out of an opened Gate in a torrent strong enough to knock the unwary off their feet, heralding a new ghost's arrival. The dead are not sucked into Gates, but blown through, pushed to equalize the pressure of existence. They fall to the floor of the Depths sodden, another piece of detritus amidst a vast field of dead debris.

The Upper Reaches

The Upper Reaches resemble whatever is underground relative to the location of the Gate. When the Gate of a cemetery opens, as so many do, the Depths resemble catacombs; if the dead enter the Depths through a city, they are subway tunnels; wilderness Gates lead to deep caverns, and deaths at sea lead to sandy dunes without a sky or cramped, rusted submarine quarters. No mourners ever descend to pay their respects, no trains ever come, and no submariners man the vessel — the Reaches resemble an out-of-the-way portion of their locale, such as maintenance sections of the subway or a cavern walkway far separated from the lighted, well-trodden path. At times, the dead feel subway cars slamming down on tracks just beyond the walls, sending bare lightbulbs swaying and flickering, or glimpse the shadows of children laughing in a cavern walkway far above, but no matter how loudly they cry, the living never hear them, and no amount of frantic excavation breaks through to anyone alive. Every tunnel slopes down — some have a sheer vertical drop requiring aid to safely traverse, while others boast a polished and grand flight of stairs. The thin streams of water moving through always let the travelers know they're heading deeper, though.

The Reaches run the gamut of cold, though sweat comes unbidden at times. Often they are so chill that breath can be seen. Condensation beads the walls and soaks into the ground, giving surfaces a reflective sheen to toss back the glow of yellowed service lights or iridescent lichen or the alien constellations in the cavern ceiling overhead. Dampness swells humid and heavy within the spectral lungs of those who walk the tunnels. The steady seep of water from the Gates (and the ceiling, so strong at times that it seems to be raining) gathers itself into streams, which themselves collect into the stagnant pools where the dead find their first meal.

The living are not the only things that die. Valued knick-knacks, treasured possessions, even real estate prized by a community: They all burn, decay, and are lost. They persist in Twilight for a time, but without Anchors, these sad castoffs are blown into any nearby Gate whenever it opens. Detritus floats ever downstream, breaking into fragments and moving through the Upper Reaches at a glacial pace. Yet they are still charged with Essence, and ghosts, deprived of Anchors themselves, cannot help but be reminded of how much they've lost with the first bite of a rotten teddy bear or the crunch of a soiled wedding photo on ephemeral teeth.

While the Upper Reaches aren't the Underworld — that title properly belongs to the lands touched by the Rivers, not mere tributary streams — they do share certain traits with the Underworld proper.

It's not uncommon to encounter groups of ghosts in the Depths, banding together for protection or more efficient victimization of weaker ghosts. In time, all of them eventually move on, if only for the simple reason that the geography of the tunnels changes, slowly but surely. Unwatched debris moves rapidly in the flow of water, eventually merging into streams and brooks. The tunnels slowly widen and take on aspects of one another the further one descends, subway maintenance corridors giving way to vast caverns still ringed with lambent safety lights. Hulks and structures litter these areas, mute testaments to remembered shipwrecks and well-loved buildings that fell through a Gate and became lodged. Visitors can find shelter but no succor within, since most are long-stripped of items containing Essence. Pirate ships covered in strange runic symbols, weathered gravestones three stories high, even small parts of cities like Pripyat remain within the Depths, drifting down year by year. Strange coral stretches from the tunnel floors, as if left there by some ancient flood.

The River Cities

Eventually, sojourners and psychopomps alike come to the Rivers.

Massive waterways cut deep into the heart of the Underworld, fed by the myriad Gate-streams and condensation running through the tunnels. Signs of culture and community mark the areas around the Rivers, the dead from 1,000 societies blending together in confused and harrowed shantytowns. Most are built from the detritus that slides down into the Rivers, giving them a patchwork appearance. A rare few have residents that possessed some degree of supernatural might capable of reshaping the Underworld, and are built up like favelas or banlieus. Most can be seen from the Upper Reaches — cliffs in the tunnels give glimpses of these communities, lighted by thousands of scavenged lanterns that never go out and reflect off the glittering Rivers in the never-ending night.

Ashes and Temples

The strong rule in these places, brutalizing the weak while forming into gangs and cults. Resources are scarce, consisting of castoffs sifted out of the streams that feed the Rivers. Some of these are cracked apart and cooked, flavored with weird mushrooms that grow in the Underworld to provide some semblance of a meal; the meaty smell of seared fungi hangs about the river hamlets like funerary incense. Some ghosts inevitably establish an

economy, and soon the strong dominate the weak, just like in the living world. The only law here is that of the Reapers and the merchant kings, the former sweeping through and devastating communities when the latter grow too strong. Yet here a ghost may stay and rest, even attempt some sense of normalcy.

Many ghosts cling to their old religions, sectarian difficulties breaking down and blending in the face of an Underworld that doesn't conform to anyone's expectations. Some adopt a faith and culture they never held in life, believing this to be the darkest foxhole you can get, while the most militant atheists rage at the lack of cessation or material rebirth. But slowly, the word spreads: you must find new gods, in a place like this.

The Reapers who wash over these towns, worse than any flood, serve gods. They believe the Chthonic Gods to be nameless and formless, a pantheistic folk belief that holds the Gods as inseparable from the Underworld itself, commingling with the living world with the Upper Reaches as a liminal state. The Gods are the Underworld, connected to but separate from the living world, as two lovers kissing are intimately joined but disparate. The longer a ghost spends in the Underworld, the harder it is to deny an omnipresent feeling of maliciousness. One by one, curious altars made of rotting ofrendas spring up in dark corners of these river cities, meaningless runes carved on their surfaces and babbling prayers made of 1,000 patchwork faiths uttered over them.

Eventually, all of the prayers are answered, one way or another.

Washed Away

Some communities find a guardian or champion: the rare necromancer (sometimes even a vampire), ghost of a mage, or Sin-Eater on an extended solo sojourn. One of the oldest of these communities, Dead Man's Hand, is inhabited mostly by western North American ghosts and has been guarded by the Death Valley Krewe since the days of the Transcontinental Railroad. The Death Valley Krewe is as close to elder statesmen as Sin-Eaters get, and the krewe has a certain legacy to it. Whenever a krewe member dies, their ghost takes up residence in the casinos and taverns of Dead Man's Hand, while another joins the krewe to take their place; so far, not even concerted Reaper attacks have been able to break the krewe's hold. Dead Man's Hand, and the few ancient communities like it, are as permanent as any structures in the Underworld come.

The Rivers of Death

The Rivers are the heart of the Underworld, and they touch every point. Bridges cross over the Rivers all the time, but they only ever lead to other tunnels within the Upper Reaches or various River cities. To truly go anywhere in the Underworld, one must sail the Rivers.

Some of the Rivers' banks are fetid and greasy charred flesh, others pristine dark sand, still others are bleached bone. If their riverbanks are strange, the Rivers themselves are stranger: some are composed of insects floating amid the brackish

The Names of the Rivers

The Underworld's Rivers demarcate boundaries and borders and provide passage into the Lower Mysteries and accompanying Dead Dominions. The following is an incomplete list; Storytellers are encouraged to create their own, with according strange waters and stranger effects.

Acheron, the River of Woe: Drinking from this river aids in remembering painful memories.

Anahita, the River of Life: These waters heal wounds, but the waters are limited, and powerful Reapers constantly guard it.

Eresh-ki-gala, the River of Dead Seed: This swampy river brims with strange floating seeds; consuming them cures infertility and ensures perfect conception the next time the eater attempts a reproductive or generative act.

Id-Kura, the River of Consumption: Drinking from the river creates sympathy for the traveler among ghosts at the cost of unquenchable thirst.

Kohan-Il, the River of Pus: The soupy, warm, pus-filled waters of this river repel ghosts (and Reapers), but leech health from the drinker.

Lethe, the River of Memory: By drinking from this river, the drinker can answer every question put to him, even without knowing the answer, but he forgets a detail about his life with every answer.

Urdabrunnr, the River of Fate: Urdabrunnr's waters show two possible futures, successful and failed, for every action the drinker takes.

waters, others are clogged with bone dust, and some have sap or gold coins floating within. Drinking from the Rivers can confer great power, but eating or drinking the stuff of the Underworld is perilous in nearly every culture's mythology.

Like Charon of myth, boatmen pole craft about the waters, willing to accept payment for crossing. Their appearances vary — many conform to the stereotype of the old man with a barnacle-encysted poleboat and lantern, but others are winged demons dragging shells on fiery chains, while others are "travel agents" for the dead, all smiles and crisp white suits. They ferry passengers down the Rivers...and back up, for a price. Few of these boatmen have much of a personality, though the reasons why don't become clear until a traveler reaches the Ocean of Fragments.

Boatmen accept ofrendas or material offerings in the form of coins —two is traditional — but in lieu of that, they ask for solidified Plasm, a pint of blood poured into the River, secrets, or some utilitarian piece of far greater value. The Bound are capable of acting as boatmen, too; some aspect of the Bargain makes this possible, and so long as they procure a craft hardy enough to withstand the rigors of River travel, the Underworld proper beckons. Even a krewe forged by friendship and fraternity is not immune to the boatman's requirements, however. Krewemates must pay the Sin-Eater in full, but so long as they do (and do not loan that payment), the boat keeps its inhabitants safe from attack and the dangers of the River, rendering even the most powerful and aggressive of the Underworld's denizens harmless. Sin-Eaters who sail the Rivers without having the proper offerings come back missing an eye, a finger, or worse.

That's the price coming back, not sailing down. Once the boatman accepts a traveler onto their craft, the Underworld proper opens.

The Lower Mysteries

Pole away from the shantytowns and the Riverbanks don't look dramatically different, just emptier. Occasionally, travelers see ghosts reenacting grim tableaux from 1,000 different Underworld myths: Sisyphus and his rock, Head-Apu I's head in the tree, Baldr playing dead with mistletoe in his eye. Those who travel down the Rivers hold these reenactors to be in the thrall of the Chthonic Gods. These strange tableux are all travelers along the Rivers see until they come to the Dead Dominions.

The Dead Dominions

The Lower Mysteries below the Rivers are 1,000 broken kingdoms, ruled by ancient ghosts, feudal overlords to those forced here in exile from the Depths. Their borders are often unclear and undefined, but each is watched over by a Kerberos, a being empowered to enforce the strange and Byzantine laws that suffuse these realms and keep them whole.

Each Dominion has a gate, seemingly ancient — specifically, Sumerian, if you know your myths. Each gate has a Guardian, a ghost who greets travelers and informs them of the Old Laws by which each Domain is ruled. The farther along the Rivers one sails, the longer and stranger the Laws become. "You must eat and drink what is offered to you" seems simple enough, but soon it becomes "Do not speak to a shade unless commanded to" and "Let no slight pass unchallenged with blood and steel." Stepping into the Dead Dominions, into a place where the Essence bleed of the Underworld is staunched, means placing yourself in subject to those Laws. Break them, and you face the wrath of the Kerberoi.

Dominions come and go with the passage of time. Some are impossibly ancient, inhabited by ghosts who claim to remember the mammoth. Others are decidedly

Whispered Dominions

Potentially thousands of Dead Dominions exist, and many more existed before they fell into the Ocean. The following are but a few.

An-Shot-Ka: Potentially the oldest Dominion, it is an ancient place of cracked and faded architecture, having lost a great deal of territory to the Ocean... yet it has not fallen yet. The ancient Kerberos who guards it, the Triptych, claims to hold the secrets of geists long fallen.

Lowgate Prison: Overseen by the Kerberos called the Faceless Warden, the impregnable and inescapable Lowgate serves as jail for those who broke Old Laws in other Dominions. They're kept until they are suitably punished and spiritually divorced of their Vice.

Gehenna: After the fall of the Saintly Kingdom, this Dominion arose to take its place for Christians who maintain their faith against all odds — yet in Gehenna they are punished for the sins they feel they deserve.

The Forge of Orcus: The eponymous Kerberos oversees this Dominion, where souls are forged into goods which are sold to denizens and visitors alike. Sin-Eaters often negotiate with boatmen to drop them off here so they can acquire payment.

The Vault: A gigantic library, this Dominion houses all forgotten and destroyed knowledge in books along thousands of shelves (and one titanic scroll, guarded by strange beasts). It can be visited freely, but finding the lost information you seek will cost you dearly.

modern, gleaming obsidian skyscrapers with no bottom to them and skyways connecting the gaps. They have appeared with each past upwelling of Sin-Eaters, dozens blooming in the dark caverns like flowers to a midnight sun. When Tenochtitlan fell to Cortés, Mictlan greeted the Sin-Eaters who came with the war dead. When the Great Famine, the Black Death, and the Hundred Years' War ravaged Europe, the Christian dead found their way to the Sainted Kingdom of Prester John, under the earth rather than to the east.

Dominions are born in the lulls between generations of Sin-Eaters, a great upswelling of Essence and life within death. Even they cannot hold against the tides for eternity, however. The Sainted Kingdom fell after 500 years of grace, cracking and falling and slamming into the Ocean of Fragments over a single bad year. The Rivers were impassable that year, choked and swelled as they were with Christian ghosts lamenting their sins.

Kerberoi

You will know a Kerberos on sight, though their forms are mutable and as fluid as the Rivers. Some are the three-headed hellhounds of Greek legend, others spit fire that wreathes their six arms wielding wicked blades, and yet others are a visage of death that defies acculturation. A Kerberos rules their Dead Dominion, instantly knowing when an Old Law has been broken and compelled to punish the transgressor according to ancient and alien rules. If the Kerberoi were ever human, mercy has been stripped from them. Even fleeing the Dominion cannot keep a krewe safe; Kerberoi have been known to command Reapers to pursue those who have fled outside their jurisdiction.

The Ocean of Fragments

All Rivers stream to the Ocean, yet the Ocean is never full. Many cultures hold that the world began with an endless ocean. Very few know that is how it ends.

The Ocean of Fragments has all the hallmarks of a Dominion — a Kerberos, Old Laws — yet it is more ancient by far than any other, appearing in the oldest, most hallowed texts of the Bound. In the repeated loss and fragmentation of Sin-Eater culture, the prominence of the Ocean has been somewhat obscured, though the earliest Sin-Eaters seemed far more preoccupied with it than their modern inheritors. Sail the Rivers long enough, though, and you'll hear the lapping of ebony waves upon the Black Beach, see the lonely fire of the Hermit who lives on the sands. The brackish water of the Rivers gives way to salt and sadness, for the Ocean is, by all accounts, made of tears. Do not sail beyond the shallows, for the depths of the Ocean belong to the Freighter and the Leviathan.

No structures sit upon the Black Beach; no dead warlords lay claim to it. Only the forlorn sit upon those shores, and only for as long as it takes them to screw up their courage and wade into the Ocean. Nothing survives within those waters, though breath comes easy. Instead of bubbles trickling up to a surface, identifiers of the individual break off like tiny pearls and pieces of driftwood to spiral into the endless sea. Small things at first, like "I am the Third Grade Spelling Bee Champion of Elderbrook Elementary" or "I am a lover of cheesy television shows meant for children." Then other things break off — "I am an accountant," "I am a writer," "I am a Muslim," "I am a mother" — until they only thing left is "I am."

When that is sundered, existence ends. *Sic transit mundus*.

Travelers approach the Ocean in two ways: sailing the winding Riverways through the Dominions, or plummeting through one of the miles-high shafts in the Ocean's cavernous ceiling after falling from a higher part of the Underworld. In the former case, sailors should heave to the Freighter and beach their ships, for only the Freighter and her Admiral may sail the Ocean's waters. In the latter case, travelers should enjoy the swim to shore while they still possess some self-identity. People venture to the Ocean for a myriad of reasons — to see where the waters go, to retrieve some valuable cargo from the Freighter, to rid themselves of a troublesome identifier like "I am a vampire" or "I am a murderer." The Ocean can take these things, leaving them mortal and innocent yet again, if need be. But it will probably take much more than that, and it cannot return one to life.

There is nothing beyond the waters of the Ocean, no bottom, no deeper Underworld. The identifiers caught in the currents spiral down into entropic eternity.

The Freighter

The ship that sails the dark waters has been described as a barque, a Viking longship, a superfreighter built to carry tons of oil. At the dawn of modern Sin-Eater society in the 1920s, it was RMS *Titanic*.

Her crew only holds on to a few ragged identifiers, foundational things that keep them going and were important, once. They are castaways and loners, those who lost the reason they waded into the Ocean in the first place. Her captain, the Admiral, wears a string of identifiers around his neck, gilded trophies made of foreign egos. Rumors abound that he numbers the boatmen among his fleet, and his necklace is their self-identity held hostage for leal service.

The Freighter's cargo is identifiers, rare and treasured bits of identity belonging to millions of forgotten ghosts. Her nets are silver silk, dipping easily into the Ocean and catching interesting elements within. The Admiral sifts through to choose the finest while consigning the rest to the deep. He is a collector of these things, and when struck by a mood of magnanimity will allow visitors to search through his holds for choice identifiers, some of which give access to troves of information and knowledge at the cost of altering one's identity with another's. Perhaps this is why the Admiral sometimes goes for a swim, coming back up with his primary identifier of "I am the Admiral, and the captain of the Freighter."

The Leviathan

The Kerberos of the Ocean of Fragments is a titanic beast that swims beneath the waters. It cannot be placated or dealt with, precisely, though it intervenes to enforce the Old Laws with tentacles as vast as a skyscraper. It has been known to pluck castaways from the deeps and return them to shore, but whether the beast is driven by compassion or disdain none can say.

The Hermit and the Black Beach

Besides the Admiral and the crew of the Freighter, only one ghost is a long-term resident of the Ocean, and he can be found sifting through the surf for tiny identifiers that he uses as tinder and kindling. The Hermit is an old man of indistinct ethnicity, but friendly nonetheless, and conversant in all languages. He's reluctant to tell of himself, but he will recount the excitement of when a Dominion eventually cracks loose and plunges into the Ocean, taking all of its inhabitants with it. The bonfires he builds from their lightest identifiers are spectacular.

Beyond the Beyond

Anything is possible. Hope springs eternal. Don't let the bastards grind you down. Desperation is the mother of invention. The grass is always greener on the other side. Whenever God closes a door, He opens a window. Some people just won't take no for an answer.

The Ocean of Fragments is the end of all things. This is accepted as fact by one and all, an axiom of death itself, so all-encompassing it reaches the status of the proverbial. No one has ever sailed the Ocean and found something else, and no one has ever plumbed its depths and returned whole. In its waters lies the dissolution of self and identity, the death of memory. Here lies the true Undiscovered Country — and perhaps the Undiscoverable Country.

Or maybe everyone else just isn't trying hard enough. If no one's done it, that doesn't mean it can't be done, just that no one's done it yet. Perhaps a krewe believes that the Ocean of Fragments is just another Dominion, if the largest and deadliest; or perhaps that other, distant shores lie at the remotest reaches of its waves. Maybe they can sail off the edge into something else, to a better Underworld, one that doesn't thrive on oppression and exploitation.

Is escape enough?

A Brighter Morning
—Interlude I—

Mark stepped into the Whiterock Building and shivered. The lobby was freezing in comparison to the muggy evening outside. He went to the front desk, darting his eyes to the corners of the room.

The concierge's voice broke his concentration. "May I help you, sir?"

"Yeah." Mark pulled out his phone. "I'm Mark Baker, and I'm here to see…Adam Wessel."

Adam Wessel was not a real person. The name was one of many that the Fifth Street Titans rented their penthouse apartment under. Two weeks of intense negotiation had led to this moment, and everything needed to be followed to the letter. The krewe almost certainly controlled the entire building. A single misstep could lead to a fatal "accident." His geist could bring him back from that, but the threat of continued violence against the Church would still be on the table, and he'd have to start from nothing.

Mark tapped a nervous rhythm against the front desk. What he had hoped would be a quick confirmation had turned into a back and forth between the concierge and one of the Titans. The Open-Throated Saint had left his side not long after came in. As far as he knew, she was skulking around the perimeter, checking for ambushes like he was. Did they know?

The concierge hung up the phone. "You're free to go, Mr. Baker. Take the express elevator up to Floor 20B."

Mark sighed in relief. "Thank you."

The Saint waited for him in the elevator. Mark asked her, "Anything I should know?"

She gurgled. Considering that she was here and not trying to tear someone apart limb from limb, Mark felt safe in assuming that they were safe for now.

He leaned against the wall and stared at their silver-tinted reflections. He put his hand into his pants pocket, where he kept two six-sided dice in a plastic baggie. These were the dice that Aiden died for.

The Church had found them after putting a murdered gambler's ghost to rest. They were loaded, and the gambler's death had left them hot to the touch. Anyone who asked a question with the dice in hand could roll them and get one or two numbers related to their answer. It wouldn't be much. They'd get the first two digits of a safe number or the true age of a target, and the querent had to figure out the rest. Still, such a pure symbol for the power of chance was hard

to come by, and the krewe figured that it'd be useful for a ritual every now and then.

The Titans had bigger plans for the dice. They made their plans known when they brought some of their own to open fire on the Church's old cenote, in the middle of a meeting. The fight was brief but bloody. The congregation sent the would-be robbers running but came away injured. Aiden bled out on the floor despite Mark's attempts at triage. Emptyface reached into the air to grasp her dying partner's spirit, but it slipped between her fingers. Leah knew what was happening before anyone else did. Mark still had a bruise on his side from when she shoved him off Aiden's body. After Aiden died, the other geists rushed to their friend to save her from the rushing waters of the open Avernian Gate. The tide was too strong. Emptyface was gone for good.

The Titans made no apology. They declared war, citing the injuries that the congregation had inflicted on them. It was a war that the Church had no chance at winning. The Titans were larger and richer than they were. So while Leah mourned and Oumil recruited, Mark sought peace.

The elevator doors parted to reveal a gray hallway leading into a brightly colored parlor. Light piano music drifted in from another room. The Fifth Street Titans were throwing a party, and for the first time in a long while, Mark felt underdressed. The krewe chatted with their guests, their geists floating behind them, waiting for orders.

The Saint emitted a low growl. Mark shook his head.

"All smiles, Saint," he whispered to her. "Let's not have a repeat of this afternoon."

A man in a mustard-yellow tuxedo walked past him. Their eyes met, and the man turned on his heel to greet him. He motioned for his geist to follow. The spirit obliged, wriggling its limbless torso across the floor and leaving a slick trail of phantom intestines and blood.

"The 'Voice to the Silent' himself!" The man extended his hand. "How the hell are you, Mark?"

Mark grinned and shook the man's hand, ignoring the increasing rage he felt radiating from the Saint. He didn't know the man's real name. He didn't know any of their real names; revealing his own had been the first of their terms. Mediating from a severe disadvantage had been difficult.

"Fine." He glanced at the Saint. Her eyes followed the handshake, up and down. "You're the "Golden Tycoon'?"

"The very same! Earthworm and I are happy to meet you, aren't we?" The Tycoon kicked the geist below him with his foot. It let out a dry cough. "Let's get straight to business."

He led them to the least ornate room in the penthouse, a sitting room with cream walls. The Tycoon patted the table. Mark pulled out the baggie and laid it there.

"There you are," The Tycoon purred. He pulled the dice from the baggie and examined them. They had one to six pips, like a normal pair. "You the real thing, honey?"

The dice clattered on the table. One die came up with eight pips, the other with ten.

"Wonderful!" He swept up the dice and put it in his breast pocket. "I can see why you wouldn't give it up."

Mark felt a buzz in his pocket. He pulled out his phone and saw a text from Kamala.

The barley tree lies broken. The krewe code for "we're in an emergency."

"I'm glad you like it," Mark said. "I need to go."

"Go?" The Tycoon frowned. "Son, we're not done discussing peace terms yet. Do you know how many medical bills you made us pay?"

"You got what you wanted!" Mark stood up. "Something's come up."

"You step outside of our door," The Tycoon said, "and I can't guarantee your little Church's safety. Might not be today, might not be tomorrow, but you turn your back now and there'll be a storm coming."

Mark walked to the door. He patted the Tycoon's shoulder on the way out. "I'll take my chances."

— chapter three —
One Foot in the Grave

**If you are silent about your pain,
they'll kill you and say you enjoyed it.**

— Zora Neale Hurston

You need a character to play **Geist**. This character doesn't need to be anything like you — in fact, it can be more fun to spend the game walking in someone else's shoes. They just need to be someone you'll enjoy inhabiting for hours. You'll speak with their voice, think with their logic, and make decisions based on their beliefs and experiences.

To help create your character, you'll go through a series of steps to decide what they're good at and what abilities they gained when they became a Sin-Eater. You can find more details on each of these steps on the page referenced in their section headers.

Step One: Concept

Even the best, most memorable characters start with a single idea. The concepts in the previous chapters can help you start thinking about who you want to play, but your character really comes to life when you choose some of those big ideas and shape them to fit a person. The only limit is your imagination; every choice you make in later steps will be shaped by the original idea you create.

Think about who your character was before they died. Did they live a comfortable life surrounded by family and friends, where death came as an unwanted shock? Did they live a life full of insurmountable hurdles from the time they were born, where death was a last insult after a string of injuries? What were the best and worst things they can remember? What forces —religious, cultural, personal, even traumatic — shaped the way they thought about their life, and their eventual death?

Now that they're dead, what has changed about the way they see the world? What kind of geist found and Bound them, and how do they feel about their new companion? Do they try to seek out any parts of their old life, or are they all too happy to leave it behind? Perhaps most importantly, how do all those factors come together to turn them into a Sin-Eater?

Try describing your character with two phrases, one for before they became a Sin-Eater, and one for after. Are they a frustrated nurse who became a fearless advocate for the dead? Are they a pessimistic ex-con who became a paranoid hunter in the Underworld? The transition from one to the other could be minor, or entirely unexpected. It all depends on the experiences they lived.

Aspirations

Once you've decided where your character is coming from, it's time to think about where they're going. These serve as goals for your character, and they'll help you and your Storyteller plot out an arc for them within the larger context of the chronicle. Clear Aspirations help your Storyteller pin

down the kind of game you want to play – a character who wants to hone her street-fighting technique will do better in a combat-heavy chronicle, while a character who wants to track down information about her missing brother will thrive in a game that lets her use her social skills.

Don't worry about making them perfect; as your character achieves their starting Aspirations, you'll give them new ones to fit the way the story is progressing. Short-term Aspirations let you watch your character grow from moment to moment, while long-term Aspirations remind you where their arc is ultimately headed.

For a more thorough discussion and examples of Aspirations, see the **Chronicles of Darkness Rulebook**.

Aspirations

- **Define Three:** Define three Aspirations for your character: two short-term and one long-term.

Step Two: Attributes

Attributes are the foundation for what your character is capable of. They're sorted into three categories: Mental, Physical, and Social, and rated from one to five dots. The Mental category includes Intelligence, Wits, and Resolve; the Physical category includes Strength, Dexterity, and Stamina; and the Social category includes Presence, Manipulation, and Composure. An Attribute with only one dot represents a significant weakness for your character, something that they're particularly bad at. An Attribute with two dots assigned to it means your character performs at about an average level. Three is above average, four is excellent, and five is the best of the best.

Attributes

- **Base Competency:** You start with one dot in all Attributes for free.
- **Priorities:** Prioritize Mental, Physical, and Social Attributes as primary, secondary, and tertiary.
- **Primary:** Assign five dots, any way you like, to the Attributes in the primary category.
- **Secondary:** Assign four dots, any way you like, to the Attributes in the secondary category.
- **Tertiary:** Assign three dots, any way you like, to the Attributes in the tertiary category.
- **Trait Maximum:** No Attribute may have more than five dots at character creation.

Step Three: Skills

While Attributes are ingrained, Skills are things your character has learned during their lifetime. Like Attributes, Skills can have up to five dots, but unlike Attributes, characters don't receive free dots in Skills. Every character has some degree of intellect or wit, but not every character knows how to drive, or lie their way out of a tough situation.

Like Attributes, Skills are grouped into Mental, Physical, and Social categories and rated from one to five dots. Any Skill without dots means your character has absolutely no experience with it, and they will suffer a penalty if they try to use it. One dot is a layman's proficiency, two marks a professional, and three shows specialized training. Four and five dots mark a character who is incomparably proficient, whether through natural ability or intensive study.

Rather than choosing the Skills you think would be most universally useful, try to pick Skills that make sense for your character. A doctor might have dots in Medicine to reflect her training; she might also have dots in Brawl from years of kickboxing classes after work.

Skills

- **Priorities:** Prioritize Mental, Physical, and Social Skills as primary, secondary, and tertiary.
- **Primary:** Assign eleven dots, any way you like, to the Skills in the primary category.
- **Secondary:** Assign seven dots, any way you like, to the Skills in the secondary category.

Breaking Points

Though Sin-Eaters have crisis points (p. 91), most mortal characters have breaking points. When a character performs certain actions or endures certain experiences, he might reach a breaking point. A breaking point simply means that what a character has done or seen has outstripped his ability to rationalize or handle it.

A breaking point can fall into one of the following categories:

- The character performs an action that either violates his personal moral code or that is considered unacceptable in society.
- The character witnesses something traumatic, terrifying, or that rattles his understanding of the world.
- The character is the victim of a supernatural attack, whether physical, emotional, or mental.

Breaking points are somewhat subjective, obviously: A homicide detective with 30 years of experience in seeing dead bodies and hearing confessions of killers has a higher tolerance for human depravity than a sheltered 20-something in a middle-class liberal arts college.

For a more thorough discussion on breaking points, please see **Chronicles of Darkness**, pp. 29-30.

- **Tertiary:** Assign four dots, any way you like, to the Skills in the tertiary category.
- **Trait Maximum:** No Skill may have more than five dots at character creation.

Step Four: Skill Specialties

Specialties further refine your character's Skills. Unlike Attributes and Skills, there's no fixed list of Specialties; you'll define them as any specific application of a Skill that makes sense for your character. For example, your character might have been a cardiologist before they died — they could have three dots in Medicine, with a Specialty in Heart Surgery. A skilled marksman might have four dots in Firearms with a Specialty in Sniper Rifles.

Skill Specialties should be specific enough to illustrate your character's talents, but not so specific that they will only apply in one or two rare situations. Conversely, they shouldn't be so broad that they apply on virtually every roll. If you're unsure whether a Skill Specialty is appropriate, check with your Storyteller and work together to come up with something that fits.

Specialties

- **Define Three:** Define three Skill Specialties for any Skills.
- **Multiple Specialties:** You may choose multiple Specialties for a given Skill, as long as they're all unique.

Step Five: Sin-Eater Template

Now that you've created a human being, it's time to turn them into a Sin-Eater.

Burden

Your character's Burden is the lingering echo of their life that pushes them to accept the Bargain and return to the living world. Their Burden haunts them, drives them, makes them the Sin-Eater they are. Each Burden provides three Haunt affinities, along with an extra Aspiration, allowing you to define your character's specific expression of the Burden. Resolving this Aspiration grants you a measure of spiritual power.

When defining your Burden Aspiration, work with your Storyteller and take into account the planned length of the chronicle. If your game is going to be a one-shot or a short arc, you'll want a relatively straightforward Aspiration: "Punish Hannah" or "get my paper published." For a longer chronicle, you might want a longer-term Aspiration, possibly even one with multiple stages: "Find my killer" or "Make sure Ahmed gets into a good college." The Haunt affinities listed in italics are unique to that Burden.

Burdens

- **Burden Aspiration:** Choose a Burden Aspiration.
- **The Hungry:** Your character is called back by something rooted in the living world. It's something they can't let go — or something they don't want to give up. Their Haunt affinities are *the Boneyard*, the Marionette, and the Caul.
- **The Bereaved:** Your character lost someone they loved, and they need to find them again, even it means making a Bargain and returning to the living world. Their Haunt affinities are the Curse, *the Oracle*, and the Shroud.
- **The Vengeful:** Your character was wronged by someone during their life, and they return to the world to get their revenge. Their Haunt affinities are the Curse, the Memoria, and *the Rage*.
- **The Abiding:** Your character wants to continue existing in whatever form they can. When presented the opportunity to make the Bargain and return to the world of the living, they took it. Their Haunt affinities are the Caul, the Memoria, and *the Tomb*.
- **The Kindly:** Your character hurt someone while they were alive, and they want to make the amends they couldn't — or wouldn't — in life. Their Haunt affinities are *the Dirge*, the Marionette, and the Shroud.

Root and Bloom

Sin-Eaters exist in both the world of the dead and the world of the living, a citizen of neither and both. Your character's Root and Bloom are traits that help describe their relationship to these dual worlds. Root defines your relationship to the dead, while Bloom defines your relationship to the living.

Touchstones

Touchstones are tangible reminders of the things that matter most to your character, and serve as a source of inner strength.

Synergy

Your character's Synergy represents their Bond with their geist. The higher the Synergy, the more in tune the two are.

Haunts

Haunts stem from the Bargain between the Bound and their geist, and allow your character to tap into their geist's powers to affect the physical world.

Keys

Keys allow your character to strengthen their Haunts by channeling the power of the Underworld.

The Geist

Geist creation has its own section, but if you haven't already, this is when you should create your character's constant companion, and think about the relationship they're beginning to build.

Remembrance Skills

While your character carries their Burden, their geist carries echoes of its own life. As your character grows to better understand their geist, they can begin to share their own knowledge and skills with it, and benefit from some of its expertise in return.

Plasm

Plasm is the stuff ghosts are made of, the stuff Manifestations generate, and the stuff your character uses to fuel their powers.

Sin-Eater Template

- **Burden (p. 19):** Choose one Burden and note its Haunt affinities. The Haunt affinity in *italics* is unique to that Burden.
- **Burden Aspiration (p. 73):** In concert with your Storyteller, define an additional Aspiration that reflects your character's specific Burden.
- **Root and Bloom (p. 81):** Choose (or define your own) one Root and one Bloom.
- **Touchstones (p. 83):** Choose (or define your own) one Touchstone associated with your character's Burden.
- **Synergy (p. 90):** Your character's Synergy begins at 1.
- **Haunt (p. 100):** Assign three dots to Haunts. At least two must go into a Haunt or Haunts you have affinity with.
- **Key (p. 121):** Choose a Key that reflects the circumstances of your character's death.
- **Plasm (p. 95):** Your character begins play with a full pool of Plasm, based on their Synergy.

Step Six: Merits

Merits define your character's knowledge, their natural affinities, and their assets, both social and financial. They're defined as Mental, Physical, or Social, like Attributes and Skills, and they have dot ratings, but only certain Merits have the same one to five dot progression; many others simply have a flat dot cost.

Merits

- **Free Merit:** All Bound characters gain the Tolerance for Biology (p. 89) Merit free of charge.
- **Assign Dots:** Assign 10 dots however you like to Merits. You don't have to prioritize them by category.
- **Ceremonies:** You may spend Merit dots on Ceremonies.
- **Synergy Increase:** You may spend five of your Merit dots to begin with a Synergy of 2, or all 10 dots to begin with a Synergy of 3.

- **Second Touchstone:** If you spend Merit points to increase your Synergy to 3, choose a second Touchstone tied to your geist's Remembrance.

Step Seven: Advantages

To finish off your character, use the dots you've allocated to calculate their Advantages.

Advantages

- **Defense:** The *lower* of Dexterity + Athletics or Wits + Athletics
- **Size:** 5, unless modified by a Merit
- **Health:** Size + Stamina
- **Willpower:** Resolve + Composure
- **Initiative:** Dexterity + Composure
- **Speed:** Strength + Dexterity + 5

Geist Creation

Once you've finished creating your Sin-Eater, it's time to create the geist she's bound to. (You can do this step alongside creating your character, if you like.) Geists use a simplified set of Traits compared to Sin-Eaters, and Bound geists are simpler even than other ephemeral entities (p. 185).

Step One: Concept

You've probably already come up with a concept for your character's geist as part of creating your Sin-Eater, but it's still a good place to start. Geists are archetypal, atavistic beings, their humanity submerged deep below the surface. They don't have names — or, more accurately, they've long since forgotten them — and so consequently they're often known by titles that evoke mythology or urban legends. They are strongly tied to a particular cause or concept of death, and echo that in their appearance and abilities. Though their appearance is often monstrous, even the most horrific of geists retains a basic, recognizable humanity; they are never wholly alien or bestial.

Example: *The Snow Queen represents slow death by exposure: she resembles an impossibly emaciated figure, skin black from frostbite, trailing wisps of mist that resemble a wedding veil.*

Remembrance

Every geist has a Remembrance, an image or powerful sense memory that holds a clue toward discovering who they were in life and how they might be granted peace. As part of creating your character's geist, you'll come up with the first such image; the Storyteller devises the rest for you to discover in play. Remembrance should be a simple, straightforward image presented mainly in sensations: sights, smells, tastes, etc. It should also provide a suggestion of where and how to start investigating it.

Example: *The Snow Queen's Remembrance is crisp winter cold, the crunch of snow underfoot, the scent of pine needles, and the sound of a scratchy recording of the "Wedding March" played on an organ. That's enough for her Sin-Eater to start narrowing down a list of wedding venues that perform outdoor ceremonies in the winter, or try to identify the approximate date of the ceremony based on the recorded music.*

Step Two: Remembrance Trait

Geists don't have Skill or Merit ratings like Sin-Eaters do, but they do have a Remembrance Trait. This is a powerful sense and muscle memory associated with their Remembrance. As the bond between geist and Sin-Eater grows stronger, the Bound can call upon her geist's Remembrance Trait to improve her own abilities.

Remembrance Trait

- **Skill or Merit:** Choose a single Skill, or a Merit with a dot cost of three or less.

Example: *The Snow Queen's Remembrance Skill is Intimidation.*

Step Three: Attributes

Geists use the three simplified Attributes common to ephemeral entities (p. 189). A bound geist only uses its Attributes when it is Unleashed (p. 303).

Attributes

- **Base Competency:** You start with one dot in all Attributes for free.
- **Assign Dots:** Assign 12 dots, any way you like, to the Power, Finesse, and Resistance Attributes.
- **Attribute Maximum:** No Attribute may begin with a rating higher than 9.

Example: *The Snow Queen's Attributes are: Power 7, Finesse 3, Resistance 5.*

Step Four: Virtue and Vice

Whereas Sin-Eaters have Root and Bloom (p. 81), geists, like ghosts, have Virtue and Vice (p. 145). These Traits represent the best and worst elements of the geist's nature.

Example: *The Snow Queen's Virtue is Empathetic, and her Vice is Implacable.*

Step Five: Crisis Point Triggers

Certain things set the geist off and cause an extreme reaction; even the geist herself might not understand (or be able to communicate) why. Reining these responses in is part of the role of Synergy (p. 90). Choose (or devise your own) a crisis point trigger (p. 91).

Example: *The Snow Queen's trigger is Betrayal: a crisis point is triggered when her Sin-Eater suffers harm from someone she considered a friend or ally.*

Step Six: Ephemeral Entity Traits

Bound geists have some Traits in common with unbound ephemeral entities. Ephemeral entity Traits not listed here are subsumed by the Bargain (p. 57); you can use the full ephemeral entity rules (p. 187) to devise those Traits if you want, but they'll only come into play if your character's geist becomes unbound during play.

Rank

Your character's geist is Rank 3, unless you take the Dread Geist Merit at character creation.

Ban and Bane

Your character's geist has a Ban and Bane appropriate to a Rank 3 ghost (p. 190).

Example: *The Snow Queen's Ban is fresh pine boughs: she cannot cross barriers made with them or harm those who wear a sprig of fresh pine. Her Bane is yellow roses.*

Innate Key

Your character's geist has an innate Key, just like a Sin-Eater. Your character can unlock Haunts with this Key. When the geist is Unleashed, they treat this Key as an Influence with dots equal to their Rank.

Example: *The Snow Queen's innate Key is, unsurprisingly, the Key of Cold Wind. Her Sin-Eater can use this Key to unlock Haunts, and when the Snow Queen is Unleashed, she treats it as Influence: Cold Wind •••.*

Step Seven: Advantages

As with Attributes, these Traits are only used when your character's geist is Unleashed. Most of the time, you won't even need them then, but you may want to have them handy in case they come up.

Advantages

- **Defense:** The *lower* of Power or Finesse
- **Size:** 5
- **Initiative:** Finesse + Resistance
- **Speed:** Power + Finesse + 5

Character Advancement

Characters in **Geist: The Sin-Eaters** advance through a system of "Experiences." Experiences are spent to increase and buy new character traits. Experiences are earned by accruing "Beats," which are small elements of drama in the plot. These Beats come through fulfilling Aspirations, through good and bad things happening to characters, and resolving minor plot hurdles called Conditions.

"Missing" Traits

Bound geists do not have the following Traits. Here's a brief summary of what they use instead; for full details, see The Bargain (p. 57).

- **Willpower:** Bound Geists share Willpower with their bound Sin-Eaters.
- **Numina:** Unleashed Geists can use the same Haunts their Sin-Eaters use, but they cannot unlock them with Keys.
- **Essence:** Bound geists share a Plasm pool with their Sin-Eater, and spend Plasm any time a rule says they spend Essence.
- **Influences:** Geists treat their innate Key as an Influence with dots equal to their Rank, but only while Unleashed.
- **Manifestations:** Bound geists can only be Unleashed in certain circumstances; otherwise they only project an image of themselves in Twilight.

Beats

Beats are measures of drama in the Storytelling system. They represent small but significant moments in your character's personal arc, the slow growth that leads to bettering oneself. You receive Beats for multiple things in the course of the story. Aspirations and Conditions are the most common ways to achieve Beats, but numerous others exist.

Some specific events give you special kinds of Beats such as Synergy Beats or Krewe Beats, which in turn become Synergy Experiences and Krewe Experiences. These work just like regular Beats, but you're more restricted in what you can spend them on.

Beats

- **Common Pool:** All beats earned by player characters go into a shared pool.
- **Aspirations:** Any time you resolve or make significant headway toward an Aspiration, take a Beat.
- **Chapter:** At the end of every chapter (game session), take a Beat.
- **Conditions:** Any time you resolve a Condition, take a Beat.
- **Dramatic Failure:** When you fail a roll, you can opt to make it a dramatic failure and take a Beat. You also take a Beat if you roll a dramatic failure on a chance die.

- **Other:** Any major dramatic event the Storyteller deems appropriate can award a Beat.
- **Scene Limit:** You may only earn one Beat per category per scene.
- **Conversion:** When the common pool has (five × number of players) Beats of a given type, each player receives one Experience of the same type.
- **Exclusive:** Different kinds of Beats do not combine with each other for purposes of becoming Experiences.

Experiences

Experiences are the culmination of the small moments that Beats represent, and serve as the currency for your character getting better. You may spend Experiences at any time to improve your character's Traits — it's assumed you've been practicing or studying in your down time.

Experiences

- **Restrictions:** Krewe Experiences may only be spent on your krewe's Traits. Synergy Experiences may only be spent on improving Synergy. Normal Experiences have no restrictions.
- **Cost Splitting:** You may split the cost of an advancement between different types of Experiences as long as you don't violate the above restrictions.

Experience Costs

Trait	Cost per Dot
Attribute	4
Skill	2
Skill Specialty	1
Merit	1
Haunt (Affinity)	3
Haunt (Non-Affinity)	4
Ceremony	2
Synergy	5

Non-Experience Based Advancement

In certain circumstances, your character advances without you having to spend Experiences.

Non-Experience Based Advancement

- **Burden:** Resolving your Burden Aspiration grants a dot of Synergy and increases your geist's Rank by 1 (to a maximum of 5).
- **Remembrance:** Resolving your geist's Remembrance (p. 267) grants a dot of Synergy for every scene resolved. Resolving the entire Remembrance increases your geist's Rank by 1 (to a maximum of 5).

Character Creation Quick Reference

Step One: Concept

Choose your character's concept. Determine three Aspirations.

Step Two: Attributes

Prioritize categories. Spend 5/4/3 dots by category.

Step Three: Skills

Prioritize categories. Spend 11/7/4 dots by category.

Step Four: Skill Specialties

Choose three Skill Specialties.

Step Five: Bound Traits

Assign Burden, Root and Bloom, Touchstone, Haunts, Remembrance, Remembrance Skills, Keys, and Plasm.

Step Six: Merits

Add 10 dots of Merits. Merit dots can also be spent on Ceremonies or increasing Synergy. Take Tolerance for Biology for free.

Step Seven: Advantages

Willpower is equal to Resolve + Composure. Size is 5. Health is Size + Stamina. Speed is 5 + Strength + Dexterity. Defense is the lower of Dexterity or Wits. Initiative is Dexterity + Composure.

Synergy

Synergy starts at 1. Additional dots may be purchased with five Merit dots each. A character cannot start with Synergy higher than 3.

Krewe Creation

Now that you've made Sin-Eaters and their geists, it's time to consider who they are together. A single Sin-Eater and their geist partner is a powerful force, but when backed up by an entire community they're capable of just about anything they put their minds to. Krewes are created from the innermost circle of the founding Sin-Eaters to the least initiated living celebrants who can hardly imagine the sorts of mysteries that the afterlife holds.

During this process, try to think what sort of krewe your character would become involved in. Are they the sort of person who believes that the afterlife needs to punish those who are wicked eternally? Maybe their

death has them skeptical of this entire death thing altogether — maybe it should be scrapped entirely because that's worked for them so far. How does your character navigate those beliefs with the other players' characters if their philosophies on it don't quite overlap? It's good to keep these kinds of conflicts and ideas in mind.

The creation of the krewe is a conversation and everyone needs to be on the same page with what they want out of the krewe as well as what everyone at the table is comfortable with. **Geist** is a game about community, and the most important one in this game is the one sitting around the table.

You're going to be making a few characters per player: the Sin-Eater main characters (with maybe a ghost or two), an iconic dead celebrant, and a handful of living ones. Who is going to be playing them? They're typically played by the person who creates them, but you might hand one off to somebody else at the table when two of your characters are in the scene together. Maybe you'd feel more comfortable if the Storyteller takes over roleplaying. The krewe is an ensemble cast and if a character needs to be picked up for a scene everyone at the table should be able to pick up the character. It is, however, good form to check with the "owner" of the character before having them take major story- or character-changing actions.

Finally, krewes have a character sheet just like any Sin-Eater, with Traits that measure their ability to act as a group and their collective resources. You'll be defining those Traits in this step as well.

The Sin-Eaters

The first step of krewe creation is the core cast. The game assumes most players will create Sin-Eater characters (p. 71), but if a player is interested and the table is willing they can choose to make a ghost their main character (p. 290).

If you haven't made a Sin-Eater yet, this is the time to make one. It might be a good time to ask everyone else what kind of krewe they'd like to make as well. A former Fortune 500 CEO might not really fit into a game about founding a Fury krewe with a group of mostly street-level activists.

Step One: Introductions

Once you have your characters built, go around the table and introduce your finalized character. A lot can change in character creation between stating a concept and filling out their sheet. Give their name, introduce their geist, share how they died, talk about what they're good at, reveal anything else interesting about them, and talk about how they might relate to the krewe. Everyone should ask questions, make suggestions that could tie the krewe together, and find something about the character to be a fan of.

Step Two: Connections

Now that you've met all the characters, it's time to go around again and build some starting connections. You've just started a mystery religion with these people, so you must think *something* about them. When it's your turn, make a proposal how your character is connected to another. It's up to everyone at the table, but especially the other player whose character is involved, whether a proposal is appropriate or not. If an idea gets vetoed for any reason, move on and don't try to force it.

If you don't have an idea at the moment that's okay. You can tell the table that, and maybe suggest some inroads to connecting with your character. Talk about family they might have, experiences they've gone through, or even silly hobbies. Things that lead to other players yelling out "Wait, that's it, both of our characters have that in common!"

If you're still not sure about it, these things tend to change in play. It's kind of like how television show pilots may feature an actor as a character, but once it's broadcast they're played by somebody completely different.

The Dead

Next you'll create the members of the krewe that died but didn't get a second chance at life.

Go around the table and come up with ideas for ghostly celebrants. Even if you don't want to create one, everyone should contribute ideas for at least a few ghosts that are part of the krewe. After all, this is a game about the Underworld as much as the living world, and it'd be a shame if there was no supporting cast for half of the game world.

Aspirations

Each of the dead receives two Aspirations. They're both free for you to decide, but one should probably be about how they feel about all this death.

Virtue and Vice

Choose a Virtue and Vice (p. 145) to help flesh out the character's drives.

Anchor

Dead celebrants have two Anchors. One is always their remains but the other can be a person, place, or thing. Something mobile is useful for allowing ghostly members of the krewe to join in the action.

Attributes

A ghostly celebrant is a Rank 2 ghost. They have nine dots of Attributes to distribute between Power, Finesse, and Resistance.

Manifestation

Pick a Manifestation. This is the ghost's main way of interacting with the physical world. Note that it is very rare for Rank 1-2 ghosts to have the Materialize Manifestation.

All ghosts get Twilight Form for free.

Influences

A celebrant has two dots of Influences over their Anchors.

Numina

Ghostly celebrants begin with three Numina.

Derived Traits

A dead celebrant has the standard derived Traits for ephemeral entities.

Finishing Touches

Once you've filled out character sheets for the ghosts you can go around the table again and establish connections between them just like you did with the Sin-Eaters. They can also have relationships with the Sin-Eaters or even their geists.

The Living

You're going to create the living celebrants of the krewe now. They might be aware of the existence of ghosts or they might just be along for the trip. Living celebrants might be occultists, specialists, or just plain religious. It's just as likely that they're friends, family, and coworkers of the Sin-Eaters from their life before they died. Every player should make at least one human but feel free to make more than that — krewes get big, especially as they grow more powerful.

Creating a living krewe member is easy. Give each character a name, a concept, and an Aspiration. Next choose three actions that support their concept — not Skills, but general tasks that the character is good at. An occultist, for example, might have Archive Access, Academic Connections, and Ghost Facts. Now give one of those actions a rating of five dice, one a rating of four dice, and one a rating of three dice. If the character ever has to take other actions alone they roll two dice.

Living celebrants are ordinary people; they might describe themselves as psychic or sensitive, but unless the krewe has the Exceptional Membership Merit, they don't have any supernatural Merits.

Background Players

Of course, your krewe almost certainly consists of more than these few faces, but for right now making a few iconic faces helps keep the game from getting mired down in minutiae. When there are too many characters in the krewe, it starts to dilute the main characters' story, be they Sin-Eaters or ghosts. If several members of a Sin-Eater's former gang are in the krewe, then make a living celebrant who is representative of that group of people. There's a reason most popular media has a starship being run by six people or a hospital where a three-person team of diagnosticians are also technicians and surgeons.

If you need a character and all your current characters are indisposed then maybe it's time to flesh out another member of the krewe. If something happens to the characters you've already fleshed out — like a particularly grisly death — then you might need to promote a new character or, if they're formerly living, reintroduce them as a ghost.

Creating the Krewe

Once you have a few main and supporting cast members to use as a base, it's time to fill out your krewe sheet. Krewes are represented by Traits and Advantages, much like individual characters, but these Traits represent the group as a whole. Unlike the previous steps, where each player contributes individual characters, the entire group should work together to assign Traits everyone can agree on. The Storyteller's role during this stage is to mediate any disputes and help the group agree on a compromise that everyone is happy with.

Step One: Krewe Archetype

The first step is deciding what sort of krewe this is if you haven't already.

Step Two: Doctrines

Doctrines are the core tenets of the krewe's faith, statements of its beliefs and its actions. Good doctrines are active, emphasizing the krewe's actual works over rote catechisms. Strong Doctrines keep a krewe coherent, while weak ones inevitably lead to infighting and internal struggle. If that is the sort of game that interests you, that's fine, but everyone at the table should agree they want a game about struggling to define the krewe from the outset.

If the group isn't sure of what sort of Doctrines the krewe believes in yet, that's fine. Maybe the krewe is very young, coming together more for mutual protection than any high-minded ideals. Maybe their only Doctrine is the krewe's promise to each other they won't let the others be lost in the Underworld, or that no ghost they meet will go hungry. Further Doctrines can be applied in play.

Doctrines

- **Choose Three:** Define three doctrines for your krewe.

Step Three: Virtue and Creed

A krewe's Virtue and Creed represent, respectively, the highest ideal to which the krewe holds itself and the ceasy devotions that make its members comfortable, if not fulfilled. In concert with Doctrines, they help to shape *how* the krewe acts on the core beliefs defined by its archetype. A Fury krewe with a Virtue of Merciful and a Creed of Superior looks very different than one whose Virtue is Wrathful and whose Creed is Hesitant, even if they have similar Doctrines. The former never employ violence as a

tool for redressing wrongs, and are probably pretty smug about that fact. The latter are slow to act, always wanting to be certain of the facts before they act — but when they do, they bring a terrible, perhaps disproportionate, response down on wrongdoers.

Step Four: Attributes

Krewes use the same simplified Attributes as ephemeral entities: Power, Finesse, and Resistance.

Power represents the krewe's ability to effect change through direct action.

Finesse is the krewe's "soft leverage," the ability of its celebrants to employ their own influence and talents for the krewe's benefit.

Resistance is a measure of how committed the krewe's members are to the cause: Low Resistance means you're more vulnerable to desertion or members not following through, high Resistance means you've got a core of fanatics at your beck and call. It also serves as a yardstick for number of members: Not counting the main characters, a krewe typically has (10 × Resistance) members.

Attributes

- **Base Competency:** The krewe starts with one dot in all Attributes for free.
- **Additional Dots:** Assign six dots to the krewe's Attributes, divided however you like.

Step Five: Merits

Merits represent the collective belongings and talents of the krewe, not necessarily individual members. Status (Local Politics) might represent a prominent City Councilwoman who is a celebrant, but it can also mean that the krewe as a whole is considered an influencer in the local political scene. Resources might be the result of a rich celebrant or just the congregation pitching in when one of their number needs something.

Also at this point, you should design a Mystery Cult Initiation Merit for the krewe (p. 87). Assume that most celebrants have access to the first dot; more advanced celebrants can be created with the Supernatural Membership Merit (p. 89).

Merits

- **Krewe Merits:** Choose seven dots worth of Merits, all of which must have the Krewe or Krewe Only tag.
- **Safe Place:** All krewes begin with one dot of Safe Place, representing their center of worship.

Step Six: Ceremonies

Krewe Ceremonies are the principal rituals of the faith. Unlike Ceremonies purchased by individual characters, krewe Ceremonies can be used by any character with a sufficient understanding of the krewe's mysteries.

Krewe Ceremonies

- **By Archetype:** Krewes begin with a one-, two-, and three-dot Ceremony determined by their archetype, and with the Bestow Regalia Ceremony.

Step Seven: Advantages

Krewes have two Advantages: Esotery, which represents how well the krewe's religious tenets convey mystical understanding of the Underworld and the cycle of life and death, and Congregation, which serves the krewe in a manner similar to Health for individual characters.

Advantages

- **Esotery:** 1
- **Congregation:** 5 + Resistance

The Krewe Prelude

A prelude helps everything come together and cement itself into a cohesive whole. These scenes help the players figure out the few remaining questions about the krewe so they can make any adjustments that might be important to the flow of the game. It also helps get everyone on the same page about how the krewe functions. There should be minimal or no dice rolling during this prelude if you can manage it.

The following are some questions that the prelude should seek to answer:

- How is the krewe organized? Are they strictly hierarchical with an inner circle of founders being served by less initiated members of the krewe subservient to them? Is the krewe entirely democratic choosing to

Krewe Advancement

Just as individual characters take Beats and Experiences at significant moments, krewes earn Krewe Beats and Experiences through the discoveries of their celebrants and their own actions. Their simplified Traits have different Experience costs.

Attribute	6 per dot
Merit	1 per dot
Ceremony	2 per dot
Esotery*	5 per dot

** Esotery may only be increased with Krewe Beats.*

bring all actions before a committee to vote? Is there an undisputed leader that everyone is subservient to?

- What are the great works the krewe performs? For example if they're a krewe of Mourners do they attempt to record the teachings of the dead or do they try to directly fill the dead's requests for their descendants?

Anchors

The dead aren't bound by gravity or momentum — they're bound by the memories of such ideas. In order to act upon a world that can no longer reach them, the dead need a mooring point. Anchors are the ties that bind, vivid reminders of a ghost's life and state of death. They're conduits by which ephemeral matter can influence a living world. And never forget that the Bound *are* dead.

A Sin-Eater's Anchors distinguish them from the living, but separate them from the dead. Their Anchors are not nooses around their necks or chains biting into their ankles. Instead, they give them a sense of place and purpose. The Bargain gives the power to act, but Anchors explain why.

Anchors of the Bound are not the same as a ghost's, and a Sin-Eater might find ghosts less than sympathetic. It's important to remember the difference: While the Bound are self-contained, ghosts are chained. Serve the dead, stand among the living, do both or either, but the Sin-Eater gets a *choice*. Whether she lives as a living soul with a few complications or one of the dead with better luck than most defines her Anchors and how they relate back to her efforts.

Root

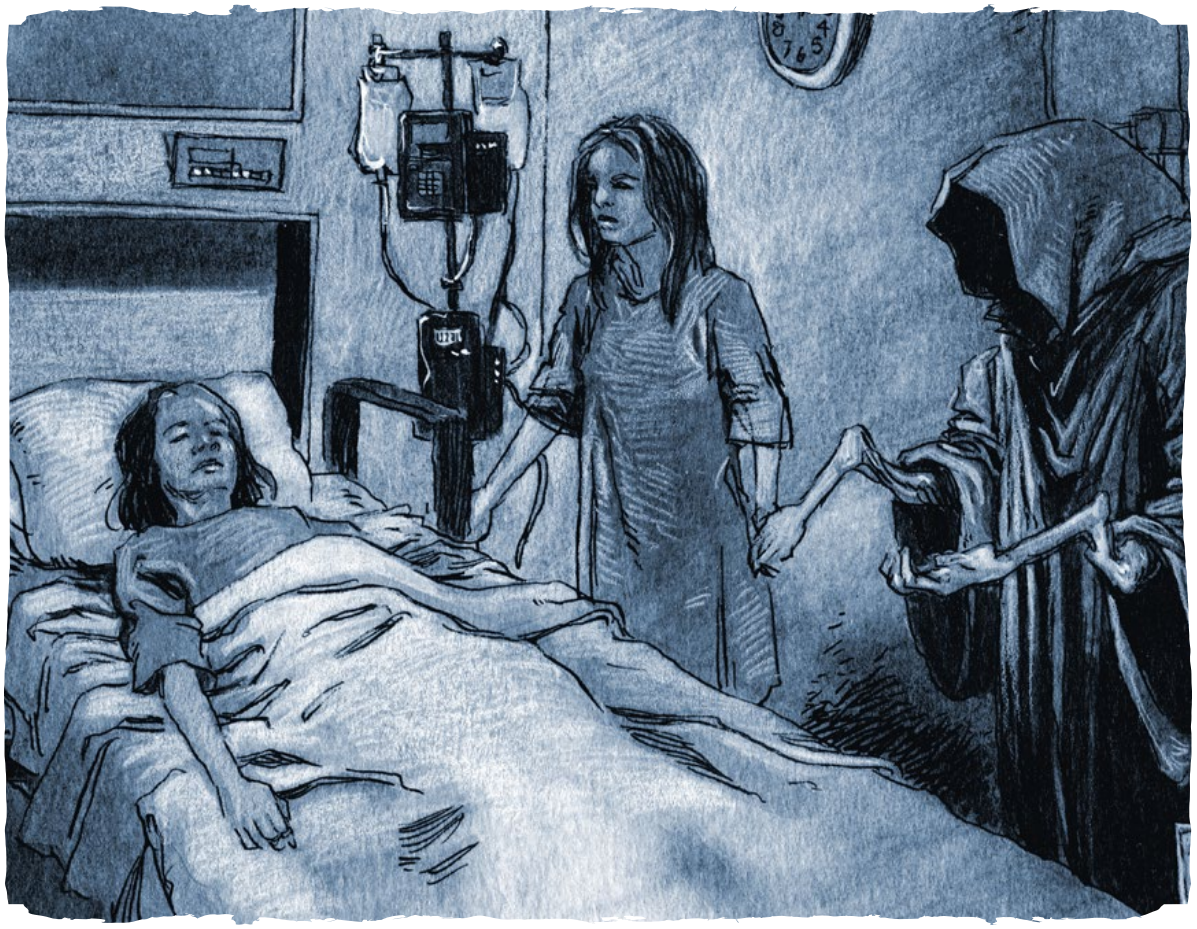
The Root is the affirmation that you are well and truly dead. It's the admission and submission to the change that's come over your flesh, your blood, and your point of view. That truth is proven by the choices you make as one of the dead. Do you speak for the voiceless? Do you wander through Avernian Gates in search of secrets or answers? Your Root is how you face death itself.

The Root keeps the Bound grounded in a very real sense. It reminds her of the privileges she carries: a body, vitality, powers of Plasm, of ceremony, and of her krewe. Every day you walk past those who cannot touch the world. What will you do with the death that you've been given?

Root Basics

- **Quick and Easy:** Once per scene, when your Root leads you to give precedence to the dead or your own death, regain 1 Willpower.

- **Grand Gestures:** Once per story, when your Root leads you to risk your life or your status in the living



world for the dead, or to protect the dead from the living at great risk or cost to yourself, regain all spent Willpower.

Bloom

The Bloom is the living, flowering, and public soul of the Bound. It's where he goes to work. It's his house, his car, his neighbors — it's each of those things and all of them. The Bloom is the sum total of how he lives his life after losing it. It's what he's retained or what he aims to cultivate.

Do you use your power and perspective to get rich? Did death give you a drive to leave a legacy, or did it help you slow down and see the little people? Do you take like a weed or give back like a ripening fruit? After buying a life and cheating death, what does the Bound actually *do* with it?

Bloom Basics

- **Quick and Easy:** Once per scene, when your Bloom leads you to ignore the dead or your own death to tend to the living, regain 1 Willpower.
- **Grand Gestures:** Once per story, when your Bloom leads you to risk your life or your status among the dead to tend to the living, or to protect the living from the dead at great risk or cost to yourself, regain all spent Willpower.

Setting Down Roots and Flowering Fruits

Here are several example archetypes for your character's Roots and Blooms. You can select from these, or work with your Storyteller to create your own. Each archetype includes a brief description and sample actions that could recover a character's Willpower.

Not all of these archetypes are healthy on the surface — some are downright concerning. That said, none of them have to be once fully explored. Through interaction with the living, the dead, their geist, and their krewes, a Sin-Eater may take on new interpretations of their Anchors over time.

Advocate

Someone has to speak for the unheard — it might as well be her. From lawyer to community leader, protest organizer to matriarch, she sees to it that her people are heard and felt. That voice comes from a place of power and opportunity — is it the power or the purpose that drives her on?

Single Willpower: Gain a significant concession for people who would otherwise go ignored.

All Willpower: Create a secure, lasting benefit to the community or stakeholders you serve.

Antihero

The antihero embodies a culture's unsung virtues or noble vices while still performing clearly "heroic" deeds. She takes the power of the Bargain and delivers evil unto evil. She isn't anybody's role model, but by embracing her flaws and the ugly kinds of justice or freedom we all ache for? She takes a place of power, outside but alongside the dead and living worlds.

Single Willpower: Apply an unconventional, ignoble, or blunt solution to a current problem.

All Willpower: Take major risks to establish your reputation as the right kind of trouble.

Casual

The casual doesn't really give a damn in the most sociable of ways. Not only does he try to do as little difficult work as possible, he recommends others do the same. From the jaded to the serene, he knows just how short life can be — shorter if you mess with a good thing. The casual abides.

Single Willpower: Show someone that their duties, schemes, or troubles aren't really worth it.

All Willpower: Undermine or subvert an impending climax in a satisfactory way to all (relevant) parties.

Cowl

The cowl has lost much and fears more. To deal with that fear, she's chosen to embody it. She confronts others with the trappings of the dead or challenges the dead to embrace the harder truths. By projecting that fear, she hopes to conquer it. By embracing that fear, it defines her.

Single Willpower: Remind someone in power of their mortality or morbidity in a significant way.

All Willpower: Crack the composure of a powerful foe or potential ally in a very public way.

Enabler

By giving others either the tools or simply permission to work out their doubts or desires, the enabler gets to experience a little secondhand living. She is the devil on their shoulder... or, with a little more effort, the angel who knows what she wants and how to indulge safely.

Single Willpower: Convince someone give in to their dark side.

All Willpower: Lead an ally or enemy to a major breaking point and through to the other side.

Gardener

The gardener believes that careful grooming can change the nature of the world — or the Underworld. By applying the right leverage from an unexpected angle, she can make a legacy that will outlast her and sustain her community. If that involves pulling a few weeds? So be it.

Single Willpower: Set up a win-win situation, setting one problem against another.

All Willpower: Set another major player down a path you've predetermined for the long term.

Pollyanna

Dying once can take the bite out of pessimism. To cope or by conscious choice, the Pollyanna has decided to be radically positive. At its best, this can mean taking life and death with open eyes and a focus on better outcomes. At its worst, he buries the bad so he won't have to see it.

Single Willpower: Take a risk, a detour, or a gamble on trusting someone else's motives.

All Willpower: Put everything on the line for what you want to see over what you fear.

Saved

Not everyone gets a second chance, but the saved doesn't intend to waste it. She takes the knowledge of the life she used to live and applies it as a lever to open doors for others. While many are kind, others define themselves by what they've overcome and scorn those who failed.

Single Willpower: Apply hard-earned knowledge from your old life to improve your new one.

All Willpower: Pay it forward, risking what you've gained to give someone else a fresh choice.

Servant

It's all easier to handle if she just does what she's told. Her krewe has needs. Her geist has needs. The dead and living both have things they need — things that she can readily provide. As long as the relationship is clear, it doesn't have to be equal. Isn't being worth something enough?

Single Willpower: Follow through with a command or request despite the personal costs.

All Willpower: Put someone else's catharsis or satisfaction above your own needs or safety.

Surrogate

A surrogate serves as a replacement parent, child, lover, or emotional teddy bear to the deprived — living or dead. By being available and reliable, he's made a secure, safe niche for himself.

Single Willpower: Dedicate your time and energy to resolve someone else's needs or concerns.

All Willpower: Devote yourself to helping someone else resolve a Condition caused by a breaking point.

Touchstones

While the Bound's Root and Bloom represent a communal bond or a role they play to the living and the dead, more direct ties bind them to the world. A personal Burden led them to return. Strange desires led the geist to offer a second chance. As time and a sort of life go on, they start to notice that life may not be fair, but death is worse. The lucky ones vanish. The unlucky ones linger. And the doomed? Have only the hungry depths of the Underworld to look forward to.

You've been given not just an opportunity, but power. Will you serve yourself or fix the scales?

Touchstones are more than links — they're promises. Making and keeping them is the heart of the bond between Bound and geist. These promises can and will conflict, so balancing those needs will impact and limit their power to influence the diverse worlds they walk.

The Bound gains her first Touchstone at Synergy 1 — a representation of her Burden. It's a reflection or a person that sums up why she couldn't just die. Was she in love? Was she a parent? Was she an inch shy of a dream achieved or that last big score against the odds? Whether it's her redeeming quality or a damning grudge she won't relinquish, it's the chain that keeps her tied to this world. She should resolve it. She should *want* to resolve it. But if she does — what then? Is it over for her? Does she lay down to a final rest? If she does, who will carry on her other work? When choosing this first Touchstone, consider the scope and length of the chronicle and work with your Storyteller to set reasonable obstacles. The longer the story, the more narrative barriers need to be between a cathartic use of the Rage and the broken body of your former abuser, for example. Maybe they're protected. Maybe they have someone you love wrapped up in their dark deeds. The longer the span of the story, the more tangled a knot the Bound's Burden becomes.

At Synergy 3, the character gains a second Touchstone — this one tied her geist's Remembrance. As unsettling as the geist can be, it still once was and in many ways is *human*. This Touchstone is the key to that humanity, the lost story of a perhaps-ancient ghost. It's why the Bargain was worth making to the geist. It's a path you must walk alongside it to honor the deal. As you walk that path, the relationship between you grows stronger and you become a greater beacon among the worlds of the dead.

At Synergy 6, they gain a third Touchstone. The character now has both the power and the perception to see the wretched state of the Underworld and the laments of the forgotten dead. The dead see them in turn and *expect something*. This Touchstone represents that conflict or cause that she can't ignore. She has seen and cannot ever unsee a larger world, but has obligations both to herself and her partner — the good fight is great, but can she afford to fight?

Touchstone Basics

- **Burden Touchstone:** At Synergy 1, you have a Touchstone tied to your Burden.
- **Remembrance Touchstone:** At Synergy 3, you gain a Touchstone tied to your geist's Remembrance.
- **Cause Touchstone:** At Synergy 6, you gain a Touchstone tied to your desire to enact change against the Underworld.

- **Losing Touchstones:** Should your Synergy drop below the level associated with a Touchstone, you lose access to that Touchstone. You regain access when your Synergy rises to the associated level again.
- **Willpower Gain:** Any time you defend your attachment to a Touchstone against a significant obstacle, regain 1 Willpower. If that defense comes at serious risk or major cost, regain all spent Willpower.
- **Synergy Boost:** While you are actively pursuing one of your Touchstones, increase your effective Synergy by 2. If you are actively pursuing multiple Touchstones, increase your effective Synergy by 3. This effective Synergy increase does not give you access to new Touchstones or allow you to buy Traits above your normal maximum, but in all other ways functions normally.
- **Clashing Touchstones:** If pursuing one Touchstone actively hinders another, you gain the Indebted Condition.
- **Resolving Touchstones:** When you resolve the issue at the core of a Touchstone, your geist gains 1 Rank.

Example Touchstones

Here are a few example Touchstones, starting points to develop your own for your character. Many of these can apply to personal, Remembrance, or even service-driven Touchstones, so take time to consider the ties that bind the Bound. These links are emotional, but also a part of dying.

9 to 5

It doesn't matter if the gates tear open, if the skies bleed Plasm, if you're alive, dead, or neither — someone's got to open up the shop every morning at six. Maybe you love the routine. Maybe this is the last inheritance of your geist's Remembrance. Maybe it's the last safe place for local kids. It doesn't matter. You're going to show up at 6 AM in one piece — or in a dozen, if you have to.

Albatross

Some mistakes, we never let go. You messed up and there's a testament to that failure. A survivor. A bitter ghost that has you as one of its Anchors. A person with a record of your geist's worst misdeeds. Resolving or destroying them would be too easy. Remembering is hard.

First Friend

Insight into a larger world is lonely. Even if events pull you away, you never forget the first being you interacted with as one of the Bound. An EMT? A troubled ghost? Are you the first one in your geist's long history? This tie to the beginning gives you a reason to keep going forward.

House Keys

Whether you've gone back to your life or had to start over from scratch, something about the clink of keys calms you. These bear no relation to your Haunts — they unlock a sense of safety or the secrets that you — or your geist — once kept safe. What happens when they change the locks?

Inherited Anchor

You've picked up some person that's a piece of someone else's story. Maybe your geist's Remembrance led you to a curious descendent. Maybe your Twilight awareness or your treks into the Underworld left you with a ghost's old obligations. Either way, *you* haven't let go yet.

Murder Weapon

Something about holding the implement of your destruction keeps you centered. Maybe it's literal — a knife, a gun, a broken bit of steering column. Maybe a certain brand of booze will do it. Maybe your old medicine or vices still settle your nerves. Odder if they're your geist's vices.

New Neighbor

Settling in to a new haunt means brushing shoulders with unexpected people. Do your neighbors or roommates remind you of your old life? Did your geist lead you to a safe haven with a secret or two in the attic? Does a different neighborhood than your upbringing call to your new power?

Our Song

Whether you need to hear it, play it, or just hum a few bars? You share a link by music to better days. In the case of your geist, it may be a song you've never heard, but something in that music reminds you of something — and betraying the themes or feelings of that song cuts you deep.

Replacement Love

Love them or hate them, this new presence in a loved one's life makes the one you left behind happy. Seeing you again? Might not. The ways they love so differently inform different ways that you can live and love... or maybe you just want to prove that your way is the *right* way.

Roadside Memorial

Out along familiar roads, there's a small cross that gets the occasional flowers, maybe a framed photo that falls out of sight more often than not. Someone remembers where you died. And as long as that cross stays standing? You haven't been forgotten. But how many others have been?

Merits

The following Merits are available to **Geist** characters.

Merit Tags

In addition to their dot cost, some Merits have special tags that denote additional rules. These tags are:

- **Krewe:** These Merits can be purchased and used by a krewe. Individual characters may also purchase these Merits for themselves.
- **Krewe Only:** These Merits may only be purchased by a krewe, not an individual character.
- **Multiple:** These Merits may be purchased multiple times; the individual Merit description explains how to differentiate multiple instances.
- **Style:** These Merits provide a unique advantage at every dot level. When you purchase a Style Merit, you gain the benefits of all abilities at your dot rating or lower.
- **Shared:** These Merits may be purchased by multiple characters; add up the total dots in the Merit purchased by all contributing characters; every character who contributed dots may use the Merit at the total level. Characters may withdraw their share of a Shared Merit at any time.

Note that the Shared tag is usually accompanied by the Krewe tag; in a typical **Geist: The Sin-Eaters** game it's more beneficial to purchase these Merits as Krewe Merits. The Shared tag is for groups without the unified backing of a krewe.

Sanctity of Merits

Merits represent in-character resources to which your character has access. Sometimes, these things come and go. But in game terms, they're dots on your character's sheet. When your character loses those resources, you don't inherently lose those dots. They're refunded as Experiences, one Experience for one dot. This also counts if you decide to abandon a Merit that no longer makes sense for your character.

However, you can't just "buy back" lost Merits. For example, if your character with Resources ••••• has her stock portfolio take a dive during a recession, stripping three of her five dots, you get three Experiences. But you can't just spend those three Experiences to buy Resources ••••• right back. Normally, you have to wait until the end of the game session to buy back one Merit. And each following session, you can purchase an additional dot.

Allies (• to •••••, Krewe, Multiple)

Effect: Allies help your character. They might be friends, employees, associates, or people your character has blackmailed.

Each dot represents a layer of sway in the group. One dot would constitute small favors and passing influence. Three could offer considerable influence, such as the police overlooking a misdemeanor charge. Five dots stretches the limits of the organization's influence, as its leaders put their own influence on the line for the character. No matter the request, it has to be something that organization could accomplish.

The Storyteller assigns a rating between one and five to any favor asked. A character or krewe can ask for favors that add up to her Allies rating without penalty in one chapter. If she extends her influence beyond that, her player must roll Manipulation + Persuasion + Allies, with a penalty equal to the favor's rating. If successful, the group does as requested. Failed or successful, the character loses a dot of Allies. This dot may return at the end of the chapter (see Sanctity of Merits, p. 85.) On a dramatic failure, the organization resents her and seeks retribution. On an exceptional success, she doesn't lose the dot.

Multiple Instances: Each instance of this Merit represents one type of ally. This could be an organization, a society, a clique, or an individual. Each purchase has its own rating. Your character might have Allies (Middle Class Anarchists) ••, Allies (Stolichnaya Crime Family) •••, and Allies (Methodist Church) •.

Architect (• to •••••)

Effect: Your character must create things that last. She's particularly good at this; she pours her all into everything, every institution, every relationship she can. When taking an extended action to create something your character finds significant, you gain a number of additional dice equal to your Merit dots. You can divide these dice as you see fit across any number of rolls. Any roll benefiting from these dice gains the 8-again quality.

Notes: If your character's Burden is Abiding, also add her Merit dots to her unmodified dice pool for determining how many rolls she's allowed in her extended actions.

Cenote (• to •••••, Krewe, Multiple, Shared)

Prerequisite: Safe Place •+

Effect: Your character has access to a haunted house, cemetery, or other place she can freely spend time and recharge Plasm. Every chapter, this Cenote generates Plasm equal to its dot rating.

Each instance of this Merit must be tied to a Safe Place Merit (p. 88) of at least one dot.

Multiple: Each instance of this Merit reflects a different place.

Common Sense (•••)

Effect: Your character has an exceptionally sound and rational mind. With a moment's thought, she can weigh potential courses of action and outcomes.

Once per chapter as an instant action, you may ask the Storyteller one of the following questions about a task at hand or course of action. Roll Wits + Composure. If you succeed, the Storyteller must answer to the best of her ability. If you fail, you get no answer. With an exceptional success, you can ask an additional question. With dramatic failure, the Storyteller can give you a piece of false advice. If you follow that "intuition" regardless of risk, take a Beat.

Questions

- What is the worst choice?
- What do I stand to lose here?
- What's the safest choice?
- Am I chasing a worthless lead?

Contacts (•, Krewe, Multiple)

Effect: Contacts provide your character with information. Each instance of this Merit represents a sphere or organization from which the character can garner information. Contacts do not provide services, only information. This may be face to face, via email, by telephone, or even by séance.

Garnering information via Contacts requires a Manipulation + Social Skill roll, depending on the method the character uses, and the relationship between the characters. The Storyteller should give a bonus or penalty, dependent on how relevant the information is to that particular Contact, whether accessing the information is dangerous, and if the character has maintained good relations or done favors for the Contact. These modifiers should range from –3 to +3 in most cases. If successful, the Contact provides the information.

Notes: Each instance of this Merit represents a different point of contact.

Dread Geist (•••)

Effect: Your geist is Rank 4.

Fast Reflexes (• to •••)

Prerequisite: Wits ••• or Dexterity •••

Effect: Gain +1 Initiative per dot.

Fleet of Foot (• to •••)

Prerequisite: Athletics ••

Effect: Gain +1 Speed per dot, and anyone pursuing your character suffers a –1 per dot to any foot chase rolls.

Good Time Management (•, Krewe)

Prerequisites: Academics •• or Science ••

Effect: Your character has vast experience managing complex tasks, keeping schedules, and meeting deadlines. When taking an extended action, halve the time required between rolls.

Krewe: Reduce the amount of Effort required for krewe actions by 1. Krewe actions always cost at least 1 Effort.

Grave Goods (• to •••••)

Effect: Your character wants and wants and takes and takes. To her, the phrase "you can't take it with you" just means you're not trying hard enough. She has gathered a cache of ghostly objects, perhaps snatched from the Underworld or given to her by ghostly lovers or even buried in her own empty tomb.

In every chapter, your character can produce equipment whose total Availability is equal to or less than her dots in Grave Goods. This equipment is ephemeral — Sin-Eaters and ghosts can interact with it normally, but it is invisible and intangible to the living. Ephemeral devices like phones and computers can still connect to ordinary networks, though they are prone to bizarre interference.

Ghosts and Sin-Eaters can consume any equipment produced with this Merit, gaining Essence or Plasm equal to the item's Availability.

Notes: If your character's Burden is Hungry, once per session when your character procures an item, she regains all spent Willpower.

Hardy (• to •••)

Prerequisite: Stamina •••

Effect: Your character's body goes further than it rightfully should. Add the dots in this Merit to any rolls to resist disease, poison, deprivation, unconsciousness, or suffocation.

Language (•)

Effect: Your character is skilled with an additional language, beyond her native tongue. Your character can speak, read, and write in that language.

Notes: Choose a new language each time you buy this Merit.

Library (• to •••, Krewe, Multiple, Shared)

Effect: Your characters have access to a plethora of information about a given topic. When purchasing this Merit, choose a Mental Skill. On any extended roll involving the Skill in question, add the dots in this Merit.

Multiple: Each instance of this Merit applies to a different Mental Skill.

Manic States (• to •••••)

Prerequisite: This Merit must be tied to a Persistent Condition that's generally negative. You may take a relevant Condition when purchasing this Merit, or you may purchase this Merit when your character acquires a Persistent Condition in play.

Effect: Once per game session, reflexively spend a point of Willpower to bring about a manic state for the scene. Ignore the negative effects of the Persistent Condition for the scene. Additionally, take a pool of dice equal to your Merit dots, and divide them among any rolls during the scene as you see fit. Any roll where you used these dice gains 8-again.

However, after the scene, your character "drops." In addition to the Condition's effects returning, she loses 10-again on all rolls until she achieves a dramatic failure *or* an exceptional success on a later action.

Notes: If your character's Burden is Bereaved, this Merit grants exceptional success on three successes instead of five on any action benefiting from the additional dice.

Memento (•••, Multiple)

Effect: Your character has a Memento (p. 131).

Multiple: Each instance of this Merit reflects a different Memento.

Mystery Cult Initiation (• to •••••)

Cults are far more common than people would like to admit. "Mystery cult" is the catch-all term for phenomena ranging from secret societies couched in fraternity houses, to scholarly cabals studying the magic of classical symbolism, to Sin-Eater-led krewes.

Mystery Cult Initiation reflects membership in one of these esoteric groups. The dot rating dictates how deeply immersed in the cult's mysteries a character is and their standing within the cult. In newly created cults, even the leadership might only have one or two dots in this Merit, while in old, powerful cults no one takes you seriously unless you have at least three or four dots.

Designing a mystery cult requires three things, at bare minimum. First is a Purpose. This is the defining reason the cult exists. Usually it's tied in with the cult's history and recent background. Second is a Relic. This is an item that grounds members' faith. For example, a piece of the God-Machine, an ancient text bound in human flesh, or the mummified flesh of a saint. The last is a Doctrine. Every cult is defined by its rules and traditions.

In addition to standing, a Mystery Cult Initiation Merit offers benefits at each level of influence. Develop these as well. The following are guidelines; use them to craft your cults:

- • A Skill Specialty or one-dot Merit, pertaining to the lessons taught to initiates.
- •• A one-dot Merit.
- ••• A Skill dot, or a two-dot Merit (often a supernatural Merit).
- •••• A three-dot Merit, often supernatural in origin.
- ••••• A three-dot Merit, or a major advantage not reflected in game traits.

Notes: Sin-Eaters who begin play as members of a krewe receive one dot of Mystery Cult Initiation for free. In addition, krewe celebrants automatically know all krewe Ceremonies whose dot rating is equal to or less than their Mystery Cult Initiation rating.

No member of a krewe can have more dots in Mystery Cult Initiation than the krewe's Esotery rating (p. 176).

Reconciler (• to •••)

Effect: Your character is an expert at bringing closure to issues and making amends. When undertaking a Social Maneuver to right a wrong or broker peace, remove a number of Doors equal to her dots in this Merit.

Sample Krewes

Sample Krewe: The Forty-Third Nome

Based out of Cairo, this Pilgrim Krewe practices a variant of Ophian Gnosticism crossed with Middle Kingdom Atenism, which posits the Underworld as the decaying corpse of the Biblical Serpent, slain by the sun god, and that only by finding the serpent's heart can it be restored to life and the cycle of death and rebirth made whole again.

- • Initiates are expected to prepare for long sojourns in the Underworld. They gain a Caving Specialty in Survival.
- •• Full members must learn to read and write Coptic. They gain the Language (Coptic) Merit free of charge.
- ••• Snake handling is a common feature of worship within the Forty-Third Nome, and members must gain a tolerance for their poison. They gain two dots of the Hardy Merit **(Chronicles of Darkness, p. 47)**.
- •••• Delvers into the Underworld, the Forty-Third Nome has established numerous base camps and waystations in the Great Below. Members gain access to up to three dots' worth of Safe Places in the Underworld per story.
- ••••• The high priest of the Forty-Third Nome has honed his instincts to such a degree that even the Underworld cannot fool him. All rolls to navigate in the Underworld (p. 199) take half as long.

Notes: If your character's Burden is Kindly, acts of reconciliation fulfill her as well. When your character accomplishes an applicable Social Maneuver, take a Beat and replenish Willpower points equal to your dots in this Merit.

Resources (• to •••••, Krewe)

Effect: This Merit reflects your character's disposable income. She might live in an upscale condo, but if her income is tied up, she might have little money to throw around. Characters are assumed to have basic necessities without Resources.

The dot rating determines the relative amount of disposable funding the character has available. One dot is a little spending money here and there. Two dots is a comfortable, middle-class wage. Three is a nicer, upper-middle-class life. Four is moderately wealthy. Five is filthy rich.

Every item has an Availability rating (p. 158). Once per chapter, your character can procure an item at her Resources level or lower, without issue. An item one Availability above her Resources reduces her effective Resources by one dot for a full month, since she has to rapidly liquidate funds. She can procure items two Availability below her Resources without limit (within reason). For example, a character with Resources •••• can procure as many Availability •• disposable cellphones as she needs.

Retainer (• to •••••)

Effect: Your character has a friend, employee, cultist, sycophant, or other thoroughly loyal person at her disposal. The dot rating reflects the retainer's relative competency. One-dot retainers are barely functional, children, or otherwise not very effective. Three-dot retainers are typically professionals, with some impressive but not overwhelming abilities at their disposal. Five-dot retainers are true experts, the best in their class.

If a retainer must roll for an action, double the Retainer Merit dots and use them as a dice pool for any action core to his primary focus or concept. For example, an auto mechanic would get that on Crafts or perhaps Drive rolls. For other rolls, use the Merit rating by itself as a dice pool. Additionally, a Retainer can have access to twice the Merit dots in her own Merits. These are limited to Merits that don't create additional Storyteller Characters — your Retainer can't have a Retainer, who then has another Retainer, for example. But he could have Resources, Status, or a fighting Style Merit.

Retribution (• to •••••, Style)

Effect: Your character isn't necessarily a practiced, learned fighter, but when she sees injustice, she gets a mean streak like nothing else. To use these abilities, your character must suffer or witness harm to someone she cares about or feels responsibility toward. This doesn't have to happen in the same scene, but she must be actively pursuing retribution or the effects end. With loved ones whose lives were in true danger, she does not need to directly witness the harm — she simply has to be made aware of it.

Note that this Merit doesn't draw a "right and wrong" distinction with what your character must witness or suffer to use these abilities — villains can be just as vindictive as heroes. Also note that these abilities aren't all for direct combat; with Storyteller discretion, any act of retribution is valid.

Unerring Pursuit (•): Your character tracks and finds assailants with the ferocity of a predatory animal. Add +2 to all rolls to track or pursue assailants. Add +2 to her Speed as well.

And Taking Names (••): Your character's fueled not just by muscle and adrenaline, but by righteous indignation. When making an all-out attack (p. 165) don't add +2 to her roll. Instead, add +1 damage (if she's attacking unarmed, her attack counts as a weapon). If an effect would add dice to her normal all-out attack bonus, add +1 damage for every two dice, rounded down.

Outside of direct combat actions, damaging effects like traps, explosives, or car crashes she causes cause an additional 2 damage.

Fight Through (•••): Your character is unstoppable in pursuit of justice. She gains Armor 2/0.

Eye for an Eye (••••): Your character's vengeance has taken on a level of dramatic appropriateness. This requires the avenged source of harm to have caused a Condition or Tilt. The first time your character damages her target, apply that Condition or Tilt. If multiple Conditions or Tilts existed, choose which to apply. This will not replicate purely supernatural effects, unless your character can reproduce them.

Guns Blazing (•••••): Your character is able to swallow all fear and apprehension when enacting vengeance. She can take the benefits of all-out attacks each turn while maintaining her Defense (or allowing her to use it on other effects). She could, theoretically, go all-out "twice," sacrificing her Defense for +4 instead of +2. Also, this can be used with the effects of And Taking Names.

Notes: If your character's Burden is Vengeful, any rolls to use Retribution abilities benefit from the 8-again quality.

Safe Place (• to •••••, Krewe)

Effect: Your character has somewhere she can go where she can feel secure. While she may have enemies that could attack her there, she's prepared and has the upper hand. The dot rating reflects the security of the place. The actual location, the luxury, and the size are represented by equipment. A one-dot Safe Place could simply be out of sight, out of mind, or feature minor security systems. A five-dot Safe Place could have a security crew, infrared scanners at every entrance, or trained dogs. Either place could be an apartment, a mansion, or a hidey-hole.

A Safe Place gives all owners an Initiative bonus equal to the total Merit dots.

Any efforts to breach the Safe Place suffer a penalty equal to the Merit dots invested. If the character desires, the Safe Place can include traps that cause intruders lethal damage equal to the Merit dots, or bashing damage equal to twice the Merit's dots. The traps may be avoided with a Dexterity + Larceny roll, penalized by the Safe Place dots.

Notes: Each instance of this Merit reflects a different place.

Status (• to •••••, Krewe, Multiple)

Effect: Your character or krewe has standing or membership in, authority or control over, or respect from a group or organization. This can reflect official standing, or merely informal respect. No matter the source, your character enjoys certain privileges within that structure.

Status only allows advantages within the confines of the group reflected in the Merit. Status (Organized Crime) won't help if your character wants an official concealed-carry firearms permit, for example.

Status provides a number of advantages:

- Your character can apply her Status to any Social roll with those over which she has authority or sway.
- She has access to group facilities, resources, and funding. Depending on the group, this could be limited by red tape and requisitioning processes. It's also dependent on the resources the particular group has available.

Drawback: Status requires upkeep, and often regular duties. If these duties are not upheld, the Status may be lost. The dots will not be accessible until the character reestablishes her standing. This shouldn't be markedly costly, but should be a relatively regular show of loyalty or authority.

Multiple: Each instance of this Merit reflects standing in a different group or organization. Your character may have Status (Baron Samedi's Gang) •••, Status (Occult Researchers) ••, and Status (Freemasons) •. Each affords its own unique benefits.

Striking Looks (• or ••)

Effect: Your character is stunning, alarming, commanding, repulsive, threatening, charming, or otherwise worthy of attention. Determine how your character looks and how people react to that. For one dot, your character gets +1 on any Social rolls that would be influenced by his looks. For two dots, it's +2. Depending on the particulars, this might influence Expression, Intimidation, Persuasion, Subterfuge, or other rolls.

Drawback: Attention is a double-edged sword. Any rolls to spot, notice, or remember your character gain the same dice bonus. Sometimes, your character will draw unwanted attention in social situations. This could cause further complications.

Supernatural Membership (• to •••••, Krewe Only)

Effect: Your krewe has various living members with exceptional abilities. When defining living members of your krewe, you may create characters with Supernatural Merit dots (p. 224) equal to twice the krewe's rating in Supernatural Membership. Such characters always roll their best dice pool to activate their Supernatural Merits. If a Supernatural Merit has a Willpower cost, they ignore it, but may only use the Merit once per chapter.

Notes: This Merit only applies to the minor living celebrants created during krewe creation. If a player wants to play a living psychic as their primary character, or if a character has a gifted krewe member as a Retainer or the like, the krewe doesn't have to purchase this Merit.

Additional Supernatural Merits can be found in the **Chronicles of Darkness Rulebook** or supplements like **Hurt Locker**.

Sympathetic (••)

Effect: Your character has a pitiful face, a well-honed sob story, or is just otherwise really good at letting others get in close. Once per Social Maneuver (p.153), you can opt to become Leveraged or take another relevant Condition to immediately eliminate two of the subject's Doors.

Notes: If your character's Burden is Bereaved, the subject gains the same Condition, directed at you.

Tolerance for Biology (•)

Prerequisite: Resolve •••+

Effect: Most people turn away at the sight of blood, other bodily fluids, or exotic biology. Your character has seen enough that nothing turns her stomach. When other characters must resist shock or physical repulsion from the disgusting and morbid, your character stands her ground. You do not need to make Composure, Stamina, or Resolve rolls to withstand the biologically strange. This doesn't mean she's immune to fear; she's just used to nature in all its nasty forms.

Notes: Sin-Eater characters receive this Merit for free, even if they do not meet the prerequisites.

Supernatural Merits

These Merits require the character remain human (non-supernatural.) If the character becomes a vampire, ghoul, mage, or any other supernatural character type, these Merits disappear. Per the Sanctity of Merits (p. 85), these Merits can be reallocated.

Automatic Writing (••)

Your character can enter a trance of sorts, in which she's temporarily overtaken by a spirit or ghost, and compelled to write mysterious things.

Effect: Your character must meditate for at least one minute. Spend a point of Willpower and roll Wits + Composure to enter the trance. For every success, your character writes a single statement or clue about something occurring in the area or relating to a pertinent issue. The Storyteller provides these clues, and they may at first seem completely nonsensical. Characters may attempt to interpret the clues with Wits + Investigation or research efforts.

Drawback: If the roll fails, or the character does not employ a personal item of a local spirit in the meditation, she's haunted afterward. Any time she fails a roll for the next week, it's considered dramatic as the spirit intervenes in complicating and sometimes dangerous ways.

Medium (•••)

Prerequisite: Empathy ••+, living character with no supernatural template.

Effect: Your character hears the words and moans of the dead. If he takes the time to parse their words, he can interact with them verbally.

Your character has more than just a knack for knowing when ephemeral beings are lurking nearby, he can reach out and make contact with them. By conducting a ritual, meditating, or otherwise preparing to commune with the unseen, and succeeding at a Wits + Occult roll, he temporarily increases the relevant Condition one step along the progression from nothing, to Anchor, Resonance, or Infrastructure, to Open, and finally to Controlled (see p. 303 for more on Conditions as they relate to spirits). The effect lasts until he spends a Willpower point, but if an Influence has been used to progress the Condition further, doing so only reduces it by one step.

Drawback: Speaking with ghosts can be a blessing, but your character cannot turn the sense off, any more than he can turn off his hearing. The character hears the words of the dead any time they're present. Once per game session, usually in a time of extreme stress, the Storyteller may deliver a disturbing message to your character from the other side. You must succeed in a Resolve + Composure roll or become Shaken or Spooked.

Phantom Limb (•, ••, or •••, Multiple)

Prerequisite: This Merit must be tied to a permanent Tilt related to the loss of a limb or organ (see below). You may take a relevant Tilt when purchasing this Merit, or you may purchase this Merit when your character acquires a permanent Tilt in play.

Effect: One of your character's limbs or sense organs left behind a Doppelgänger (p. 196) when it was lost, and you can tap into its ephemeral nature. Choose one of the following:

- **Ghost Eyes (•):** Requires Blind. Your character can see Twilight as though she were sighted, and loses Blind in the Underworld.
- **Ghost Ears (•):** Requires Deaf. Your character can hear Twilight as though she were not deaf, and loses Deaf in the Underworld.
- **Ghost Leg (••):** Requires Leg Wrack. Your character can kick open Avernian Gates: Picking the Lock (p. 199) becomes an Instant Strength + Stamina + Phantom Limb action with no time requirement. Her ghost leg can interact with ghosts in Twilight. In the Underworld or Twilight, your character loses Leg Wrack.
- **Phantom Arm (•••):** Requires Arm Wrack. Choose one: your character has full control of her ghost arm and can touch and manipulate things in Twilight, *or* your ghost arm points toward sources of ghostly Essence or Plasm. Normally it points toward the nearest such source, but extremely large sources of Essence or Plasm, such as a Rank 5+ ghost or a Sin-Eater spending 20 Plasm on a Haunt, might draw your arm's attention from anywhere in the same city.

Multiple: Each instance of this Merit represents a different phantom limb. You may not have more than one instance of the same phantom limb.

Synergy

Synergy is the measure of a Bound's connection with her geist. With low Synergy, a Sin-Eater has no significant connection; her geist is a separate actor who occasionally lends her its power. High Synergy, on the other hand, reflects the living and dead halves of the Bound working in concert; the Sin-Eater picks up on the geist's mannerisms and attitudes while the geist in turn becomes more human.

A Sin-Eater's connection to her geist grows as she understands what drives the little god of death, following its passions and in turn helping — or forcing — it to understand what drove her to accept the Bargain in the first place. Geists understand the need for release better than most, and so a Sin-Eater who helps the restless dead grows closer to her spectral half.

To lose Synergy is to tear the Sin-Eater's constituent beings apart, literally as well as figuratively. As with any kind of grievous wound, it isn't easy. The geist can give up some of the bond in order to bring the Sin-Eater back from death, while the human side can weaken the bond by showing her disrespect for the dead by consuming them. Finally, a Sin-Eater can choose to sacrifice some of the bond by imbuing its power into physical objects. Weakening the bond is difficult, but that doesn't mean that things are otherwise fine between the constituent halves of the Bound. Geists have their own wants and needs, their own

Synergy Effects

Synergy	Max Plasm/ Per Turn	Trait Maximum	Touchstones	Liminal Aura	Relationship
1	10/1	5	1	N/A	Coercive
2	11/2	5	1	Anchor	Positional
3	12/3	5	2	Anchor	Positional
4	13/4	5	2	Anchor	Positional
5	15/5	5	2	Anchor	Sympathetic
6	20/6	6	3	Open	Sympathetic
7	30/7	7	3	Open	Sympathetic
8	40/8	8	3	Open	Empathetic
9	50/9	9	3	Controlled	Empathetic
10	100/10	10	3	Controlled	Empathetic

personality that all too often is a slave to the Sin-Eater's needs. The added autonomy that comes with the Bargain also leaves the geist free to pursue its own agenda. It's all a matter of control — those Bound who have only a weak connection with their geist find that it acts with a mind of its own in all manner of circumstances, while those whose personalities have started to bleed into one another find themselves acting at cross purposes only rarely.

Effects of Synergy

Synergy ranges from 1-10. Each dot has specific effects, detailed on the chart.

- **Maximum Plasm/Per Turn:** A Sin-Eater can only hold so much Plasm. Synergy determines how much she can store at once, and how much she can spend per turn. Effects that require spending more Plasm take multiple turns.
- **Trait Maximum:** At Synergy 6+ a Sin-Eater's Attributes and Skills can be increased above five dots up to a maximum of her Synergy.
- **Touchstones:** At Synergy 1, 3, and 6, the Sin-Eater unlocks a new Touchstone (p. 83).
- **Liminal Aura:** A Sin-Eater stands out whether she wants to or not (p. 99). Her Synergy dictates the base Manifestation Condition she creates around herself.
- **Relationship:** A character's Synergy limits how she can respond to crisis points, based on her relationship with her geist and how well she knows what her geist is doing. She always knows where her geist is; a Positional relationship tells her its general emotional state, a Sympathetic relationship grants its specific emotions, and an Empathetic relationship gives the basic reasons for its emotional state.
- **Haunts:** Haunts include the Sin-Eater's Synergy in their dice pool.
- **Rank:** A Sin-Eater's Synergy limits how much of her geist's spiritual pull she can access. She has an effective Rank (p. 187) of the *lower* of her Synergy or her geist's Rank. This Rank only works against ghosts, geists, and spirits aligned with death and decay (see Physical Medium, p. 96). It also acts as a bound on some Synergy-related effects, including Remembrance Traits and Liminal Aura.

Crisis Points

A crisis point is the moment when the geist wants something but the Bound is unwilling to relent. Driven by passion and memory, the geist lashes out — and if the Sin-Eater can't use his relationship with his geist to calm the spirit, it wreaks havoc while he looks on, helpless to stop the chaos.

Some Sin-Eaters let their geists run free when a crisis arises, understanding (or merely believing) that the geist will be easier to deal with once it has burned off some of its emotional anguish. Others try to keep a tight rein on their geist, though how successful they are depends on how strong the relationship is between the two halves of the Bound.

Each geist faces crises in a different fashion, and to what extent the Sin-Eater has any understanding or control is based on the relationship between the two. Some lash out in pain or fear, some terrorize their victims, while others try to control their surroundings. As such, crisis points have both *triggers* and *responses*.

Crisis Points

- **Trigger:** When you encounter one of your geist's unlocked *triggers*, a Crisis Point occurs.
- **Response:** Your geist is Unleashed (p. 302) and acts in accordance with a *response* chosen by the Storyteller, unless you choose to *intercede*.
- **Intercession:** By rolling your *relationship* dice pool, you can keep your geist from lashing out.

Triggers

A trigger is the condition that causes the geist to lash out in the first place. As the connection between Sin-Eater and geist grows closer, the geist understands more of the world through the Sin-Eater's perspective, so crisis points only trigger in specific circumstances that resonate with the geist.

Triggers always come in sets of three, starting very broad and ending up in specific situations tailored to the geist as the Sin-Eater moves along the journey of Remembrance. Several examples are presented below, but these are only suggestions: while Hazy triggers are vague enough to be universal, the Storyteller should absolutely tailor the Vague and Specific triggers to the individual geist.

In addition, all geists share a set of Universal triggers. These triggers are *not* tied to Remembrance; all geists suffer a crisis point when faced with one of these triggers.

Triggers

- **Unique Trigger:** Every geist has a unique set of triggers. At the start of play, the *Hazy* trigger is unlocked.
- **Unlocking Triggers:** When you successfully complete your first Remembrance scene (p. 266), you unlock

Geists Are Not Omniscient

Geists do not have an automatic knowledge of events surrounding crisis points. They rely on their own perceptions, filtered through the emotional bond they share with their Sin-Eater. If a Bound's business partner manages to screw her over without her ever finding out (and without doing anything untoward where an invisible, intangible, and curious geist might have seen), the event wouldn't trigger a betrayal crisis point.

The flip side of that is that sometimes, if the Sin-Eater and/or her geist have strong reason to suspect the root cause of a trigger, that can trigger a crisis point *even if it's not true*. If the screwing-over was due to an outside competitor, but the Sin-Eater jumped to the conclusion it was her partner, her geist might very well experience a crisis point.

UNIVERSAL TRIGGERS

- Take damage from your geist's bane.
- Deliberately ignore the geist's ban.
- Suffer a wound in one of your rightmost three Health boxes.

BETRAYAL

- **Hazy:** Suffer a significant loss (of social standing, of opportunity, of money, etc.) due to the actions of someone you considered a friend or ally.
- **Vague:** See a friend or ally fulfill one of your Aspirations in a way that robs you of the ability to do so.
- **Specific:** See your Burden undermined by a friend or ally.

HELPLESSNESS

- **Hazy:** Face a situation that harms you (materially, socially, or physically) that you cannot mitigate or control.
- **Vague:** Dramatically fail a contested action.
- **Specific:** Watch a loved one die despite your best efforts to save them.

JEALOUSY

- **Hazy:** Neglect pursuing your geist's Remembrance to spend time with the living.
- **Vague:** Intercede in a crisis point specifically to protect a loved one.
- **Specific:** Actively pursue ways to sever the Bargain between you and your geist.

MALICE

- **Hazy:** Be the victim of a deliberate attempt to discredit, harm, or disempower you.
- **Vague:** Lose access to Social Merits due to a deliberate attempt to block your use of them.
- **Specific:** See one of your Aspirations thwarted by the deliberate action of another.

MISFORTUNE

- **Hazy:** Be the victim of freak circumstances — nearly hit by a car that runs a red, pickpocketed in the street, or similar.
- **Vague:** Suffer material harm from bad luck — losing hundreds or thousands of dollars in a card game, suffer significant injury in a car crash.
- **Specific:** Suffer material harm from bad luck in the same form that happened to your geist.

the *Vague* trigger. When you successfully complete your final Remembrance scene, you unlock the *Specific* trigger.

- **Mutually Exclusive:** Only one trigger may be unlocked at a time.
- **Universal Triggers:** These triggers affect all geists and do not change based on Remembrance.

Responses

Each geist handles crisis points differently, in a similar way to how different people handle stressful situations differently. Unlike humans, geists are far better able to realize their base needs in the face of stress.

Unlike triggers, a geist's response to a crisis point can be different each time it encounters a crisis. Often, a Sin-Eater won't know what her geist is about to do until after she tries to calm it, though as her ability to identify with her geist increases, she can gain a level of insight.

Responses

- **Storyteller Chooses:** The Storyteller chooses which response the geist enacts, based on the situation in the fiction and the specifics of the geist's personality and Remembrance. The geist's Sin-Eater does not receive any knowledge about what her geist is about to do.
- **Sympathy and Empathy:** If the Sin-Eater has a Sympathetic or Empathetic relationship with her geist *and* chooses to forego intercession, she may choose her geist's response.
- **Unleashed:** If the geist's response is not curbed by intercession, it is Unleashed (p. 302). This does not count against the normal limits on how often your geist can be Unleashed.
- **Player Control:** The geist must act in accordance with the chosen response, but the player maintains control of her character's geist.
- **Duration:** The geist remains Unleashed until the source of the crisis point is destroyed or no longer present, or until the end of the scene.
- **Exclusive:** While a geist remains Unleashed in response to a crisis point, it ignores any other triggers it encounters.

Defend

The geist does its level best to protect the Sin-Eater from the situation. The geist gets between the Sin-Eater and the trigger (or whoever looks most threatening), acting as a human shield.

It proactively attacks anyone or anything it perceives as a threat to the Sin-Eater.

Escape

The geist gets itself and its Sin-Eater the hell away from whatever caused the crisis point. It runs from the cause if it is able, attacking anyone who doesn't get out of the way and destroying any obstacle that would prevent its Sin-Eater from following. As with lashing out, it will only attack for as long as they continue to oppose her. If its Sin-Eater refuses to follow, it attempts to bodily carry her to someplace it considers safe.

Lash Out

The geist does its level best to destroy whatever caused the crisis point. If the trigger is near enough it attacks, otherwise the geist moves toward the trigger, attacking anyone who doesn't get out of its way. It only attacks people in its way who continue to oppose it; once they're down it no longer cares.

Obsess

The geist ignores the rest of the world, focusing on the trigger above everything else. It will attack anyone that tries to distract it, including the Sin-Eater, but as long as it is not disturbed it will not take further action. Humans studied in this way suffer a breaking point.

Intercession

A geist in crisis in unpredictable and dangerous — which can be a useful ace in the hole when fighting a necromantic cult, but is a considerable liability at a co-op board meeting. When a Sin-Eater feels her geist about to lose control, she can intercede, attempting to soothe, distract, or simply browbeat it into calming down.

The Sin-Eater's ability to intercede is determined by her relationship to her geist. In a coercive relationship, where both sides of the Bound must cajole or otherwise bribe the other into helping, it's almost impossible to placate the geist. When the Sin-Eater can't just understand the geist, but feels sympathy for it — or even allows herself to understand its emotional response — she has a better chance of talking it down.

Requirement: Your geist is currently experiencing a crisis point.

Action: Reflexive

Dice Pool: Relationship

Roll Results

Failure: The geist responds to the crisis point, *or* the Sin-Eater gains the Wavering condition.

Dramatic: The Sin-Eater says or does the wrong thing. The geist responds to the crisis point unless she sacrifices a dot of Synergy. Her next crisis point is resolved as though their relationship were one step lower. Replaces Failure.

Success: The geist does not respond, and the Sin-Eater gains the Bonding condition.

Exceptional: The Sin-Eater adds two dice to her next Synergy roll.

Relationships

So much of how a Bound responds to a crisis relies upon the relationship between Sin-Eater and geist. Her Synergy determines the nature of this relationship — a Bound with low Synergy has very little shared understanding between the two halves, while those with higher Synergy fully comprehend one another's emotional responses.

Relationship	Intercession Dice Pool
Coercive	Chance die
Positional	Synergy
Sympathetic	(Lower of Presence or Manipulation) + Synergy
Empathetic	(Higher of Presence or Manipulation) + Synergy

Coercive

A Coercive relationship includes almost no fellow-feeling. Instead, both sides trade favors, threats, or bribes to get the other to go along with them. Neither particularly understands the other's emotional state or long-term goals, and so while a Sin-Eater may know what her geist wants her to do, she's in the dark about *why*. Likewise, when the Sin-Eater wants her geist to do something for her, the geist being unable to understand her motivations means it may end up doing the wrong thing entirely, or resenting what is (to the Sin-Eater) a perfectly reasonable request.

Positional

When a Bound is in a Positional relationship, both Sin-Eater and Geist know what the other wants (in general terms), though the relationship is contractual rather than based on shared understanding. Both sides have set out their stakes, and they can get along as long as each sticks to what they have already set down. This relationship does away with some of the friction of a Coercive relationship, but is still focused on goals rather than understanding; when something happens that the geist reacts to on an emotional level — a crisis point — the Sin-Eater doesn't understand it, and can make things worse.

Sympathetic

In a Sympathetic relationship, the two halves of a Bound begin to understand the underlying drives of the other. A Sin-Eater recognizes the emotions behind his geist's actions and responses to crisis points, while the geist in turn has more insight into how and why the Sin-Eater does what he does. While both understand the emotions of the other, they do not have the degree of fellow-feeling that comes from an Empathetic relationship, and that disconnect can still cause problems, especially when one half

thinks that the other should react to stress in a different way based on past observation rather than shared feeling.

Empathetic

The closest relationship a Sin-Eater can have with her geist, an Empathetic relationship goes beyond each half of a Bound understanding the others' emotional state. They imagine themselves in the other's position — sometimes subconsciously — and feel what the other feels. Getting to this point requires a great deal of trust and insight between the two, and significant shifts of perspective can damage that bond. While the Bound remains two distinct beings, the Sin-Eater and the geist, at this level of relationship the two think like one another enough that some mistake it for the two actually beginning to merge together.

Losing Synergy

Sin-Eaters only lose Synergy in circumstances that force the geist into a situation that can cause it to rethink the Bargain. Most often, this happens when the Sin-Eater dies. The geist again brings the Sin-Eater back from the dead, but she has to pay the price: Someone nearby will die instead.

Eating ghosts, on the other hand, shows a base disrespect for the dead — and puts the Sin-Eater's geist in fear for its existence. After all, if the Bound eats ghosts for power or consumes a geist to gain a Key, she's effectively forcing the geist into cannibalism.

Even worse is forcing the geist to drink from a River of the Underworld, weakening its connection to the world of the living. Doing so damages the relationship between the Bound, and demonstrates a fundamental lack of understanding.

Finally, Sin-Eaters can externalize their understanding of death, setting what they know in concrete form in order to make a memento. Doing so demonstrates a plateau in his understanding, a focus on how his relationship with his geist is now rather than how it will be in the future.

Event	Synergy Loss
Return from the Dead	1 dot
Drink Underworld Rivers	3 dots
Ectophagia	1 dot per Rank consumed
Memento Creation	1 dot per Memento created

On the Edge

If the Bound puts the Bargain in trouble too often, she can lose the relationship with her geist entirely, reducing her Synergy to 0. In this sorry state, a Sin-Eater has only three options open to her:

The first is the simplest: she can die. At Synergy 0 her geist will not bring her back. That's it. Discuss with the Storyteller whether your character can come back as a ghost (see Appendix One, p. 280).

If she doesn't *want* to die, however, she's got to reconnect with her geist. She has to make significant process towards resolving her geist's Remembrance.

Finally, she can choose to impose her will on her geist, ignoring its needs. She destroys her geist's Touchstone, in doing so forcing it to obey her. She loses her Synergy Trait, replacing it with Tyranny (p. 230), and becomes a Storyteller character.

Synergy 0

- **Flatlining:** At Synergy 0, the Bound gains the Flatlining Condition.
- **Remembrance:** Completing a Remembrance scene raises Synergy to 1 and removes Flatlining.
- **Tyranny:** By ritualistically destroying her geist's Touchstone (p. 83), the Bound *removes* the Synergy Trait and replaces it with Tyranny (p. 230) at one dot, becoming a Storyteller character. The Sin-Eater must have discovered her geist's Touchstone (i.e. reached Synergy 3 at some point) to take this option.

Plasm

While Sin-Eaters have no problem interacting with ghosts, they cannot tap in to the Essence that powers the ephemeral dead. Instead, they require Plasm — a physical substance suffused with the power of the dead. Anyone can reach out and touch Plasm, but only those who have accepted the Bargain can put it to use as the geist draws on the Essence within.

Plasm is always visible for what it really is — though some people who haven't had much contact with the supernatural may think that it came from a joke shop or a special-effects house. Most Plasm is a milky-white, viscous fluid that flows like molasses. Other times it manifests as blocks of jelly the purple of flesh rotting from snakebite, lumpy sludge the putrid yellow of rotten fruit, or a thin liquid the pale blue of a drowned child's lips.

Sources of Plasm

- **Keys:** Unlocking with a Key grants Plasm equal to the character's rating in that Key's Unlock Attribute.
- **Materialization:** Ghosts that Materialize leave residual Plasm equal to their Corpus.
- **Other Manifestations:** Ghosts that use other Manifestations in the living world leave a trail of Plasm equal to the Essence cost of the Manifestation.
- **Moving On:** Ghosts that resolve their Anchors and move on (p. 189) produce a concentrated form of Plasm that completely restores a Sin-Eater's pool regardless of size.

- **Underworld Feasts:** Just as ghosts can gain Essence by eating the weird "food" of the Underworld (p. 203), Sin-Eaters can gain the same amount of Plasm.
- **Rites:** A krewe's religious rites (p. 177) draw Plasm forth from the Underworld, in a form suitable for the Sin-Eaters of the krewe to ingest.
- **Ectophagia:** A Sin-Eater can feast on ghosts and geists, literally eating the dead and transforming their ephemera into Plasm (p. 95).

Gaining Plasm

Because Plasm is a physical, visceral substance, the Sin-Eater can't just draw it into her body. She has to consume it. Some of the Bound prefer to do so in its natural state, feeling the Plasm flow down their arms and slipping into their bellies even as they retch from the taste of month-old fish. In many cases, Sin-Eaters gain much more Plasm for their buck if they consume it in a manner resonant with their own death. A junkie who died on the street with a needle hanging out of his arm gets the biggest kick from shooting Plasm straight into her veins, while someone who burned to death might roll the Plasm into a cigar and smoke it. Many of the Bound find a black humor in this relationship, but for some — especially those who have only just recovered from their first death — the experience is too traumatic.

Gaining Plasm

- **Consumption:** The Bound must physically consume Plasm to add it to her pool. Eating, drinking, smoking, injecting, inhaling, etc. are all possibilities.
- **Per Turn Limit:** A Sin-Eater may consume as much Plasm in a turn as she can spend. Sources of Plasm that completely refill her pool can be consumed in a single turn.
- **Instant Action:** Consuming Plasm is an instant action.
- **Thematic Resonance:** Consuming Plasm in a manner appropriate to the Sin-Eater's death gives two extra points. This can take the Sin-Eater above their normal maximum, but excess points vanish at the end of the scene. Consuming extruded Plasm never counts as thematic resonance.

Using Plasm

Plasm is the fuel for a number of the Bound's abilities. It is the key to unlocking the geist's Remembrance Traits, and Haunts infuse Plasm into her body and environment. She can also bolster her body with Plasm, knitting together wounds while her body heals. She can even use her Plasm to give succor to the dead, though converting Plasm back into Essence is less efficient.

- **Plasmic Healing:** Plasm can downgrade damage from lethal to bashing, and can resolve physical Tilts by repairing the Sin-Eater's body.
- **Haunts:** A Sin-Eater must spend Plasm to use Haunts (p. 100).
- **Remembrance Traits:** Spend Plasm to access Remembrance Traits (p. 100).
- **Extrusion:** The Bound may expend Plasm from their pool simply to create Plasm, which other Sin-Eaters can then consume.
- **Open:** The Bound may spend (target's Size) Plasm to coat an object or creature with Plasm, giving it the Open Condition until the end of the chapter or until the Plasm is washed off. If the Sin-Eater can spend enough Plasm to cover the target in a single turn, she may coat an unwilling target with a touch attack (p. 158); otherwise the target must be willing, inanimate, or otherwise unable to avoid the Sin-Eater.
- **Feeding:** Spend 3 Plasm to give a ghost 1 Essence.
- **Reflexive Action:** Spending Plasm is always a reflexive action.
- **Per Turn Limit:** A Sin-Eater's Synergy dictates how much Plasm she can spend in a single turn. If an effect requires her to spend Plasm in excess of that limit, she must spend multiple turns expending Plasm. The effect (and any actions associated with it) takes place in the turn where the Plasm cost is met.

Sin-Eater Abilities

Sin-Eaters share a range of otherworldly gifts, all drawn from their place straddling the boundary between life and death. Able to tap into the memories of their geists, to return from death, and even to consume the very essence of another geist, they are never far from reminders that the dead are all around.

Physical Medium

The presence of a geist means a Sin-Eater is forever touched by death. She cannot help but see and hear ghosts, putting her in a liminal state between medium and necromancer. While not all Bound *like* the constant attention of the dead, over time it becomes a comfort. Even if she can't be around living people for a time, she's always got someone to talk to.

A Sin-Eater sees the dead constantly. She sees ghosts, creatures from the Underworld, and other ephemeral beings with sway over the dead, and can both hear and speak with them as she might a living person. Her sight isn't as broad as that of other supernatural creatures, and she remains unable to see the alien creatures that lurk in a Twilight state that

have nothing to do with death. One byproduct of this sight is that the Bound can always see when a ghost is possessing someone. Hiding in a living being is no disguise.

While living mediums can speak with the dead, a Sin-Eater can reach out and touch them. Ghosts are as solid to her as living people; she can punch, grab, or kiss a ghost as she would anyone else.

The constant presence of the Underworld inures a Sin-Eater to the presence of death. Mutilated corpses, apartments filed with animals feasting on people's remains, and other gory scenes don't shock or disturb the Bound — after all, it's nowhere near as bad as some of the sights they see in the Underworld. Where others would shy away, a Sin-Eater instead is drawn by curiosity.

Physical Medium

- **Free Merits:** Sin-Eaters all possess the Tolerance for Biology Merit.
- **Ghost Touch:** The Bound can see, touch, and interact with ghosts and other ephemeral beings with death-related Influences or Numina as easily as they can with the living. This ability extends to anything they wear or use, including ranged weapons.
- **Effective Rank:** Sin-Eaters have an effective ghost Rank (p. 187) equal to the lower of Synergy or her geist's Rank.
- **Second Sight:** Sin-Eaters can perceive ghosts possessing humans, and recognize other Bound by the presence of their geists. This effect is automatic unless some supernatural effect conceals the possessing ghost (or Bound geists), in which case it's a Clash of Wills (p. 101).

Possession Immunity

A Bound geist is a jealous houseguest; ephemeral entities or stranger things that attempt to possess a Sin-Eater find that their efforts are rebuffed by a maelstrom of Plasmic fury where the Bound's soul should be. This immunity does not extend to effects that merely control the Sin-Eater's body or mind — she's every bit as vulnerable to a vampire's mesmerizing gaze or the Plasmic puppet strings of the Marionette as anyone.

Possession Immunity

- **Automatic Failure:** Any attempt by another being to possess a Sin-Eater's body automatically fails. This includes the Possess and Claim Manifestation effects, body-swapping rituals, and any magic that replaces a Sin-Eater's mind with another's.
- **Not Covered:** Sin-Eaters are *not* immune to magic that controls their mind or their body by other means.

Plasmic Healing

Perhaps understandably, geists are protective of their Sin-Eaters. Fortunately, they have more options available to them than most living creatures. As a result, Sin-Eaters are hard to kill — and even then, they rarely stay dead for long.

By suffusing her body with Plasm, the Sin-Eater can mitigate even the most terrible injuries. What would be lethal wounds fill with milky-white ooze, pulling separated tissue back together and reconstituting elements of the Bound's body. The Plasm keeps her alive, even to the point of linking severed body parts, stretching across the gap between a wrist and a hand — or between neck and head.

Even if a part of her body is crippled or destroyed, she can reconstitute it with Plasm. Someone who feeds a Sin-Eater's arm into a wood chipper will no doubt get a surprise when the Bound grabs her by the throat with a hand made of ghost-stuff. The geist knows how the Sin-Eater's body should be, so Plasm can hold bones together when they would shatter, and replace gouged-out eyes.

Plasmic Healing

- **Downgrading Damage:** 1 Plasm downgrades the wound in a single Health box from aggravated to lethal *or* lethal to bashing. The same wound can be downgraded more than once.
- **Tilt Negation:** A Sin-Eater may remove any Tilt caused by physical damage. This costs 2 Plasm if the Tilt was inflicted by bashing damage, 4 Plasm if it was inflicted by lethal damage, or 8 Plasm if it was inflicted by aggravated damage.
- **Reflexive Action:** Downgrading damage is a reflexive action.
- **Per-Turn Limit Exemption:** When downgrading damage or negating Tilts as it is inflicted, the Bound ignores her normal per-turn limit on Plasm expenditure. Downgrading damage or negating Tilts after the fact is still bound by per-turn limits.
- **Bane Exemption:** Plasmic healing may not be used on any damage inflicted by the Bane of the Sin-Eater's geist.
- **Hard to Kill:** The Bound do not fall unconscious from damage or bleed out. They still suffer wound penalties.

Death

Sin-Eaters don't die easy. They made a bargain with a little god of death, and it drives the Bound to keep going for as long as she can. Even killing one of the Bound won't put her down for long. The geist doesn't make her immortal, far from it. Rather, the Sin-Eater is serially mortal, returning once more to life every time she is killed. Some forces, however, are beyond even a geist's ability to defeat — old age claims Sin-Eaters normally, and a death that mirrors their original can kill the Bound for good. Likewise, the Bound cannot recover from a killing blow dealt by the geist's Bane.

After she dies, the Sin-Eater awakens at the next dawn or dusk, her face shrouded with an ectoplasmic caul. Tearing this lump of Plasm free so she can take her next first breath, she finds her body is whole again, even if it was dismembered when she died. If she has time, consuming the caul can help refill her drained reserves. Any parts of her that were removed for research (or transplant) wither to grave dust as she awakes. She is battered and bloody, but alive.

Returning from the dead comes with a price: Nobody can cheat the universe, and as much as it can demand anything, it must have a life for a life. Someone near to the Sin-Eater dies when she comes back, and the first thing the Bound sees is the last minute of her surrogate's life. She chokes with the chest pains of a man who drowns in his own blood after a massive hemorrhage. She feels the knife as it slices through the veins of a woman who had never thought of suicide before.

These deaths are often both unexplained and noticeable, but sometimes only the Sin-Eater has any real idea of the cause. A chronically depressed man whose husband leaves him chooses to jump off a tall building. Someone who would otherwise have survived a house fire dies of smoke inhalation. Whatever the case, the Sin-Eater lives the last few minutes of the unwitting victim's life — an experience that many find so traumatizing that they would rather never return. Unfortunately, that's not an option. A geist clings to life harder than many humans. Unless the Sin-Eater and geist are particularly close, the geist may swear on everything it holds dear to let her die, but it will still bring her back.

If the manner of her death mirrors her original death, her geist cannot bring a Sin-Eater back. How specific the new death has to be depends on the circumstances of her original passing. A Bound who died as a result of a knife through the heart will only die if stabbed through the heart in similar circumstances or with the same knife, while one who died from the venom of a specific type of snake may die as a result of any similarly venomous snakebite, rather than only the original breed. The player and Storyteller should discuss what counts as a "resonant death" during character creation, so it doesn't cause arguments later on.

Systems

- **Dead:** When the Sin-Eater dies, she gains the Dead Condition unless otherwise specified.
- **Synergy 0:** If the Sin-Eater dies with Synergy 0, she does not gain the Dead Condition.
- **Resonant Death Exemption:** If the Sin-Eater dies in a manner that resonates with her original death, she does not gain the Dead Condition.
- **Bane Exemption:** If the Sin-Eater dies due to her geist's Bane, she does not gain the Dead Condition.

Remaining Dead

A Sin-Eater can beg for her geist to let her remain dead, but she only stands a chance of succeeding if she has an Empathetic relationship (p. 91). Roll (Synergy – 7); on a success the geist will let her remain dead.

Liminal Aura

As a hybrid of living and dead, a Sin-Eater stands out as something *other* to the people and ghosts around him. To the living, he carries with him an aura of death. Everything feels slightly cold, sensitive people may hear whispers just at the edge of hearing, and recording devices pick up instances of EVP. People nearby catch flashes of the world through the eyes of the dead — for just a moment, food looks rotten and nearby animals look withered and close to death.

The dead, by contrast, see the Sin-Eater as a beacon of life. She stands out to ghosts as though glowing, and they know where she is by instinct even if they cannot see her. Around her, the sensory impressions of Twilight fade: Physical objects appear more solid, lights are brighter, and sounds clearer. Weaker-willed ghosts flock to her if they have some need among the living — or even just to experience something closer to the living world — driven by a primal understanding that the Bound are liminal beings, conduits between the dead and the living. Around one of the Bound, Manifestations come easier and the gnawing hunger of Essence Bleed is held at bay.

Liminal Aura

- **Recognition:** Other Bound, ghosts, and other ephemeral entities with death-related Influences or Numina recognize the Bound on sight within their aura.
- **Manifestation Condition:** The Bound creates a Persistent Manifestation Condition (p. 303) around herself. Her Synergy determines the Condition created. Any ghost can make use of this Condition as though it were tagged to him.
- **Increasing or Reducing Condition:** The Bound may spend 1 Willpower to increase the "level" of the Condition by one (from no Condition to Anchor, Anchor to Open, or Open to Controlled), or to reduce the level by one. She may do this multiple times, but the effects end at the end of the scene.
- **Area:** The Sin-Eater's aura extends (10 × Synergy) yards around the Sin-Eater. The Condition it creates applies to both the area as a whole and to any creature or object within it.

Aura Flare

A Sin-Eater can focus on her nature, expanding the momentary glimpses of death or the light of the living, flaring her power into a beacon that draws ghosts, or reminds the living of the inevitability of death and the proximity of the afterlife. She can also use her aura to contest the aura of other Sin-Eaters or even stranger supernatural beings.

Aura Flare

Requirement: Have not flared your aura in the current scene.

Cost: 1 Willpower

Area: (10 × Synergy) yards

Action: Instant and contested

Dice Pool: Presence + Synergy vs. highest Composure + Synergy among affected targets *or* the dice pool of another supernatural being's aura.

Roll Results

Success: Living targets gain the Spooked Condition, while dead targets gain the Inspired Condition. When contesting another's aura, this effect supersedes the other aura's effects.

Exceptional: Affected targets improve their impression level by one for Social Maneuvering.

Failure: The target is unaffected by the Sin-Eater's aura.

Dramatic: The targets gain a +2 bonus on their next action against the Sin-Eater *or* worsen their impression level by 1 for Social Maneuvering.

Ectophagia

Strictly speaking, ghosts are made of ephemera unless they Materialize, but through her role as a physical medium the Sin-Eater can manipulate ghostly ephemera with the same ease as she can Plasm. Most only go so far as to touch ghosts. A few go further, either out of desperation or a misplaced sense of right and wrong. After all, the Plasm of a ghost may only exist in Twilight, but it's still Plasm — and the Bound can consume it like any other, in an act called *ectophagia*.

Ghosts aren't uniform blobs of Plasm in human shape: A Sin-Eater who decides to consume one must tear the ghost open and eat the viscera and organs directly, choking down Plasmic muscle and offal that tastes disturbingly authentic.

The Bound don't just eat ghosts. Some go one further and eat geists. Eating a geist provides a material benefit to the Sin-Eater depraved enough; she can learn the geist's innate Key as her own geist absorbs the poor bastard's essential being. Those Sin-Eaters who would consume another Bound's geist must first kill the Sin-Eater. If they manage to do so, the Sin-Eater remains dead.

Ectophagia

- **Helpless Target:** The ghost to be eaten must be incapable of fighting back.
- **Corpus Damage:** The ghost suffers 1 aggravated wound for every Plasm consumed. A ghost slain by ectophagia does not reform.
- **Unbound Geists:** Only Unbound geists, or those whose Sin-Eaters are Dead, may be consumed.
- **Full Consumption:** A geist slain by ectophagia does not reform. The consuming Sin-Eater fully replenishes her Plasm pool and gains the geist's innate Key.

Remembrance Traits

Each geist has memories of what it was in life, though its memories remain a mystery to the Sin-Eater, at least until he discovers more about this geist's identity. As he learns more about the mysterious being with whom he made the Bargain, he can encourage it to assist in areas where the geist was once skilled.

For some, this knowledge comes in the form of expertise that the geist possesses but the Sin-Eater does not — how to read a crime scene or fire a gun. Others benefit from a geist's knowledge of finances or how to talk to people in a field, getting access to ready cash or contacts.

Remembrance Traits come in the form of either Skills or Merits, initially defined at character creation. While Social Merits are the most appropriate for most geists, the player and Storyteller should work together to determine how a facet of your geist's past life might grant access to another Merit.

Remembrance Traits

- **Plasm Cost:** Spend Plasm to gain dots in the Trait, up to the Sin-Eater's effective Rank. These extra dots can go above her Trait maximums.
- **All or Nothing:** For Merits with a fixed dot cost, you must spend enough Plasm to gain all the Merit's dots in order to benefit from it.
- **Duration:** Remembrance Traits last for one scene.
- **Echoes:** After using a Remembrance Trait for the first time in a scene, gain the Echoes Condition.

Unleashing the Geist

The geist half of a Bound is an independent entity, a little god of death with memories of life. It isn't under the Sin-Eater's control — far from it. The geist has its own wants and needs, and its own desire for freedom. The Bargain holds it in check just as it grants the geist access to the living world through the Sin-Eater. Neither side has to hold tight to the other, though. The Sin-Eater can choose to release her geist, giving up her own spectral power in exchange for a tsunami of horrors. She weaves it a body made of Plasm, opens the gates, and lets her geist do what it will.

Pulling the geist into the physical world is taxing, and Sin-Eaters can attempt it relatively rarely. If she wants to summon it frequently, she needs to hurt, to feel the proximity of death. While some of the Bound inflict these wounds upon themselves, most — especially at low Synergy — have a stronger survival instinct.

On the Leash

When it's not Unleashed to wreak havoc, where does a Sin-Eater's geist go? The Bargain replaces the Bound's soul, which departs at the moment of death — and that's where the geist's ephemeral form "lives." It's not the same as Possession or Claiming — the geist shares sensations and sensory information with their host, but has no control over the shared body.

However, bound geists *can* (and often do) project an image of themselves in Twilight near their Sin-Eater. This projection is immaterial even to other beings in Twilight and in the Underworld, but ghosts and other Bound can see it.

A Sin-Eater can touch her own geist (and vice versa), but no matter how violent their interactions, neither can actually inflict damage on the other.

Unleashing

- **Once Per Chapter:** A Sin-Eater can Unleash her geist once per chapter.
- **Instant:** Unleashing the geist is an instant action.
- **Conditions:** The geist gains the Unleashed Condition; the Sin-Eater gains the Weakened Bond Condition.

Haunts

The Bound are not merely people possessed by the dead. A Sin-Eater's geist is a conduit through which she can draw on the power of the Underworld itself. She unleashes tendrils of Plasm that take physical form as bleeding walls, flying knives, and skeletal apparitions. She lays deadly curses, draws her geist into her flesh to transform her body, or infuses her voice with the keening wails of the dead.

All Haunts draw their power from the Underworld, the Sin-Eater (or her geist) weaving Plasm into a form that befits the Haunt, whether that's invisible strings that

fling objects around a room, or black-iron talons wrapped around her fingers. How visible the effects are depend on the Sin-Eater. Once she releases the power of the Haunt, the Plasm dissipates. Other Sin-Eaters cannot consume it.

Haunts

- **Dot Rating:** Each Haunt is rated from 1 to 5 dots.
- **Dice Pool:** A Haunt's dice pool is always Synergy + Haunt. Unlocking the Haunt with a Key adds that Key's Unlock Attribute to the dice pool (p. 121).
- **Plasm Cost:** Using a Haunt costs Plasm, the amount dependent on the effect the Sin-Eater desires. The Sin-Eater cannot add Plasm to the basic effect of an already-active Haunt.
- **Enhancements:** Higher dot levels of Haunts offer Enhancements to the base effect for additional Plasm. Unless otherwise specified, Enhancements may be added to an already-active Haunt. Unless otherwise specified, applying an Enhancement is a Reflexive action.
- **Duration:** The Haunt's effects, including all Enhancements, end when the Condition created by the Haunt does.
- **Pick and Choose:** A Sin-Eater does not have to spend Plasm on every level of a Haunt. If she only wants the effect of Rage ••••, she does not have to use any of the effects of Rage •• or •••.
- **Per Turn Limit:** Haunts that cost more Plasm than the Sin-Eater can spend in a turn require her to spend the Plasm over a number of consecutive turns. Only roll to activate the Haunt after spending all the Plasm.

Learning Haunts

A Sin-Eater gains her first Haunts when she accepts the Bargain. The fusion of human and geist presents a certain affinity for some means of manipulating the power of the Underworld, and the knowledge of how to draw on that power is almost instinctive. Once he knows a Haunt, the Bound can develop his talents naturally, coming up with new ways to manipulate Plasm.

Unlocking new Haunts isn't as easy, however. That knowledge comes from the Underworld itself, and the Sin-Eater has to explore the lands of the dead in order to find it. Sometimes the means of unlocking a new Haunt is on a scroll lost in a Dominion, other times it requires the Sin-Eater snatching a key out of one of the rivers of the dead. The means of developing those Haunts that resonate with her Burden are often easier for her to find than others; one of the Bereaved can find a means to unlock the Curse far easier than one of the Abiding. The means of discovering a new Haunt is specific to the Bound themselves; what works for one will not work for another.

The good news, as far as the Bound are concerned, is that a Sin-Eater only has to do that once per Haunt. Once she knows the basics, she can develop new techniques on her own through a mixture of practice and instinct.

Supernatural Conflict

Sin-Eaters mostly interact with ghosts, but they're not the only creatures in the world that deal with the dead — and some of those creatures have their own agenda for the Unbound, too. Some Haunts use a character's Synergy as part of a contested roll; when they are unleashed against other supernatural creatures instead use the closest equivalent — a werewolf's Primal Urge, or a Promethean's Azoth. This only applies to contested rolls, not when Synergy is subtracted from the Haunt's dice pool.

The same protection applies to Sin-Eaters when they would be the victim of a supernatural power. Add Synergy to all contested dice pools that use a supernatural power Trait.

Clash of Wills

When two Sin-Eaters bring their geists' powers to bear against one another, it's not always clear which ability trumps another. Likewise, a Haunt's power may have effects that oppose the effects of a vampire's Discipline or a mage's spells. When the effects of two supernatural abilities clash in this way, it's a Clash of Wills.

Each player involved rolls their character's Haunt + Synergy, or Ceremony dice pool. Whoever scores the most successes wins; their power takes effect as normal while the conflicting abilities fail. Characters can only spend Willpower on the clash roll if they're both physically present and aware that two abilities are in conflict. Other supernatural creatures have their own dice pools for clashes, detailed in their respective books.

Long-lasting effects have a level of supernatural endurance, per the following table.

Duration Modifiers

+1	Effect would last a night
+2	Effect would last a week
+3	Effect would last a month
+4	Effect would last a year

The Boneyard

The Boneyard allows Sin-Eaters to perform the most common trick of ghosts — the haunting of a location. Plasm leaks into the environment, staining it with the Sin-Eater's deathly essence and allowing them to spread their consciousness across a building or similarly sized landmark. At its most basic level a Sin-Eater instinctively knows both the layout of his Boneyard as well as who is currently within it. He can tell if they are living or dead as

well as where they are, but without a greater expenditure of Plasm he's left unaware of precisely who or what they are. Cautious Sin-Eaters know that just because somebody is alive doesn't mean they're harmless, or even all that human. Given a great enough expenditure of Plasm, a suitably skilled Sin-Eater may become a true master of his Boneyard, learning to bend the domain to his will.

The domains of Sin-Eaters are as varied as those that take on the Bargain, limited only by their imagination to cause havoc for rival krewes and organizations. Some Bound make soft uses of the Boneyard for personal gain, performing mock exorcisms for the living or casing a building for an easy burglary. Others use their powers for more extreme ends, trapping their enemies and consuming them within their own hideouts or causing phantasmagoric nights of revelry, allowing the living and the dead to rub shoulders as equals.

Bound that have explored the Great Below sometimes share rumors of the strange effects of claiming portions of the Underworld. Some claim the stone walls of the Underworld actively resist those that seek to twist them, answering to another unseen master that is unwilling to share. Others report that the lands of the dead were enthusiastic to be shaped by the Sin-Eater, as though waiting for their new master to define them.

Raise the Boneyard (•)

Cost: 1-3 Plasm (see Area)

Area: Determined by Plasm spent:

Plasm Spent	Area
1	Several rooms, or a single floor of a house
2	A ballroom or small house
3	A large house or building

Action: Instant to infuse environment; contested by Composure + Synergy to influence targets within the Boneyard; contested by Synergy + Boneyard to seize control of another Sin-Eater's Boneyard.

Dice Pool: Synergy + Boneyard

Roll Results

Success: The area becomes infused with the Sin-Eater's consciousness per point of Plasm spent, giving it the Boneyard Environmental Tilt. While the Boneyard exists the Sin-Eater may roll Synergy + Boneyard contested by Composure + Synergy to impose the Guilty, Shaken, or Spooked Condition on a target within the Boneyard.

Exceptional: When the Haunt ends without resolving, the Sin-Eater regains half the Plasm spent on Raise the Boneyard.

Failure: The Sin-Eater fails to establish their domain.

Dramatic: The Sin-Eater invests too much of themselves within the Boneyard and binds themselves to it. They gain the Lost Condition (p. 301) for the rest of the chapter whenever navigating anywhere but back to the place they tried to create the Boneyard.

So You Want to Haunt Dead Man's Curve

For stretches of highway, forests, or other empty areas of land where measurements in terms of architecture aren't helpful, measure it as the stretch of land between two landmarks. On roads this may be the Historic Route 66 exit and the Phantom Racer's road memorial, while in the woods it could be the limit of the woods between Buzzard's Roost and the freshwater marsh.

Boneyard Enhancements

- All Boneyard Enhancements may be added to an already-active Boneyard.

Eyes in the Paintings (••)

The Sin-Eater can project her awareness to any point within the Boneyard, allowing her to listen, look, or even taste the situation as if she was there herself. She can even place her perceptions in places her physical form could never reach or fit into, like the eyes of a painting hanging high above the great fireplace.

This extrasensory perception leaves some telltale sign of the Sin-Eater's presence like ripples in a pond. In a Boneyard unlocked with the Primeval Key, the singing of birds or insects accompanies its master's awareness as she scours her domain looking for the one that has wronged her, while those unlocked with the Sanguine Key may create electronic voice phenomena of the Sin-Eater's own voice as he watches an unfaithful member of his krewe.

Prying Eye's Boneyard focuses on reinforcing and strengthening the Boneyard through the infusion of Plasm. Rather than altering the rules of the haunted grounds, it allows the Boneyard to spread and further refines the Sin-Eater's ability to sense those moving through what they have claimed as their own.

Enhancements

1 Plasm: The Sin-Eater transfers her perception to any location within the Boneyard, seeing, hearing, smelling, and tasting as though she were physically present. Returning her perceptions to her body does not cost Plasm. This Enhancement may be applied more than once.

No Escape (•••)

The Boneyard is vast and inescapable. The environment becomes infused with the same will as its master, preventing those that have entered the Boneyard from escaping again. Doors made from flimsy particle board stand up to the strength of professional athletes. Hallways that once led to exits lead back to the rooms from which the victim just fled. Power lines tear themselves free and

fall across footpaths while trees uproot, blocking entire roads to the outside world. Boneyards created with the Pyreflame Key may fill with phantasmal infernos that drive their victims back from exits while those created with the Primordial Key may find any attempt to leave the house defeated by a vicious murder of crows.

Enhancements

Free: The Sin-Eater may spend up to 5 Plasm on Raise the Boneyard. Raise the Boneyard affects an area determined by Plasm spent:

Plasm Spent	Area
1	A small warehouse or parking lot
2	A large warehouse or supermarket
3	A small factory or shopping mall
4	A large factory or city block
5	A university campus, small town, or city neighborhood

1-5 Plasm: Any attempt to leave the area of the Boneyard suffers a penalty equal to Plasm spent, and any attempt, no matter how seemingly trivial, requires an action.

Earthquake Weather (••••)

The Sin-Eater floods the domain with their Plasm, allowing them to warp and contort the physical landscape to their will. Air grows blazing hot then cold enough to freeze skin to metal, rains of blood pour indoors, or the whole house rattles in an unseen wind. These manifestations only grow more violent when the Boneyard is unlocked with a Key. Phantom faces and hands strain against solid walls within a Boneyard unlocked by the Key of Grave Dirt, manifestations of those that have been smothered under the shale and dirt of the world. The Key of Disease causes the odor of rot to fill the air of its Boneyards as the walls begin to drip with tainted blood.

This aspect of the Boneyard is as much a tool of intimidation as it is a weapon. When a Sin-Eater lets themselves go on a victim it is a promise that no matter how many walls or locks they put between them and their enemies they will never be safe. Those Sin-Eaters that prefer the less violent approach to the problem find that the aspect makes them especially adept at driving out troublesome mortals that are a threat to local ghosts or just making sure that the living stay that way by keeping them away from a particularly dangerous shade.

Enhancements

3 Plasm: Create an Environmental Tilt in the Boneyard with a Severity equal to the Bound's dots in Boneyard. Choose from the following: Blizzard, Extreme Heat, Extreme Cold, Heavy Winds, Heavy Rain, Ice, or Earthquake. The Bound can end any Tilt she creates as a reflexive action. This enhancement may be applied more than once.

The New Law (•••••)

A Sin-Eater's Boneyard can be a place of absolute safety for the dead that come to them looking for solace, or it may be a nearly impenetrable fortress for those trying to enter it without their permission. Under the Bound's rule nothing happens within the Boneyard of which its master doesn't approve.

When the Boneyard is created, the Sin-Eater may create a single rule they consider inviolable, and their Boneyard enforces its owner's will on the land. Plasmic chains weigh down the limbs of offending ghosts, or flakes of their Corpus fall away and turn into ghostly butterflies or maggots to warn their master of the offense. Boneyards created with the Key of Cold Wind create horrific wailing winds that warn those within the Boneyard of what fate awaits those that violate its masters laws, while those invoked with the Key of Disease cause the air around those foolish enough to violate the Boneyards laws to fill with the sickly sweet odor of rot. Some who use this power see it as a necessary tool to have a true neutral ground for negotiations between two parties, while other Sin-Eaters just feel they're doing the right thing.

Enhancements

2 Plasm: The Bound states a rule that must be followed by all that enter the Boneyard. A target that violates the rules of the Boneyard gains the Defiant Condition (p. 299) for the duration of the Boneyard. Any roll to violate the law of the Boneyard receives a penalty equal to half of the Sin-Eater's Synergy. Those entering the Boneyard do not automatically know the rules. This Enhancement may be applied more than once, but only when the Boneyard is created.

2 Plasm: The Bound gains the rote action quality to all rolls to punish occupants of the Boneyard that break her law and counts as a Bane for all ghosts that violate the rule.

The Caul

The first words a new Sin-Eater often hears about the Caul are, "you want to do *what*?" Sin-Eaters may be fusion of a dying mortal and a geist, but they are still two separate beings capable of disagreeing, conversing, and even someday coming to understand the differences between the two of them. While the Caul is invoked, all of those possibilities die. The Sin-Eater and the geist are one being, not just Plasm and flesh melded in a loving union but of one mind as well. Their bodies fuse together as Plasm permeates every layer of fat and muscle, transforming it into rubbery Corpus or fibrous ectoplasmic flesh that begins to sag when the hybrid's attention lessens. From the outside the Caul is the literal stuff of nightmares. From the inside, it is the most

intimate a Sin-Eater can ever be with their geist partner. Some of the Bound speak of the peace both feel when they are one being, no longer tormented by the hungry pangs of what the geist has sacrificed nor the anxiety about what lies in the Sin-Eater's future.

While bound together the Sin-Eater and geist share more than just a body. Memories, passions, relationships, and even ambitions flow across the connection. Even when separated some Bound cannot help but seethe with rage at a betrayal by men long dead while the geist can't help but feel a longing for the love shared between a Sin-Eater and her wife. As horrifying as these moments can be, some truly believe they are the first step to understanding and communicating on common ground with their geist. If nothing else, it gives the two of them more to talk about.

Other Bound tend to look askance at those who have become masters of the Caul. No other Haunt demands so much of its practitioner, nor leaves them so exposed to even the potential for manipulation by their own geist. There are those that spread rumors of krewemates that came back from the transformation not quite themselves, rumors of Sin-Eaters that seem more than willing to bend to their geist's every demand even as they grow more sinister. Many respond that if a Sin-Eater can share an apartment with their krewe without losing it, they can tolerate 10 minutes together with their geist.

Extrude the Caul (•)

Cost: 1-5 Plasm
Action: Instant
Dice Pool: Synergy + Caul

Roll Results

Success: The Sin-Eater dons the Caul, becoming one with her geist. She gains the Caul Condition, with a number of charges equal to the Plasm spent.

Exceptional: When the Haunt ends without resolving, the Sin-Eater regains half the Plasm spent on Extrude the Caul.

Failure: The Sin-Eater fails to entice the geist into her body.

Dramatic Failure: The merging of Plasm and flesh goes horrifically wrong as bodies distort and fail come together. The geist pulls away, trapping the Sin-Eater in Twilight for the duration of the scene.

Cold Flesh (••)

The Sin-Eater's skin quivers and grows cold as she takes on the pallor of a cadaver. Rather than blood, all that manages to drip from her wounds is viscous Plasm that evaporates as it touches the pavement. The fire sizzles as the Sin-Eater walks through inferno but the dead nerves

barely register the pain of the act. Sarin gas? She kicked that like a bad habit years ago.

Each Sin-Eater has personally tasted death, and for some it's a reminder of the few physical advantages that being dead has over being alive. This is an expression of the most obvious common ground between the Sin-Eater and his geist: their mutual shuffling out of life. Both remember what it was like to feel their limbs growing cold and the feeling of death looming. Now instead of terror they both feel satisfaction — nothing can take anything away from them that they haven't already lost before.

Enhancements

3 Plasm: The Bound gains a general Armor rating equal to her Caul rating, and a ballistic Armor rating equal to half her Caul rating (rounded up).

Vitiate (•••)

As the Sin-Eater grows more comfortable in communion with their geist, they find it easier to eschew strictly humanoid body plans. With a thought his arms grow longer, giving him a quadrupedal gait like a horse, or skin unzips from his chest and back allowing him to take to the air like a literal bat out of hell. His body swells to grotesque proportions, or he scuttles about as a spider made exclusively of human corpses. These are the stories that make Sin-Eaters pass on rumors about the sort of person that learns the Caul, the kind that begin with growing extra limbs and end with opening a locked door by unspooling their own body into hundreds of feet of bloody, millimeter-thin worms. For some practitioners of the Caul, there is a playfulness to these actions — the sort of person that delighted in finding something gross to show off in his mortal life or possessed of a fascination with the morbid. For others it may be a personal discomfort or dislike of their own body that makes the transformations of the Caul seem no worse then what life already gave them.

These transformations are unpalatable enough to people that regularly spend their time around the dead, but the living witnessing the transformations are quite another matter. Simply seeing a Sin-Eater using this level of the Caul is cause for a breaking point in most circumstances.

Enhancements

Free: The Caul Condition has two charges per Plasm spent on Extrude the Call.

1-4 Plasm: The Sin-Eater's body swells and bloats, gaining Size equal to Plasm spent. For every 2 Size gained, he also gains a dot of Strength.

1 Plasm: The Sin-Eater warps his body into a scuttling thing, all spindly limbs and gripping fingers. He moves at twice his normal Speed on the ground, and can climb walls and ceilings at his normal Speed.

1 Plasm: The Sin-Eater's next unarmed attack inflicts lethal damage. This Enhancement may be applied more than once.

2 Plasm: The Sin-Eater grows wings, allowing him to fly at his normal Speed.

4 Plasm: The Sin-Eater transforms into a swarm of tiny animals or a viscous mass of flesh capable of seeping through any crack wide enough to permit light through. Passing through cracks takes one turn per point of Size.

Disarticulation (••••)

The Sin-Eater becomes a fountain of nightmarish potential, spewing forth impossible unlife that move with a purpose and instinct all their own. Her body may create a homunculus of a dead friend then slowly consume it again, or shed limbs like autumn leaves littering the area in obedient watchers made from their former extremities. Nor are all homunculi created from the Sin-Eater strictly organic — the ephemeral flesh cast off from the gestalt is just as likely to look to viewers like cold stone or dry, rustling paper as anything that should come from a human being. A Caul unlocked with the Key of Grave Dirt may create desiccated wraiths who leave a trail of dust-like Plasm where they move, while the creations of the Key of Blood may be monstrosities of enamel, cloth, and whatever equipment the Sin-Eater was holding at the time of the merging, held together by dried sinew.

Enhancements

1-5 Plasm: The Sin-Eater creates a homunculus with (Plasm spent) Health levels. This homunculus follows simple commands (e.g. "Carry this," "Kill her," "Guard that") and has a dice pool equal to (2 × Plasm spent) for all physical actions, and a chance die for social and mental actions. Commanding any number of homunculi is an instant action. This Enhancement may be applied more than once, but only to a limit of the Sin-Eater's Synergy.

The Hungry Dead (•••••)

Death is emptiness. It is hunger and need and raw, aching yearning. By tapping into her geist as a conduit to that emptiness, the Sin-Eater can fill that void, at least for a time, with the lives of others. His jaw distends grotesquely, or his flesh unfolds like an opening flytrap, and consumes his victim whole. As long as the memory remains fresh, the Bound can mimic the form and abilities of his unfortunate meal.

Enhancements

(Victim's Size) Plasm: The Sin-Eater wholly consumes a recently-dead being or recently-incapacitated ghost of Size no greater than 7. If the Sin-Eater consumed the target via ectophagia (p. 99), this Enhancement costs no Plasm.

Add the following effects to the Caul Condition. These effects last until the duration of the Caul ends or the Sin-Eater uses any other Caul Enhancement. Once that happens, the Sin-Eater permanently loses the ability to mimic the consumed victim.

- Spend one charge to mimic the appearance of the consumed victim for five minutes. You may extend the duration by spending more charges. If used on a ghost, the Sin-Eater appears as the ghost did in life.

- Spend one charge to use the Attributes and Skills of the consumed victim in place of your own on a single action. If used on a ghost, the Sin-Eater uses the ghost's relevant Attribute + Rank.

The Curse

The Curse doesn't strike against its victim directly. It instead leaves a tiny amount of Plasm as a mark on the victim, and that Plasm twists the world around him. The trace of Plasm summoned when using the Curse becomes a mark only visible in Twilight. The poor sap on the receiving end may notice a weird stain on her jacket or an odd bruise on her shoulder, but will likely write it off. Little does she know that it's just the physical remnants of the Curse's mark, and it does not wash off easily.

Some Curses are soft — neither directly harmful nor particularly long-lasting. Sin-Eaters use these Curses to shore up their reputation as occultists or cunning-men; easier to prove your supernatural credentials by making someone unable to make flame for a week than manifesting the Rage and tearing them apart. Other Curses laid through this Haunt are *terrifying*. A Fortune 500 CEO watches as his family goes about their life completely unaware of him, sees his assets seized and his company stripped, and when he does finally force someone to notice him, she can't understand a word he says. While the Curse didn't kill him directly, he still dies when he jams a needle in his arm after six months of the world treating him like he doesn't exist.

Many Bound hold that people who die as a result of the Curse are more likely to make the Bargain than others — they know that *something* about their death wasn't right, and they want to find out what happened. Others claim that the Curse's victims have a hard time attracting the attention of a geist, who likely wants nothing to do with someone who is already on the wrong side of a Sin-Eater.

Lay the Curse (•)

Requirement: The Sin-Eater must touch the victim to lay the Curse.

Cost: 1-4 Plasm

Action: Instant and contested

Dice Pool: Synergy + Curse vs. Resolve + Synergy

Roll Results

Success: The victim is plagued with bad luck. She gains the Curse Condition, with a number of charges equal to the Plasm spent.

Exceptional: When the Haunt ends without resolving, the Sin-Eater regains half the Plasm spent on Lay the Curse.

Removing a Curse

Any Sin-Eater who knows the Curse can remove hexes inflicted by other Bound. They must find the Curse's mark on the victim, then wipe it clean, passing the power back through their geist into the Underworld. It only takes a few minutes, but most don't like to admit that it's possible — doing so only proves that other Bound can remove their own Curses.

A Sin-Eater removing another's Curse rolls Synergy + Curse vs. the original Sin-Eater's Synergy + Curse. On a success, resolve the Cursed Condition. On an exceptional success, the Sin-Eater removing the Curse also takes a Beat.

Dismissing your own Curse is a reflexive action.

Failure: The Curse does not manifest.

Dramatic: The Bound leaves a trace of Plasm on the victim, but not in the way he intended. The victim regains a point of Willpower; the Sin-Eater suffers the effects of the Curse until the end of the scene.

Gremlin (••)

For people suffering under the Curse of the Gremlin, technology just doesn't work. Computers flake out and crash, ATMs eat cards, cars won't start, and forget trying to pay for anything with a credit card. Even simple tools like knives or hammers twist in her hand. If someone else try to use the same computer or car, it works just fine when the victim isn't around — it's very much her problem to deal with. A Sin-Eater who infuses this Curse with Plasm can prevent her victim from making fire, or even extinguish fires in her vicinity — bad news for someone with a gas stove. Even living off the grid is no protection for someone who cannot make fire.

While anyone can evade the Gremlin Curse for a while if she can work out what's going on and has friends who are willing to help her out, relying on other people to interface with the modern world for too long is a surefire way to strain friendships and drive acquaintances away.

Enhancement

2 Plasm: Add one of the following effects to the options available from the Curse Condition. This Enhancement may be applied more than once.

- A piece of equipment goes haywire. Its equipment bonus becomes a penalty for the rest of the scene when the Cursed character uses it. For a second charge, the equipment inflicts damage equal to its equipment bonus the next time the Cursed character tries to use it.

- The victim cannot start fires for the rest of the scene, and any fires she has lit during the scene extinguish themselves.

Malady (●●●)

The Sin-Eater's Curses grow in strength, becoming more prominent in the victim's life. What was once just a split grocery bag becomes a dropped pickle jar that bursts into 100 razor-sharp glass shards, lacerating the victim's leg. Tripping over a paving stone tears ligaments in the victim's ankle. If unlocked with the Primeval Key, she may be savaged by a stray dog, while the Key of Stillness means she does not hear an oncoming bus until it is too late. All Keys except the Key of Chance shape the misfortune that befalls the hex's victim; the Bastard's Key instead adds even more randomness to events.

Enhancements

Free: The Curse Condition has two charges per Plasm spent on Lay the Curse.

2 Plasm: Add one of the following effects to the options available from the Curse Condition. This Enhancement may be applied more than once.

- The victim suffers 3 points of lethal damage, then the Curse Condition resolves.
- Inflict one of the following Tilts: Arm Wrack, Blinded, Deafened, Insane, Knocked Down, Leg Wrack, Poisoned, or Sick. The effects of the Tilt last until the end of the scene.

Exhaustion (●●●●)

This Curse inflicts the victim with both physical and psychological exhaustion. He can't sleep, but is never truly awake. He always feels too cold, even at noon in the Sahara. Doing anything takes a toll, but staying in bed is just as tiring, and when he does go out his limbs feel like they're filled with concrete. He feels sullen and bitter when he feels anything at all, no longer able to find joy in life, and it's worse when he's around people who don't understand what he's feeling or why. For people who already suffer from mood disorders, the curse of exhaustion magnifies any extant depression, while those who have never felt the black dog's touch finally understand. The combination of depression and exhaustion leads some to self-harm, or even suicide.

Enhancements

2 Plasm: Add one of the following effects to the options available from the Curse Condition. This Enhancement may be applied more than once.

- Turn the victim's next Social roll into a chance die.
- Prevent the victim from gaining Willpower from one event.

Forgotten (●●●●●)

While the victims of other aspects of the Curse can write off what happens as bad luck or happenstance, perhaps never knowing that their foul moods and terrible luck are the result of supernatural intervention, a victim of the Forgotten Curse knows full well what's happening to him. It's as if the world simply writes him out of existence. People ignore him unless he grabs them or screams at them. In a club, his wife hits on another man until the victim reminds her that he's sitting next to her — then she shrugs and goes right back to flirting. Old friends forget to invite him to social functions, then look at him in the street like a stranger. His bank accounts close, his house may be repossessed, and even when he does manage to speak to someone they soon forget everything he says. Particularly cruel Sin-Eaters pair this disconnection with the mundane world with a touch of the Underworld, leaving the victim unable to differentiate living and dead even as he remains incapable of making anyone see or hear him. The victim becomes a ranting, raving lunatic, having to dodge invisible people and conversing in a language that only he understands.

While the effects of this Curse are temporary, the longer-term consequences are not. He may no longer see the dead as real, but he's spent days, weeks, or even months not knowing who can see whom around him. He'll likely never fully trust that he is no longer under the Curse.

Enhancement

3 Plasm: Add one of the following effects to the options available from the Curse Condition, each of which lasts for the rest of the scene. This Enhancement may be applied more than once.

- The character must spend a Willpower point to have anyone other than the Sin-Eater who cursed him register his presence.
- Block one of the victim's Social Merits.
- The victim can see, touch, and interact with ghosts as though they were living.

The Dirge

The Underworld takes all, given time. It is the inevitable entropy that strips away identity and purpose just as surely as it grinds away at the physical beings of the dead that live there. The Dirge is the reminder that other things yet remain. It is the song of hope in the realm of apathy and resignation, the reminder that things exist beyond the slow deterioration of self over decades. When the Sin-Eater sings or speaks her voice gains an otherworldly quality. The voices of the dead speak with him, turning each sentence into a chorus, or the music of the grave joins him in accompaniment. His features grow serene, like a body prepared for viewing or a sculpture of a saint. For Sin-Eaters who enjoy a less subtle approach, these changes might be accompanied by Plasmic limbs that sway and play ghostly instruments or the growth of flightless cricket wings for the purposes of stridulation. Those Bound wielding the Key of Stillness with the Dirge

cause a tinnitus that drowns out anything but even the quietest whisper from the Sin-Eater or an atmospheric.

Some Bound question if the Dirge is really a tool for good or simply another cruel feature of the Underworld. What good is hope in a world without change? What good is inspiring anyone but delighting in the last aspirations of escape slowly shriveling and dying? Perhaps this is all just a grand prank, a phantom to delude those who feel entitled to something more than what they've gotten. Most Sin-Eaters who encounter that opinion just know that the speaker has never actually heard the Dirge.

Sing the Dirge (•)

Requirement: You must sing a haunting, wordless song at conversational volume or louder. You must also choose a simple emotional state or action the Dirge urges its targets toward (e.g. "calm," "stop fighting," or "come to me").

Cost: 1-5 Plasm

Action: Instant and contested

Subjects: (Plasm spent) targets who can hear the Sin-Eater.

Dice Pool: Synergy + Dirge vs. Composure + Synergy.

Roll Results

Success: The subject gains the Dirge Condition.

Exceptional: When the Haunt ends without resolving, the Sin-Eater regains half the Plasm spent on Sing the Dirge.

Failure: The target is no more touched by the Sin-Eater's music than they are by elevator Muzak.

Dramatic: The listener isn't moved by the song in the slightest and becomes unreceptive to the Sin-Eater's power. The Bound takes a –3 penalty to using the Dirge on the target for the rest of the story.

Paean (••)

Music exists in the Underworld, but not like the Dirge. For the dead, when a Sin-Eater sings it is transcendent, a reminder of all the things death strips away in one wonderful package. It is the feeling of breathing, the sensation of sun on skin, and the warmth of intertwined fingers. All the Keys shape the memories remembered of sensations now denied to the dead of sustenance, companionship, and belonging.

For the living to experience this level of the Dirge is to remember the dead as if he stood right beside him. A Sin-Eater can rekindle that fire within the living, reminding them of how they felt and what those individuals meant to them. For some it can be jarring to so deeply remember again somebody she hadn't thought of in years.

Sin-Eaters use this aspect for a variety of things — trying to keep a ghost from sinking into the great below a little longer or aiding them in resolving an Anchor that wouldn't be right for the krewe to do itself. Some less-scrupulous Bound use it in a trading game, as there is a lot of information about the Underworld they don't know and a few extra days where a granddaughter can remember their Oma is a desirable fix no matter the shade.

Enhancements

1-5 Plasm: The Sin-Eater distributes Essence equal to Plasm spent to any ghosts with the Dirge Condition.

2 Plasm: A living character with the Dirge Condition also gains the Inspired Condition. This Enhancement may be applied more than once.

Communion (•••)

The Sin-Eater's song transcends language, speaking directly to the heart. With this level of mastery they may express themselves with a purity of purpose, moving others to act with nothing but the power of their song.

Additionally, the power of the Sin-Eater's Dirge grows, allowing her to reach large crowds with her song.

Enhancements

Free: Sing the Dirge affects anyone capable of hearing within an area determined by Plasm spent. If rolling for each target becomes unfeasible, contest the power with the highest Composure + Synergy of all targets.

Plasm Spent	Area
1	A small room
2	A large room
3	Several rooms, or a single floor of a house
4	A ballroom or small house
5	A large house or building

2 Plasm: The Sin-Eater has a Perfect social impression, and may roll Synergy + Dirge to open Doors in a Social Maneuver, against any character with the Dirge Condition.

Exaltation (••••)

All Haunts are ultimately derived from the Underworld and thus from death. The music of the Dirge allows the Sin-Eater to project the serenity and grace of a peaceful death onto those who hear the song, or invoke shattering grief of a life snatched away. Through her song, a wielder of the Dirge can let a shade communicate through the grief or rage that anchors them in the afterlife. With the Sin-Eater's presence, communities of the dead can even work up the courage to face off against the likes of one of the Reapers.

Enhancement

2 Plasm: The Sin-Eater removes (without resolving) one of the following Conditions from a subject with the Dirge Condition: Beaten Down, Broken, Deprived, Guilty, Madness, Obsession, Shaken, or Spooked. Persistent Conditions are suppressed until the Dirge Condition ends. This Enhancement may be applied more than once.

3 Plasm: The Sin-Eater gives one of the following Conditions to a subject with the Dirge Condition: Beaten Down, Connected, Deprived, Guilty, Inspired, Obsession, Shaken, Spooked, or Swooning. This Enhancement may be applied more than once.

Visitation (●●●●●)

The Bound's song is otherworldly even by the standards of ghosts. Sometimes this particular talent is called the Voice of Orpheus. A Sin-Eater who has mastered the Dirge has the power to bring forth those ghosts unwilling or unable to enter the physical world on their own. Her song ties unbound ghosts to objects and just as easily creates Plasmic flesh for the dead, bringing them fully into the world. Some Sin-Eaters use this aspect to allow a final meeting among family or lovers. Others realize there are few problems that can't be solved by sufficient amounts of ghosts, and Sin-Eaters are rarely lacking in ethereal accompaniment.

Some Bound have found less-compassionate uses for this aspect of the Dirge. By invoking this power, they can tie unwilling ghosts to sights of their greatest crimes to atone for what they have done. Some use it to steal the bodies of the living, handing over a mortal life for a day to the ghost willing to pay the body trader what they desire.

Enhancement

1-5 Plasm: The Sin-Eater spends Plasm equal to the Rank of a ghost with the Dirge Condition. That target gains a Manifestation Condition of the Sin-Eater's choice. This Enhancement may be applied more than once.

The Marionette

The Marionette puts the Sin-Eater in control of the people and things in her environment. She spins tendrils of Plasm that connect her to objects, animals, even people, and through those connections she can manipulate whatever she possesses. Initially, her control is limited to jerking on those connections, sending objects flying across the room. With time and a suitable investment of Plasm she can raise zombies, control armies of vermin, and puppet human beings like toys for her amusement.

Some of the Bound, especially those who did not have much control over their lives before making the Bargain, lean heavily on the Marionette as a way to make the world do what they want. While possessing and manipulating items is not in and of itself harmful, animals and people seized by the Marionette remain fully aware of their surroundings even as their bodies refuse to do what they want. Some victims liken it to locked-in syndrome, only far worse — those afflicted with LIS cannot move their bodies, while victims of the Marionette can see and feel their bodies doing things completely outside of their control.

A lot of Sin-Eaters focus on the Marionette as a way to control animals and people, but in the modern world perhaps its most effective use is the ability to control and possess items. Possessing a smartphone allows the Bound to do anything that the phone normally could. While possessing her own phone is of no benefit, she could possess an enemy's phone to dial back to her own as a crude listening device, share his location, or rifle through his email and message history. Tech-savvy Sin-Eaters keep their personal electronics away from anyone with the Marionette, even within their own krewes.

The Marionette lifts and controls objects, and the Key used to unlock it affects the form of the animating Plasm. Thin traces of blood seep across anything manipulated by the Stigmatic Key, vanishing only once the Marionette ends, while the Key of Cold Wind tosses anything so puppeted about in ghostly winds that only the victim can feel, while objects moved by the Scrivener's Key seem to blink from one place to the next while observers aren't watching.

String the Marionette (●)

Cost: 1-3 Plasm

Dice Pool: Synergy + Marionette

Action: Instant against unattended objects or animals, contested by Stamina + Synergy against conscious humans or other animals.

The Puppetmaster

The Marionette Condition defines the effects of the Marionette on the target, but the Sin-Eater also has specific rules:

- Controlling a puppeteered subject for a turn is an instant action.
- The Sin-Eater rolls Synergy + Marionette any time she needs to roll to take an action with a puppeteered target.
- The Sin-Eater can command a puppet to do whatever it could do normally — if she controls a car, she can make it drive, and if she puppeteers a bird, she can make it fly.
- Puppeteered targets can be moved around telekinetically with a Speed equal to Synergy × Marionette.
- Heavy, sharp, or dangerous objects can be thrown as an attack (and puppeteered creatures can be thrown into dangerous objects). Treat the damage as an improvised weapon and the range as a thrown weapon, substituting Synergy + Marionette for Strength + Athletics – Size.

Roll Results

Success: A target creature or object of (Plasm spent) Size gains the Marionette Condition.

Exceptional: When the Haunt ends without resolving, the Sin-Eater regains half the Plasm spent on String the Marionette.

Failure: Tendrils of Plasm fail to take hold.

Dramatic: The tendrils of Plasm latch on to the target, but tear off, leaving a thick layer of ectoplasmic slime behind. For the rest of the story, attempts to use the Marionette on the same target fail automatically.

Swarm (••)

The Sin-Eater's tendrils of Plasm stretch out and latch on to more than one object, allowing her to puppeteer multiple objects at the same time. Powerful Bound can fling rooms full of people around with wild abandon, or create whirlwinds of flying knives, commanding them all with one mind. She retains as much control over every puppeteered creature as she has over a single target. Sin-Eaters who develop more control over the Marionette can use this ability to affect more than one target at once.

Enhancements

2 Plasm: String the Marionette affects a number of targets equal to the Sin-Eater's Marionette dots. Multiple targets may be commanded as a single instant action, as long as all of them do the same thing (e.g. several dolls all pointing at the same character, multiple televisions turning on at once). Attacking with multiple Puppets halves the target's Defense.

Phantom Strength (•••)

The Sin-Eater's control over the Marionette expands. Her Plasmic tendrils grow stronger, able to lift and move larger objects and bend them to her will. While previously she could lift a cop's gun from its holster and shoot it, now she can manipulate the policeman directly. She can rip open a car like a tin can or slam a door as someone tries to walk through it. Using this ability with Swarm allows her to puppeteer multiple people at once, making entire groups dance to her own tune or hefting multiple large objects.

A Sin-Eater can, with the investment of enough Plasm, wrest control of cars and trucks, flinging them around without regard for the desires of the driver. Such showy displays are beneath most Sin-Eaters, who instead use Phantom Strength to take control of a car in far subtler ways, suddenly jerking the steering right as her target tries to negotiate a dangerous bend, or stomping on the gas rather than the brakes so her puppeteered SUV plows into a crowded street and leaves the driver at the tender mercies of human authorities.

Enhancements

Free: String the Marionette affects targets of Size up to (Marionette + [2 × Plasm spent])

2 Plasm: The next attempt to resist the Sin-Eater's control of a puppet suffers a −3 penalty. This Enhancement may be applied more than once, but only once per action.

Servant (••••)

By infusing Plasm into an animal, object, person, or a recently dead body, the Sin-Eater can use the target as a semi-independent servant. Unlike other uses of the Marionette, creatures raised in this way remain under her control but do not require her focus — tendrils of Plasm flow into the brain of the puppet, allowing her to give simple commands that the victim cannot resist. The Marionette does not bring dead creatures back to life; even the most powerful Bound can only raise a corpse to obey simple commands rather than a replica of whoever the person was when he was alive, and she cannot stave off the effects of decay.

Enhancements

2 Plasm: Replace the Marionette Condition on a single target you control with the Servant Condition. This Enhancement may be applied more than once.

4 Plasm: The Servant Condition (on all targets) ends without resolving after 24 hours. This Enhancement may be applied more than once.

Traitor Flesh (•••••)

One of the most invasive and terrifying uses of the Marionette, Traitor Flesh reaches deep within a living person's body and takes total control. The Sin-Eater can pilot another person, leaving the victim watching helplessly as his body does whatever the Bound wants. She could make him strangle his husband, stab his child — or go through a perfectly normal day, but with the Sin-Eater in the driving seat. Traitor Flesh is a means for the Sin-Eater to control another person's every move, and it is a profoundly horrifying experience for the victim.

Anyone possessed by the Traitor Flesh remains fully aware of everything going on around them. No matter what tricks or Keys the Sin-Eater uses, she can't prevent her victim from the feeling of total violation as his body does things without him wanting — and doesn't do things that he desperately needs it to.

Enhancements

2 Plasm: The next time a sapient Marionette takes lethal damage or suffers a breaking point, they do not resolve the Condition. This Enhancement may be applied more than once.

3 Plasm: The next time a Marionette tries to fight against something the Sin-Eater wants to do, he suffers 2 lethal damage. This Enhancement may be applied more than once, but only once per attempted resistance.

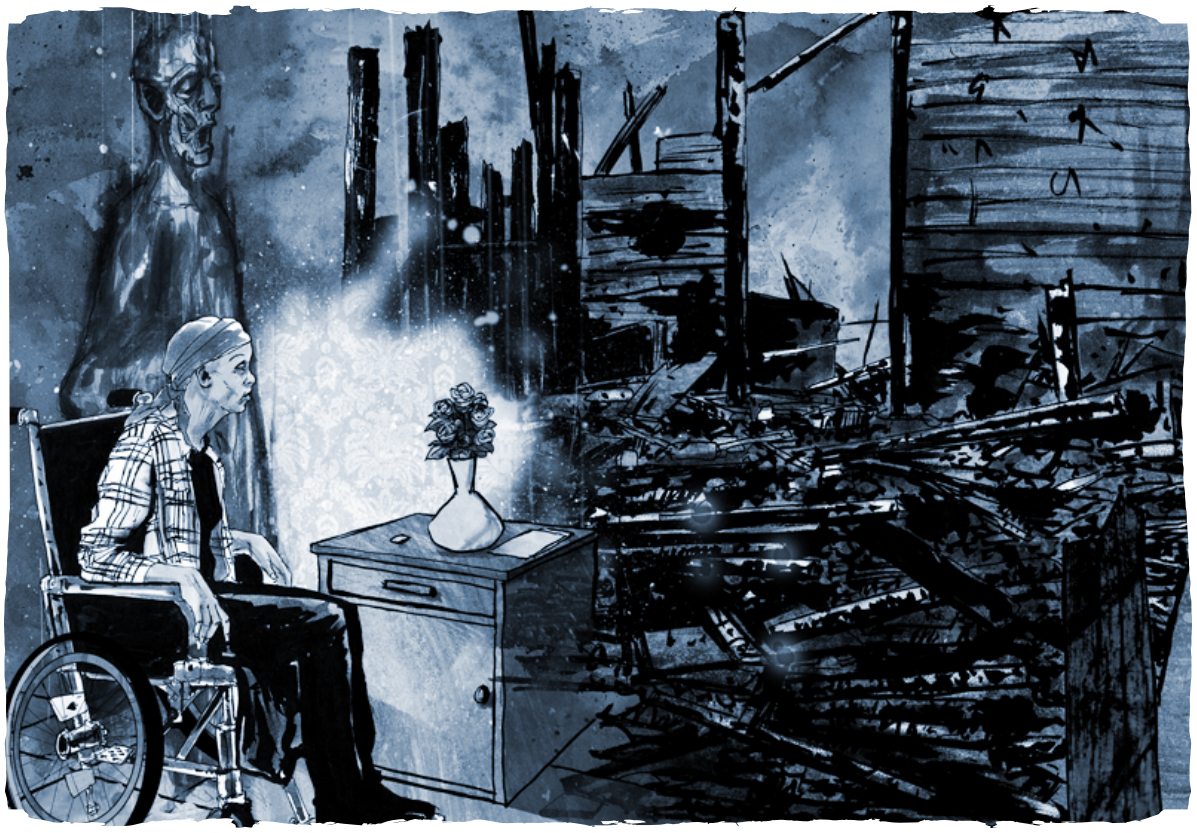
The Memoria

The Memoria allows the Sin-Eater to give body and substance to the events of the past. If the Oracle is flashes of insight into the surface of a problem, Memoria is the process by which one of the Bound can crawl deep into the mystery, experiencing it firsthand. She might witness a coal mine collapse as it happened 20 years ago or the tense family Thanksgiving that marked the last time a local crime lord's son was ever seen. Any memory of death, or of an event that led to a death, can leave stains in Twilight. As long the Sin-Eater can enter a place where the memory still lurks, they can coax it back to life. At the most basic level, this allows the Bound to experience it firsthand, from the perspective of the dead.

The Memoria only works on events that actually happened — false memories or lies can't produce a revelation. The Bound must know what memory they're trying to draw forth to have any chance of success, requiring at the very least the premise of the memory and when it occurred, such as the murder of Emile Robinson on that cold winter night in 1959. The Memoria is a fickle power and the practice of "channel surfing" in historic buildings rarely succeeds, drawing forth only a confused Plasmic miasma of hundreds of minor tragedies. This can of course be the cause of some difficulty, as not everyone remembers an event the same way and more than a few of the Bound have had to attempt to console a ghost whose entire conception of their untimely demise was based on a mistaken premise.

Some krewes retain a Memoria specialist simply because they're afraid of what they may leave behind. It's disturbing enough to think about being recorded by a camera on the end of every block and in every pocket, but it's another for your actions to be bled into the walls themselves. Others coming along and harvesting moments of hard choices without knowing why the krewe had to make them can be a source of frustration. What inscribes a memory can be difficult to say. It might happen when there is a tragedy, but some theorize that any sufficiently emotional moment should be sufficient. The fact that Sin-Eaters rarely ever find events caused by joy or happiness goes unsaid.

The Memoria is not a pleasant experience even for the most jaded Sin-Eater. When the Memoria is unlocked the memories surge forth, inundating the Bound in a life that seems to supersede their own. It's hard to focus on mundane things when ancient passions play out around them. With so little information given, it's up to the Sin-Eater to personally decipher the mystery of the event. Who is the dark-eyed woman and why is she protecting the teenager who will become the Keyless Boy? Why does she look that way at him? It's common for some Bound to become obsessed with these visions, playing them over endlessly in their mind. Some of them even develop attachments and fondness for the people they watch, yearning to find them (or at the very least their ghosts) so they can ask what ever became of them? Why did this moment matter to them? Who are they?



Recall the Memoria (•)

Requirement: You must be at the site of a traumatic death, or in the presence of a ghost's Anchor that relates to the memory, and you must know at least three details of the memory you're trying to invoke (e.g. the name of the dead, the date and time of the event, the killer's identity, the specific murder weapon, etc.). The memory must be of a ghost's death, or of a significant event that led up to the death.

Cost: 1-5 Plasm

Action: Instant

Dice Pool: Synergy + Memoria

Roll Results

Success: The Sin-Eater is able to find a memory of the event in question. She gains the Memoria Condition for the scene with a number of charges equal to Plasm spent during activation.

Exceptional: When the Haunt ends without resolving, the Sin-Eater regains half the Plasm spent on Recall the Memoria.

Failure: The Bound gains no insight into the past they didn't already know.

Dramatic: The Sin-Eater becomes trapped in the vision, unable to interact with the real world.

Dénouement (••)

The dénouement is often the end of a film, the point of revelation that will tie the story together with a satisfactory revelation. Whatever Bound popularized the name for this aspect of the Memoria clearly had a dark sense of humor. The Sin-Eater can weave their Plasm into illusionary duplicates of the memory as it was recorded. A condemned hospital wing is restored to the way it was in 1980, or a burnt-out Victorian manor is restored to its pristine condition at the end of the war. These scenes are populated by illusionary actors that were present at the time, reliving the moment as if the viewers weren't even present. Though these illusions look solid, they are no more real than a trick of light. A person attempting to walk down the illusionary grand staircase will plummet to the ground below if the stairs have rotted away over the years, and a knife in the memory is no more tangible then a shade.

Enhancements

1-5 Plasm: The visions of the past are clearly visible to anyone present, though nothing in the scene can be interacted with and only the Sin-Eater receives the Memoria Condition. Characters may attempt a reflexive Wits + Composure action to recognize the scene's intangibility before inadvertently harming themselves. The Plasm cost depends on the size of the scene to be recreated:

Plasm Spent	Area
1	A small room
2	A large room
3	Several rooms, or a single floor of a house
4	A ballroom or small house
5	A large house or building

Memory in a Bottle (•••)

Once a Sin-Eater has found a memory, they can keep the vision for later viewing by storing its essence in a container, pulling the delicate strands loose from their Anchor and placing the imbued Plasm somewhere safe. The type of vessel doesn't particularly matter — some Bound use ritually prepared containers carved with mystical runes, while those who buy less into the entire mysticism angle might just use empty plastic soda bottles. The Plasmic memories stored within the container can be drunk or eaten, allowing another to experience the memories as if they had activated the Memoria at the place that spawned it.

The uses of a stored memory vary from individual Sin-Eater to individual Sin-Eater. Some cities have a thriving trade of stored memories, using them as a sort of esoteric currency or part of an inter-krewe exchange for locations that some krewes just can't gain access to. In some places the Bound keep collections of memories hoping to find the ghosts they belong to someday, just in case they can one day make it right or find living family that need to know what has happened to their missing loved ones. Then there are Sin-Eaters who have learned that these sorts of memories make damn fine weapons and if he bottles one up he's made a nasty surprise for somebody he doesn't like.

Enhancements

Free: The Memoria Condition has two charges per Plasm spent on Recall the Memoria.

3 Plasm: The Sin-Eater resolves the Memoria Condition and fills a container with Plasm charged with the memory itself. Anyone who consumes this Plasm gains the Memoria Condition, with as many charges as it originally had when placed in the container. Sin-Eaters don't gain Plasm from this; the metaphysical energy of the Plasm is tied up in the memory.

While the memory is bottled, attempts to invoke it through Recall the Memoria fail automatically. If the container is destroyed or the Plasm poured out, the memory is lost forever.

Mystery Play (••••)

The Sin-Eater can drag others into the visions created by Dénouement. The actor becomes bound to a role in the vision, their mannerisms and posture changing to take on

the qualities of someone else. Some Sin-Eaters use this to clear out the living in a hurry — after having been drafted into a grim tableau of the past, regular people tend to run. More vengeful Bound use this aspect of the Memoria to give a grim lesson to those that have committed wrongs in the past. People drawn into an illusion experience it as if it were a dream, feeling the hunger, the frustration, and even the pain.

This aspect of the Haunt may look as if a death mask of solid Plasm has been affixed to victim's face. Unlocked with the Tearstained Key it may appear as a frozen brand clinging to frostbitten skin, while with the Stigmatic Key it appears as though blood staining their hands forms shackles that bind an actor to their past.

The use of this aspect also allows the dead to be infused with the Sin-Eater's Plasm and reclaim their original role in the memory. For some, this can be a cathartic experience allowing them to understand why they are still trapped or realize they were mistaken about the situation that happened the first time around. For others it can be torture, as they are forced to relive the mistake that cost them everything. The reactions of ghosts may vary, but Sin-Eaters are generally of the opinion that forcing the dead to relive one of the last moments of their life without a lot of preparation tends to go poorly.

Enhancements

1-5 Plasm: Draw one target per Plasm spent into the illusionary scenario. They gain the Actor Condition. Unwilling participants may contest the roll with Resolve + Synergy. The Sin-Eater cannot create more Actors than there were people present in the actual memory.

Break the Cycle (•••••)

History and truth rarely do more than intersect. With this ability the Sin-Eater can empower the actors of the illusion, allowing them to generate entirely new psychodramas from stale old psychodramas. They can recast a victim, allowing them to stand up to his tormenter, say no, and this time finally leave. They can try to prevent a confrontation between two brothers from escalating to violence and, for one, his accidental death. These additions can be to aid either the living or the dead, giving them a chance for closure or just really messing with the head of someone the Sin-Eater hates.

Another use of Break the Cycle is attempting to try out counterfactuals, trying to find some piece of information the Sin-Eater's missed about the man who will someday die and become the Doe-Eyed Beauty, or the right combination of words that will get a daughter to forgive a mother. Sin-Eaters try to be careful when using this ability "live" on a ghostly participant. It's traumatic enough just reliving the past but having to relive it several times looking for the right set of elements that helps a ghost achieve catharsis is nothing short of an unliving hell.

Enhancements

2 Plasm: Add the following effects to the Actor Condition for all Actors in the scene:

- The character may go "off-script" with a reflexive Resolve + Synergy roll, making actions or statements that are not part of the original memory and altering its outcome.
- When the Actor Condition resolves, the target immediately resolves another Condition related to a breaking point or other trauma related to the memory.
- A ghost that resolves the Actor Condition may immediately resolve an Anchor relevant to the memory.
- A Rank 1 ghost that resolves the Actor Condition rises to Rank 2.

The Oracle

The dead have always held secrets treasured by the living. Traditions seeking to contact the dead have existed as long as Underworld itself. The Bound are hard pressed to meet a necromancer not making some claims out of the classics, like Odysseus seeking Tiresias or Saul invoking Samuel. Real amateur-hour Ouija board stuff. Those Bound that practice the Oracle are different. Why bother the dead when they're already one of them? Practitioners of the Oracle are those of the Bound that have realized a single truth — each and every member of the Bound is dead, meaning they have a perfectly serviceable ghost waiting to answer all sorts of questions. The Sin-Eater just needs to die. Again.

Each practitioner of the Oracle has their own method of releasing their ghost. Some perform meditations or actions that are evocative of their own deaths, rituals like leaving lit cigarettes on mattresses as they slumber or playing a one-woman game of Russian roulette. Other Sin-Eaters prefer to draw on sensory-deprivation techniques by isolating themselves in caves, tombs, or underwater. The Bound most in a hurry skip past all the mysticism and will themselves to die, stopping their heart through sheer determination. No matter the method, the end result is the same if performed successfully. For a brief moment, the Sin-Eater dies and his ghost is released. Plasmically severed from all Anchors and ties that would keep such a being in the world, the Sin-Eater's ghostly form is barely more than a spectre.

As long as the Oracle is active, bystanders can question the Sin-Eater's body, which will do its best to answer based on what its ghost sees. Sometimes this comes as a slurred response through a jaw locked with rigor mortis or sudden spasms as the body begins a frenzied bout of automatic writing. When unlocked with the Pyre Flame Key the body may spontaneously combust, rising smoke forming a representation of the Sin-Eater's ghost. The Key of Blood causes the ghost's answers to be scrawled across the closest available surface in the blood of the Sin-Eater.

Most find extended periods in the distant and diminished senses an unpleasant experience, but the ghosts are capable of perceiving the world in ways that don't naturally occur while the Sin-Eater is bothered by more worldly issues like community, safety, and oxygen. Sin-Eaters cannot argue with how efficacious the results are, especially for those Sin-Eaters who prior to their death were not trained detectives or forensic investigators. With a few seconds of communion the Sin-Eater can find a new lead in a murder that happened years ago, or a connection opaque to even the most widespread federal investigation. Unfortunately, the Sin-Eater's ghost is too trapped in the circuitous thinking and solipsism of death to give fully contextualized answers. Rarely is the spectre able to answer questions for the Bound such as "who murdered you?" or "who committed this crime?" instead providing only snippets of sensory information and ancient memories, leaving the Sin-Eaters to ponder through vagaries and clues themselves — but, as many of the Bereaved have claimed, that's a whole lot more than nothing.

The Oracle allows the Bound to find another way to puzzle out the mysteries of the dead, both those they are trying to aid and the ones they wish to harm. As he becomes more powerful the Bound learns how to better control his spectre, training it to seek out information that no simple ghost should know, learning deep mysteries that exist within the very bones of the Underworld. The Bound who possess the Oracle may seem gripped by the minute details of death, even obsessive, but why not? The Oracle is a key to understanding the secrets the Underworld — and it's not like they haven't died before.

Consult the Oracle (•)

Cost: 1-4 Plasm

Action: Instant

Dice Pool: Oracle + Synergy

Roll Results

Success: The Sin-Eater gains the Oracle Condition with a number of charges equal to Plasm spent.

Exceptional: When the Haunt ends without resolving, the Sin-Eater regains half the Plasm spent on Consult the Oracle.

Failure: The Sin-Eater comes out of his trance unharmed and unfortunately alive. The Oracle is not activated.

Dramatic: The Bound's spirit breaks free of the Plasmic bonds that connect it to his body and becomes lost. The Sin-Eater gains the Dead Condition.

Wandering Shade (••)

The Oracle gives the Bound insights into the connections of life and death, but they must still be present at the

scene of the crime. For some Sin-Eaters this simply isn't enough, and they learn to project their spirit far beyond themselves to hunt down information. Some krewes use this to do as much good as they can across their territory, tracking down ghosts that would never have been able to approach the Sin-Eaters normally. Other Bound use this aspect for personal gain, searching for weak links across a city to enrich themselves.

At this level the Oracle may learn information from across the region, learning of events that might be happening miles away from where the Sin-Eater currently lies dead and cold. The ghost is too weak to survive crossing over into the Underworld unless the Bound uses the Haunt while already past an Avernian Gate. When the Oracle is able to answer a question it doesn't come as a direct answer but flashes of insight or experiences that lead the Sin-Eater on to what will help them gain their desires.

Enhancements

1 Plasm: Add the following questions to the Oracle Condition's list of questions:

- What is the biggest threat to me and mine? *The revving of a diesel truck engine and the sight of a license plate as someone new drives into town.*
- Who is most in need our aid? *The sight of an emaciated man ringed by a circle of salt.*
- Who is guilty of crimes against the dead? *The scent of begonias and powdered bone accompanied with the vision of a dinner table strewn with ectoplasmic flesh.*
- What has been forgotten here? *The sound of trickling water turning into a roaring river from behind a cement wall in the local morgue.*

Spirit Reading (●●●)

Assuming an ephemeral form aids the Sin-Eater in understanding the invisible cues between ghosts that inform their nature. They see the way the Candle Man shields flames from cold breezes and the way the Doe-Eyed Beauty shies away from unpaved paths instinctively. The clarity of vision unfettered by flesh allows them to probe more deeply and more broadly.

Sin-Eaters often use this aspect of the Oracle to assist the dead with resolving their Anchors or to learn more of their nature. Less community-minded Bound often hunt down Anchors of the dead they want a favor from, threatening to put the torch to it or throwing their body to the dogs. When unlocked with the Pyre Flame Key these clues often appear in the Bound's vision as brands seared into the Corpus of the ghost, while the Key of Beasts gives its users a literal nose for it, smelling out the limitations in their target.

Enhancements

Free: The Oracle Condition has two charges per Plasm spent on Consult the Oracle.

2 Plasm: Add the following questions to the Oracle Condition's list of questions:

- What is the Ban of [a ghost I know]? *The patter of rainfall. The sharp medicinal smell of quinine.*
- What is the Bane of [a ghost I know]? *The touch of silk that burns like fire. Salt, bright and terrible as uranium.*
- What ties [a ghost I know] to the mortal plane? *A wedding ring heavy as a millstone. Chains studded with photographs of the same person, from infancy to manhood.*

Descent (●●●●)

Using this power, the wandering spectre is released deep into the Underworld, left to naturally descend as if the Bound had died and been snared in the cruel system of death.

The ghost is unharmed by the descent into the Lower Mysteries, too far gone to be worth the energy of preying on by most denizens of the Underworld and already descending deeper just as the Reapers desire. Some Bound share rumors, though, of carelessly leaving a doppelgänger behind, wordlessly screaming at a toll it can't afford, or endlessly toiling under the arcane laws of some cruel Dominion.

Enhancements

3 Plasm: The Sin-Eater can answer a single question about the Underworld. This Enhancement may be applied more than once.

Sample Questions

- Does one of Irkalla's Gates bar travel deeper through this Avernian Gate? *The rattling of ancient coins. A hawker's call for trade of descendants in exchange for passage.*
- What are the laws of this Domain? *A vision of the Domain's stone slate.*
- Does this Ferryman trade fairly? *The rushing cry of someone falling through the false bottom of a vessel.*

Nekyia (●●●●●)

The Underworld is old, certainly older than anything still alive or any ghost that the Bound have ever encountered. It is older than the Kerberoi or the laws they slavishly enforce, more ancient then the alien Chthonians that crawl and scurry through its tunnels. It is the place of things that have been, so it is little wonder to the most powerful practitioners of the Oracle that even the scars of future events can be scavenged and intuited from the ancient place.

The process of divining the future for Sin-Eaters is never encountered the same way twice. Most practitioners of the Oracle could hardly explain if their subterranean dream quests are entirely real or just the product of the

fraying Plasmic connection between the Sin-Eater and his spectre. Some of the Bound describe their ghosts entering the Underworld in vast boneyards of ylem where shattered artifacts of the Sin-Eater's own life are laid out in front of them. Others talk of being consumed by the very walls of the Underworld, only to find themselves in cavities filled with slumbering, unliving things that whisper what will be to the trapped ghost. The experiences go on — ghostly actors, drinking from secret wells of stagnating river waters, grisly fates chiseled into the wall, or passing conversations with long-lost family members. However the Underworld journey manifests, when the Sin-Eater returns to his body he comes back wiser of the future.

Sin-Eaters react very differently to the ability to stare into the future. Many Bound can fall into the trap of obsessive cross-referencing, trying each and every variable against the future to avoid a tragic end. Others, disgusted at the process of receiving the information, seek to use the aspect as little as possible, seeing the information as unreliable at best. Some Sin-Eaters worry, for if their struggles really are the true path to fixing the Underworld, how could their futures be so easily seen in its broken cycles?

Enhancements

4 Plasm: The Sin-Eater may answer a single question about future events.

Sample Questions:

- Who amongst my krewe will betray me? *The cheap stink of the signature cologne of a member of the krewe. A vision of one of the celebrants placing a death masque over their face.*
- What trial awaits us in the Underworld? *The vision of a great obsidian gate layered in the flayed skin of traveling ghosts. The sound of one of the Kerberoi reciting the Old Laws over and over again.*
- When will our enemies be at their weakest? *The sounds of heavy bass and the taste of cheap whiskey. A "get well soon" card and a novelty stuffed animal.*
- Is this course of action going to get me killed all over again? *The warm blush of a gunshot wound to the stomach. A vision of the Sin-Eater being torn apart by angry shades.*

The Rage

Some Haunts are subtle tricks, drawing the geist into the Sin-Eater or sketching curses on a victim's flesh in Plasm. The Rage isn't subtle. It *cannot* be subtle. The geist wraps around the Sin-Eater's body, lashing out in terrible violence against someone. The simplest manifestation turns the Sin-Eater's hands into deadly weapons, while infusing more Plasm might allow her to spit flocks of carrion crows, stretch her limbs into barbed whips, or sprout wicked spikes from her body. The Bound can choose how her Rage appears, as long as her chosen form would have the effects that she requires from her geist.

The Rage does not have much application outside of violent conflict. While some Bound use the Curse to teach their victims and the Marionette to make their own lives easier, the Rage is inherently destructive. Only the most skilled Bound can ensure that their blows will not kill — and even then, all too often their use of the Rage makes the victim *wish* they were dead.

Sin-Eaters proficient in the Rage may be cocky, even arrogant in their dealings with the living. After all, in any fight they have the winning card: an easy way to deal hideous damage to anyone stupid enough to cross them. Others use their proficiency with the Rage as a reason to explore nonviolent ways to resolve conflicts. A Sin-Eater who *can* kill those who stand in his way only stands to make more of the unquiet dead, many of whom will bear him ill will, so it's to his benefit to find ways to avoid that. And if it turns out that violence is the *only* answer, he will not be found wanting.

Vent the Rage (•)

Cost: 1-4 Plasm
Action: Instant
Dice Pool: Synergy + Rage

Roll Results

Success: The Sin-Eater gains the Rage Condition.

Exceptional: When the Haunt ends without resolving, the Sin-Eater regains half the Plasm spent on Vent the Rage.

Failure: The Plasm coalesces around the Sin-Eater's body but does not solidify.

Dramatic: The Plasm running through the Sin-Eater's body tears out of her skin, shredding her flesh. The Sin-Eater suffers one point of lethal damage, plus another for each Enhancement she applied. These injuries cannot be downgraded with Plasm.

Black-Iron Blade (••)

Plasm infused into the Rage allows a Sin-Eater to deal horrific injuries to her victims. Those Sin-Eaters who manifest the Rage through gross physical transformations change their limbs into blades of black iron or pillars of obsidian. The fires unlocked with the Burning Key are a conflagration compared to a candle flame, while the Key of Stillness grips the victim's heart with ice-cold fingers and grows cataracts over his eyes in a second. Some use the Rage to cripple their enemies, pulverizing arms and legs or clawing out eyes.

This is the first way that Sin-Eaters learn to focus the Rage for it is the most obvious expression of Rage itself. The Haunt is an expression of the Bound's anger and need to hurt — the best way to express that is by making her attacks hurt more, and quickening her enemy's demise.

Enhancement

2 Plasm: The next time the Sin-Eater inflicts damage, he also inflicts one of the following Tilts: Arm Wrack, Blinded, Deafened, Knocked Down, Leg Wrack, or Poisoned. This Enhancement may be applied multiple times.

Maelstrom (●●●)

The Sin-Eater lashes out at her foe at a distance. Some of the Bound simply strike their victims down without apparent cause; a Sin-Eater who unlocks the Rage with the Key of Deep Waters may flood her victim's lungs with water, while one who uses the Key of Pyre-Flame causes her opponent to spontaneously combust. Others have an obvious component to their attacks: vomiting swarms of venomous insects, forging Plasm into blood-stained knives that fly through the air, or summoning spectral crows to claw at their victims.

Some Bound do not use intermediaries to wound their foes at range, instead warping their bodies in new ways. Arms and legs disjoint and lengthen into flailing whips, flesh imbued with Plasm tearing to reveal black bone and pulsing muscle. Barbed hooks of rusty iron shoot from the Bound's chest and face, connected by whips of sinew to her bloody flesh.

Enhancements

Free: The Sin-Eater may make unarmed ranged attacks out to 30 yards.

2 Plasm: The Sin-Eater's next unarmed ranged attack is treated as a medium-burst autofire attack (p. 159). This Enhancement may be applied more than once.

Shatter (●●●●)

The Rage is a manifestation of pain and hatred, but it is not limited to the Sin-Eater sprouting wicked claws or otherwise physically striking her opponent. Her hatred can take many forms, attacking the victim's mind as much as his body. She might create a mask of a man's dead wife from Plasm that screams all of his hidden fears back at him or send spectral rats to bite the flesh of a woman with musophobia. Less creative Sin-Eaters simply make the manifestations of the Rage visible to their victim or to everyone in the vicinity, showing them the true horror of a raging Sin-Eater. The terrifying wounds inflicted by this Rage can easily rot the flesh from a limb or rot eyes to nothingness, even though the victim can still feel and see as though (relatively) undamaged.

This power enhances the Rage such that it has lasting effects on the victim's mind as well as his body. Certainly, wounds caused by other forms of the Rage take time to heal, but the psychological injuries can last years — or for the rest of the poor bastard's life.

Enhancements

3 Plasm: The Sin-Eater's next unarmed attack inflicts aggravated damage. This Enhancement may be applied more than once.

2 Plasm: The next character who suffers a breaking point caused by taking damage from the Rage gains the Fugue Condition. This Enhancement may be applied more than once.

Breaking the World (●●●●●)

The Sin-Eater lets out an ungodly shriek that twists the world around her. The Plasm exuded by her cry infuses the whole area. One Sin-Eater's Rage coats all of the nearby surfaces in thick, slippery ichor, while another rives spectral chains that make the very ground shake, and a third vomits hundreds of gallons of brackish water to flood the area. Some Sin-Eaters don't go for such showy displays, instead infusing the very air with Plasm to summon buffeting winds or drop the temperature enough to cause a blizzard even in a Texan summer.

The Sin-Eater strides through the chaos she has created untouched, while her enemies and allies both must deal with the consequences of her wrath. This Rage makes her the ultimate killer, the yeti in the snows or Jenny Greenteeth in the flooded desert.

Enhancement

4 Plasm: The environment in the scene suffers one of the following Tilts: Blizzard, Earthquake, Flooded, Heavy Rain, Heavy Winds, or Ice, even if it is otherwise unlikely for the location (e.g. Heavy Rain while indoors). Where the Tilt requires a severity, use the Rage's weapon modifier. The Sin-Eater is immune to this Tilt.

The Shroud

The Shroud wraps the Sin-Eater in his geist. He exhales Plasm in a thick fog that clings to his body, leaving him coated in a thin layer of dark ichor. Wrapped in its embrace, he becomes a spectral figure, never quite entirely *there*. His appearance matches what most people would consider "ghostly" — paler than normal, the color of his hair and clothes muted, his eyes gray and cloudy. He flickers in and out of existence, here one moment, gone the next. With effort, he can further loosen his ties to the living world, reach across the border from Twilight, and even slip free of the world altogether to plummet into the Underworld.

Of all Haunts, only the Caul can compare to the Shroud for the level of integration between Sin-Eater and geist. Others involve the geist, certainly, but that's as much to shape and manipulate Plasm as it is to directly affect the Sin-Eater. By inviting the geist to completely surround his body, they become more of a fusion even than other Bound. Many who don't know the Shroud find the idea of being totally encased in Plasm slightly scary, while others desire the connection with their geist that the Haunt provides.

The integration between both halves of the Bound leaves its mark on the ghostly result of this Haunt. Whichever Key the Sin-Eater used is quite obvious to any other Bound who sees her. If she uses the Primeval Key her ghostly form

may have a bestial cast, or look like it has been savaged by wild animals. The Key of Deep Waters makes her appear soaking wet, with the blue lips and swollen flesh of a drowning victim.

Don the Shroud (•)

Cost: 1-4 Plasm

Action: Instant

Dice Pool: Synergy + Shroud

Roll Results

Success: The Sin-Eater coats himself in a thin layer of Plasm containing the essence of his geist. He gains the Shroud Condition, with a number of charges equal to the Plasm spent.

Exceptional: When the Haunt ends without resolving, the Sin-Eater regains half the Plasm spent on Don the Shroud.

Failure: Plasm fails to coalesce around the Sin-Eater.

Dramatic: The coating of Plasm seals the Sin-Eater's face, leaving him unable to see, hear, or even breathe. He will suffocate unless he takes an instant action to clear the ooze from his airway.

Vision of Mist (••)

Enshrouded in her geist, the Sin-Eater remembers what it is to be dead. She becomes a phantasm in the mist, half-glimpsed and barely there. While her flesh still anchors her to the living world, she touches it only lightly.

Enhancements

1 Plasm: Your body registers no temperature, and you don't set off motion detectors, laser tripwires, or similar sensors.

2 Plasm: You can hover and fly in any direction at half your Speed.

Haunting Presence (•••)

Entwined with her geist, the Sin-Eater can influence the world around her in the same fashion as a ghost. While she lurks in Twilight, she may project her image to the living, discorporate in a burst of Plasm, or even manipulate the minds and bodies of the living.

Enhancements

Free: Spending a charge on the Shroud Condition allows the Sin-Eater to spend (Shroud rating) minutes in Twilight.

3 Plasm: The Sin-Eater gains one of the following Manifestation effects or Numina, usable while she is in Twilight:

- Discorporate (In lieu of ghostly hibernation, the Sin-Eater reforms in a gout of Plasm 24 hours later at the last place she died. She reforms with no Plasm.)
- Fetter
- Image
- Possess
- Sign (Numen)
- Hallucination (Numen)

This Enhancement may be applied more than once. In all cases, the Sin-Eater rolls Synergy + Shroud and spends Plasm instead of Essence.

Harrow (●●●●)

As easily as the Bound slips between Twilight and the material, that journey is denied to others. No longer, with this power the Bound may drag others across the veil and into Twilight, whether to give tragic lovers one last night together or to hand a murderer over to the tender mercies of the dead.

Enhancements

2 Plasm: Add the following effect to the options available from the Shroud Condition:

- Bring another person you are holding on to with you into Twilight. If they're resisting, you must grapple them (p. 158) first.

Descent (●●●●●)

The Bound can use the ghostly nature inherent in this Haunt to slip between the Underworld and the land of the living. She can make this passing without an open Avernian Gate, and as long as she has an idea of where she is going, she can emerge in any place that has a strong emotional tie — either somewhere she has lived for more than a year, or a place of a major life event (such as her death). If she has no real destination in mind, she emerges in a random point of the Upper Reaches, or near to the last place she entered the Underworld if she is returning to the living world. The Key unlocking this Haunt colors her travel, with the Stigmatic Key seeing the Bound dissolve into a pool of blood, while the Key of Cold Wind has her blow away into fragments as she crosses.

Some Sin-Eaters go so far as to use this ability for fast travel, dipping in to the Underworld and reemerging at their childhood home, or the first apartment they lived in after graduation. Other Bound believe that doing so profanes their duty to the dead — or at least makes them more likely to draw the attention of the kind of Underworld dwellers that no Sin-Eater wants to encounter.

Enhancements

3 Plasm: Add the following effect to the options available from the Shroud Condition:

Anchors Aweigh

Since Sin-Eaters don't have Anchors (or Influences to increase their Condition levels), using Manifestations granted by Haunting Presence requires some extra work. A Sin-Eater's liminal aura provides a base Condition to work with, while spending Willpower allows them to create more potent Conditions. Finally, while it's not subtle, remember that anything coated in Plasm has the Open Condition.

- Cross into or out of the Upper Reaches of the Underworld. For an additional charge, you may bring one person you're holding into (but not out of) the Underworld. If they're resisting, you must grapple them (p. 158) first.

The Tomb

The Tomb is the Haunt of things lost to time, allowing a Sin-Eater to spin Plasm into things touched by death, returning to a prior state. She might restore a torn painting, repair her father's Mustang, or create a perfect physical replica of her son from a lock of his hair. She can make broken things whole once again, but she must have some symbolic representation of the object in order to use the Tomb at all — a powerful Sin-Eater can recreate the gun used to murder her brother from just a shell casing, or her brother's finger bone, but could do nothing with a piece of a new gun. The Bound doesn't need to know about the precise electronic components in a laptop to restore it from a smashed wreck; the Plasm she infuses will return it to full functionality even if she has never used or even seen a computer before. She can also restore parts of an item, restoring the blood stains in the trunk of a murderer's car, even if the killer has completely replaced the lining.

The Tomb can also restore — or at least create a reasonable facsimile of — the dead. To recreate a dead person, the Sin-Eater needs something of them to work with. Not even the most powerful Sin-Eater can summon a simulacrum of her ex-wife *ex nihilo*. Had he a lock of hair or the cremated ashes of her body, he could trust the rest to the Tomb, but without that physical connection to her memory, the Plasmic constructs of the Tomb wash away like tears in the rain. One thing remains constant: She cannot cheat death. Nothing that she repairs with the Tomb is truly permanent — no matter how much she tries to reinforce something, Plasm is the residue of death, and everything has its time.

The Key used to unlock the Tomb changes how the Sin-Eater effects repairs. The Key of Beasts sees insects swarm and blur together until they coalesce into the object, while the Key of Chance builds the result of the Tomb from tokens of luck and ill-omen. The end result is always the same: after the infusion of Plasm, the object is what

it was. The knife that murdered her, recovered through the Tomb, has the same blood stains — and they have the same DNA markers as the blood on the actual knife.

Open the Tomb (•)

Requirement: The subject must come from an object that has been destroyed or a dead person or animal.

Cost: 1-4 Plasm

Action: Instant

Subject: A piece of one object or creature whose original Size was up to (Tomb + Plasm spent).

Dice Pool: Synergy + Tomb

Roll Results

Success: The subject gains the Tomb Condition.

Exceptional: When the Haunt ends without resolving, the Sin-Eater regains half the Plasm spent on Open the Tomb.

Failure: Plasm fails to coalesce.

Dramatic: The Sin-Eater's memories grow clouded as she struggles to differentiate what is and what was. She can remember faces, but has no idea to whom they belong; she remembers an address but has no idea that it's her home. She suffers the Addled Condition.

Headstone (••)

The headstone is not the dead. It is a reminder, a symbol of the life that is no longer, a convenient repository for the memories and the grief of the living. With this power, the Sin-Eater applies that same metaphysical connection to the Tomb. Now, a representation, or an object linked to the thing she wants to recreate, is enough. With the jacket of a dead biker, a Sin-Eater can recreate the deceased's treasured Ducati, while a photograph of a long-dead child suffices to give her a semblance of form.

Enhancements

2 Plasm: The Sin-Eater may use Open the Tomb on a representation of an object or creature (e.g. a photograph or recording), or on an object closely linked to it (e.g. a man's wedding ring or the keys to a house). The representation must still be of a specific object or person — a drawing of "a policeman" won't work. In the case of a representation, the Plasmic recreation represents the object as it is depicted. This Enhancement must be applied when Open the Tomb is activated.

Empty Graves (•••)

The Bound feel loss even more keenly than most people, seeing as they do what happens to the dead. Some Sin-Eaters, especially those who have watched their family and friends die, long for just a little more time. Others use Empty Graves to put others off their guard — making a facsimile of a mob boss' dead husband in order to get close to her, or bringing an assassin's victims back to life. Still others use their ability to create replicas of people to capitalize on others' grief. Offering a grieving son another day with his father is a powerful gift — and one for which many people will pay handsomely. Most are so grateful they don't even bother asking if it's really their father looking out from behind his eyes.

Enhancements

Free: The Tomb creates objects with Size equal to ([Tomb + Plasm spent] × 2). In addition, the Tomb Condition no longer ends with the passage of time.

Free: Replicas of living beings are capable of following simple instructions. They have their original Physical Attributes and Skills, but all Social and Mental actions are reduced to a chance die.

3 Plasm: The Plasmic replica created by Open the Tomb has the Open Condition. For replicas of people or animals, the ghost of the original can Possess the replica, even if the ghost doesn't have the Possess Manifestation.

Stygian Treasures (••••)

The Tomb restores objects touched by death to how they were in life, but that isn't enough for some of the Bound. The shadows that gather when the Tomb is unlocked can bring a touch of the Underworld with them — if the Sin-Eater is willing to invest the Plasm. A reconstituted Dodge Charger makes ghosts visible when they're caught in its high beams, while the cellphone of a murdered child allows the user to speak to ghosts when they dial #86.

The Underworld claims all things, no matter how vast. By calling on its Chthonic Power, the Sin-Eater may recreate things far larger than she could before.

Enhancements

2 Plasm: Pick one of the following effects for the item. This Enhancement can be purchased multiple times, but it must be applied when Open the Tomb is activated.

- Anyone using the object can see the dead.
- Anyone using the object can hear the dead.
- Anyone using the object can speak to the dead.
- The object can communicate between the living world and the Underworld.

Terra Cotta Soldiers (•••••)

The dead are often buried with symbolic representations of the things they will need in the next life, from joss paper money to ushabti servants. Imbued with the magic of funerary rites and the laws of the Underworld, those signifiers would become the signified in the afterlife, giving the deceased a leg up in the land of the dead. Rather than restoring that which has been destroyed, this level of the Tomb allows the Sin-Eater to reach into that same semiotic space and spin truth from metaphor.

Enhancement

1-5 Plasm: The Sin-Eater may use Open the Tomb on a wholly symbolic representation of a person, animal, or object, creating a piece of equipment or an appropriate Merit (e.g. Retainer, Library, etc.). The Plasm cost of this Enhancement is equal to the cost of the Merit or the Availability of the object. This Enhancement must be applied at the same time Open the Tomb is activated.

Keys

The gates of the Underworld are locked. Everyone knows that. They open only to admit the shades of the dead — but over the millennia, common motifs wear grooves in the fabric of death itself. Every bloody-handed murder, every plague, every senseless accident that snatches away a life, leaves an impression on the land of the dead. It's a process not unlike taking a wax impression of a lock, but in reverse: Instead of the tumblers imprinting on the soft wax of the key, the Key shapes the lock to fit itself.

While anyone with the proper knowledge can use these Keys to open Avernian Gates (p. 191), the Bound, standing as they do on the borders between the land of the living and the land of the dead, are themselves doors to the Underworld. Unlocking *themselves* yields a rush of power and Plasm. That power doesn't come free; each Key bears a Doom that afflicts those who call on its power. If there's an argument for the active, thinking malevolence of the Underworld, it may well be these.

Sources of Keys

- **Innate:** Each of the Bound has one innate Key, representing the manner in which they died. Every geist similarly has an innate Key, which they share with their Sin-Eater as part of the Bargain.
- **Mementos:** Every Memento (p. 131) has a Key. Possessing a Memento allows a Sin-Eater to use its Key.
- **Ectophagia:** Wholly consuming a geist with ectophagia (p. 99) grants the geist's innate Key as a new innate Key.
- **Multiple Instances:** The Bound may have multiple instances of the same Key, either as innate Keys or through Mementos. This allows them to use the Key more often.

Using Keys

Keys enhance the power of a Sin-Eater's Haunts. The Bound may elect to "unlock" a Haunt with a Key as part of the Haunt's one-dot power. Unlocking a Haunt is a reflexive action with the following effects.

- **Unlock Attribute:** Add the Key's Unlock Attribute to the power's dice pool. Any Enhancements that call for a Synergy + Haunt roll also benefit from the Unlock Attribute.

The Door Has Many Keys

Is every drowning a candidate for the Key of Deep Waters? Will every gun death gift the Key of Blood? These are questions that may be raised at the table and it's up to you to decide. It's entirely possible that even though a Sin-Eater died by drowning after falling from a bridge they may find they resonate with another Key. Perhaps the bridge and the deaths on it are part of a larger history (Grave Dirt) or they were pushed (Blood) or all of this was entirely coincidental to the fact that plummeting headfirst into the water was part of a ritual that was needed to feed the bridge (Chance). It's up to the players and the Storyteller to agree what makes sense for the chronicle they are playing.

- **Free Plasm:** Gain Plasm equal to your character's rating in the Key's Unlock Attribute. This can exceed the character's maximum Plasm pool, but excess Plasm is lost at the end of the scene.
- **Per Turn Limit Exemption:** Free Plasm ignores the normal limit on how much Plasm you can spend in a turn.
- **Resonance:** If the Haunt's usage matches the Key's Resonance, the Haunt gains an exceptional success on three successes instead of five.
- **Doom:** Unless the unlocked Haunt rolls an exceptional success *or* the Sin-Eater pays 1 Willpower, she gains the Doomed Condition (p. 121).
- **Multiple Unlocks:** Characters may only unlock a Haunt with one Key at a time. They may unlock a Haunt with multiple instances of the same Key, but only the free Plasm and the Doomed Condition stack.

DOOMED

The Bound drinks too deeply of the Underworld's mysteries and finds their own fate controlled by the Old Laws that first created the Keys. They can't help but find themselves

Unlocking Without a Haunt

Sin-Eaters desperate for Plasm (for example, to downgrade incoming damage) may unlock a Key without activating a Haunt as a reflexive action. They gain the free Plasm and Doomed Condition.

drawn to situations that reflect the deaths they now draw on for power. A sense of malaise and hunger grows at the back of the Bound's mind as they go about their lives, unaware of the well-trod steps they find themselves following.

Effects:

- Note this Condition as Doomed (Key, Source). A character may be under the effects of multiple Dooms at once, even from the same Key.
- You cannot unlock Haunts with the same Key from the same source (i.e. the same Memento or the same instance of an innate Key).
- This Condition ends (without resolving) at the end of the story.

Possible Sources: Unlocking a Haunt.

Resolution:

- Resolve the Condition as described in the Key's Doom.
- Help a ghost whose death fits thematically under the Key to resolve an Anchor.

The Key of Beasts

The Primeval Key, the Key of Tooth and Claw, the Key of Verdant Savagery

The Primeval Key is the feeling of adrenaline coursing through the veins. It is the discharge of the sympathetic nervous system at the feeling of teeth or hooves or horns entering the body. This is the Key of whatever it takes to be safe, to escape, to eat, to breed, to have one more day. The Primeval Key opens when humanity is reminded they are just part of the game of life and they don't always get to win it.

Unlock Attribute: Wits

Resonance: The Key of Beasts is resonant when called upon in a place where humanity is no longer the dominant force: abandoned buildings inhabited by nothing but rats and roaches, untrammeled wilderness, or city parks after dark, for instance. Additionally, using a Haunt on an animal target always counts as resonant.

Doom: Automatically fail an action targeting an animal, or any action an animal could plausibly hinder (e.g. a barking dog could foil a Stealth action) to resolve this Doom.

The Key of Blood

The Stigmatic Key, the Key of Veils and Shades, the Key of Crimson Agony

Turning the Key of Blood is the numb feeling of chambering one last round, only to feel the hornet sting at the back of your skull. It is the knife sliding home between that drunken bastard's ribs like a bird coming home to roost. The Stigmatic Key is the memory of passion and the lives lost because of that passion. Not all deaths that fall under the Key's dominion are premeditated: a crazy scheme, a malicious rumor, or an irritated phone call may have never meant to kill somebody, but the tumblers of the lock turn nonetheless and the gate opens.

Unlock Attribute: Presence

Resonance: When situations spiral out of control the Key of Blood is at its strongest. If the Bound finds himself in a violent situation that *wasn't* premeditated or intended, the resonance of the Key applies.

Doom: The next time the character tries to avoid a violent confrontation, whether by de-escalating a situation, running away, or some other means, she suffers an automatic dramatic failure and resolves this Doom (taking a Beat from the dramatic failure as well as the resolution).

The Key of Chance

The Bastard's Key, the Key of Jinx and Hex, the Key of Black Humor

Who knew the weather would turn like that? I guess you're really not supposed to operate those on a ladder? It turns you really have to be that tall to ride. The Key of Chance is the call and response of "hey y'all, watch this" and the million to one death that follows. This is the Key of the absurd, unfair, and improbable. When expectations fail, when the tools of civilization turn on you, when probability turns a blind eye, when rumors becomes truth — those are when the lock comes undone.

Unlock Attribute: Dexterity

Resonance: The Key of Chance is resonant when the Bound is risking something important, like a treasured belonging, a friend, or her life on a single action. It also has Resonance when the subject of the Haunt is a machine with at least three moving parts capable of inflicting lethal damage (e.g. a gun, an industrial press, a wood chipper, etc.).

Doom: The next time your character makes a roll with a +3 or greater bonus, roll a chance die for that action instead and resolve this Doom. If the action succeeds, it counts as an exceptional success.

The Key of Cold Wind

The Breathless Key, the Key of Gale and Garrote, the Key of Ivory Sorrow

Exposure and execution: these are the deaths that feed the Breathless Key. They are deaths of things lost to the formless and ephemeral, robbed of a simple breath of air. To turn the Key is to hear the breathless whispers of prisoners with the noose around their necks and the roar of tempests that wiped villages from the face of the living world. It is the cold whispers of your community as they turn their backs on you, and the loneliness that comes from being a pariah.

Unlock Attribute: Resolve

Resonance: The Key of Cold Wind is resonant when the Bound is within an Environmental Tilt like Blizzard, Extreme Cold, or Heavy Winds. Additionally, if the Bound is in a setting where ambient noise makes it impossible to have a spoken conversation, the Key has resonance.

Doom: The character gains the Extreme Cold Tilt (p. 294) that lasts, in spite of other environmental conditions, for (10 – Synergy) hours *or* until the character actively reveals a damaging personal secret. When the Tilt ends, resolve this Doom.

The Key of Deep Waters

The Tear-Stained Key, the Key of Wave and Whirlpool, the Key of Azure Futility

The feeling of turning the Tear-Stained Key is, ironically, the sensation of air leaving the lungs, not water entering them. It is the experience of loss as cool, uncaring water drives the last vestiges of consciousness from the body. It is the emptiness that extinguishes sorrow, fear, and hope alike.

Unlock Attribute: Manipulation

Resonance: The Key of Deep Waters is resonant when the Bound is in an environment where breathing is impaired: a carbon-dioxide-filled garage, an industrial farm feedlot, or submerged in water, for example. Additionally, if the target of a Haunt is at least half submerged in water, the Key has resonance.

Doom: The next time your character would fully replenish her Willpower, gain only 1 Willpower and resolve this Doom.

The Key of Disease

The Wasting Key, The Key of Plague and Pestilence, The Key of Bilious Despair

No turn of the Wasting Key is quite like the last. Every user has experienced the burning fevers and the clogged airways that marked so many childhood illnesses, but everyone has a story to tell. Some talk of the invisible pains of archaic poisons used by ancient alchemists, or phantom bleeds from bacterial species that have been extinct longer than penicillin has been cultivated. Yet just as many Bound have felt the pains of diseases all too common today, of growths measured in metaphor and hacking coughs. The deaths of people that didn't quite get better, that couldn't catch it early enough, who were just a little too unlucky.

Unlock Attribute: Stamina

Resonance: The Key of Disease is resonant if it is used in a place or on a target that resonates with illness or poison, such as a hospital, malarial swamp, or a person suffering from the Sick Tilt.

Doom: Your character suffers the Sick Tilt until the end of the *next* scene. When the Sick Tilt ends, resolve this Doom.

The Key of Grave Dirt

The Crushing Key, the Key of Stone and Barrow, the Key of Slate Bereavement

All things must die. Yet humanity struggles on, forever trying to leave a reminder of itself on the planet. The Key of Stone and Barrow is the jealous owner of all who perish in that task. Those who are buried in kingly tombs and crushed by heavy girders. The ones left stranded in the bottom of empty mine shafts and trapped in the decrepit monuments of yesteryear. Nothing is created without spending something: time, resources, lives. The Crushing Key keeps them all, a small payment for the immortality of another.

Unlock Attribute: Strength

Resonance: The Key of Grave Dirt is resonant when the Bound unlocks a Haunt in a place, or on a target, dedicated to the past: a graveyard or memorial, of course, but also something as prosaic as an abandoned building or an antiquated business such as a VHS repair store. Additionally, any time the character is below ground, the Key of Grave Dirt is resonant.

Doom: For the rest of the story, any time the character wishes to roll for an extended action (p. 147), she must spend 1 Willpower. She may resolve this Doom by sacrificing a living being in the name of accomplishing her goal.

The Key of Pyre Flame

The Burning Key, the Key of Ash and Brand, the Lover's Key, the Key of Golden Annihilation

To unlock the Burning Key is to understand being consumed, to feel the skin peel and run while the lungs fill with hot particulates that burn, then cool. A fire does not begin from nothing, though. They are created, fed, encouraged to cook, to warm, to protect. Yet those reasons may change as the flame is fueled and stoked. Maybe it was for the money? For beauty? For revenge? For love? The flame is an apathetic medium though — all it knows is how to consume and how to spread.

Unlock Attribute: Intelligence

Resonance: The Pyre Flame Key is resonant when it's used in an area, or on a target, that is on fire or subject to the Extreme Heat Tilt.

Doom: The character gains the Extreme Heat Tilt (p. 294) that lasts, in spite of other environmental conditions, for (10 – Synergy) hours or until the character deliberately destroys a valued personal possession. "Valued" can refer to monetary value or personal significance. When the Tilt ends, resolve this Doom.

The Key of Stillness

The Silent Key, the Key of Shroud and Shadow, the Key of Jet Uncertainty

Deaths under the Silent Key are those punctuated with the statement "I didn't know," or "It's such a shame," if they're discovered at all. They are the deaths of ignorance, powerlessness, and apathy of individuals who were treated like ghosts long before they ever drew their last breath. They are deaths caused by a valve being turned off, a zero being shuffled off of a budget, or talking on the phone being just a little too much of a hassle.

Unlock Attribute: Composure

Resonance: The Key of Stillness is resonant when the target of a Haunt is unaware of the Bound's presence, helpless, or if there is no one present in the scene except the Bound and the target.

Doom: The next time your character speaks even a single word, resolve this Doom and the Condition from the Haunt she unlocked with the Key of Stillness. If she unlocked the Key without a Haunt, she instead gains the Mute Condition until the end of the chapter; when that Condition ends, resolve this Doom.

Ceremonies

An Imam leads his congregation in the Salat al-Janazah, praying for Allah to forgive the recently departed before burial. In the basement of a haunted prison, giggling teenagers try to contact the spirit world with an Ouija board. After the funeral, family and friends gather to eat and drink, to laugh and weep at the memory of the dead. On the shore of an underground river, a magician pours out a libation of blood, compelling answers from the shades that linger there.

The Root of Power

Although Sin-Eaters and their krewes make the most frequent use of Ceremonies, they aren't unique to the Bound. Ceremonies don't draw their power from the Bargain or the geist — as near as anyone can tell, they don't draw their power from *anywhere*: they're just a part of how the world works.

The truth is, anyone can learn Ceremonies, and indeed many people know and perform at least a few regularly, even if they don't think of it as doing a "magic spell." Virtually every religion's funerary rites include the Pass On Ceremony, for example, and the Warding and Exorcism actions described in the **Chronicles of Darkness** Rulebook are effectively Ceremonies that have become such common knowledge that they don't have a dot rating any more.

Humankind has always turned to ritual and ceremony in its attempts to process and understand death. Spells and prayers ensure a peaceful rest for the dead, taboos avoid drawing their ire, and offerings encourage them to intercede on behalf of the living. It's so ingrained in our culture it's hard to even term it "magic;" it's just the way things are. You don't whistle past a graveyard, you cover all the mirrors in the house when someone dies, and you pour out some rum for the departed.

Sin-Eaters catalogue these formalized interactions between the living and the dead as Ceremonies, and syncretize them into their own faiths and works.

Symbolism and Sacrifice

Ceremonies take time, they require symbolic objects, and the most powerful ceremonies call upon community and sacrifice.

Symbolic objects and actions are how Sin-Eaters converse with the Underworld and draw on its powers. Many practitioners would like Ceremonies to be simple, consistent, and clear, but rituals are about relationships and are rarely as simple as A + B = C. Even Ceremonies conducted under exactly the same circumstances produce slightly different results, one time producing the smell of brimstone as a side effect and the next a howling wind that flings sand into the practitioners' eyes.

Because of their connection to the Underworld, Sin-Eaters are compelled to make their Ceremonies personal. They modify their Ceremonies with symbols that reflect their backgrounds, emotional needs, krewe Doctrines, and their own personal understanding of life and death. If you've seen one Sin-Eater lead a ceremony, you've seen one Sin-Eater lead a ceremony.

Symbolic Objects

Symbolic objects or movements serve specific roles within the ritual. Circles protect, chanting and open mouths create openings, images reflect relationships, colors evoke elements, glyphs draw on ancient stories.

The nature of symbols means that yellow, to one Sin-Eater, can mean cowardice, while it means great power to another. This potential of objects and movements to take on a multitude of meanings does not mean the symbolism is arbitrary. Rather, it means that, as many rivers run to the same sea, a multitude of symbols can lead to the same supernatural effect.

The Working

A Ceremony is largely comprised of symbolic elements that represent every aspect of the desired outcome. Each Ceremony presented here has some example elements, but those are by no means exhaustive or restrictive. Different krewes teach different versions of the same Ceremony, reflecting their own unique faiths, while self-taught necromancers stumble through their own symbolism in search of meaning.

Every Ceremony requires the following symbolic elements:

Symbolic Idea Starters — Body

- Precise movements or hand gestures
- Dancing
- Pilgrimage (Walking from one place of power to another)
- Parades
- Piercing, bloodletting, or tattooing
- Extremes of hot or cold
- Fasting
- Sleep deprivation
- Immersion in water
- Walking on coals
- Extreme physical suffering
- Ecstatic fainting or seizures
- Wearing specific clothing
- Observing taboos (avoidance of objects or actions that are profane in the context of the ceremony)

The Actor: The person or persons enacting the ritual. *Your name, the phase of the moon you were born under, a favorite pen, a dram of your blood.*

The Target: Who or what you're trying to affect. (If the target of the ritual is physically present, that counts.) *Her name, a bit of dirt from the bottom of her garden, pages torn from her favorite book, a tooth from a beloved family pet.*

The Stage: A prepared space in which to perform the Ceremony. *A basement on a moonless night, with no light coming in or out, save for one anointed beeswax candle. The grave of an unjustly murdered man, ringed round with salt and rue.*

The Effect: The intended outcome of the Ceremony. *Black thread, tied around the representation of the target. A broken mirror.*

The Ritual: The sequence of action that ties it all together. *Bathe the symbolic elements in the light of the candle, then eat each one while speaking the names of Chthonic Gods. Chant your target's name and those of her close family members as the midnight hour passes, while pouring maggots over a corn poppet holding her fingernail trimmings. Make a paste of your blood and the shredded pages of your target's favorite book, stir it into a cup of souring wine, and drink the whole right down.*

Performing a Ceremony

Requirements: Assemble symbolic elements and perform a ritual as described above.

Duration: As described in the specific Ceremony.

Subjects: As described in the specific Ceremony. Ceremonies cannot reach subjects in another world than the ritualist (e.g. the living world, the Underworld, or stranger places) unless specified in the Ceremony.

Action: Instant, specific Ceremonies may be resisted or contested; takes 15 minutes per dot level of the Ceremony. Additional ritualists can help with teamwork actions (p. 152).

Dice Pool: As described in the specific Ceremony.

Success: The Ceremony's effect takes place, as described in the specific Ceremony.

Exceptional: The Ceremony provides startling new insight into the nature of the Underworld; take a Krewe Beat.

Failure: Nothing happens.

Dramatic: You touch the Underworld, the Underworld touches back and it takes. You gain the Deprived Condition (p. 299), which you can resolve by visiting the Underworld or performing a more powerful Ceremony.

Suggested Modifiers

Ceremony uses a rare, expensive, or dangerous symbolic element	+2
Ceremony takes an hour per dot	+1
Ceremony takes a day per dot	+2
Ceremony takes a week per dot	+3

Innate Sin-Eater Ceremonies

All Sin-Eaters can perform these Ceremonies. Other characters may purchase them as normal.

Bestow Regalia (•••)

Reenact the mysteries of your krewe's faith, enrobing a celebrant in mythic power.

Requirement: Ritualist must be a member of a krewe that has at least one Regalia (p. 177).

Subject: One celebrant of the ritualist's krewe.

Duration: One chapter or until resolved.

Symbols: Symbolic representations of the myth to be reenacted.

Ritual: Reenact a parable or myth that illustrates a key tenet of the krewe's understanding of the mysteries of the Underworld.

Dice Pool: Presence + Occult

Success: The subject gains the relevant Regalia Condition.

Krewe Binding (•••)

Form a new krewe, bind someone to a krewe, or expel a member.

Symbolic Idea Starters — Visual

- Circles: Geometric shapes bind the Underworld with logic and certainty, which is why they are often deeply embedded into ceremonies. Often used to bind and protect.
- Writing: Words of power, naming words, phrases in dead tongues, writing Blake's *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* over and over.
- Colors: Red can evoke blood, fire, or luck; black or white for death; yellow for courage or cowardice.
- Stars: Specific constellations visible, planetary alignments, pentacles for binding and focusing.
- Specific environment with an evocative visual aesthetic
- Body paint, powder, or texture: Paint yourself to look like death to reach death, powders to open up specific channels of connection, daubed with cotton fluff to evoke newborn chicks.

Duration: Permanent

Subject: Any number of willing participants.

Dice Pool: Presence + Manipulation

Symbols: Geometric shapes. Acts of endurance. Oaths and promises.

Ritual: Use physical objects or actions deeply connected to the krewe's values. Dance all night, smear each other with mud sanctified with cool stuff you scavenged and pinky swear to have each other's backs. Endure a grueling exam about the finer points of Socratic thought and the virtues of different types of encryption as you work together to draw a perfect triangle in the sand. Do it in reverse to excommunicate a celebrant, stripping them of power and office.

Success: All participants who do not have any dots in the krewe's Mystery Cult Initiation Merit gain one dot free of charge. If the Ceremony is to create a new krewe, the players work together to design the Merit first.

Alternately, revoke a celebrant's membership in your krewe. They still keep their Mystery Cult Initiation dots, but lose access to any benefits that rely on the krewe's goodwill or shared resources. They may redesign any lost dots per the Sanctity of Merits rule (p. 85).

Speaker for the Dead (•••)

Offer yourself as a conduit for the dead, allowing the ghost to speak from your mouth in their own voice.

Symbolic Idea Starters — Objects and Substances

- Drugs that induce altered states, LSD, peyote, puffer fish venom, ecstasy, or snakebites.
- Powders or odors associated with cleansing, saltpeter, ash, sage, rosemary, or eucalyptus smoke.
- Objects made from or touched by different primal aspects of humanity, bone, blood, tears, semen, or urine from an ovulating woman.
- Objects representing elements, jugs, candles, incense, tree branches, swords, or clay. Sin-Eaters often make sure they include water in their Ceremonies to make an easier connection with the rivers of the Underworld.
- Make an object as part of the ritual.
- Destroy something of value as part of the ritual.

Subject: One ghost within earshot.

Duration: Scene

Symbols: Fresh rainwater, a clay pot made by hand under a full moon, the ghost's iPhone

Rituals: Sanctify an open vessel or body of water and place an object that belonged to the ghost at the bottom of it, then call to the ghost and offer the service of your tongue. Smear your lips with a mixture of ash and bitters and invite the ghost to speak. Call the ghost's disconnected phone number on a cell phone that gets no service.

Dice Pool: Stamina + Composure

Success: The target ghost can speak through your mouth for as long as you allow it. Your voice is recognizably that of the target ghost.

Pass On (•••••)

Help a ghost that has resolved its Anchors move on — past this world, past the Underworld, to whatever awaits it beyond.

This Ceremony can only be performed outside the Underworld, once a ghost that has resolved all of its Anchors.

Symbols: A circle of white salt. Doorways and liminal spaces. Emotional farewells.

Rituals: Perform the last rites of the ghost's religion. Take one last shot "for the road" as the bar closes out. Burn the ghost's remains on a pyre of sacred woods and holy oils, that the ghost might climb to heaven on the smoke.

Dice Pool: Manipulation + Empathy

Success: The ghost passes on, leaving behind an afterimage evocative of the life they led. Often it is quite pleasant, tinged with a sense of closure and their best self, but occasionally the shade vanishes with a noxious gas or an earsplitting scream.

Any Sin-Eaters present regain all spent Plasm.

Other Ceremonies

The following Ceremonies can be purchased by individuals or by krewes. The specific names, suggested symbols, and rituals are all examples — if you like the effects of a Ceremony but not its aesthetics, you are free to come up with your own. For example, maybe you want a Ceremony to remove a magical curse, but Crow Girl Kiss doesn't fit with your krewe's mythology. Rename it "Ritual Ablution" and describe the symbols and rituals as a religious washing or baptism, keep the dice pool and success result, and you're good to go.

Dead Man's Camera (•)

Since the invention of photography, cameras have been utilized to capture photos of the ephemeral spirit world that lurks just beyond.

Subject: One camera and its film. Digital and video tape cameras don't work.

Duration: Permanent, but only the film in the camera when the Ceremony is performed is enchanted.

Symbols: Veves painted on the lens cap or scratched directly into the lens. A burned-out flashbulb. Developing chemicals cut with water from one of the Rivers of the Underworld.

Rituals: Expose the film stock to the light of a full moon and load the camera as you repeatedly chant "Eye of silver, eye of glass, reveal to us what now has passed." Deface the camera in ways that should make it impossible to take photos. Clean the lens with a dead man's handkerchief.

Dice Pool: Intelligence + Science

Success: The camera takes photos normally, no matter how damaged. When the film is developed, objects and entities in Twilight are visible in the photos.

Death Watch (•)

Slow time and buy a few more precious moments when someone is at the edge of death. Sometimes this allows a grievously injured person hang on until help comes. More often it buys a little bit more time so loved ones can say goodbye.

Special: This Ceremony takes only three turns to perform.

Subject: One being the ritualist can touch.

Duration: As long as the ritualist maintains physical contact with the subject.

Symbolic Idea Starters — Vocal/Auditory

- Monotonal chanting that includes words of power
- Singing Madonna's "Like a Prayer" or polyphonic Belarusian folk songs
- Ringing bells, setting off fireworks or explosives to disperse ghosts or negative influences
- Playing instruments, the breath of erhu or violin, the thunder of a church organ or whistling on a leaf
- Animal sounds, banishing ghosts is often easier if a rooster crows.
- Speaking in tongues
- Prayers and poems

Symbol suggestions: Dirt. Blood. Red silk ribbon or thread. Amber. An hourglass.

Ritual: Anoint the subject with blood and dirt. Bind your hand to theirs with ribbon or thread. Tip the hourglass on its side. Pass a chunk of amber over the subject's wounds.

Dice Pool: Stamina + Medicine

Success: Time ceases to pass for the subject's body. She does not bleed out or risk losing consciousness due to injuries, she doesn't age, she doesn't get hungrier or thirstier, and she doesn't suffer ongoing damage from suffocation. She also does not heal damage or Tilts, and cannot resolve physical Conditions. This only applies to the subject's body itself — external factors (such as extreme environments, being set on fire, or being stabbed) can still injure or kill her.

The Diviner's Jawbone (•)

Subject: One skull, human or animal

Duration: One week

Symbols: Sayings from the *I Ching* or Exodus 28 etched into the skull. Yarrow stalks placed in the skull's mouth. Questions you wish answered written in cinnabar ink across the forehead.

Rituals: Kill the owner of the skull and flense the flesh away with a sacred knife. Cast the skull into a fire and watch how it cracks and blackens. Place it beside your pillow and listen to it whisper in your dreams.

Dice Pool: Wits + Empathy

Success: As long as you can consult the skull, you gain the benefits of the Common Sense Merit.

Ishtar's Perfume (•)

Scent lingers like nothing else, triggering sense memories deeply rooted within the psyche. Perfume clings to flesh and clothing alike for days, changing each time and revealing new layers to anyone that might happen to catch a whiff.

Death lingers in much the same way.

Subject: One corpse, or at least the eyes thereof.

Symbols: Holy oils. The deceased's favorite incense. Plasmic ambergris harvested from the things that swim the Rivers of the Underworld.

Rituals: Make a perfume out of Underworld ambergris and alcohol into which the deceased's favorite food has been infused, then spray the mixture into a cloud around your head. Annoint the corpse's eyes with holy oils, then pierce them with burning incense.

Dice Pool: Presence + Occult

Success: The Sin-Eater sees the last minute of the corpse's life. She sees everything as the corpse saw it, but she only gains its sight: she cannot hear, feel, smell, or taste anything during the vision.

Lovers' Telephone (•)

Twilight is full of the victims of jealous lovers, their communications with secret paramours uncovered via caches of love letters or anomalous entries on phone bills. Forbidden loves, clandestine messages, and tragic death are all snarled up together, and by pulling on those threads the ritualist can reach out to the otherwise unreachable.

Subject: One person whose name you know.

Duration: One phone call

Symbols: A broken rotary telephone, its cord long-frayed, wound with red string strung with charms, baubles, and things that chime and dance. A smartphone with a smashed screen, its wallpaper a photo of a jilted lover in happier times.

Rituals: Dial the address of the place your intended recipient lost their virginity. Paint the phone with images sacred to Ishtar, Aphrodite, or Mictecacihuatl. Bury one end of the phone's cord in the grave of someone murdered by a jealous spouse.

Dice Pool: Manipulation + Computers

Success: Your phone call connects to the nearest phone to the subject, even if that phone is long since disconnected or never functioned at all (e.g. a child's toy phone or the Plasmic memory of a phone in the Underworld). It's their choice whether to answer or not, but as long as you keep the line open, whatever phone is closest to them keeps ringing. If the subject is a ghost, they can answer the call even if the phone isn't in Twilight.

Crow Girl Kiss (••)

A brush of lips and a bit of verse draws out black magic and casts it away.

Subject: One person suffering from a deleterious supernatural effect.

Duration: Permanent (but see below)

Dice Pool: Manipulation + Expression vs. the dice pool that created the curse.

Symbols: Black lipstick laced with psychoactive drugs. Black feathers. A song about Crow or Raven from your own culture or the subject's.

Rituals: Pace around the subject singing a song about Crow or Raven. Brush a feather over the subject's chakras while repeatedly chanting "Bad magic get out!" End the ritual with a kiss to draw out the curse.

Success: The curse is lifted, its magic transferred into a feather or similar talisman. If the talisman is ever destroyed, the effect returns in full force. Its duration continues from the point at which this Ceremony was performed.

Gifts of Persephone (••)

Name an obstacle you must overcome, and gaze deep into the Eleusinian mysteries to learn of something in the Underworld that will help you face it.

Subject: Self

Duration: Story

Dice Pool: Wits + Craft

Symbols: Fire. Blood. Water. Creation.

Rituals: On ground made sacred to Persephone, burn sheaves of wheat while chanting the Homeric hymn to Demeter. Hold a willow basket you made yourself to the sky while it fills with rainwater. Prick your thumb with Saint Brigid's Cross and let a single drop land in your eye.

Success: Gain the Informed Condition related to something in the Underworld that will help you overcome a specific obstacle.

Ghost Trap (••)

Seldom used by Sin-Eaters or their krewes, this Ceremony is common among living occultists, necromancers, and eaters of the dead.

Subject: A ritual object designed to catch spirits or trap magical effects.

Duration: One week.

Symbols: A devil's trap. An agimat. Slow-smoldering tobacco. A palindrome written in a circle.

Rituals: Place your spirit trap in a place you suspect ghosts frequent. Anoint it with blood, or rum, or tobacco smoke. Whisper the palindrome into a half-full bottle of whisky and bury it beneath the cemetery gate.

Dice Pool: Manipulation + Subterfuge

Success: Any ghost within 10 yards of the trap must, upon seeing it, succeed on a Resistance + Rank roll or become fascinated by it, gaining the Ban "Must stop everything to stare at the ghost trap." Blocking a ghost's line of sight removes the Ban for that ghost, while destroying the trap ends the ceremony's effects immediately.

The Absent (p. 280) may spend 1 Willpower to replace the Ban with the Obsessed Condition.

Skeleton Key (••)

Locked doors can't keep death out, and they're no better at keeping out the holder of an Skeleton Key.

Subject: One key

Duration: Permanent

Symbols: A key whose lock no longer exists. Purified water and mercury. A VHS copy of 1961's *The Cat Burglar*.

Rituals: Soak the key under the dark of a new moon. Dip black thread in your own blood and wind it along the length of the key, then wait for the blood to clot and harden. Leave the key to bask in the light of the climax of the movie, projected on Charles Peace's gravestone.

Dice Pool: Resolve + Investigation

Success: The key opens the first lock it's used on, even if the key shouldn't fit the lock — it will even open electronic locks. The magic is permanent: Until it's destroyed, the Skeleton Key will always open the lock in question. Attempts to make copies of the key automatically fail, due to mechanical errors or similar mishaps.

Black Cat's Crossing (•••)

Superstitious people will cross the street to avoid letting a black cat cross their path. This binding ritual gives superstition teeth.

Subject: Either one being, living or dead, or a location no larger than a small single-family home.

Duration: Until the next new or full moon.

Symbols: Jezebel root, cloves, and chicory. Whole dried chilies to be burned into a fine ash. A photo of the subject bound with black thread. Something representing the specific Ban you're inflicting.

Rituals: Bury the symbolic elements in a jar under the threshold. Wrap and re-wrap the image of the subject with thread while chanting "I bind you to (suffer this Ban)." Sprinkle the powdered remains of the symbolic elements across the target's path, or in their footprint.

Dice Pool: Intelligence + Intimidation (vs. Resolve + Synergy if the subject is an individual)

Success: If the Ceremony's subject is an individual, that person gains a Ban (p. 190), equivalent to a Rank 2 ghost's, determined by the ritualist. The Ban must be something the subject is physically capable of (e.g. a living person's Ban cannot be "discorporate when confronted with holy water" or "stop breathing"), and the subject may spend 1 Willpower to suppress the Ban for one action. Bans like "cannot eat or drink" or "must fling himself in front of any bus he sees" are possible and likely fatal unless resisted.

If the Ceremony's subject is a location, the ritualist defines a group or category of beings (e.g. the living, the dead, redheads, members of the Church of Edison, Psychopomps). All members of that category treat "Cannot

Symbolic Idea Starters — Animistic

Drawing on the power of the non-human to hack the Underworld can be powerful, but deeply dangerous and unpredictable. Animistic forces have their own agenda, and god knows just what you're adding to the mix. Animals are more than symbolic and have lived their own lives that have influenced the Underworld. Where they have interacted with humans, they can be even more potent. Animism can connect to life beyond human centeredness, or be a fast path to eating a power source larger than your head and finding yourself in more trouble than you thought possible. Context and understanding is important: A lucky rabbit's foot has never caused trouble, but calling on Coyote has disappeared more than a few Sin-Eaters.

- Rooster — Honest, power, protector, demonic, sacrificial
- Rabbit — Luck, promiscuity, modesty, fertility, kindness, stubbornness
- Dog — Loyal, hardworking, trusting, unclean, lying
- Pig — Good luck, fertility, filth, laziness

enter the subject location" as a Ban. They may spend 1 Willpower to suppress this Ban for (Resolve) turns.

Bloody Codex (•••)

Blood carries more than oxygen; it carries thought and will and history. Press it to a page and see what you can read.

Subject: One book (or tablet computer, or scroll — anything that can be written on)

Duration: Permanent

Symbols: A blank book, preferably handmade and bound in ancient leather. Fountain pens with sharpened nibs. An unread diary, buried with its writer.

Rituals: Bury the book for one month in fertile soil, and burn a single tallow candle over the spot every night. Play a game of "never have I ever" while you prick your thumbs with sharpened pens. Email your private thoughts to the email address of someone you know to be dead.

Dice Pool: Wits + Investigation

Success: Anyone who presses a bloody thumbprint to one of the pages of the book (or an open text file, or the equivalent) finds their surface thoughts recorded on the page, appearing and disappearing as their minds wander. Tearing someone's page out of the book (or deleting the text file, etc.) ends the effect for that person.

Dumb Supper (•••)

Subject: Up to 13 individuals.

Duration: 5 days

Symbols: Stale crusts of bread on fine china. The last bit of a borrowed Eucharist. Pan de muerto and sugar skulls. Rum.

Rituals: Prepare a meal out of the crumbs left over from a feast. Serve a multi-course meal in reverse. Smear blood and tears on the plates, and pantomime eating in perfect silence.

Dice Pool: Stamina + Expression

Success: A phantasmal feast appears, sufficient to feed all participants in the Ceremony, living or dead. The living who partake in the feast completely refill their Willpower, while the dead need not spend Essence to remain active for three days, and do not suffer Essence Bleed during that time.

Forge Anchor (••••)

When the Great Below threatens to drag them down like a riptide, it's not a life preserver the dead need — it's an Anchor.

Requirement: The ritualist must be one of the Bound or one of the living.

Subject: One ghost and an object or being that will become an Anchor

Duration: Permanent

Symbols: Blood. Pure water. Fruits and flowers. Bright colors, whether in clothes or props. Joyful music.

Ritual: Wash the intended Anchor in blood and water. Braid flowers into a chain and pass them through the ghost's Corpus before wrapping them around the Anchor-to-be. Sing, dance, and play music in defiance of the Underworld's grip.

Dice Pool: Resolve + Persuasion – ghost's Rank (vs. Resolve + Rank if the subject is unwilling)

Success: The subject ghost gains the object or being as an Anchor.

Maggot Homunculus (••••)

Temporarily summon a ghost, even from the Underworld, and give it something approximating a physical form. Reapers *really* don't like this Ceremony, but since it temporarily creates a new Anchor, they technically can't do anything about it. Technically.

Subject: One ghost, who may be in a different world from the ritualist.

Duration: Scene

Symbols: Blood, sweet bread, or liquor for the dead. Meat and honey — a whole lamb carcass that a swarm of bees has made a hive in is best, but a lot of steak and a plastic bear will do in a pinch. A protective circle drawn in 11 colored powders, representing the Rivers of the Underworld. The target ghost's jawbone.

Ritual: Place the meat and honey in the circle and sing a hymn in Attic Greek. Fill a trench with blood, rum, and gunpowder and perform an ecstatic dance, leaping over the trench again and again.

Dice Pool: Presence + Occult (vs. Resistance + Rank if the ghost is unwilling to be called)

Success: Maggots boil up from the ground, swarming into a roughly humanoid shape. The subject ghost is drawn from wherever it may be to inhabit the maggot homunculus (treat this as though the ghost used the Materialize Manifestation). When the Ceremony ends, the ghost returns to wherever it was summoned from.

Ghost Binding (•••••)

A tool of last resort, and one looked on with repugnance by many Sin-Eaters, this Ceremony traps a ghost in the prison of one of its Anchors. It can be used to bind away vicious shades too powerful to deal with any other way... or as a quick route to power.

Requirement: The ghost to be bound must be in hibernation (p. 195).

Subject: An object with the Anchor Condition.

Duration: Permanent until the object is destroyed.

Symbols: Chains. Locks. Rue. Apotropaics and binding symbols. The Seal of Solomon.

Rituals: Place the Anchor in a circle of chains and bathe it in the smoke of burning rue. Chant the names of God and binding rituals from the *Lesser Key of Solomon*. Deface the Anchor with sigils that represent imprisonment or binding.

Dice Pool: Composure + Intimidation vs. Power + Resistance

Success: The ghost is bound into her Anchor, in a state of hibernation (p. 195). The Anchor becomes a Memento. If the bound ghost had an innate Key, the Memento has that Key, otherwise it's determined by the Storyteller based on the bound ghost's death and Influences.

Persephone's Return (•••••)

Create a new Avernian Gate or reopen one that has been destroyed.

Symbols: In the living world: Mourning clothes. Fasting. Natural clefts in the earth. Scythes, hourglasses, or symbols of death. In the Underworld: Pomegranate seeds. Flowers and spring crops. Snowmelt. Laughter and dirty jokes.

Rituals: In the living world: Dress in mourning clothes and make overt displays of grief. Spill blood into the earth while destroying beloved possessions. Sacrifice a living being. In the Underworld: Sing planting songs. Dance around a maypole. Eat, drink, and make love with consenting partners.

Success: With a thunderous crash, the earth splits open and creates a new Avernian Gate at the ritualist's location. The Gate is open when created, and remains so for 13 minutes. This ritual does *not* give the ritualist any control over where the other side of the Gate appears.

Dice Pool: Stamina + Occult

Mementos

Sin-Eaters borrow the term Memento from the Latin phrase *memento mori*, "remember that you must die." People have been finding or making tokens by which to remember death for nearly as long as they've been dying, but to the Bound they are something more. A Memento is a physical object with a Twilight presence, transformed by the resonance of death into something that's no longer entirely of the living.

Death Trinkets

Most Mementos are ordinary objects that were transformed by playing an important role in someone's death, or by acting as one of a ghost's Anchors. The Bound have never been able to figure out exactly what turns one object into a Memento while another remains untouched; one grisly murder might

Deathmasks

You can't exactly kill a ghost, but you can certainly make the end of their existence more final. When a geist is destroyed, the power it accumulated twists and writhes and refuses to die completely. One of the Bound can consume the corpse, internalizing the geist's Key, but if left uneaten it settles into an unusual sort of Memento: a twisted sculpture of the geist's own face. A Deathmask.

When held or worn by a Sin-Eater, a Deathmask functions exactly like any other Memento, providing a Key and an effect. When a ghost puts it on, however, the geist's power can be revived, transforming the ghost into a Reaper (p. 215).

Sin-Eaters don't like Deathmasks. They're creepy, and that's not an adjective the Bound use lightly. Other Mementos feel deathly, but Deathmasks simply feel dead. Worse, they have a sense of the Chthonic about them. Whatever the geist was like while alive, or dead, the destruction of one always feeds the Underworld, tying the Deathmask to it and its strange gods. No matter how fancy it looks, carrying a Deathmask around never counts toward the Memento Collector Condition, and is instead met with apprehension and disgust by the Sin-Eater community. Many krewes will hide any Deathmasks they come across, or throw them back into the Underworld where they belong.

result in the murder weapon itself becoming a token of death, while another death, just as violent, leaves the murder weapon unaltered, but creates a Memento out of the porcelain doll sitting on the shelf next to where the victim died.

Mementos can also come from more unusual sources. Objects brought back from the Underworld often become Mementos, resonating with the purpose for which they were returned to the world of the living. With effort, the Bound can even create Mementos, infusing an object of their own creation with Plasm and deathly inspiration. Geists can also create Mementos, through their own demise: A geist that's torn apart or otherwise ended leaves a physical token of their existence in the form of a mask, and certain Ceremonies can create Mementos by trapping a ghost in one of its Anchors.

Some Sin-Eaters claim to own even stranger Mementos: the bones of a Kerberoi, bottled souls, undead hearts, and more. Such stories are exactly as fanciful as they are impossible to prove, but if nothing else they turn a common Memento into a great conversation starter.

Death Trinkets

- **Touched by Death:** All Mementos are inanimate objects that have been touched by death.
- **Liminal:** Like Sin-Eaters themselves, Mementos are solid to both material and ephemeral things.

Strange Keys

Practically speaking, the Bound use Mementos in two ways. First, they hold Keys. Every Memento resonates with a single Key, appropriate to how or why it was created. While a Sin-Eater is wielding a Memento: holding it, wearing it, or using it in some appropriate way, she may use its Key to unlock a Haunt. Sin-Eaters who collect many Mementos with the same Key can use them to unlock several Haunts with that Key simultaneously, taking full advantage of resonance to combine multiple potent effects.

Second, Mementos are never entirely normal. Touched by the energy of death, they interact with the living world in strange ways. The stub of a wax candle never completely burns down, no matter how long it stays lit. An antique mirror reflects the viewer back as if they were 10 years older. A set of teeth in a jar rattles when the temperature drops below freezing. Memento effects are seldom earth-shaking, but clever Sin-Eaters find uses for their collection of haunted objects.

Strange Keys

- **Key:** Every Memento has a Key. A Sin-Eater who holds or wears a Memento can Unlock with that Key (p. 121).
- **Effect:** Mementos have one or more, usually minor, unnatural effects.
- **Identification:** Sin-Eaters and ghosts can instinctively identify a Memento and its Key by sight.

Enduring Symbols

Mementos cannot be broken by mistake. They cling to their own existence, shrugging off scrapes and scratches

Greater Mementos

While most Mementos have weird, but ultimately minor, supernatural effects, rumors abound of those with truly staggering power. A watch that stops you from aging as long as you wear it. A perfectly-preserved Roman trireme that can sail to any port in the Mediterranean in one night. A date book that tells you exactly when, where, and how you're fated to die.

No one can seem to agree on what makes these Mementos, if they even exist, so powerful. Is it because they're associated with famous deaths, like Caesar's assassination or the plane crash that killed Buddy Holly, Ritchie Valens, and the Big Bopper? Is it because they're very old, like the 430,000-year-old skull of the first known murder victim? Or is it just sheer dumb luck and random cosmic convergence?

Whatever the truth, even the rumor of a greater Memento can set the occult world on edge, and an actual, verifiable greater Memento is the sort of thing krewes and cults go to war over.

that would render ordinary objects unusable. Accidents can still damage them; plastic melts at the edges, glass cracks, paper crinkles and browns, but a Memento always survives well enough to serve its original purpose, and to act as a Key. Even deliberate attempts to destroy a Memento find them surprisingly durable. Clever Sin-Eaters can use this toughness to their advantage, as armor or shields.

Destroying a Memento on purpose is simple enough for the Bound: Their geists can eat them. With spectral teeth or stranger maws, a bound geist can devour any Memento, chewing through it regardless of its size or material and rendering it down into nothingness. This act of consumption is incredibly satisfying to the geist and their Bound, but completely and irreversibly destroys the Memento. Most Sin-Eaters eat their Mementos only as a last resort, or when the Memento itself has proven to be dangerous.

Enduring Symbols

- **Accident Immunity:** Mementos are never damaged by accidents or environmental hazards.
- **Durability & Structure:** No matter their nature, all Mementos have at least Durability 5 (p. 174), and twice the Structure (p. 174) of a mundane object of the same type.
- **Armor:** Apparel Mementos count as armor (usually a Kevlar vest, but especially large garments or full suits might count as riot gear), while a Memento of the appropriate size and shape (e.g. an umbrella or a large dish) can be used as a shield.
- **Consumption:** Sin-Eaters may feed a Memento to their geist as an instant action to completely refill their Plasm pool.

Collectibles

Besides their utility, Mementos are treasured by Sin-Eaters and their krewes simply for being what they are. A Memento is a holy relic, a trophy, and a fashion statement all rolled into one. Krewes gain prestige by showing off the most dramatic Mementos they can find, or failing that, the overwhelming quantity of their collections. Famous Mementos are considered especially valuable: Owning a token of some preeminent figure's death is sure way to turn heads.

Since they must be kept on hand at all times to be effective, boring-looking Mementos are ripe for customization. The art of decorating a Memento can be as traditional as painting a real skull to look like a calavera, or as tacky as dying an old coat black and gluing on plastic studs. In dressing to impress, Sin-Eaters develop their own style, turning mismatched objects into a cohesive fashion statement with paint and dye, fabric and steel, and anything else they can get their hands on.

Showing up to a Sin-Eater party with a collection of Mementos is a great way to make a good first impression. Any set of Mementos is a start, but a curated collection is the surest way to turn heads.

Collectibles

- **Collector:** A Sin-Eater who owns, and openly displays, five or more Mementos with the same Key, nine Mementos each with a different Key, or a single famous or greater Memento, gains the Memento Collector Condition (p. 301).

Creating a Memento

Mementos the Bound craft themselves are sometimes called Vanitases, named for the 16th-century European tradition of still-life paintings that reflected on the fleeting nature of life through imagery of death and decay. They are works of art, created by someone exploring her personal relationship with death. As such, they can take nearly any form, though they have to have a physical form: A poem or a song by itself can't be a Memento, but a custom-bound chapbook of poetry or a recording of the song absolutely can be.

Because they come from such a deep, personal place for the Bound who create them, only innate Keys can

be worked into a Memento. Likewise, as personal expressions of a Sin-Eater's philosophy, most Bound take a certain amount of pride in making their Mementos as functional or attractive as possible, but that's not actually required; a shoddily-restored '68 Charger that belches smoke and throws a belt every 100 miles can be just as much as a Memento as one that was lovingly rebuilt bolt by painstaking bolt.

Creating a Memento

- **From Scratch:** Mementos must be created from scratch, or at least built up from simple components. Restoring a vintage car from the frame is fine, buying a used Camaro and sticking a spoiler on it is not.
- **Time:** Depending on the exact nature of the Memento, the Storyteller defines how long it takes to make, but it should never be less than a week.
- **Optional Creation:** If you want, you can use the building equipment rules (**Chronicles of Darkness**, p. 100) to create the base object.
- **Cost:** Creating a Memento costs a dot of Synergy.
- **Result:** The new Memento has one of your innate Keys. Work with your Storyteller to discuss an appropriate effect.

Example Mementos

Bone Music Vinyl

Key: Disease

Description: In the 1950s, western rock 'n' roll was censored or banned in the USSR. Long before digital piracy, underground fans used discarded x-ray films as blanks to produce illicit copies of their favorite songs, called "ribs" or *roentgenizdat*. This knock-off record is printed on an x-ray of someone's chest, in which the ribs appear to suffer from an extreme form of bone cancer.

Effect: The Bone Music Vinyl plays a different song every time it's placed on a turntable. It's always a piece no one's ever heard before, and always unmistakably in the voice and style of a rocker who's long dead.

The Cold Harbor Diary

Key: Stillness

Description: A small, bloodstained, leather-bound book, filled with notes written by a Union soldier during the American Civil War. Despite being made in the 1860s, it looks almost new. The pages are a uniform cream, the blood on the cover barely dry. The entries begin cheerfully, but become increasingly nihilistic and distraught as the diary goes on. The final entry is uncharacteristically short and to the point: "June 3. Cold Harbor. I was killed."

Effect: The body of anyone who dies holding the Cold Harbor Diary cannot be identified. Fingerprints, DNA, dental records, and more all fail. Even the deceased's loved ones can't do better than "It sort of looks like him, maybe, but it's hard to tell." This effect does not extend to the deceased's ghost.

The Digger's Mojo Bag

Key: Grave Dirt

Description: An antique red silk handkerchief tied into a bag with black twine. Inside it's filled with sweet herbs, clay, and written spells. A twist of cord is pulled through the twine, turning the Memento into a necklace.

Effect: When left to swing freely from its cord, the bag twists and sways to point toward the nearest open or unmarked grave.

Designing New Mementos

Every Memento begins with a ghost story: a death, a passing on, or something even stranger. Fortunately, a **Geist** campaign is full of interesting ghost stories, which a Storyteller can look to for inspiration when creating new Mementos for his game. Ghosts with which that the players have interacted are a common source of new Mementos, while other Mementos might give hints about their geists' Remembrances or their own Burdens.

Once you've determined how the Memento is formed, give it a Key that fits with the circumstances of its creation. Some Mementos might suggest multiple Keys: the bloody knife used in a kidnapping/murder might be tied to Blood, but it could also resonate with the Key of Deep Waters for the tears its victim shed, or Stillness for the gag and blindfold he wore. When in doubt, try to pick a Key that complements the most interesting part of your Memento's story. An unusual Key pick, like the Stillness Key on a violent murder weapon, helps get players interested in the object, wondering how it came to resonate in that way.

The effect of a Memento should also help to tell its story, and encourage clever thinking or planning from its owner in order to be useful. Mementos do not usually generate mechanical bonuses, or mimic the effect of a Haunt or Ceremony. Instead, they should provide their wielders with new, strange little powers, helpful in certain circumstances but not liable to make a Sin-Eater universally better at something she can already do. Ideally, no one Memento should be so incredibly useful that its owner would never consider trading it for a different one, under the right circumstances.

The Drowned Phone

Key: Deep Waters

Description: A banged-up smartphone a few years out of date. Drops of water under the screen and behind the lens of the back camera create weird distortions in the display and in any photos taken with it. Despite that, the phone functions perfectly, though the operating system refuses to update to the latest version.

Effect: The phone can make calls and access the internet from anywhere, regardless of reception, provided it is at least partially submerged in water (which doesn't affect it the way you'd expect). Audio sent this way is raspy and distorted on the other end, but usually still comprehensible. The phone can even make — and, according to one previous owner, receive — calls from the Underworld.

Everest Oxygen

Key: Cold Wind

Description: A compressed oxygen tank with a mask attached by a hose, of the type used by mountain climbers in the early 1960s. A small hole in the hose constantly hisses a stream of oxygen, though the pressure gauge remains at 0 psi.

Effect: Anyone who breathes through the mask immediately begins suffocating, while simultaneously experiencing vivid hallucinations and an altered mental state similar to high-altitude cerebral edema. These visions are, according to survivors, highly addictive.

The Offal Rosary

Key: Beasts

Description: A rosary necklace made of silver and patterned, white glass beads, stained with offal and marred with rats' teeth marks. An expert in religious antiquities could date it to the early 1630s, probably of Venetian make. The air around it smells of fresh-cut lilies and decay.

Effect: Praying the Rosary with the Offal Rosary attracts all vermin within a few city blocks (or the equivalent area) to the holder. Praying the Rosary in reverse drives away all vermin in the same area.

Mourning Dove

Key: Blood

Description: A cracked porcelain Deathmask of a beautiful woman, her expression locked in an endless scream. The back is made of stained glass, wrought and painted with intricate geometric patterns and icons of bleeding martyrs.

Effect: Despite being backed by porcelain, the glass lining glows as if daylight shines through it. When worn by someone other than a ghost, the wearer can clearly see the Virtue and Vice (or equivalent Traits) of anyone he looks at, though his eyes will begin to bleed after a few hours' use.

The Glass Martyr

If a ghost dons Mourning Dove, she becomes the Reaper known as the Glass Martyr. She gains the following Traits:

- Rank 4
- Aspiration: Drag ghosts back to the Underworld.
- Power +8, Finesse +8, Resistance +4 (all to a maximum of 12); adjust Advantages accordingly.
- Maximum Essence: 25
- Influence (Pain) • •
- Manifestations: Descend, Discorporate, Engulf, Possess
- Numina: Blast, Emotional Aura (Self-Sacrifice)
- Ban: The Glass Martyr cannot act in a way that contravenes its Virtue.
- Bane: A *libellus* (a Roman certificate confirming that the bearer has sacrificed to the Roman gods).

Tricked-Out Hearse

Key: Chance

Description: The Sin-Eater who put this car together started with a 1941 Cadillac hearse. She spent years restoring the vehicle to its former glory, and then some. The finished Memento is painted a deep, matte purple, with ornate bone imagery picked out in gloss finish. The inside is all fresh black leather and chrome, embroidered and engraved with grinning skulls and faces that could be laughing or crying.

Effect: So long as it's driving at full speed, the Tricked-Out Hearse can pass through any Avernian Gate it can reach, regardless of the Gate's size and without any roll. In the living world, the hearse's wheels leave behind a trail of black, sulfurous powder, while in the Underworld it leaves a trail of white salt.

The Witch's Finger

Key: Pyre Flame

Description: The charred bones of a human index finger, wired together with copper wire and studded with small capacitors at the knuckles.

Effect: Combustible materials that come into contact with the Witch's Finger ignites after a turn.

A Brighter Morning — Part III —

There was nothing to hold on to, no brace for the rapid descent to the bedrock below. Whatever lights hadn't broken in the impact were dark from the immediate disconnection from the power grid, leaving only the faint yellow glow of fungi growing on the bedrock's surface. The house shattered, burying Leah in rubble and dust. The thick, cold humidity hit her skin and made it crawl.

Through the dim light, Leah saw the Abandoned One standing between Oliver and a hovering sphere of chains made from bones. Most of the chains were colored and bound together so that they formed an image of an emaciated, grinning face. The rest of its chains were extended like tendrils, ready for an attack.

Trisha was nearby, screaming for her father and sister while tearing away wood and plaster from the remains of the house with shaking hands.

Leah flung rubble off of herself and ran toward the sphere. "You got want you wanted, Reaper! Leave!"

Though the thing only had painted eyes, she felt its gaze fall upon her. A scraping sound came from within. The chains on its surface parted; the face's grin opened wide. A wooden mask rose from the fissure: another human face, its agony rendered in loving detail. One of the loose chains wrapped around the mask and pulled it off.

In an instant, the ball of chains became an old woman. A thin white shawl covered her tattered evening wear. She shook her head.

"Sin-Eater." She spat the word out like a curse. "I had the situation under control. The ghost—"

"Oliver," Leah said. She looked to him. He was frozen in fear, trying to find any connection between the woman and the being that once stood in her place.

The woman glanced at him, then back to Leah. "Oliver. He was already known to us. The Old Laws of the Arched Shelter demand a direct equivalent to any ghost lost to withering. The Cage of Wings requested that I be liaison for his transport. I expected a simple task, only to find an anarchist and her lackeys attempting to foil me. Were it not for your criminal incompetence, Oliver would be home."

"Home?" Oliver asked.

The woman's face softened. "Yes. Come along, now. The rest of your eternity awaits."

Oliver took a step towards her. "Do you know where my family is?"

The Abandoned One appeared behind him and tried to clasp his hands on top of Oliver's ears.

Oliver pulled the geist's hands off. "Ma. Pa. Danny and Claude. Have you seen them?"

The woman gave him a sad smile. "I haven't, but I assure you that they are in a much better place. Let's go see one of those places now."

"Dad!" Trisha yelled. Oliver stopped walking just before the woman could grasp him.

Trisha lifted her father's bleeding body from the wreckage. Jade, coated in gray dust, helped her settle Hari on the ground.

She laid her head on his chest. "He's still breathing, Trish!"

The old woman tightened her grip on her mask. The Abandoned One tensed his body.

"Let me bring them back," Oliver said to the woman.

The woman's smile faded. "No. Their fate is sealed."

Leah closed her eyes. Striking now would only buy them time, escape was the real goal. Hadn't Mark said that Oumil was down here? Even in this unfamiliar part of the Great Below, finding her wouldn't be difficult with the Abandoned One at her side. He could call out to Tempest-Bloated, Oumil's geist. Even if they were too far away to rendezvous, she could at least be a beacon to the surface.

A vision of being chased in the woods by a shadowy figure in a uniform appeared in her mind. She gritted her teeth. The Abandoned One was right: The Reaper would hear his call, and she would follow.

To her left, she heard the echo of running water from one of the nearby tunnels. If she could guide them to the nearest River and walk against its flow, they'd still be able to return on their own.

"They're still alive!" Oliver said. "There's still a chance for them!"

The woman curled her lip. "Everything in this land is dead. There is no room for them in the Arched Shelter, but I will gladly guide them to exactly where they belong."

"Then…" Oliver looked to Leah. His mouth fell open at the sight of her. Around her, fresh green grass grew between the stubbly fungi. The walls of the cavern shone with an iridescent beauty. Her black skin still flushed with life, even as the Patels' brown skin began to grow gray and sickly.

Oliver pulled up shaking fists. "Then I'm not going anywhere."

He ran at her with a right hook. The woman grasped his fist in her free hand.

The woman sneered. "Dear boy, you don't have a choice."

She went to slap her mask on. The Abandoned One leapt on top of her, coiling his arms and legs around hers. He stretched himself until her appendages snapped off. Her limbs vanished and the wooden mask flew into the distance.

"My mask!" the woman cried. She slid out of the Abandoned One's grasp.

Leah gestured to the echoing tunnel. "This way!"

Trisha struggled to lift her father over her shoulder. Oliver rushed to Hari's other side and lifted it up. They shared a look of surprise, then started running. Jade followed behind, left arm in a hastily made sling.

The woman skittered across the ground to her mask. An arm grew from her corpus and gasped for it. Leah raised her arms and swung them to her sides. The woman seized up. She fumbled around the cavern, missing the mask with every grab. Without her mask, she was as susceptible as having to relive her own death as any other ghost.

"What have you done, Sin-Eater?" she screamed. "Your tricks won't work! I know we're still below! You can't…"

The woman trembled. She looked up to an unseen person. She regrew her other arm and clasped her hands together in prayer. She shook her head furiously.

"Please," she begged to nothing, "Take me, not her! *Don't!*"

The woman thrashed on the ground. Her legs grew back during the struggle. After a moment, she smoothly rose into a kneeling position and raised her hands in prayer once more. Leah breathed a sigh of relief. By the time the woman finally escaped the looping vision of her death, they would be long gone.

She felt mirth bubble in her stomach. The Abandoned One watched the woman suffer with a smile.

She glared at him. "None of that. She's one of us."

The Abandoned One growled.

"I meant what I said. We will all see the dawn or none of us will. Go find the others. I'll catch up."

The Abandoned One shot her a puzzled look, but moved ahead. Leah closed her eyes and made a hexagram in the air.

"May the wind carry you somewhere new," she said. It was the Church's prayer for the dead, to encourage them to pass on. It was the first time she had spoken it since Aiden died.

— chapter four —
Old Laws

In the long run we are all dead.
— John Maynard Keynes, A Tract on Monetary Reform

This section contains the basic rules for playing **Geist: The Sin-Eaters**. More information, system variants, and examples can be found in the **Chronicles of Darkness** Rulebook.

Traits

In addition to the supernatural traits of the Bound, **Chronicles of Darkness** characters have mundane Traits common to mortals and monsters alike. Many Traits are rated in *dots*, ranging either from 0-5 or from 1-10. Trait dots are used to determine how many dice you roll when your character takes *action*.

- *Attributes* are raw potential, the inherent levels of physical, mental, and social prowess a character possesses. Attributes are rated in dots ranging from 1-5.
- *Skills* are trained abilities, learned by dint of study or practice. They are rated in dots ranging from 0-5.
- *Skill Specialties* are specific areas of training in which a character excels. They are not rated in dots; a character either has a Skill Specialty or she doesn't.
- *Merits* are special knacks, social connections, and similar abilities characters possess. Merits are rated in dots, with each Merit requiring a certain number of dots to purchase.
- *Willpower* is the extra effort a character can bring to bear in a stressful or dangerous situation when success is crucial or hangs by a thread. Willpower is also used for some supernatural powers. It is rated in dots ranging from 1-10.
- Finally, human characters have Anchors in the form of a personal *Virtue* and *Vice* from which they can draw strength and refill Willpower, much the same way a Sin-Eater derives Willpower from her Root and Bloom. These are short, usually single-word descriptors and are not rated in dots.

Attributes

Attributes represent essential traits that every character possesses by default. These serve as the foundation for most rolls in **Geist: The Sin-Eaters**. The nine Attributes are split into three categories: *Mental*, *Physical*, and *Social*. Each category has a *Power* Attribute, a *Finesse* Attribute, and a *Resistance* Attribute.

One dot in an Attribute reflects a below-average capacity. Two dots are about human average. Three and four reflect a high level of competency, while five reflects the height of human potential in that field.

Attribute Basics

- **Rating:** Attributes are rated from 1-5 dots. Supernatural beings sometimes have Attributes rated at 6 or more dots.
- **Use in Actions:** Most actions a character takes involve one or two Attributes.
- **Basic Competency:** All characters receive one free dot in every Attribute.

Mental Attributes

Mental Attributes reflect your character's acuity, intellect, and strength of mind. Each is listed with a sample action that might use that Attribute.

Intelligence

Intelligence is your character's raw knowledge, memory, and capacity for solving difficult problems. This may be book smarts or a wealth of trivia.

Example Task: Memorization (Intelligence + Composure, instant action)

Wits

Wits represents your character's ability to think quickly and improvise solutions. It reflects your character's perception and ability to pick up on details.

Example Task: Perception (Wits + Composure, reflexive action)

Resolve

Resolve is your character's determination, patience, and sense of commitment. It allows your character to concentrate in the face of distraction and danger, or continue doing something in spite of insurmountable odds.

Example Task: Resisting coercion (Resolve + Composure, reflexive action)

Physical Attributes

Physical Attributes reflect your character's bodily fitness and acumen.

Strength

Strength is your character's muscular definition and capacity to deliver force. It affects many physical tasks, including most actions in a fight.

Example Tasks: Breaking a barrier (Strength + Stamina, instant action), lifting objects (Strength + Stamina, instant action)

Dexterity

Dexterity is your character's speed, agility, and coordination. It provides balance, reactions, and aim.

Example Task: Keeping balance (Dexterity + Composure, reflexive action)

Stamina

Stamina is your character's general health and sturdiness. It determines how much punishment your character's body can handle before it gives up.

Example Task: Staying awake (Stamina + Resolve, instant action)

Social Attributes

Social Attributes reflect your character's ability to deal with others.

Presence

Presence is your character's assertiveness, gravitas, and raw appeal. It gives your character a strong bearing that changes moods and minds.

Example Task: Good first impressions (Presence + Composure, instant action)

Manipulation

Manipulation is your character's ability to make others cooperate. It's how smoothly she speaks, and how much people can read into her intentions.

Example Task: Poker face (Manipulation + Composure)

Composure

Composure is your character's poise and grace under fire. It's his dignity and ability to remain unfazed when harrowed.

Example Task: Meditation (Resolve + Composure, extended action)

Skills

Whereas Attributes represent innate ability, Skills reflect behaviors learned and honed over a lifetime. These are things that could be practiced or learned from a book. Similarly to Attributes, Skills are divided into Mental, Physical, and Social categories. Skills without dots are deficient or barely capable. Skills with a single dot reflect cursory training. Two dots are sufficient for professional use. Three represents a high level of competency. Four is outstanding, and five is absolute mastery of the discipline.

We've listed sample actions for each Skill; these lists are just common actions and should not be taken as a comprehensive guide to Skill usage. We also suggest dice pools, but it's important to look at the context of the scene and apply the best Attribute + Skill combination for the events at hand.

We've also listed some sample *equipment* and *circumstances* that could enhance Skill use. You can find deeper rules for equipment in the **Chronicles of Darkness** Rulebook.

Finally, each Skill comes with a list of possible Specialties. As with sample actions, these are common examples, not a comprehensive catalogue.

Skill Basics

- **Rating:** Skills are rated from 0-5 dots. Supernatural beings sometimes have Skills rated at 6 or more dots.
- **Use in Actions:** Many actions a character takes involve a Skill. Only one Skill is used for a given action.
- **No Free Dot:** Characters *do not* receive a free dot in any Skills.
- **Untrained Penalty:** Actions that require a Skill your character has no dots in suffer a penalty. Untrained Mental action: −3; untrained Physical action: −1; untrained Social action: −1

Skill Specialties

In addition to Skills, your character possesses Skill Specialties. These are refinements of broader Skills: narrower than the main Skill, and defining your character's particular expertise. For example, your character might have three dots in Firearms but a Specialty in Rifles. This means he's capable with all guns, but particularly good with rifles. If you look to the Skill descriptions, you'll see example Specialties. The Storyteller is the ultimate arbiter of what constitutes a Specialty and what doesn't; Specialties that are too broad or too narrow can hurt the story or never come into play.

Skill Specialties let you flesh out your character and offer a mechanical benefit. When creating your character, let Specialty choice guide his development. For example, there's a huge difference between a character with Brawl 4 (Bar Fights) and Brawl 4 (Aikido).

Skill Specialty Basics

- **Skill Specific:** A Specialty is linked to a single Skill.
- **Applicable Specialty:** A Specialty is applicable if the action your character is taking uses the linked Skill *and* fits with the description of the Specialty.
- **Effect:** An applicable Specialty grants a +1 bonus on the action.
- **Multiple Specialties:** A Skill can have multiple different Specialties, but not multiple instances of the same Specialty.
- **Multiple Applicability:** More than one applicable Specialty may apply to an action. The bonuses from multiple Specialties stack.

Mental Skills

Mental Skills reflect knowledge and procedure, lore and understanding.

Academics

Academics is a broad Skill representing your character's higher education and knowledge of the arts and humanities. It covers language, history, law, economics, and related fields. The Bound often study history, literature, and philosophy looking for clues about the Sin-Eaters who came before.

Sample actions: Recall trivia (Intelligence + Academics; instant action), Find patterns in the data (Wits + Academics; extended action), Distort statistics to fit an agenda (Manipulation + Academics; instant action)

Suggested equipment: Internet access (+1), Library (+1 to +3), Professional consultant (+2)

Specialties: Anthropology, Art History, English, History, Law, Literature, Religion, Research, Translation

Computer

Computer is your character's advanced ability with computing. While most characters in the Chronicles of Darkness are expected to know the basics, the Computer Skill allows your character to program computers, crack into systems, diagnose major problems, and investigate data. This Skill reflects advanced techniques and tricks; almost everyone can operate a computer for email and basic internet searches.

Sample actions: Hacking a system (Intelligence + Computer, extended action, contested if against a security administrator or other hacker), Internet search (Wits + Computer, instant action), Programming (Intelligence + Computer, extended action)

Suggested equipment: Computer system (+0 to +3, by performance), Custom software (+2), Passwords (+2)

Specialties: Data Retrieval, Graphics, Hacking, Internet, Programming, Security, Social Media

Crafts

Crafts reflects your character's knack with creating and repairing things. From creating works of art to fixing an automobile, Crafts is the Skill to use. Sin-Eaters use Crafts to build monuments and repair Anchors, as well as to create art that expresses their faith.

Sample actions: Appraisal (Wits + Crafts, instant action), Counterfeit item (Intelligence + Crafts, extended action), Create art (Intelligence + Crafts, extended action), Repair item (Wits + Crafts, extended action)

Suggested equipment: Point of reference (+1), Quality materials (+2), Tools (+1 to +3, depending on utility and specialty), Well-equipped workplace (+2)

Specialties: Automotive, Cosmetics, Fashion, Forging, Graffiti, Jury-Rigging, Painting, Perfumery, Repair, Sculpting

Investigation

Investigation is your character's ability to solve mysteries and put together puzzles. It reflects the ability to draw conclusions, find meaning out of confusion, and use lateral thinking to find information where others could not. Sin-Eaters dedicated to unearthing the forgotten stories of the dead typically have high Investigation ratings.

Sample actions: Examining a crime scene (Wits + Investigation, extended action), Solving riddles (Intelligence + Investigation, instant or extended action)

Suggested equipment: Forensic kit (+1), Unrestricted access (+2), Reference library (+2)

Specialties: Artifacts, Autopsy, Body Language, Crime Scenes, Cryptography, Dreams, Lab Work, Riddles

Medicine

Medicine reflects your character's knowledge of the human body and how to fix it and keep it in working order. Characters with Medicine can make efforts to stem life-threatening wounds and illnesses.

Sample actions: Diagnosis (Wits + Medicine, instant action), Treating wounds (Intelligence + Medicine, extended action)

Suggested equipment: Medical tools (+1 to +3), Trained assistance (+1), Well-stocked facilities (+2)

Specialties: First Aid, Pathology, Pharmaceuticals, Physical Therapy, Surgery

Occult

The Occult Skill is your character's knowledge of things hidden in the dark, legends and lore. While the supernatural is unpredictable and often unique, the Occult Skill allows your character to pick out facts from rumor.

Sample actions: Identify the sliver of truth (Wits + Occult, instant action), Relate two similar myths (Intelligence + Occult, instant or extended action)

Suggested equipment: Well-stocked library (+2)

Specialties: Alchemy, Mystic Places, Casting Lots, Phrenology, Sorcery, Supernatural Being (specify), Superstition, the Underworld, Witchcraft

Politics

Politics reflects a general knowledge of political structures and methodologies, but more practically shows your character's ability to navigate those systems and make them work the way she intends. With Politics, she knows the right person to ask to get something done.

Sample actions: Cut red tape (Manipulation + Politics, extended action), Identify authority (Wits + Politics, instant action), Sully reputations (Manipulation + Politics, extended action)

Suggested equipment: Official position (+1 to +5, by Status)

Specialties: Bureaucracy, Church, Democratic, Krewe, Local, Organized Crime, Scandals

Science

Science is your character's knowledge and understanding of the physical and natural sciences, such as biology, chemistry, geology, meteorology, and physics.

Sample actions: Assess variables (Intelligence + Science, instant or extended action), Formulate solution (Intelligence + Science, extended action)

Suggested equipment: Reference library (+1 to +3), Well-stocked laboratory (+2)

Specialties: Chemistry, Genetics, Hematology, Neuroscience, Physics, Virology

Physical Skills

Physical Skills are those practiced, trained, and learned through action.

Athletics

Athletics reflects a broad category of physical training and ability. It covers sports and basic physical tasks such as running, jumping, dodging threats, and climbing. It also determines a character's ability with thrown weapons, and how hard they are to hit when violence breaks out.

Sample actions: Acrobatics (Dexterity + Athletics, instant action), Climbing (Strength + Athletics, extended action), Foot chase (Stamina + Athletics, contested action), Jumping (Strength + Athletics, instant action, one foot vertically per success)

Suggested equipment: Athletic Shoes (+1), Rope (+1)

Specialties: Acrobatics, Archery, Climbing, Jumping, Parkour, Swimming, Throwing

Brawl

Brawl reflects your character's ability to tussle and fight without weapons. This includes old-fashioned bar brawls as well as complex martial arts (the **Chronicles of Darkness** Rulebook offers Merits to complement unarmed fighters). Most of the Bound have at least a basic ability to defend themselves — sooner or later, it becomes necessary.

Sample actions: Breaking boards (Strength + Brawl, instant action), Hand-to-hand combat (covered in the Violence section, p. 156)

Suggested equipment: Brass Knuckles (+1)

Specialties: Biting, Boxing, Dirty Fighting, Grappling, Martial Arts, Threats, Throws

Drive

Drive is the Skill to control and maneuver automobiles, motorcycles, boats, and even airplanes. A character can drive a car without Drive dots; the Skill relates to moments of high stress, such as a high-speed chase or trying to elude a tail. It's assumed that most modern characters have a basic ability to drive. Drive can also reflect your character's familiarity with horseback riding, if appropriate to her background.

Sample actions: Impressive maneuvering (Dexterity + Drive, instant action), Pursuit (Dexterity + Drive, contested action), Tailing (Wits + Drive, contested action)

Suggested equipment: Performance vehicle (+1 to +3)

Specialties: Defensive Driving, Evasion, Off-Road Driving, Motorcycles, Pursuit, Stunts

Firearms

Firearms reflects your character's ability to identify, maintain, and otherwise use guns. This Skill covers everything from small pistols, to shotguns, to assault rifles, and anything else related. (You can find numerous Merits and further rules for firearms combat in the **Chronicles of Darkness** Rulebook.)

Sample actions: Firearms combat

Suggested equipment: Ranged weapons, Scope (+1 to +3), Stable firing platform (+2)

Specialties: Handguns, Rifles, Shotguns, Trick Shots

Larceny

Larceny covers intrusion, lockpicking, theft, pickpocketing, and other (generally considered) criminal activities. This Skill is typically learned on the streets, outside of formal methods. However, stage magicians and other entertainers learn these tricks as part of their repertoire.

Sample actions: Bypass security systems (Dexterity + Larceny, extended action), Lockpicking (Dexterity + Larceny, extended action), Pickpocketing (Dexterity + Larceny, contested action)

Suggested equipment: Crowbar (+1), Crowded area (+2), Lockpicks (+2), Partner in crime (+1)

Specialties: Breaking and Entering, Concealment, Lockpicking, Pickpocketing, Safecracking, Security Systems, Sleight of Hand

Stealth

Stealth reflects your character's ability to move unnoticed and unheard or blend into a crowd. Every character approaches Stealth differently; some use distraction, some disguise, while some are just hard to keep an eye on. *Sample actions*: Losing a tail (Wits + Stealth, contested action), Shadowing (Dexterity + Stealth, contested action)

Suggested equipment: Binoculars (+1), Dark Clothing (+1), Smokescreen (+2), Spotters (+1)

Specialties: Camouflage, Crowds, In Plain Sight, Rural, Shadowing, Stakeout, Staying Motionless

Survival

Survival represents your character's ability to "live off the land." This means finding shelter, finding food, and otherwise procuring the necessities for existence. This could be in either a rural or urban environment. This Skill also covers the ability to hunt for animals or, under the right circumstances, people. The Bound often use this knowledge to survive and find their way in the Underworld.

Sample actions: Foraging (Wits + Survival, extended action), Hunting (for animals, Wits + Survival, extended action)

Suggested equipment: Survival Guide (+1), Survival Knife (+1)

Specialties: Foraging, Hunting, Navigation, Shelter, Weather

Weaponry

Weaponry is the ability to fight with hand-to-hand weapons: from swords, to knives, to baseball bats, to chainsaws. If the intent is to strike another and harm him, Weaponry is the right Skill. (You can find numerous Merits for Weaponry-based fighting in the **Chronicles of Darkness** Rulebook.)

Sample actions: Attacking another *Suggested equipment*: See p. 160 for a full list of weapons

Specialties: Chains, Clubs, Improvised Weapons, Spears, Swords

Social Skills

Social Skills are your character's ability to understand and relate to other people and animals.

Animal Ken

Animal Ken reflects your character's ability to train and understand animals. With Animal Ken, your character can cow beasts or rile them to violence under the right circumstances.

Sample actions: Animal training (Manipulation + Animal Ken, extended action), Cowing an animal (Presence + Animal Ken, contested action)

Suggested equipment: Treats (+1), Whip (+1)

Specialties: Animalism, Canines, Felines, Reptiles, Threatening, Training

Empathy

Empathy represents your character's ability to read and understand others' feelings and motivations. This helps discern moods or read deceptive behavior in discussion. It is not inherently sympathetic; one can understand another's positions without agreeing with them. Empathy is key to understanding the dead, particularly those ghosts who have passed beyond the ability to communicate easily.

Sample actions: Finding someone's pain (Wits + Empathy, contested action), Sense deception (Wits + Empathy, contested action), Soothing nerves (Manipulation + Empathy, instant action)

Suggested equipment: Muted clothing (+1), Relaxing environment (+2)

Specialties: Calming, Emotion, Lies, Motives, Personalities

Expression

The Expression Skill reflects your character's ability to communicate. This Skill covers written and spoken forms of communication, journalism, acting, music, and dance. Sin-Eaters often incorporate it into their religious rites.

Sample actions: Composing (Intelligence + Expression, extended action), Performance (Presence + Expression, instant action)

Suggested equipment: Quality instrument (+1 to +3)

Specialties: Dance, Drama, Journalism, Musical Instrument, Performance Art, Singing, Speeches

Intimidation

Intimidation reflects your character's ability to influence others' behavior through threats and fear. It could mean direct physical threats, interrogation, or veiled implications of things to come.

Sample actions: Interrogation (Wits + Intimidation, contested action), Staredown (Presence + Intimidation, contested action)

Suggested equipment: Fearsome tools (+2), Gang colors (+2), Isolated room (+1)

Specialties: Direct Threats, Interrogation, Stare Down, Torture, Veiled Threats

Persuasion

Persuasion is your character's ability to change minds and influence behaviors through logic, fast-talking, or appealing to desire. It relies on the force of your character's personality to sway the listener.

Sample actions: Fast Talk (Manipulation + Persuasion, extended action), Firebranding (Presence + Persuasion, instant action), Seduction (Manipulation + Persuasion, extended action)

Suggested equipment: Designer Clothing (+1 to +3), Reputation (+2)

Specialties: Confidence Scam, Fast-Talking, Inspiring, Sales Pitch, Seduction, Sermon

Socialize

Socialize reflects your character's ability to present herself well and interact with groups of people (alive or dead). It reflects proper (and setting-appropriate) etiquette, customs, sensitivity, and warmth. A character with a high Socialize is the life of the party.

Sample actions: Carousing (Manipulation + Socialize, instant action), Fitting in (Wits + Socialize, instant action), Getting attention (Presence + Socialize, instant action)

Suggested equipment: Drugs (+1), Knowing People (+1), Money (+1 to +5)

Specialties: Bar Hopping, Church Lock-in, Dress Balls, Formal Events, Frat Parties, Political Fundraisers, The Club

Streetwise

The Streetwise Skill is your character's knowledge of life on the streets. It tells her how to navigate the city, how to get information from unlikely sources, and where she'll be (relatively) safe. If she wants to get something on the black market, Streetwise is how she'll know what to do.

Sample actions: Finding a shortcut (Wits + Streetwise, instant action), Working the black market (Manipulation + Streetwise, instant action)

Suggested equipment: Burner phone (+1), Known nickname (+2), Valuable contraband (+1 to +3)

Specialties: Black Market, Gangs, Navigation, Rumors, Undercover

Subterfuge

Subterfuge is the ability to deceive. With Subterfuge, your character can lie convincingly, project hidden messages in what she says, hide motivations, and notice deception in others.

Sample actions: Disguise (Wits + Subterfuge, instant action), Lying (Manipulation + Subterfuge, contested action)

Suggested equipment: Costume Supplies (+2), Fake ID (+1)

Specialties: Detecting Lies, Doublespeak, Hiding Emotion, Little White Lies, Misdirection

Willpower

A character's Willpower represents her determination and her ability to go above and beyond what should be possible to achieve her goals.

Spending Willpower

- **Reflexive Action:** Unless otherwise specified, spending Willpower is a Reflexive action.
- **Roll Bonus:** Spend 1 Willpower: +3 bonus on a single dice pool.
- **Increased Resistance:** Spend 1 Willpower: +2 bonus on *Resistance* against a single action.
- **Other Expenditures:** Other abilities may require Willpower expenditure, as noted under **Cost**.
- **Per Action Limit:** Characters may only spend 1 Willpower per action.

Anchors

A Sin-Eater's Anchors are her Root, Bloom, and Touchstones (p. 81). Human characters have only two Anchors: Virtue and Vice.

Virtue is a point of strength and integrity in the character's life, while Vice is a place of weakness. This is just a brief touch on the topic; for more, look to the **Chronicles of Darkness** Rulebook.

When choosing Virtues and Vices, use the following guidelines:

- Both should be adjectives that describe dominant personality traits. Don't use physical descriptions.
- Traits that describe existing Advantages, Attributes, or Skills similarly do not apply. For example, "Strong," and "Composed," would not work as Virtues.
- Virtue should be a point of self-confidence and self-actualization, but something easy and tempting to ignore. It's a higher calling if she chooses to walk the talk.

- Vice should contrast Virtue as a short-term, quick source of distraction from the world. It should be a hiding place when you're weak.
- Virtue and Vice must be different. The same adjective could work as both a Virtue and Vice in some cases, but a character must have two different ones.

Anchors Basics

When your character *fulfills* their Vice, they take an action that is in accordance with it (picking a fight if they're Violent, stopping off for a pint if they're Drunk, etc.) When your character fulfills their Virtue, they take *meaningful* action in accordance with it (putting themselves in harm's way for another if they're Protective, defeating a great threat if they're Crusading, etc.).

- **Vice:** Fulfill Vice: Regain 1 Willpower; once per scene.
- **Virtue:** Fulfill Virtue: Regain *all* Willpower; twice per chapter.

Speed

Your character's Speed is the number of yards or meters she can travel in a single turn. This trait is a combination of her Strength, Dexterity, and a species factor that reflects her age, physical configuration, Size and other considerations.

Other species, such as horses and cheetahs, have physical configurations that lend themselves to high travel rates.

Factor	Species
1	Turtle
3	Human toddler
5	Human adult
8	Wolf
10	Caribou
12	Horse
15	Cheetah

Defense

Defense measures your character's ability to react to danger and mitigate harm to herself. It's most often used when violence breaks out, but is sometimes used to resist harm from other sources as well.

Defense Basics

- **Resistance:** Defense counts as a Resistance Attribute for any rule that interacts with Resistance (e.g. spending Willpower).
- **Multiple Hazards:** In an *action scene* (p. 152), each time you resist an action with your Defense, you suffer a cumulative –1 penalty to Defense. This penalty goes away at the beginning of your next turn. You can choose not to resist an action with Defense; if you do, the penalty doesn't increase.

Actions

Geist: The Sin-Eaters rates each action by two criteria: how long they take to attempt and whether they are opposed by another character. All actions fall into one category in both arenas: an action might be instant and basic (usually just abbreviated to "instant"), extended and contested, or reflexive and resisted, for example.

Actions by Time

- **Instant:** The action is resolved in a single roll. Unless otherwise noted, an instant action only takes a few seconds and takes up your *turn* in an *action scene*.
- **Reflexive:** The action takes no appreciable time or effort, and is resolved in a single roll. In an action scene, you can take reflexive actions on other characters' turns, and reflexive actions don't take up your turn. *Contesting* someone else's action is always reflexive.
- **Extended:** The action requires multiple rolls over time to complete; as such an extended action is not usually an option in action scenes.

Actions by Opposition

- **Simple:** No opposition. Calculate dice pool and roll results as normal.
- **Contested:** Calculate dice pool as normal and roll. The target rolls a dice pool specified by how they con-

Time

When you're playing **Geist: The Sin-Eaters**, time in the story can speed past or slow to a crawl compared to time in the real world. Weeks or months might pass in the space of few words, while a tense negotiation plays out in real time — or takes even longer.

In addition to years, days, hours, and so on, **Geist** also uses six units of dramatic time. These build upon one another, from shortest to longest.

- Turn — The smallest increment of time, a turn lasts for about three seconds. A character can perform a single instant action and move their Speed in a turn. Turns normally only matter in fights or other dramatic and stressful situations.
- Scene — Much like a scene in a play, a scene in a roleplaying game is the time spent dealing with a single, specific event. The Storyteller frames the scene, describing what's going on, and it's up to the players to resolve the event or conflict. A scene might be played out in turns (called an *action scene*), progress in real time, or skip forward depending on dramatic necessity.
- Chapter — A chapter is the collection of scenes that happen during one game session. From the moment you sit down and start playing to the point where you pack up your dice, you're playing out a chapter of your story.
- Story — A story tells an entire tale, following the dramatic arc of a related series of events. It might comprise several chapters or be completed in just one. It has an introduction, rising tension, a number of twists, and a climax that brings things to a conclusion.
- Chronicle — The big picture, a chronicle is the collection of interlinked stories that involve your characters. They might be linked by a common theme or overarching plotline, or they may only share characters and locations. As your story progresses, the players and Storyteller work together to create an ongoing chronicle.

test the action. If the target's total successes exceed yours, your action fails.

- **Resisted:** Calculate dice pool, then apply a penalty equal to one of the target's Resistance Attributes (Stamina, Resolve, or Composure) or Defense. Roll, and calculate roll results as normal.

Contested or Resisted?

If you're not sure whether to use resistance or a contested action, use this guideline: Resistance applies in situations where the number of successes on the roll is an important factor. If what matters is just whether the roll succeeds or not, use a contested action. For example, combat applies Defense as a resistance because the number of successes on the roll determines how badly the attacker messes up his victim. A supernatural power that puts a victim in your thrall uses a contested action, because the number of successes you roll doesn't matter to the power.

Extended Actions

Some actions require a great deal of effort over time, and represent the sort of project you can abandon and resume later. Such actions are modeled as extended actions, and they're a little more complex than instant or reflexive actions.

When you take an extended action, the Storyteller determines how many successes you require. Most actions require between five and 20 successes. Five reflects a reasonable action that competent characters can achieve with the right tools and knowledge. Ten represents a difficult action that's still realistic for a professional in a field. Twenty represents a very difficult action that even a particularly skilled character will have trouble pulling off.

The Storyteller also determines the interval between rolls. If an action would take weeks to complete, she might consider one roll per week. If it's likely to take a day's work, one roll per hour makes for a solid timeframe.

Once those factors are determined, you make a number of rolls, counting up the total number of successes across all your rolls. If you earn the required number of successes before you run out of time, you accomplish your goal.

Extended Action Basics

- **Multiple Rolls:** You roll your dice pool multiple times over the course of the action. Successes earned on all rolls count toward completing the action.
- **Roll Limit:** You can make a total number of rolls equal to your base dice pool for the action, before factoring in any modifiers. The Storyteller may reduce this value if time is a factor.
- **Time Interval:** Each roll takes a certain amount of time, determined by the Storyteller.

When to Use Extended Actions

As Storyteller, when should you call for an extended action vs. an instant action that takes a defined amount of time? Use the following guidelines:

- **Time Pressure:** If the hungry ghosts manifest at dusk and the characters need to fix their car before that happens, the question of "how long does it take?" has real stakes and tension. If the characters aren't under time pressure, extended actions can feel like a lot of tedious rolling for no reason.
- **Take a Break:** Extended actions are best suited for things the character could conceivably abandon for some time and then resume later: fortifying a safehouse or researching a haunting, for example. If it's something that has to be done all in one go (like performing a magical ritual or cooking a meal), it's probably better modeled as an instant action unless time is a factor.

- **Required Successes:** The Storyteller sets the total number of successes required for the action, usually between five and 20.
- **Exceptional Success:** Extended actions earn an exceptional success when a single roll shows 5 or more successes.

Extended Action Roll Results

These apply to all extended actions. Specific extended actions may have additional effects.

Success: Add the successes earned on the roll to your running total. Work with the Storyteller to determine what steps your character has taken towards his goal.

Exceptional: Choose one: Reduce the number of successes required by your character's Skill dots, reduce the time on each following roll by a quarter, or apply the exceptional success result of the action when you complete your goal.

Failure: You face a setback. The Storyteller will offer you a choice: Take a Condition of her choice or abandon the action. You can offer a different Condition if you think it makes sense. If you refuse or cannot agree on a Condition, you lose all accumulated successes (see "Conditions," p. 299).

Dramatic: Lose all accumulated successes. In addition, the first roll on a subsequent attempt suffers a −2 die penalty.

Common Actions

The following actions represent some of the more common actions characters might undertake in a **Geist: The Sin-Eaters** game. They are presented here in a highly condensed form; for more detailed discussions of many of these actions, see the **Chronicles of Darkness** Rulebook.

ABJURATION

(Instant and Contested; Resolve + Composure vs. target's Power + Resistance; requires five minutes)

By confronting an ephemeral entity with faith and conviction, you drive it back to wherever it came from.

- Success: Any Manifestation Conditions tagged by the target within (your Willpower) yards are suppressed for one day.

  Exceptional: The Conditions are suppressed for one week.

- Failure: The entity is not abjured.

  Dramatic: You cannot attempt to abjure the same entity for the rest of the story.

ARGUMENT

(Instant and Contested; Intelligence + Expression vs. victim's Resolve + Composure)

You try to sway someone with a rational argument. (If arguing with a crowd, use the highest Resolve in the crowd.) (See also Social Maneuvering, p. 153.)

- Success: They accept the truth (or apparent truth) of your words.

  Exceptional: They're convinced and become recruits to your point of view, though they might change their minds if they find themselves at risk.

- Failure: They listen but are ultimately unaffected.

  Dramatic: You convince them of quite the opposite.

CAROUSING

(Instant; Presence + Socialize or Streetwise)

You mix with a group, bringing high spirits with you and using them to loosen tongues.

- Success: You make a single-serving friend who might be willing to pass secrets or go with you somewhere private.

  Exceptional: You make a friend you can contact again.

- Failure: You end up a wallflower, with a drink in your hand that you don't even want.

  Dramatic: A faux pas reveals that you don't belong... and maybe even hints at your supernatural nature.

FAST-TALK

(Instant and Contested; Manipulation + Subterfuge vs. victim's Composure + Empathy)

You may not be able to win the argument with facts, but you can try to get out of trouble with a little judicious spin.

- Success: The other party swallows your story.

  Exceptional: The other party believes you so thoroughly that they're even willing to offer a little aid... though they won't put themselves at any kind of risk.

- Failure: The other party doesn't believe you.

  Dramatic: The other party has a good idea what the truth is.

INTERROGATION

(Extended and Resisted; Manipulation + Empathy or Intimidation – victim's Resolve)

You try to dig secrets out of a reluctant informant. (See also Social Maneuvering, p. 153.)

- Success: You get the information you were looking for; one piece per success rolled.

  Exceptional: You get the information you were looking for, and the informant is willing to continue cooperating.

- Failure: The informant blabs a mix of truth and falsehood — even he may not know the difference.

  Dramatic: The informant is so alienated or injured that he will no longer reveal information.

INTIMIDATION

(Instant and Contested; Strength or Manipulation + Intimidation vs. victim's Resolve + Composure)

You try to get someone to do what you want by making him afraid of you.

- Success: They're coerced into helping you.

  Exceptional: They develop a lasting fear of you, which could make them easier to coerce in the future.

- Failure: They're unimpressed with your threats.

  Dramatic: They don't take you seriously, even if you knock them around a bit. They won't be doing what you want.

INVESTIGATING A SCENE

(Extended; Intelligence + Investigation)

You look for clues to what's happened in the recent past...or tidy up so that no one else can find them.

- Success: You find a clue of exactly the sort you need or manage to significantly confuse future investigators.

  Exceptional: You find a clue, and know exactly how it fits in, or you leave the scene immaculate and impossible to decipher.

- Failure: You find evidence, but it's damaged and hard to interpret. Or you miss a spot in your clean-up that you won't find out about until later.

  Dramatic: You find clues but you contaminate them, or you leave evidence of your presence.

JUMPING

(Instant; Strength + Athletics – [yards or meters of distance])

To get past an obstacle or out of danger, you leap into the air.

- Success: Your character clears the obstacle or avoids the danger.

  Exceptional: Your character may attempt another instant action in the air or upon landing.

- Failure: Your character doesn't achieve any significant distance at all — she jumps too early, has a false start, or loses her nerve.

  Dramatic: The task not only fails, but your character loses her balance.

REPAIR

(Extended; Intelligence + Crafts)

You try to fix something that's broken down.

- Success: You get the thing working...for now.

  Exceptional: The object works better than before. It won't break again any time soon.

- Failure: You're stymied by the problem, but you could come back to it in another scene.

  Dramatic: The broken object's a lost cause. It'll never work again.

RESEARCH

(Extended; Intelligence + Academics or Occult)

Using your existing knowledge, you look for information on a current mystery.

- Success: You find the basic facts you were looking for.

  Exceptional: You find what you were looking for, which leads toward a much bigger source of information.

- Failure: You turn up a lot of promising leads, but they're all dead ends.

  Dramatic: You learn something, but it doesn't help. In fact, it sets you back. If using Occult, this could mean dangerously false assumptions.

SHADOWING A MARK

(Instant and Contested; Wits + Stealth or Drive vs. Wits + Composure)

You follow someone, perhaps in the hopes of ambushing them, or of finding out their destination.

- Success: You follow the mark to his destination.

  Exceptional: You find some means by which you can continue following the mark, such as an unlocked entrance into the building he arrived at.

- Failure: The mark senses he's being followed and manages to lose you.

  Dramatic: You're caught, either by the mark or some observer that's become suspicious of you.

SNEAKING

(Instant and Contested; Dexterity + Stealth vs. Wits + Composure)

You're trying to avoid notice by someone...or multiple someones. Maybe you want to get into a place undetected. Maybe you're trying to break out.

- Success: You avoid notice and get closer to your goal.

  Exceptional: You avoid notice and get away before anyone has another chance to catch you.

- Failure: You're noticed but still have the chance to slip away.

  Dramatic: You attract a lot of attention...enough that now it's going to be hard to get out.

WARDING AND BINDING

(Instant and Contested; Resolve + Composure vs. Power + Resistance; requires 15 minutes)

Using an ephemeral entity's Bane, you mark out a boundary it cannot cross.

- Success: The ephemeral entity treats crossing the boundary you defined as against its Ban. This lasts for (successes) days or until the boundary is broken.

  Exceptional: The effect lasts (successes) weeks.

- Failure: The ephemeral entity is not bound or warded.

  Dramatic: You cannot attempt to ward or bind this entity again for the rest of the story.

Rolling Dice

When your character is trying to accomplish something and the outcome is in doubt, you roll a number of 10-sided dice. The result of that roll determines whether your character *succeeds* and accomplishes their goal, or whether they *fail* and don't do what they set out to. Failure doesn't mean "nothing happens," just that your character doesn't get what they want and complications are headed their way.

You might also score an *exceptional success* or suffer a *dramatic failure*.

Dice Pool

The number of dice you roll depends on the action you're taking. Most of the time, it will be the value of one or more Traits on your character sheet; for example, fast-talking your way past a bouncer might be a roll of Manipulation + Subterfuge, which means you roll a number of dice equal to your Manipulation rating plus your Subterfuge rating. Circumstantial factors, appropriate equipment (or lack thereof), or opposition from another character can add or subtract dice from the total. The total number of dice you roll is called your *dice pool*.

Circumstance and Equipment

Sometimes, fortune favors your character, or they're packing the right tools for the job. Other times, the odds are stacked against you or you don't have the right gear at all. The Storyteller should weigh how circumstances or equipment affect a character's chance of success and assign an appropriate *modifier*. A slight advantage — picking an old and damaged lock — might be worth a bonus die, while a stressful situation — trying to pick a lock while people are shooting at you — might subtract three dice from your pool.

The Storyteller determines the appropriate dice pool based on what you're trying to do and how you're trying to do it, using the descriptions of the various Traits involved. In the above example, if you explained to the Storyteller that you weren't trying to lie your way past the bouncer but schmooze her into liking you enough to let you in, the Storyteller might revise the dice pool to Manipulation + Socialize.

Most of the actions described in this book will tell you what the dice pool should be, but it's fine to come up with dice pools for other actions on an ad hoc basis. Just try to be fair and consistent — if you decide bashing down a door is Strength + Stamina in one session, it should always be Strength + Stamina unless the situation radically changes.

Dice Rolling Basics

- **Building a Pool:** Unless otherwise noted, a dice pool is always Attribute + different Attribute or Attribute + Skill.
- **Modifiers:** Bonuses add the indicated number of dice; penalties remove the number of dice. Unless otherwise specified, modifiers can never exceed +/−5. Add all relevant bonuses *before* subtracting penalties.
- **Successes:** Any die showing 8, 9, or 10 counts as a *success*.
- **10-again:** Any die that shows a 10 is counted as a success, then rerolled. Rerolled dice count successes as normal. Continue counting successes and rerolling as long as you keep rolling 10s.

Dice Rolling Advanced

The Storytelling system has a few special rules that apply to certain actions. This section lists the ones used most commonly in **Geist: The Sin-Eaters**.

- **9-Again:** Replaces 10-again. You reroll dice that show 9 or 10, as opposed to just 10. Keep rolling until you get a result that isn't a 9 or 10.
- **8-Again:** Replaces 10-again and 9-again. You reroll dice that show 8, 9, or 10 — any successful die — and keep rolling as long as your dice show successes.
- **Extra Successes:** On a successful action, add additional successes after the roll. This can turn a success into an exceptional success.
- **Rote Actions:** After rolling, reroll all dice showing 1-7. If you're reduced to a chance die on a rote action, don't reroll a dramatic failure. Only reroll once.
- **Successive Attempts:** If time is not an issue and your character is under no pressure to perform, retry failed actions with your full dice pool. If time is short and the situation is tense, retry failed actions with a *cumulative* −1 die penalty. Successive attempts do not apply to extended actions.
- **Teamwork:** Say how your character's action helps another character with a task and roll an appropriate dice pool: For every success you roll, give that character a +1 bonus on their roll. If you roll a dramatic failure, give that character a −4 penalty instead.

The Chance Die

If penalties ever reduce your dice pool to 0 or fewer dice, roll a single die anyways. This single die is called a *chance die*, and it follows slightly different rules.

Chance Die Basics

- **Success:** A chance die showing a 10 counts as a success.
- **No 10-again:** Do not reroll 10s on chance dice.
- **Dramatic Failure:** A chance die showing a 1 is a *dramatic failure*.

Roll Results

Once you've rolled all the dice, counted all your successes, and finished any rerolls or other permutations, it's time to see how your character fared. On most actions, you'll only worry about whether your character succeeded or failed. Sometimes, however, the outcome of an action is more dramatic.

Roll Result Basics

- **Success:** 1-4 successes; your character's action succeeds.
- **Exceptional Success:** 5+ successes; your character's action succeeds *and* your character gains a beneficial Condition (p. 299). Usually, the Inspired Condition is the most appropriate. Specific actions might have additional effects on an exceptional success.
- **Failure:** 0 successes; your character's action fails.
- **Dramatic Failure:** Chance die showing 1; your character's action fails and something goes significantly awry. Specific actions might have additional effects on a dramatic failure. Otherwise the Storyteller decides on an appropriate turn.
- **Voluntary Dramatic Failure:** Take a Beat; convert a failure into a dramatic failure.

When to Roll Dice

You don't need to roll dice for many actions. If your character isn't in a stressful situation — nobody's actively trying to tear his throat open or demolish the building as he works — you don't need to roll; as long as it's something your character could reasonably do, he just does it. Some actions, like spending Plasm, don't require a roll at all.

When the dice hit the table, the Storyteller should have some idea of what will happen if the roll fails, as well as if it succeeds. Sometimes that's coded in the rules. If you fail on an attack roll, for example, you don't deal any damage. Other times, it's up to the Storyteller. If you fail a roll to jump between buildings with a group of necromancers on your tail, do you make it but fall on the other side, grab the next building by your fingertips, or plummet to the alley below?

Action Scenes

Sometimes it's useful to zoom in close on the action and track things moment by moment, with a clear understanding of who does what in what order. We call these scenes *action scenes*, and to keep everyone's actions straight we proceed by *turns* in order of *Initiative*. The most common action scenes are fights, but the Storyteller can call for one any time a lot of complex things are happening very quickly, like a car chase or an escape from a crumbling haunted house.

Turns

- **What You Can Do:** On your turn, move up to your Speed and take one instant action *or* move twice your Speed.
- **How Long it Lasts:** A turn is roughly three seconds. If an effect says it lasts "until your next turn," it lasts until the beginning of your next turn.

- **Order of Action:** Characters involved in an action scene take turns one at a time in order of Initiative, from highest to lowest.
- **Cycle:** Once all characters involved in the scene have acted, the order of action returns to the character with the highest Initiative.

Initiative

- **Calculating:** When you come into the action scene, roll one die and add the result to your Initiative modifier (p. 75). This is the only roll in the game where you treat the result of the die as a number rather than a success or not.
- **Delaying:** You may choose not to act when your turn comes up and instead act at any point later in the scene, even if the order of action has reset. When you do act, change your Initiative to the Initiative you acted on for the rest of the fight.
- **Surprise:** If a character might be taken unawares by the start of the action, the Storyteller may call for a surprise roll. Roll the character's Wits + Composure, possibly contested by an opponent's relevant dice pool (Dexterity + Stealth for an ambush, Manipulation + Subterfuge if they lull you into a false sense of security, etc.). If the surprised character's roll fails, they cannot act or apply their Defense until their second turn.

Social Maneuvering

A Pilgrim tries to help a ghost resolve her Anchors by convincing her to let go of her obsession with her still-living twin brother. An interfaith council struggles to resolve doctrinal conflicts between two krewes before a war breaks out. A Mourner smooths over the shock when a young man realizes his grandfather's ghost lives in the attic and watches over him. All of these scenes are rich with potential drama and complexity, which might be undercut if they're resolved in a single throw of the dice. When you want to spotlight interpersonal relationships and conflicts solved without violence, Social Maneuvering is the system to use.

In a Social Maneuver, you start by stating your character's *goal*. Maybe you want to convince the police chief to keep his officers out of the Tenderloin tomorrow night, or get One-Eyed Jack to tell you where the Reverent Lodge of the Crow holds their sacrificial rites.

Once you and the Storyteller have agreed that the goal is reasonable, you'll have to overcome the other person's resistance by taking actions that make them more likely to agree to your terms. Successful actions open *Doors* (as in, "the door is open for further discussion," not literal doors.)

How often you can try to open Doors depends on the *impression* your character makes — the more they like you, the more often you can try to sway them.

Goals

When using Social Maneuvering, the first step is to declare your character's intended goal. This is as simple as stating what you want the subject to do and how your character is going about making it happen. You need only announce the initial stages, as the effort will likely occur over multiple rolls, reflecting different actions.

At this point, the Storyteller determines whether the goal is reasonable. A character might, with time and proper tactics, convince a rich person to give him a large sum of money. He probably isn't going to convince the wealthy individual to abandon *all* of his wealth to the character (though it might be possible to get him to name the character as heir, at which point the character can set about speeding up the inheritance process).

Doors

Once you've declared your character's goal, the next step is to determine the scope of the challenge. We represent this with "Doors," which reflect a character's resistance to coercion: her social walls, zir skepticism, their mistrust, or just his hesitance toward intimacy. It's abstract and means different things in every given case.

Calculating Doors

- **Baseline:** The subject starts with Doors equal to the lower of their Resolve or Composure.
- **Breaking Point:** If the stated goal would be a *breaking point* (p. 72) for the subject, *and* the subject is aware of that fact, add two Doors.
- **Aspiration:** If the stated goal is in opposition to one of the subject's Aspirations, *and* the subject is aware of that fact, add one Door. If the goal would clearly help the subject achieve an Aspiration, remove one Door.
- **Virtue:** If the stated goal is in opposition to the subject's Virtue, *and* the subject is aware of that fact, add one Door.

Social Maneuvering and Consent

This system is designed to allow characters to manipulate or convince other characters to perform favors or undertake actions, but it does raise the question: is one character dictating another's actions, and how much of that should be allowed in a roleplaying game? Or, put a different way, can one character seduce another with this system?

Under a strict read of the rules, the answer is yes. The goal is "get that character to sleep with my character," the number of Doors is decided as explained below, and impressions and other factors play into the final result. This is not too different from how seduction and other less carnal forms of persuasion actually work — the persuader tries to make the offer as enticing as possible.

But because it's the persuader's player making the rolls, the target is left without a way to say "no." As such, we recommend reserving this system for use by player-controlled characters on Storyteller characters rather than on other players' characters. If one player's character wants to seduce, persuade, convince, or intimidate another, leave it up to roleplaying and let players make their own decisions about what their characters do. Remember that the Geist Card (p. 275) is always an option in any scenario that makes you uncomfortable or pushes limits you don't want to push.

- **Adding Doors:** If things change such that the breaking point, Aspiration, or Virtue rules above apply during the Social Maneuver, add Doors to the remaining total (two for breaking point, one each for Aspiration or Virtue). If your character goes back on her word during the maneuver, add two Doors.

Impression

The Storyteller sets the first impression based on any past history between the characters, the circumstances of their meeting, the nature of the favor being asked (if the acting character is asking right up front — sometimes it's a better idea not to lead off with what you want!) and any other factors she deems relevant. Most interactions default to average impression, which makes the maneuver a long, drawn-out process. Your character can take steps to improve that: meeting the subject at their favorite restaurant, wearing their favorite perfume, and so on. The Storyteller is the final arbiter of whether any particular action raises the impression level, but she should be open to working with you to develop a plan.

Impression level determines how frequently you're allowed to roll to open the subject's Doors — the more they like your character, the more often you can roll. If the impression is too hostile, you might not be able to roll at all.

Impression

Impression	Time per Roll
Perfect	1 Turn
Excellent	1 Hour
Good	1 Day
Average	1 Week
Hostile	Cannot roll

Adjusting Impression

- **Favorable Circumstances:** A comfortable environment, appealing clothing, or similar pleasant situations can raise a hostile impression to average, or an average impression to good.
- **Actions:** Success on an appropriate action, like a Wits + Socialize action to create the ideal guest list for a party, can raise an average or good impression to excellent.
- **Soft Leverage:** A bribe, gift, or offer of service or payment raises the impression level one step if the subject accepts the offer.
- **Vice Leverage:** An offer that indulges the subject's Vice, or an equivalent Trait (like a Sin-Eater's Root or Bloom) raises the impression level one step if the subject accepts the offer.

Opening Doors

At each interval, you may make a roll to open Doors and move closer to your character's goal. The roll might be different each time, depending on the character's tactics. Some of the rolls might not even be Social. For example, if your character is trying to win someone's favor, fixing his computer with an Intelligence + Computer roll could open a Door.

As Storyteller, be creative in selecting dice pools. Change them up with each step to keep the interactions dynamic. Similarly, consider contested and resisted rolls. Most resisted actions or contested rolls use either Resolve, Composure, or a combination of the two, but don't let that stand as a limit. Contested rolls don't require a resistance trait. For example, Wits might be used to notice a lie, Strength to help a character stand up to threats, or Presence to protect and maintain one's reputation at a soiree.

PvP Resolution

If you allow players' characters to be the targets of Social Maneuvering, resolve this stage as a negotiation with two possible outcomes. The subject chooses to abide by the desired goal or offers a beneficial alternative.

Go With the Flow

If the character does as requested and abides by the intended goal, his player takes a Beat (see p. 76).

Offer an Alternative

If the subject's player chooses, he may offer a beneficial alternative and the initiator's player can impose a Condition (p. 299) on his character. This offer exists between players; it does not need to occur within the fiction of the game (though it can). The alternative must be beneficial and not a twist of intent. The Storyteller adjudicates.

The initiator's player chooses a Condition to impose on the subject. It must make sense within the context of the scenario.

Roll Results

Success: Open one Door.

Exceptional: Open an additional Door.

Failure: Open no Doors. Subsequent actions as part of the Social Maneuver suffer a cumulative –1 penalty. The Storyteller may choose to lower the impression level by one step; if she does so, take a Beat.

Dramatic: The Social Maneuver fails utterly. No further rolls can be made. Any attempt to achieve the same goal must start from scratch, likely with a worse impression.

Resolution

The outcome of a Social Maneuver is either success or failure. Don't confuse this with the success or failure of any particular action that's part of a Social Maneuver; here we're talking about the whole thing.

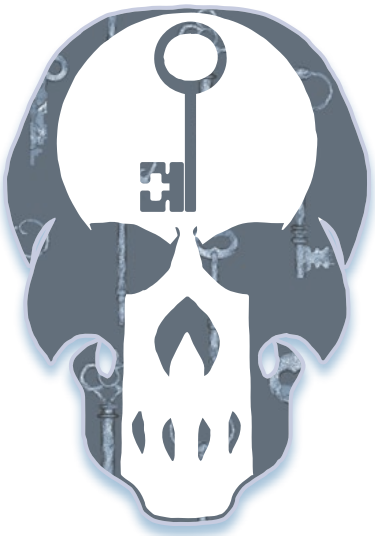
Success

Once your character has opened all the Doors in her path, the subject must act. Storyteller characters abide by the intended goal and follow through as stated. How they feel afterward might vary, but they will always do what you and the Storyteller agreed on.

Failure

A Social Maneuvering attempt can fail utterly under the following circumstances:

- **Dramatic Failure:** The player rolls a dramatic failure on an attempt to open a Door (the player takes a Beat as usual).
- **Deception:** The target realizes that he is being lied to or manipulated. This does *not* apply if the target is aware that the character is trying to talk him into something, only if the target feels betrayed or conned.
- **Bad Impressions:** The impression level reaches "hostile" and remains so for a week of game time. The character can try again during the next story.



Violence

Sin-Eaters have many enemies. Reapers assault the dead communities they're part of, rival krewes settle theological disputes with gunplay, and Kerberoi come to crush any who dare violate the Old Laws. In a Sin-Eater's life, violence is rarely a permanent solution: Ghosts and other Bound are notoriously hard to kill permanently, and even living foes are likely to come back as vengeful shades. Still, sometimes it's inevitable, and a fight breaks out.

"Violence" is a catch-all term for what happens when two people find that they cannot reach agreement like rational individuals and instead beat, claw, and bite the living shit out of one another until one of them gets what she wants.

Intent

Everybody wants something out of a fight. The very first thing you need to do — before worrying about who attacks first or anything like that — is to determine what each character wants to get out of the fight. Boil it down into a simple sentence that starts with the words "I want:" "I want to kill Johnny," "I want the book that Frances is holding," or "I want what's in Larry's wallet."

Declaring Intent

- **By Violence:** Intent must be something achievable by violence within the current scene.
- **The Price:** If your intent doesn't include causing harm and your character ends up killing someone, lose 1 Willpower.

Down and Dirty Combat

The Storyteller might decide that your character can get what she wants without focusing on the details of the fight. Maybe she's picking on people weaker than her. Maybe she's internalized the mechanics of violence. Or maybe the fight's not the important thing going on with regards to the character's intent. If that's the case, the Storyteller can opt to use Down and Dirty Combat. This system resolves the entire fight in a single roll.

Action: Instant and contested; takes anywhere from 30 seconds to a few minutes.

Dice Pool: Combat pool (Dexterity + Firearms, Strength + Brawl, or Strength + Weaponry) versus either the opponent's combat pool (as above) *or* an attempt to escape (Strength or Dexterity + Athletics).

Roll Results

Success: Inflict damage equal to the difference in successes + weapon modifier and achieve your intent — including killing, if that was on the table.

Exceptional: Gain 1 Willpower.

Failure: Do not achieve your intent. If the opponent rolled a combat pool, suffer damage equal to the difference in successes + opponent's weapon modifier. Opponent escapes if they want to.

Dramatic: The opposite of your character's intent happens, or she's knocked out or suffers other serious consequences.

Optional Rule: Beaten Down & Surrender

A character who takes more than his Stamina in bashing damage or any amount of lethal damage suffers the Beaten Down Tilt (p. 292): he's had the fight knocked out of him.

If one side's intent involves violence, their intended victims don't get Beaten Down. When someone wants to kill you, the only thing you can do is to try to stop her, whether you run like hell or unload a shotgun at her.

This optional rule only applies to people (or supernatural beings) who would incur a breaking point for committing (or attempting) "murder." Creatures that don't have a problem killing people in general — like Reapers — never suffer the Beaten Down Tilt from damage taken. Because they can normally get back up after being killed, the Bound don't get Beaten Down unless some effect (low Synergy, an attack that mirrors her original death, etc.) would prevent her from resurrecting.

Detailed Violence

When the fight is a significant event in the story, or Down and Dirty Combat doesn't suit, use these rules. Violence like this is an action scene (p. 152).

Actions in a Fight

The most common action in a fight is to *attack*. Characters can also *dodge* or push themselves to the limit, sacrificing Defense for greater effect.

Specified Targets

A normal attack is aimed at the target's center of mass. You can aim for specific body parts by taking a penalty on your attack roll. Attacking a specific body part can bypass Armor (p. 160) or inflict a Tilt (p. 292) on the target. Attacks against specified targets aren't a way to inflict extra damage or instantly kill people; that's covered by simply rolling a lot of successes on the attack action.

The following modifiers assume a target roughly human in size and shape. The Storyteller can adjust these for more unusual targets.

- **Arm (–2):** If damage exceeds victim's Stamina, inflicts Arm Wrack.
- **Leg (–2):** If damage exceeds victim's Stamina, inflicts Leg Wrack.
- **Head (–3):** If damage equals or exceeds victim's Size, Stuns victim.
- **Heart (–3):** If damage equals or exceeds 5, the attack pierces the victim's heart. This isn't instantly fatal, but may have special effects against certain monsters.
- **Hand (–4):** If the attack deals damage, inflicts Arm Wrack.
- **Eye (–5):** If the attack deals damage, the victim is Blinded.

Attack

All attack actions are instant actions. Unarmed, melee, and thrown attacks are resisted, while ranged and touch attacks are basic actions.

- **Unarmed Attack:** Strength + Brawl – Defense; bashing damage
- **Melee Attack:** Strength + Weaponry – Defense; lethal damage
- **Ranged Attack:** Dexterity + Firearms; lethal damage
- **Thrown Attack:** Dexterity + Athletics – Defense; lethal damage
- **Touch Attack:** Dexterity + Brawl *or* Dexterity + Weaponry; no damage.
- **Damage:** A successful attack inflicts damage equal to the number of successes rolled + weapon modifier (p. 161), if any. Touch attacks do not inflict damage.
- **Pulling Blows:** Set a maximum damage value up to the highest Trait in your attack dice pool and grant the target +1 Defense. Your attack cannot inflict more than the maximum damage you set.

Dodge

Dodging is a reflexive action, but after dodging your character loses their next turn.

- **Contested Attacks:** Attacks made against your character become contested instead of resisted until your next turn. Contest attacks with double your Defense, and unlike a normal contested action, your successes cancel out the attacker's successes on a one-for-one basis.
- **Multiple Attackers:** Apply the Defense penalty for multiple attackers before doubling. If your character's Defense is reduced to 0, roll a chance die.
- **Dramatic Failure:** Defense suffers a –1 penalty until your next Turn.

Special Maneuvers

The following instant actions cause your character to sacrifice xir Defense until xir next Turn. If your character has already lost xir Defense, for example by being surprised or being attacked by enough opponents in one turn to reduce xir Defense to 0, xie cannot take any of these actions.

- **Charge:** Move up to twice your character's Speed and make an unarmed or melee attack.
- **All-Out Attack:** Make an unarmed or melee attack with a +2 bonus.

Other Actions

These are all instant actions.

- **Drop Prone/Stand Up:** Ranged attacks against prone characters suffer a −2 penalty, but unarmed and melee attacks against prone characters gain a +2 bonus if the attacker is standing.
- **Reload a Weapon:** If rounds must be loaded individually, lose Defense until your next turn.
- **Killing Blow:** Inflict damage equal to your attack's dice pool + weapon bonus. Requires an unconscious, immobilized, or otherwise helpless target. Counts as a breaking point.

Unarmed Combat

These rules present special cases that come up when fighting without weapons.

Bite

Biting counts as an unarmed attack action.

- **Damage:** Human teeth inflict −1 bashing damage (so an attack that rolls only one success inflicts no damage). Animals and monsters treat their teeth as weapons, with a bonus between +1 and +4.
- **Grapple Required:** Humans (and most Sin-Eaters) must first grapple a victim in order to bite them.

Grapple

Grappling counts as an unarmed attack action. To start grappling, you have to grab your opponent.

- **Grab:** Make an unarmed attack. On a success, inflict no damage but start a grapple. On an exceptional success, also choose a grapple option.
- **One Action:** All participants in the grapple act on the highest Initiative among them. The only action they can take is the grappling action.
- **Grappling:** Instant and contested; Strength + Brawl vs. Strength + Brawl. The character with the most successes chooses a grapple option, or two grapple options on an exceptional success.

Grapple Options

- **Break Free:** The grapple ends, and your character may take another instant action immediately.
- **Control Weapon**: Take firm hold of a weapon, either your character's or their opponent's. Lasts until your character's opponent chooses Control Weapon. Required for other grapple options.
- **Damage:** Treat the grapple action as an unarmed attack, inflicting damage equal to your rolled successes.

Ranged Weapons Chart

Type	DMG	Ranges	Clip	Initiative	Strength	Size	Availability
Revolver, hvy	2	35/70/140	6	–2	3	1	••
Pistol, lt	1	20/40/80	17+1	0	2	1	•••
Pistol, hvy	2	30/60/120	7+1	–2	3	1	•••
SMG, small*	1	25/50/100	30+1	–2	2	1	•••
SMG, large*	2	50/100/200	30+1	–3	3	2	•••
Hunting Rifle	4	200/400/800	5+1	–5	2	3	••
Assault Rifle*	3	150/300/600	42+1	–3	3	3	•••
Shotgun**	3	20/40/80	5+1	–4	3	2	••
Crossbow***	2	40/80/160	1	–5	3	3	•••

RANGED WEAPON TRAITS

Ranges: Short/medium/long ranges in yards/meters.

Clip: The number of rounds a gun can hold. "+1" indicates that a bullet can be held in the chamber, ready to fire.

Size: 1 — Can be fired one-handed; 2 — Must be fired two-handed and can be hidden in a coat; 3 — Can be fired two-handed but not hidden on one's person.

* The weapon is capable of autofire.

** Attack rolls gain the 9-again quality

*** Crossbows take three turns to reload between shots. A crossbow can be used to deliver a stake through the heart (–3 die penalty to attack rolls; must deal at least 5 damage in one attack)

If you have control of a weapon, this counts as a melee attack with the weapon's modifier.

- **Disarm:** Remove a weapon from the grapple entirely. Requires Control Weapon.
- **Drop Prone:** Throw all participants to the ground. Requires Break Free to stand back up.
- **Hold:** Immobilize an opponent. Both characters lose Defense.
- **Restrain:** Your opponent is Immobilized (p. 295). Requires Hold. If your character uses equipment to restrain her opponent, she can leave the grapple.
- **Take Cover:** Any ranged attacks against your character automatically hit her opponent. Lasts until your next turn.

Ranged Combat

These rules present special cases that come up when shooting at people.

Autofire

Automatic weapons can fire a short, medium, or long burst in place of a single shot.

- **Short Burst:** Uses 3 bullets. +1 bonus to attack action.
- **Medium Burst:** Uses 10 bullets. +2 bonus to attack action. Can attack multiple targets, up to three.
- **Long Burst:** Uses 20 bullets. +3 bonus to attack action. Can attack multiple targets, with no limit.
- **Multiple Targets:** −1 penalty per target after the first. Roll individually against each target.

Range

Ranged attacks suffer a penalty the farther away the target is. Ranged weapons have a short, medium, and long range listed on the weapons table (see above).

- **Short Range:** No penalty.
- **Medium Range:** −1
- **Long Range:** −2

Melee Weapons Chart

Type	DMG	Initiative	Strength	Size	Availability	Special
Sap	0	–1	1	1	•	Stun
Brass Knuckles	0	0	1	1	•	Uses Brawl to attack
Metal Club	2	–2	2	2	•	
Chain	1	–3	2	2	•	Grapple
Shield (small)	0	–2	2	2	••	Concealed
Shield (large)	2	–4	3	3	••	Concealed
Knife	0	–1	1	1	•	
Sword	2	–2	2	2	••	
Small Ax	1	–2	1	1	•	
Large Ax	3	–4	3	3	••	9-again, two-handed
Chainsaw	5	–6	4	3	•••	9-again, two-handed
Spear**	2	–2	2	4	•	+1 Defense, two-handed

MELEE WEAPON TRAITS

- **Size:** 1 — Can be hidden in a hand; 2 — Can be hidden in a coat; 3+ — Cannot be hidden.
- **Concealed:** A character who wields a shield but doesn't use it to attack adds its Size to Defense and uses its Size as a concealment modifier against ranged attacks.
- **Grapple:** Add the chain's damage rating to your dice pool when grappling.
- **Stun:** Halve the victim's Size when aiming for the head with intent to Stun (p. 297).
- **Two-handed:** This weapon requires two hands. It can be used one-handed, but doing so increases the Strength requirement by 1.

** The reach of a spear gives a +1 Defense bonus against opponents who are unarmed or wield weapons of Size 1.

Concealment

If the target of a ranged attack is partially or fully obscured, she has concealment. Concealment applies a penalty to the shooter's dice pool.

- **Barely Concealed:** −1 (hiding behind an office chair)
- **Partially Concealed:** −2 (hiding behind the hood of a car, with upper body exposed)
- **Substantially Concealed:** −3 (crouching behind a car).
- **Shooting from Concealment:** Barely concealed, no penalty; partially concealed, −1; substantially concealed, −2. You can ignore this penalty, but you lose your own concealment until your next turn.

Cover

If a target's entirely hidden by something substantial, he's in cover.

- **Tough Cover:** If the cover's Durability (p. 174) is greater than the attacker's weapon modifier, the attack can't penetrate the cover.
- **Less Tough Cover:** Subtract the cover's Durability from the attacker's damage roll. Both the object and the target take any remaining damage.
- **Transparent Cover:** If the cover is transparent (bulletproof glass, for example), subtract *half* the cover's Durability, rounding down. Both the object and the target take any remaining damage.

Weapons and Armor

Weapons are one of the fastest ways to turn a fight into a murder. Sometimes, that's what you want; pulling a gun shows you're serious about killing people. Armor, meanwhile, keeps that murder from being yours.

Armor

Type	Rating	Strength	Defense	Speed	Availability	Coverage
MODERN						
Reinforced Clothing*	1/0	1	0	0	•	Torso, arms, legs
Kevlar Vest*	1/3	1	0	0	•	Torso
Flak Jacket	2/4	1	–1	0	••	Torso, arms
Full Riot Gear	3/5	2	–2	–1	•••	Torso, arms, legs
ARCHAIC						
Leather (hard)	2/0	2	–1	0	•	Torso, arms
Chainmail	3/1	3	–2	–2	••	Torso, arms
Plate	4/2	3	–2	–3	••••	Torso, arms, legs

ARMOR TRAITS

- **Rating:** Armor provides protection against normal attacks and Firearms attacks. The number before the slash is for general armor, while the number after the slash is for ballistic armor.
- **Strength:** If your character's Strength is lower than that required for her armor, reduce her Brawl and Weaponry dice pools by –1.
- **Defense:** The penalty imposed on your character's Defense when wearing the armor.
- **Speed:** The penalty to your character's Speed when wearing the armor.
- **Availability:** The cost in Resources dots or level of Social Merit needed to acquire the armor.
- **Coverage:** The areas of a character protected by the armor. Wearing a helmet increases the armor's coverage to include a character's head.

* This armor is concealed, either as normal clothing (e.g. biker leathers) or being worn under a jacket or baggy shirt.

Common Weapon Traits

- **Type:** A weapon's type is a general classification that fits any number of specific weapons. A metal club might be a crowbar or a length of rebar, while a light revolver might be one of any number of .22-.38 caliber weapons.
- **Damage:** Added to successes rolled on attack to determine total damage inflicted.
- **Initiative:** The penalty to Initiative when wielding the weapon.
- **Strength:** The minimum Strength needed to use a weapon effectively. A wielder with a lower Strength suffers a –1 penalty on attack rolls.
- **Availability:** The cost in Resources dots or level of Social Merit needed to acquire the weapon.

Armor

Armor provides protection against attacks, including bullets and knives. Though it's rare to find Sin-Eaters wearing armor, police officers and other law enforcement agencies rely on it.

Armor Basics

- **Ballistic Armor:** Each point of ballistic armor downgrades one point of damage from lethal to bashing.
- **General Armor:** Each point of general armor reduces the total damage taken by one point, starting with the most severe type of damage.
- **Order of Operation:** If armor has both ballistic and general ratings, apply the ballistic armor first.
- **Minimum Damage:** When applying armor to an attack inflicting lethal damage, you always suffer at least one point of bashing damage from the shock of the blow.

Injury and Healing

Characters can suffer three types of damage. Fists and feet, along with other kinds of low-impact trauma, deal *bashing* damage. Brass knuckles, knives, and speeding trucks deal *lethal* damage. Some horrifying powers deal *aggravated* damage. When something deals aggravated damage directly, it's quite obvious. Flesh bubbles and sloughs away. Foaming pustules taint the victim's flesh. Blackened veins streak out from the site of the injury.

The following rules apply to living humans and animals. The Bound deal with damage differently, and other horrors likewise have their own rules regarding the effects of damage. Ephemeral entities likewise have their own rules for injury and healing (p. 195).

Suffering Damage

When a rule tells you to suffer an amount of damage, you mark off that many Health boxes, starting from the leftmost side and continuing to the right. A box marked with any kind of damage is called a *point*.

Damage Basics

- **Bashing:** Mark bashing damage with a (/) in the leftmost empty box of the Health track.
- **Lethal:** Mark lethal damage with an (X) in the leftmost box that is empty *or* filled with bashing damage. If you mark over bashing damage, move that damage to the leftmost empty box of the track. If there are no empty boxes left, that damage is overwritten but not moved.
- **Aggravated:** Mark aggravated damage with an (*) in the leftmost box that does not already contain aggravated damage. If you mark over bashing damage, move that damage to the leftmost empty box. If there are no empty boxes left, that damage is overwritten but not moved. If you mark over lethal damage, move it to the leftmost box that is empty *or* contains bashing damage. If there are no empty boxes *or* boxes containing bashing damage, that damage is overwritten but not moved.
- **Upgrading Damage:** If your character suffers bashing damage but has no empty Health boxes in which to mark it, upgrade each point of bashing damage to lethal damage. If she suffers lethal damage but has no empty Health boxes *or* boxes marked with bashing damage, upgrade her leftmost Health box that's filled with lethal damage to aggravated damage.

Effects of Damage

- **Wound Penalties:** If your character has any damage marked in her third-to-last Health box, she suffers a −1 penalty to *all* actions except Stamina rolls to stay conscious. This increases to −2 when her second-to-last Health box is filled, and −3 when her last Health box is filled.
- **Unconscious:** If your character's rightmost Health box is filled with bashing *or* lethal damage, roll her Stamina every turn as a reflexive action. Failure means she falls unconscious until her rightmost Health box is empty.
- **Bleeding Out:** If your character's rightmost Health box is filled with lethal damage, she suffers 1 lethal damage per minute until she receives medical attention.
- **Dead:** If your character's rightmost Health box is filled with aggravated damage, she is dead.

Example of Marking Damage

Hetienne has seven dots of Health. She's just taken two points of bashing damage. Her Health boxes look like this:

If she's later stabbed and takes a point of lethal damage, her Health track would be:

If Hetienne next suffered a point of aggravated damage, her Health boxes would look like this:

Healing

Characters need time to heal once they've been beaten to a pulp. Normally, a character can heal without medical attention, though use of the Medicine Skill will help him recover. The only exception is if a mortal character has all her Health boxes full of lethal damage — she's bleeding out. She can't recover from that without urgent medical attention and emergency surgery.

The following rules apply to living humans and animals as well as the Bound. The Bound, however, have ways of mitigating damage as they suffer it (p. 195).

Healing Basics

- **Rightmost Box:** Natural healing only affects the rightmost point of damage. Once the rightmost box is cleared, healing time for the next-rightmost box starts.
- **Bashing:** Clear bashing damage after 15 minutes of game time.
- **Lethal:** Clear lethal damage after two days of game time.

- **Aggravated:** Clear aggravated damage after a week of game time.

Example: A Sin-Eater low on Plasm gets between her ghost lover and a Reaper and pays the price. Her health track looks like this at the end of the fight.

Her rightmost wound heals first. Since it's a bashing wound, she clears it after 15 minutes. After another 15 minutes, her second bashing wound clears. Her lethal damage then heals over the course of the next two days. Finally, her aggravated wound heals over the course of the next week. In all, it takes a little over a week and two days for her to recover from her injuries, barring magical healing.

Sources of Harm

Outside of damage suffered in fights, characters in the Chronicles of Darkness face peril from a variety of sources. These are just a few of them.

Disease

Sin-Eaters find themselves drawn to places of death and decay, where strange pathogens often lurk. Enemy Bound with the Key of Disease and the ghosts of long-dead plagues in the Underworld can also expose characters to sickness.

Disease Basics

- **Tilt:** In action scenes, sick characters suffer the Sick Tilt (p. 297).
- **Moderate Disease:** Outside action scenes, moderate sickness might impose a –1 or –2 penalty on actions where concentration or stamina are required.
- **Grave Disease:** Outside action scenes, grave diseases inflict a certain amount of damage at specified time intervals, as determined by the Storyteller. The sick character's player makes a reflexive Stamina + Resolve roll to resist; success means no damage this time.
- **Recovery:** Most diseases simply run their course over a certain amount of time. Others require a minimum number of successful resistance rolls, require medical intervention, or merely go into periodic remission as determined by the Storyteller.

Poison

Whether from the sting of a venomous insect or a pinch of arsenic in the food, poison stars as the cause of death in many a ghost story.

Poison Basics

- **Tilt:** In action scenes, poisoned characters suffer the Poisoned Tilt (p. 293).
- **Toxicity:** Outside action scenes, the Storyteller assigns the poison a Toxicity rating. The poisoned character suffers lethal damage equal to Toxicity. Mild poisons only inflict damage once. More severe poisons may inflict damage every hour or even every turn for a period of time determined by the Storyteller.
- **Resistance:** The poisoned character's player rolls Stamina + Resolve – Toxicity every time the poison inflicts damage. Each success cancels one point of damage.

Drugs

Legal or otherwise, drugs factor into many stories of tragic, untimely death.

Drug Basics

- **Tilt:** In action scenes, drugged characters suffer the Drugged Tilt (p. 297).
- **Effects:** Drugs can have a wide variety of effects, ranging from dice penalties to imposing Conditions. Most drugs last for a scene, but some burn through a character's system more rapidly or linger for more time.
- **Resistance:** A drugged character can shake off the effects temporarily by succeeding on a reflexive Stamina + Resolve roll. Depending on the potency of the drug, this roll might be required every hour, scene, or even turn.

Overdose

- **Poison:** Characters who overdose on drugs treat the drug like a poison, with a Toxicity somewhere between 3 and 7. The drug inflicts damage once per hour.
- **Duration:** The overdose typically runs its course after (eight – Stamina) hours, though the Storyteller may adjust that.

Electricity

Electric shocks inflict damage based on the strength of the current.

Source	Damage
Minor; wall socket	4 (B)
Major; protective fence	6 (B)
Severe; junction box	8 (B)
Fatal; main line feed/subway rail	10 (B)

Environment Levels

Level	Example Environs
1	Light snow, heavy storms; too cold to sleep safely; air pressure causes shortness of breath; sweltering sun can cause first-degree burns
2	Heavy snow; cold causes physical pain and potential hypothermia; sun quickly causes first-degree burns, can cause second-degree burns with time; minor radiation poisoning
3	Desert exposure; heat rapidly causing second-degree burns; moderate radiation exposure
4	Desert sandstorm, severe hurricane, tornado, tsunami

Electricity Basics

- **Damage per Turn:** Electricity inflicts damage every turn if the current is continuous.
- **Breaking Away:** Characters in contact with a continuous electrical current must succeed on a reflexive roll of Strength to pull away.
- **No Armor:** Worn armor provides no protection against electrocution.

Extreme Environments

The human body is not built to withstand extreme heat, cold, air pressure, and other harsh weather. Extreme environments are rated with a level from 1 to 4, depending on the severity of the environment. While characters are exposed to these conditions, they suffer the level of the environment as a penalty to all actions. After a number of hours equal to the character's Stamina, he takes bashing damage equal to the environment's level once per hour. In the case of a level 3 exposure, the damage is lethal instead of bashing. Level 4 environments cause lethal damage each *turn* after a number of turns equal to the character's Stamina.

Any damage caused by level 2-4 exposure leaves lasting marks, scars, and tissue damage. Damage caused by extreme environments cannot be healed until the character is back in a safe environment.

Extreme Environment Basics

- **Penalty:** Characters suffer a penalty to all actions equal to the environment's level.
- **Level 1-3 Damage:** After (Stamina) hours of exposure to level 1-3 environments, characters suffer damage equal to the environment's level for every hour. At levels 1-2, the damage is bashing. At level 3, it's lethal.
- **Level 4 Damage:** After (Stamina) *turns* of exposure to level 4 environments, characters suffer 4 lethal damage every turn.
- **No Healing:** Characters cannot heal damage from extreme environments until they are no longer in an extreme environment.

Falling

Ghosts might be able to fly, but Sin-Eaters and the living, as a rule, can't.

Falling Basics

- **Damage:** Falls of less than 30 yards inflict 1 bashing damage per three yards fallen. Falls of 30 yards or more inflict 10 lethal damage.
- **Armor:** At the Storyteller's discretion, armor may reduce damage from falls of less than 30 yards.
- **Reduced Damage:** If there's a reasonable way for a character to slow xir fall, xie makes a reflexive Dexterity + Athletics roll. Each success reduces damage from a fall of less than 30 yards by 1 point.
- **Soft Landing:** Landing in water, snow, or another soft surface may automatically reduce damage from falls of less than 30 yards at the Storyteller's discretion.

Fire

Fire automatically inflicts lethal damage per turn of exposure (no attack roll is required). The damage inflicted depends on both the size and intensity of the flames.

Size of Fire	Damage
Torch	1
Bonfire	2
Inferno	3

Heat of Fire	Damage Modifier
Candle (first-degree burns)	—
Torch (second-degree burns)	+1
Bunsen burner (third-degree burns)	+2
Chemical fire/ molten metal	+3

Fire Basics

- **Combustion:** Exposure to fire for longer than a turn ignites anything combustible on the character; he continues to take full damage even after escaping the source of the flame.
- **Firefighting:** Fighting a fire typically requires an instant action but no roll. At the Storyteller's discretion, an action might immediately put out the fire (e.g. diving into water) or reduce its size by one level (e.g. stop, drop, and roll).
- **Armor:** Most armor can block its general rating in fire damage automatically for a number of turns equal to that rating.

Equipment

Equipment, tools, and technology help to solve problems. Having the right tool for the job can mean the difference between life and death — or in the Chronicles of Darkness, the difference between life and a fate worse than death. This list is not all-inclusive, but features many of the tools that characters might have at their disposal.

Equipment is divided up by the Skills they typically assist with. Mental Equipment typically assists with Mental Skills, for example.

Equipment Traits

- **Availability:** The minimum level of a relevant Trait a character must have to acquire the equipment with a single roll. Resources is the most often used Trait, but other Social Merits or Skills may work at the Storyteller's discretion (e.g. Larceny to steal it or Allies to borrow it from a friend).
- **Size, Durability, Structure:** See Objects (p. 174).
- **Dice Bonus:** The bonus the equipment adds to relevant actions.
- **Effect:** Any special rules that apply to using the equipment.

Mental Equipment

Mental equipment is all but essential for many character types. Mental Skills without the proper tools are almost useless in most cases. A doctor without medicine is hardly capable of healing, and an auto mechanic without a toolbox couldn't change even some minor belts on a car.

Automotive Tools

Basic (Kit): Die Bonus +1, Durability 2, Size 2, Structure 3, Availability •

Advanced (Garage): Die Bonus +2, Availability •

Effect: Automotive tools are a necessity for all but the simplest automobile repairs. Even then, a fully stocked garage with heavy equipment is required for more involved tasks such as engine or transmission replacement. If time is not a factor, any trained character with a Crafts (Automotive) Specialty can repair a vehicle's mundane issues without rolls. Complex modifications and enhancements or massive damage always require a greater effort (an extended Intelligence + Crafts roll) to work out.

Cache

Die Bonus +1 to +3, Durability 2, Size 1–5, Structure 5, Availability • to •••

Effect: A cache is a hidden and defensible place for items, usually weapons. It keeps important items from prying eyes. A cache can never be more than half the Size of its parent object. For example, a Size 6 car can support nothing larger than a Size 3 cache. A given cache can hold two items of its Size and any reasonable number of smaller-sized items. Its Availability determines its die bonus, which both adds to concealment rolls and subtracts from rolls to find the items within.

Communications Headset

Die Bonus +2, Durability 0, Size 1, Structure 1, Availability ••

Effect: Communications headsets keep characters in constant contact. Different varieties work over different distances, but most commercial models work over about 200 feet. A common alternative is a conference call between cellular phones and Bluetooth headsets. If the users have practiced using their headsets together, they gain the die bonus on any coordinated efforts. In the case of a teamwork action, the die bonus only applies to the final roll. If the users are unpracticed, the bonus falls to +1 and actors must make reflexive Wits + Composure rolls to participate successfully.

Any heavy objects can obstruct a headset's signal. Anything obstructing with Durability higher than 3 requires listeners to make a Wits + Composure roll to understand shared messages. Levy a –1 penalty for each point of Durability over 4.

Crime Scene Kit

Die Bonus +2, Durability 2, Size 3, Structure 2, Availability ••

Effect: A crime scene (or CSI) kit is a toolbox full of investigative aids such as magnifiers, fingerprinting dust, cameras, tape, testing chemicals, and sample bags. While the kits offer a die bonus to Investigation rolls, the more important benefit of the CSI kit is that it allows evidence to be moved and digested elsewhere. Properly applied, it allows investigators to do the bulk of their work offsite and at their own pace.

Code Kit

Die Bonus +5, Durability 1, Size 2, Structure 1, Availability •

Effect: A code kit is a series of tools created for the purpose of making and interpreting a code for a specific audience. A common example is a book code, where a page, paragraph, and word from a certain book are used as the foundation for a cypher. This keeps any uninformed eyes off the intended message. In the case of a book code, a book is often chosen that all message recipients can access easily. This guarantees that the code never has to travel with the code key.

A successfully designed cypher is difficult to break. The die bonus acts as a penalty to any rolls to crack the code without the necessary reference key.

Cracking Software

Die Bonus +2, Durability N/A, Size N/A, Structure N/A, Availability •••

Effect: Crappy software's a dime a dozen. Good, reliable cracking software is hard to come by. With solid software, a hacker can force passwords, breach firewalls, and otherwise be a nuisance in computer systems. Beyond the dice pool modification, the benefit such software offers is a sort of buffer between the hacker and security. Any effort to track the hacker takes two steps: one to identify the software, then one to trace it back to the source. Functionally this means two rolls on behalf of the security personnel, with an opportunity for the hacker to withdraw before detection.

Digital Recorder

Die Bonus +1 or +2, Durability 1, Size 1, Structure 2, Availability • or ••

Effect: In the last decade, digital audio recorders have gotten smaller, more effective, and more affordable. Now, any student can carry a coin-sized device that would have put intelligence agencies of the 1980s to shame. The cheaper model of recorder gives its +1 bonus to any rolls to catch words or sounds. The bonus also applies to concealment rolls. The more expensive model gives +2. With an Intelligence + Computer (with die bonus), a character can contest any rolls to obscure discussion or mask noises.

Duct Tape

Die Bonus +1, Durability 1, Size 1, Structure 2, Availability •

Effect: Duct tape has as many uses as one can think of, and just as many you never would. It can reinforce barricades, stabilize weapon handles, bind prisoners, repair broken pipes, and so much more. In most cases, duct tape can offer a +1 bonus to Crafts-related rolls. Alternatively, it can add a point of Durability to almost anything. If used as a restraint, rolls to break free suffer a –3 penalty, and must overcome the duct tape's Structure.

First-Aid Kit

Die Bonus 0 or +1, Durability 1, Size 2, Structure 3, Availability • or ••

Effect: A first-aid kit contains all the necessary supplies to stabilize an injury and stop wounds from getting worse until the victim can find proper treatment. The one-dot version of the first-aid kit does not offer a die bonus; it simply allows for treatment. The two-dot version offers a +1 to treatment rolls due to superior supplies.

Flashlight

Die Bonus +1, Durability 2, Size 1, Structure 3, Availability •

Effect: In a world full of darkness, a flashlight can be a

person's best friend. It generally does what it's supposed to; it helps cut a path through the unknown. Its die bonus subtracts from any penalties due to darkness, and adds to any rolls to search in the dark. A good flashlight can serve as a club in a pinch. It can also blind an unfortunate subject. A Dexterity + Athletics roll, subtracting an informed opponent's Defense, will put the beam where it needs to be. The victim's player may make a contested Stamina roll. If your character scores more successes than the subject, they're blinded for one turn. Victims with especially acute senses are blinded for two turns.

Glowstick

Die Bonus +2, Durability 1, Size 1, Structure 1, Availability •

Effect: Glowsticks use a chemical mixture to summon forth enough light to see in a small area. Most commercial glowsticks last a couple of hours; police and other professional varieties can last 12. Because they're small, airtight containers, they serve the added benefit of being useful underwater or in the rain. Functionally, they work the same as a flashlight. They cannot be used to blind a target, however, since their soft glow is far less obtrusive than a flashlight's beam. They're also very conveniently worn, which can serve strategic purposes for a group operating in low-light conditions. A member will not go missing without being noticed so long as they have a glowing neon bar on their belt.

GPS Tracker

Die Bonus +3, Durability 2, Size 2, Structure 2, Availability ••

Effect: With the advent of the modern cellular phone, most modern people have a GPS-enabled device on their person at any given time. With a bit of know-how and access to someone's phone, your character can track their every move (provided those moves are not in caves, tunnels, or sewer systems). Some characters will trade GPS data in case one of the group becomes lost or if they have to follow someone without notice. Planting a phone on an unwitting subject can serve as a highly effective tracking device.

Keylogging Software

Die Bonus +2, Durability N/A, Size N/A, Structure N/A, Availability ••

Effect: Keylogging software does exactly one thing: it logs keystrokes on a computer. This is usually done to record incriminating data or passwords. Usually, keylogging software is coupled with software to transmit the data once captured. The challenge for the would-be intruder is installing the software. Email scams are an unreliable way to get onto a specific computer, but could fool one member of a large organization. A thumb drive is very effective, but requires direct, physical access to the recipient computer. The software's die bonus offers an advantage to breach a network or to find important data.

Luminol

Die Bonus +2, Durability 0, Size 1, Structure 1, Availability •

Effect: Luminol is a chemical that reacts to certain metals in human blood and other bodily fluids. The reaction causes a faint neon glow for about 30 seconds, visible in the dark. It comes in an aerosol can and will seek out faint traces, even after a thorough cleaning. In addition to showing the exact locations of violent crimes, luminol can assist in tracking wounded people and animals. Luminol's die bonus applies to any roll to track by the fluid traces, or to piece together the details of a crime scene.

Multi-Tool

Die Bonus +1, Durability 3, Size 1, Structure 4, Availability •

Effect: Sometimes, the need for mobility doesn't allow for your character to carry around a full tool kit. In these cases, a multi-tool can be a lifesaver. From sawing to stripping wires, to opening bottles, to filing off serial numbers, a multi-tool can do the job in a pinch. The multi-tool offers a negligible die bonus on numerous Crafts and other assorted tasks, and most importantly, allows for rolls when sometimes they couldn't be made for lack of proper equipment. While not made for use as a weapon, it can serve as one, causing 0 lethal but suffering a –1 penalty to hit.

Personal Computer

Die Bonus +1 to +4, Durability 2, Size 3, Structure 2, Availability • to ••••

Effect: In the developed world, almost every household has access to a personal computer. They can vary in size, functionality, and price, from decade-old models that barely surf the web to high-end machines that process gigabytes of data per second. In today's world, many lives revolve around computers. For some people, their entire careers and personal lives exist within digital space. The Availability rating of the computer determines its die bonus.

Smartphones

Die Bonus +1 to +2, Durability 2, Size 1, Structure 1, Availability • to •••

Effect: By themselves, smartphones can make calls, send text messages and emails, take pictures, maintain an agenda, and search the web. With a bit of software, the smartphone becomes the multi-tool of the electronic age. While it cannot accomplish the raw computing power of a full-sized personal computer, higher-end smartphones can manage almost all the same tasks with ease.

Most major gadgets have been successfully replicated with smartphone applications. GPS scanning and tracking are staples of the amateur investigator. Facial-recognition software finds a face in a crowd with relative accuracy. They can photograph and transcribe text, then translate ancient tomes. They can store a library's worth of text and allow for automated searches. They offer directions with photographic assistance. Even the value of a mindless video game on a stakeout is often underestimated.

Special Effects

Die Bonus +2, Durability 2, Size 5, Structure 3, Availability •••

Effect: Special effects is a catch-all term for the tricks and chicanery used by amusement parks and stage magicians to fool witnesses. A character may use these as a distraction or a defense. For example, the Pepper's Ghost illusion is relatively easy to set up with the right tools. It uses a large mirror and a sheet of glass, along with a model and a light source. It projects an illusion of the model's reflection and makes witnesses see a "ghost."

In addition to the die bonus, special effects generally fool their audience at first. A witness will fall for the trick unless given good reason to be suspicious. This can waste valuable time or lead the witness into a trap.

Surveillance Equipment

Die Bonus +2, Durability 2, Size 2, Structure 2, Availability •••

Effect: Standard surveillance equipment usually consists of motion detectors, cameras, and monitors. High-end versions may include infrared heat sensors, barometric scanners, or even more complex gear. Either way, the point of surveillance equipment is to survey, detect, and otherwise track who enters or leaves a location. Often, this also means locking down breached zones. Unless someone knows surveillance equipment exists and actively avoids it, his presence is noticed and recorded. If he tries to avoid it, contest his Dexterity + Stealth against the installing technician's Intelligence + Computer or Intelligence + Crafts (for digital and analog systems, respectively). The technician may add the equipment's die bonus. If the intruder scores more successes, he remains unnoticed. Otherwise, he goes on record.

Survival Gear

Die Bonus +1 or +2, Durability 2, Size 2 or 3, Structure 3, Availability • or •••

Effect: Survival gear is the catch-all term for the various kits of equipment needed to survive in harsh environments. This could encompass tents, canned foodstuff, raingear, sleeping bags, sterile water, or any of the various things a person can use to survive the world outside their cushy homes. They come in two levels: a basic level and an advanced level. The basic level offers +1 and subtracts one from the effective level of environment (see Extreme Environments, p. 164), while the advanced offers +2 and subtracts two from the effective environment level. This does not help with a level 4 environment. A resourceful character can rig or scavenge the necessary supplies for basic survival gear, but an advanced set of gear requires very specialized equipment. Basic survival gear can assist with most any environment, but advanced survival gear must target one particular type of environment.

Talcum Powder

Die Bonus +2, Durability N/A, Size 1, Structure N/A, Availability •

Effect: Talcum powder can keep a baby's bottom from getting diaper rash, but it can also show the presence of the unseen or evidence of intrusion if placed at a portal of entry. If an entrance is dusted with talcum powder, a character must achieve five successes on a Dexterity + Stealth roll to enter without a trace. Fewer successes will only obscure the specifics of their feet and hands. Some paranormal investigators use talcum powder as a way to give ghosts and other invisible entities a method for communication.

Ultraviolet Ink

Die Bonus +2, Durability 1, Size 1, Structure 2, Availability •

Effect: Ultraviolet ink, or invisible ink as it's commonly called, is an outstanding way to relay messages in plain sight. Since the naked eye cannot perceive the ink without an ultraviolet light, a character can scrawl messages for other recipients in the know. It also allows for secretive information to be passed around through mundane channels. If nefarious forces are surveying someone, an ultraviolet message scribbled on a throwaway magazine is much easier to get into their home unmolested than, say, a suspicious letter slid through their doorframe. If you need to mark a path to a secret hiding place, what better way to conceal the guiding marks?

Physical Equipment

Physical equipment enhances the use of Physical Skills. This often means the use of simple and complex machines to make things easier, or tricks to heighten the effectiveness of a character's inherent talents.

Battering Ram

Die Bonus +4, Durability 3, Size 4, Structure 8, Availability ••

Effect: The purpose of the battering ram is to bring down doors and other barricades with direct, focused force. A battering ram uses a Teamwork action (see p. 152), allowing up to four participants. The primary actor adds the ram's die bonus to her roll. A ram ignores two points of Durability.

Bear Trap

Die Bonus +2, Durability 3, Size 2, Structure 5, Availability ••

Effect: A bear trap is a large metal contraption that looks something like a set of deadly jaws. For this reason, they're also commonly called jaw traps. When a human or large animal steps into the bear trap, it snaps shut on their leg. Due to the serrated edges on the trap, this can cause massive bleeding or even broken bones.

The jaw trap causes 3L damage and ignores two points of armor or Durability. A character trapped in the jaws can attempt to escape as an instant action. Doing so requires a Strength + Stamina roll, with the trap's die bonus as a penalty due to the distracting pain and the strength of the jaws. Failure on this roll causes another point of lethal damage as the jaw digs in further. Creatures without opposable thumbs cannot escape this way and must rip themselves free.

Any rolls to hide a bear trap suffer its die bonus as a penalty. They're difficult to hide due to their awkward shape and weight.

Caltrops

Die Bonus +2, Durability 2, Size 2, Structure 3, Availability ••

Effect: Caltrops are small, pointed pieces of metal, arranged in such a way that one point is always facing upward. This makes walking (or driving) through a patch of caltrops inconvenient and painful. These traits assume enough caltrops to fill a doorway or other narrow corridor.

Moving through caltrops causes one point of lethal damage. Caltrops ignore a point of armor or Durability. To move through safely, a Dexterity + Athletics roll is required with the caltrops' die bonus applied as a penalty to the roll. A character may only move half Speed (rounded down) while moving safely through caltrops.

A character may hide caltrops, although it is difficult. A Wits + Larceny – 3 roll is required; the caltrops' die bonus does not apply to this roll.

Camouflage Clothing

Die Bonus +2, Durability 1, Size 2, Structure 3, Availability ••

Effect: Camouflage clothing allows its wearer to blend in sufficiently with her surroundings for the untrained eye to pass over her completely. Effective camouflage must be catered to the environment; greens and browns in the woodlands, shades of gray in an urban area. Proper camouflage adds its bonus to rolls to remain unnoticed.

Climbing Gear

Die Bonus +2, Durability 3, Size 2, Structure 2, Availability ••

Effect: Climbing gear includes ropes, pulleys, handles, carabiners, hooks, and other assorted tools for scaling things. They serve a twofold purpose. First, they add their die bonus to the normal Strength + Athletics rolls for climbing. Second, if properly applied (with a Wits + Athletics roll), they prevent a character from falling more than 10 feet at a time.

Crowbar

Die Bonus +2, Durability 3, Size 2, Structure 4, Availability •

Effect: A crowbar is a curved piece of steel used to pry open shipping pallets, jammed doors, and other things a normal person would be incapable of doing by hand. It adds to any dice rolls used to establish leverage. When prying things open, it allows your character to ignore two points of Durability on the lock or barricade. A crowbar can also be used as a weapon (see p. 160).

Firearm Suppressor

Die Bonus +2, Durability 2, Size 1, Structure 2, Availability ••

Effect: A firearm suppressor is popularly and misleadingly referred to as a silencer in cinema and other media. It's a cylinder placed on the end of a gun barrel that changes and lightens the sound of a shot. A suppressor delivers many minor benefits, but offers two noteworthy advantages: short-range accuracy and concealment.

Increased Accuracy: A suppressed firearm travels through a longer barrel and the muzzle crown evens the expulsion of hot gasses that can slightly affect trajectory. In game terms, reduce a suppressed gun's damage rating by 1 due to the bullet's subsonic flight, but increase the attack dice pool by 2 when firing at short range.

Position Concealer: The sound changes dramatically, to the point where many people do not recognize the sound as that of a gunshot and are often unable to place where the lower tone came from. The muzzle flash is also reduced dramatically with a suppressor, helping to conceal a shooter's position. A character trying to identify a suppressed shot must roll Wits + Firearms – 2. Any character searching for the shooter using the gun's tells suffers a –2 penalty.

Gas Mask

Die Bonus +5, Durability 1, Size 2, Structure 3, Availability ••

Effect: A gas mask is a filtration device placed over the face that defends against noxious chemicals in the air. With a working gas mask, a character can stand minor toxins for as long as he needs, whereas other characters might take damage over time or require rolls to remain conscious. Powerful toxins may still require rolls. A gas mask adds five dice to these rolls.

Handcuffs

Die Bonus +2, Durability 4, Size 1, Structure 4, Availability •

Effect: A solid pair of steel handcuffs is made to restrain even a remarkably strong person. Applying handcuffs to an unwilling combatant is an additional option in a grapple. Roll Strength + Brawl – the opponent's Strength. Success means the handcuffs are where they need to be.

Breaking out of successfully applied handcuffs requires a Strength + Stamina – 4 roll. Each success on the roll reduces the Structure of the cuffs by 1. Cuffs reduced to 0 Structure snap open. Each attempt to escape causes 1 point of bashing damage.

A character may also try to finagle their hands out of the cuffs. This requires a Dexterity + Athletics – 4 roll. Success allows for an escape, and causes one point of bashing damage. Failure on this roll causes one point of lethal damage, as the thumb jerks out of socket.

Attempting to do anything requiring manual dexterity while cuffed incurs a –4 penalty, or –2 if the hands are cuffed in front. Witnesses are unlikely to behave favorably around a cuffed character, Social rolls against strangers incur a –3 penalty.

Many police forces and security companies now prefer heavy-duty plastic zip ties in place of handcuffs. While they're slightly less durable (Durability 3), they incur a –5 penalty from behind or –3 from the front, because they can be far tighter on the wrists. They can also be cut free.

Lockpicking Kit

Die Bonus +2, Durability 2, Size 2, Structure 2, Availability ••

Effect: A lockpicking kit consists of picks, tools, and rods for manipulating tumblers and opening locks. A good kit contains a wide array of tools to all but guarantee intrusion of an analog lock. With such a kit and at least a dot of Larceny, a character can pick a lock without a roll if time is not an issue. If time is an issue, the die bonus applies to the Dexterity + Larceny rolls. At Availability •, a character may procure a portable lockpick. It has Size 1, Structure 1, and is far more concealable. However, it only offers a +1 bonus and doesn't allow for picking without rolls since the kit realistically may not have the right tools for a given job.

A lockpicking kit only works on mechanical locks. Digital locks require more specific hacking and code prediction. A character may procure a digital lockpick at Availability •••, but it typically only works on one type of lock, such as the keycard locks used in hotels. Digital lockpicks can be Size 2, or Size 1 if crafted as an extension of a laptop computer or smartphone.

Mace (Pepper Spray)

Die Bonus +1, Durability 2, Size 1, Structure 1, Availability •

Effect: Pepper spray, or "mace" as it's commonly called, is a blend of chemicals (mostly capsaicin, the "hot" part of a chili pepper) in a small spray can, designed to debilitate threats. Civilians use these devices in self-defense; police use them to subdue unruly criminals. Use of pepper spray requires a Dexterity + Athletics, or Dexterity + Firearms roll. Each yard is a range category, so one yard is short

range, two yards is medium, three yards is long range. An opponent's Defense applies, but in normal wind conditions, the die bonus applies to the roll.

Upon the first attack, the victim suffers the Stunned Tilt (see p. 297). Someone affected by the spray suffers a –5 penalty to all actions. This penalty can be reduced by 1 for every turn spent rinsing the eyes with water. Commercial chemicals designed to cleanse the eyes will fully remove the penalty after a turn.

Rope

Die Bonus +1, Durability 2, Size 3, Structure 2, Availability •

Effect: Rope is one of the oldest tools known to humankind. It's never left prominent use because of its simple, efficient utility. A good rope adds its die bonus to relevant Crafts rolls and anywhere else it would assist. As a binding agent, it resists breaking with Durability (or effective Strength) equal to its user's Crafts score, due to the multiplicative effect of solid knots. An applicable Specialty adds one to the user's Crafts score for this purpose. Some interrogators, shibari fetishists, and boy scouts alike specialize in remarkable knot-tying, potentially rendering subjects completely and hopelessly immobile.

Stun Gun

Die Bonus 0, Durability 2, Size 1, Structure 2, Availability •, ••, or •••

Effect: A stun gun is designed to deliver an overwhelming amount of electricity to an assailant in order to shut down her muscles and send her to the ground. As a defensive item, this gives the would-be victim time to run or get help. As an offensive item, it leaves the victim ready for restraint or worse.

These devices come in two varieties (hand-held and ranged) and three intensities (1-3, corresponding to their Availabilities). The hand-held model has live leads on the edge of a handle and can be used as many as 50 times on one battery charge. The ranged model fires small, wired darts up to 15 feet away. While the ranged model has a similar battery life, it uses a compressed air cartridge that must be replaced after each shot.

Use of a handheld stun gun requires a Dexterity + Weaponry roll, penalized by the victim's Defense. The ranged model uses Dexterity + Firearms, also penalized by the victim's Defense. On a successful hit with either, the victim takes one point of lethal damage. The successes subtract from the victim's next dice pool. With the ranged version, the darts remain in the victim's body, adding three successes automatically each turn. They can be removed with a Strength + Stamina roll, with the initial successes penalizing the action. With the hand-held version, the attacker can attempt to maintain the shock, which takes a Strength + Weaponry, penalized by the greater of the opponent's Strength or Defense. Once the accumulated successes exceed the victim's Size, the victim collapses in neuro-muscular incapacitation. Once the shock ends, this lasts for (10 – victim's Stamina) in turns.

Social Equipment

Social actions deal with people. Social Equipment offers tools for leverage, influence, and manipulation.

Cash

Die Bonus +1 to +5, Durability 1, Size 2, Structure 1, Availability • to •••••

Effect: This represents a wad of cash, a briefcase of money, an offshore bank account number, or some other lump sum. It can't be reflected in the Resources Merit since it's not a regular income. However, it can be expended to offer a bonus equivalent to its Availability on any social roll where a bribe could benefit. It can also be expended to purchase one item of equal Availability. For more complex uses, consider it a single month's allotment of the same Resources.

Disguise

Die Bonus +1 to +3, Durability 1, Size 3, Structure 2, Availability • to •••

Effect: A good disguise goes a long way to help fit in with a strange group or go unnoticed in a crowd where one doesn't belong. Properly costumed for a situation, no rolls are required to blend into the crowd. Any rolls to actively detect the outsider suffer a penalty equal to the die bonus of the disguise; the disguised character also gains the bonus to remain hidden.

With a disguise, a character can emulate the first dot of a single Social Merit that would make sense within the scope of the scene. For example, it doesn't make money appear from thin air, but it would allow a character to get their drinks on a nonexistent tab, reflecting Resources •. This requires a Composure + Subterfuge to maintain in the face of anyone in the know, contested by the witness's Wits + Subterfuge. The die bonus of the disguise applies to the liar, but does not affect the witness.

Fashion

Die Bonus +1 to +3, Durability 1, Size 2, Structure 1, Availability • to •••••

Effect: Never underestimate the value of high fashion. Like a disguise, fashionable clothing allows a character to fit in. However, the point of fashion is to draw attention, not to fade into the crowd. As opposed to anonymity, fashion means being noticed. Note that the clothing chosen must be appropriate to the setting. Punk chic will not work at a Senator's fundraiser, for example. When improperly dressed, the die bonus applies as a penalty to all Social Skill rolls. The die bonus for Fashion is equal to half the Availability rating, rounded up.

Services

In addition to equipment, characters may want to procure services from other characters. Treat Availability of these services as the cost of securing the bonus on a single instant or reflexive action or for the entirety of an extended action or social maneuver.

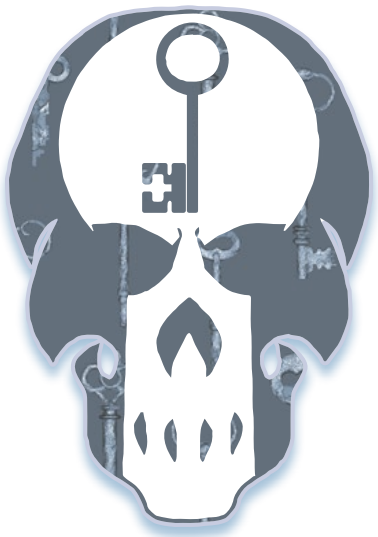
Note that some services listed could be highly illegal and should be limited in access to appropriate Merits. In many cases, illegal services only offer negligible die bonuses. Their real advantage comes from a layer of separation from legal authorities.

Service	Availability	Die Bonus
ACADEMICS		
Historical specialist consulting	•••	+3
Research assistance from grad students	••	+2
Translation of a dead language	•••	+2
COMPUTER		
Custom phone application	•••	+2
Digital image enhancement	••	+3
Graphic design/ forgery	••	+2
CRAFTS		
Antiquities restoration	•••	+2
Auto repair	••	+3
Custom equipment modifications	•••	+2
INVESTIGATION		
Consultation on evidence	•••	+3
Investigative photography	•••	+2
Private investigation/ background check	••	+2
MEDICINE		
Black market surgeon	••••	+3
Expert medical witness	••••	+2
Rush plastic surgery	••••	+2
OCCULT		
Esoteric consultant/ sage	••••	+3
Exorcist	•••	+2
Protective amulets or wards	••••	+1

Service	Availability	Die Bonus
POLITICS		
Campaign assistant	•••	+3
Cutting red tape (read: bribe)	•••	+2
Spin doctor	•••	+2
SCIENCE		
Fact-checking	••	+3
Falsifying research/ cover-up	•••	+2
Lab access	••	+2
ATHLETICS		
Meditative assistance	•••	+2
Personal trainer	•••	+3
Throwing an athletic competition	••••	+4
BRAWL		
Arrange underground boxing ring	•••	+2
Bodyguard service	•••	+3
Self-defense classes	•	+1
DRIVE		
Chauffer	••	+2
Stunt performance/ mock crash	•••	+3
Tour bus rental	••••	+2
FIREARMS		
Antique gun repair	•••	
Cover fire from gangs	•••	+3
Procuring smuggled military arms	••••	+2
LARCENY		
Breaking and entering	•••	+2
Security consulting	•••	+2
Stealing a protected relic	••••	+3

Service	Availability	Die Bonus
STEALTH		
Strategic distraction	●●●	+3
Tailing a suspect	●●●	+2
Targeted vandalism	●●	+2
SURVIVAL		
Field dress and preserve an animal	●●●	+1
Trail guide	●●	+3
Weatherproof a shelter	●●	+2
WEAPONRY		
Properly forged sword	●●●	+2
Identify wound from obscure weapon	●●●	+2
Training in archaic warfare	●●●	+2
ANIMAL KEN		
Buy a trained animal	●●●	+2
Identify animal droppings	●●	+1
Rule out natural causes of death	●●●	+2
EMPATHY		
"Good cop" interrogator	●●●	+2
Neutral arbitrator	●●●	+2
Therapy session	●●	+1
EXPRESSION		
Document forgery	●●●	+3
Ghostwriting	●●	+2
Motivational speech	●●●	+1

Service	Availability	Die Bonus
INTIMIDATION		
Anti-interrogation training	●●●●	+3
"Bad cop" interrogator	●●●	+2
Deprogramming therapy	●●●	+2
PERSUASION		
Defense attorney	●●●	+3
Hostage negotiator	●●●●	+3
Pickup artist	●●●	+2
SOCIALIZE		
Catering	●●●	or ●●●●
Elocution consulting	●●●	+1
Escort	●●●	+2
STREETWISE		
Arrange a rave or block party	●●●	+2
Black market access	●●	+2
Find crash space	●●	+1
Smuggling contraband	●●●	+1
SUBTERFUGE		
Amateur actor/actress	●●	+2
Con artistry	●●●	+2
Gambling ringer	●●●	+2



Objects

Objects such as lead pipes, walls, or cars have three traits in the Storytelling System: Durability, Size, and Structure. Mostly, these relate to how easy the object is to destroy.

Object Basics

Durability: How hard the object is to damage. Subtract Durability from any damage inflicted on the object. Durability has no effect against attacks that inflict aggravated damage.

Durability	Material
1	Wood, hard plastic, thick glass
2	Stone, aluminum
3	Steel, iron
+1	per reinforced layer

Size: How large the object is. Objects smaller than Size 1 can fit entirely in a person's palm.

Size	Object
1	Pistol
2	Crowbar, sawn-off shotgun
3	Assault rifle
5	Door
10	Sports car
15	SUV

Structure: An object's Structure equals its Durability + Size.

Damaging Objects

- **Damage:** Each point of damage removes a point of Structure. Objects do not differentiate between bashing and lethal damage.
- **Reduced Functionality:** Once it's taken more damage than its Durability, anyone using the object suffers a −1 die penalty.
- **Destruction:** When an object's Structure hits 0, it is destroyed.
- **Repair:** Repairing an object is typically an extended Wits + Crafts roll, with time interval and required successes determined by the Storyteller.

Krewes

No man is an island, or so the saying goes, and the Bound understand that better than most. Without their geist partners they would be anchored to their pasts, powerless before the inevitable pull of the Underworld. Without their fellow Sin-Eaters they would have no one to offer them guidance, protection, and camaraderie in their descent. Without the krewe, the Sin-Eater is just a lone idealist trying to singlehandedly restructure the monumental machinery of the afterlife.

Krewes have adopted many trappings over the decades, from esoteric societies of scholars to exclusive new personal training regimes for the spiritually inclined. They've gone by just as many names: krewes, mystic orders, sects, unions, guilds, cults and fraternities. No matter the name, they bring together the living, the dead, and those few individuals that straddle both worlds.

Krewe Traits

Krewes aren't just abstract philosophies and religious precepts: they are organizations composed of like-minded individuals pooling their collective resources. Instead of measuring themselves in terms of soul, mind, or physical limits, krewes are an accumulation of human and supernatural ability. In game terms, krewes are represented with Traits similar to those of the characters'.

Attributes

Like ghosts, a krewe uses the simplified Attributes Power, Finesse, and Resistance.

Power describes the krewe's ability to get things done itself, directly and without dissimulation. When the krewe needs to apply physical force in a turf war, participate in a large-scale ritual, or scour a city for a single artifact, it rolls Power.

Finesse describes the social and intangible leverage the krewe has. When a krewe needs to blackmail a city councilor, come to an armistice with local gangs, or find a guy that knows a guy, it uses Finesse.

Resistance describes the krewe's loyalty and commitment to its own philosophy. If the krewe needs to resist

infiltration, participate in the sort of ceremony that normal people could never stomach, or remain ideologically pure, it rolls Resistance.

Krewe Attributes

- **Rating:** Attributes are rated from 1-5 dots. Krewes with high Esotery Traits (p.176) may have Attributes rated at 6 or more dots.
- **Use in Actions:** Most krewe actions use Attribute + Esotery as their dice pool.
- **Basic Competency:** All krewes receive one free dot in every Attribute.

Merits

Krewe Merits function similarly to those of individual characters. Merits represent the collective capabilities of the krewe rather than a generalized statement about it. A krewe with five dots of Resources doesn't mean every member is affluent, just as three dots of Status (City Hall) doesn't mean every member of the krewe is a government employee. Instead these refer to the krewe's ability to pool together enough resources to make that purchase even if it means putting a second mortgage on a few members' houses, or the fact that a few celebrants are also in the same fraternal order as the mayor.

Every krewe has a custom Mystery Cult Initiation Merit associated with membership (p. 87).

Krewe Merits

- **Rating:** Merits are rated from 1-5 dots.
- **Not a Krewe Action:** Using a Merit is *not* a krewe action, and is not subject to the same limits as krewe actions (p. 178).
- **Dice Pool:** Merits with the Krewe tag have an entry telling you what dice pool, if any, to roll.

Doctrines

Doctrines are phrased as goals, beliefs, and dreams that the krewe works toward. Acting in accordance with Doctrines earns Krewe Beats, which allow the players to improve the strength and mystical puissance of their krewe. Doctrines are powerful, but restrictive: breaking Doctrines leads to doubt and unrest within the krewe, and they are difficult to change without sacrificing the very power they helped the krewe to build.

Doctrines

- **Pillars of Faith:** Krewes have three Doctrines, phrased as active tenets of the krewe's faith.
- **Krewe Beats:** At the end of the chapter, for every Doctrine the krewe has actively lived by or advanced, the krewe takes a Krewe Beat. The entire group, collectively, decides whether the krewe has advanced its Doctrines this session.
- **Redefining Doctrines:** The krewe may sacrifice a dot of Esotery to rewrite one of their Doctrines. Doctrines may also be redefined in the wake of a Schism (p.182)
- **Broken Doctrines:** If the krewe takes an action that directly violates one or more Doctrines, or if a leading member of the krewe (a player's character, or a Storyteller character with Mystery Cult Initiation •••+) openly violates a Doctrine, the krewe gains the Shaken Faith Condition (p. 183).
- **Secret Violations:** If a leading member of the krewe violates a Doctrine and covers it up, they gain the Obsession Condition (p. 302) centered on keeping their secret. When that Condition is resolved, the krewe gains the Shaken Faith Condition.

Virtue and Creed

If Doctrines define the works a krewe undertakes, Virtue and Creed describe the spiritual pillars of their faith. Creed represents easy, surface-level devotion, the sort of thing that makes celebrants feel better but seldom effects any lasting change. Virtue, on the other hand, represents the true spiritual bedrock: the difficult, painful self-examination that ultimately makes you a better person.

For example, a Pilgrim krewe has the Creed of Hopeful and the Virtue of Loyal. The krewe takes comfort in sharing their vision of the Underworld without actually challenging their own beliefs, but when they do make a promise to aid someone they will crawl through hell for them.

For the living, affirming their krewe's Virtue and Creed are spiritually refreshing, but the dead understand how much being included helps anchor them to this world. To a ghost, fulfilling a krewe's Creed is as nourishing as being remembered by the living, while fulfilling its Virtue is a rush unlike anything else.

Virtue and Creed

When a krewe *fulfills* its Creed, the group collectively takes an action that is in accordance with it. When it fulfills its Virtue, it take *meaningful* action in accordance with it, in spite of risk or difficulty.

- **Creed:** Fulfill Creed: All participating celebrants regain 1 Willpower; once per scene.
- **Virtue:** Fulfill Virtue: All participating celebrants regain *all* Willpower; once per chapter.
- **Essence Substitute:** Ghost celebrants may regain Essence instead of Willpower when fulfilling the krewe's Creed or Virtue.

Congregation

Where a living character has Health and a ghost has Corpus, a krewe has Congregation. This Trait measures the unity, cohesiveness, and overall well-being of the krewe as a group. Damaged Congregation represents celebrants pulling away from the krewe, doubting its mission, or even being injured in battle.

Congregation

- **Starting Value:** 5 + Resistance

Esotery

Esotery represents the symbolic strength and faith of the assembled krewe. When a krewe first forms it is a tenuous thing, more a collection of impermanent and material alliances than a matter of spirituality. As Esotery increases, the Krewe's beliefs and practices find purchase in the structures of the Underworld, gaining power from the symbolic resonances much as a geist does when it drinks of the Rivers.

Esotery ranges from one to 10 dots, but krewes with more than five dots of Esotery are rare. Most people find it hard to both keep up the sacrifices necessary for the journey and manage their own private affairs. Those few krewes that do possess six or more dots have found niches for themselves in the current status quo, realizing it's easier to not rock the boat.

Newly formed krewes find even a single project leaves them burning the candle at both ends, while larger krewes can attempt to make the afterlife a better place while simultaneously pursuing revenge against those who've wronged them. Mechanically, a krewe is limited in the number of actions they may attempt based on their Esotery.

However, if a krewe finds they really must begin another project beyond what they're capable of they may push themselves past their normal limits. A krewe who wishes to start a project past their limit takes 1 lethal damage for every roll they make to generate Effort.

Esotery

- **Krewe Actions:** This indicates how many *krewe actions* (p. 178) the krewe can undertake in a story.
- **Task Limits:** This indicates how many *Tasks* (p. 179) a krewe action can comprise.
- **Attribute Maximum:** This indicates the maximum value of the krewe's Attributes (p. 174).
- **Krewe Regalia:** This indicates the number of *Regalia* (p. 177) the krewe can have.

Esotery	Krewe Actions	Task Limits	Attribute Maximum	Krewe Regalia
1	1	3	5	0
2	1	3	5	1
3	2	5	7	1
4	2	5	7	2
5	3	7	9	2
6	3	7	9	2
7	4	9	12	3
8	4	9	12	3
9	5	9	15	3
10	5	10	15	4

Ceremonies

Krewe Ceremonies represent the core rites an initiate of the faith is expected to be able to perform. Just as any Catholic priest can perform Mass, any hierophant of the Bone Collective can perform the Diviner's Jawbone.

Krewe Ceremonies

- **By Archetype:** Krewes begin with a one-, two-, and three-dot Ceremony determined by their archetype, and with the Bestow Regalia Ceremony.
- **Further Ceremonies:** Krewe Experiences may be spent to buy additional krewe Ceremonies.
- **Initiation:** Any krewe member whose Mystery Cult Initiation rating equals or exceeds a krewe Ceremony's may perform that Ceremony.

Regalia

As krewes accrue mystic significance, they develop ritualistic trappings and roles that reflect their shared mythology of how the afterlife should be. Regalia are specially created Conditions that reflect a deeper mystical anchoring to the philosophies that each krewe espouses. By reenacting a key tenet of their faith through a Ceremony, the krewe may crown a celebrant with one of its Regalia.

Creating a Regalia

- **Base Condition:** Start with the Regalia Condition (p. 302). Then choose a Regalia Effect from the list below.
- **Unique:** A krewe may only have one of each Regalia Effect. Only one character may have the same Regalia at any time.

Sample Regalia: Orpheus the Lover

The members of the Coven of the Rose are something of classics nerds and incorporated Orphic motifs into their own krewe mythology. If the Underworld exists, couldn't an individual like Orpheus have existed as well? When a celebrant of the krewe dons the Regalia of Orpheus the Lover, he sees the world in the hopeful light of new love. They find ancient songs flow easily from their mouth even if they have no prior training in music.

Effect

- Improve your impression level (p.154) with other Sin-Eaters by 1.
- Gain 8-again on rolls using Expression.

Possible Sources

- Regalia Ceremony

Resolution

- Act in opposition to a krewe Doctrine, Virtue, or Creed.
- Gain half of the krewe's Esotery in automatic successes on a roll using Expression.
- Resolving this Condition grants a Krewe Beat.

The Bigger Picture

Unlike most actions, a krewe action spans geographic space and time. A member of the krewe may be hustling a store owner on one end of town for access to the steam tunnels under their business while another, dead member shadows a local doctor of whom the krewe is suspicious. The Sin-Eaters might be spending all their attention on scaring off a local drug dealer dealing ghost cocaine, so who is running this job while they're occupied? A krewe is a many-headed hydra able to focus its attention on several problems at the same time, but that doesn't mean its members can't be stretched too thin or make major mistakes.

Krewe actions aren't just a series of rolls to see if the Sin-Eaters' minions performed a task while the camera was focused elsewhere. Krewe actions should be immersed in the world just as much as the central scenes of the chronicle are. Which member of the krewe is in charge of this if all the Sin-Eaters are too busy to help out? Are they alone or did they bring help with them? Do they have any experience trying to do anything like this? These sorts of questions help build a sense of interconnectedness between the characters and the krewe. The world is turning outside of the main action and krewe members aren't frozen in stasis waiting for the characters to interact with them.

Regalia Effects

- **Glory:** The character gains 8-again on rolls using a specific Skill related to the mythic concept. Resolve: Gain half of the krewe's Esotery (rounded down) as automatic successes to a single roll using the chosen Skill.

The Keeper's Child Regalia, an archetype of ghostly understanding, gives 8-again on Empathy rolls.

- **Eminence:** A Sin-Eater, ghost, or geist member of the krewe donning the Regalia gains +1 Rank (the living and others who don't have an effective Rank are treated as Rank 1). Resolve: Give all lower-Ranked entities that can see you the Beaten Down Tilt.

When the ghosts of the Dead Letters krewe invoke the Regalia of the Bear Mother on one of their own, she is treated as a Rank 3 ghost.

- **Power:** The character may access a Key related to the krewe's mythology as if it were an innate Key for the duration of a scene. Resolve: Unlock a Haunt with the Key *without* gaining the Doomed Condition.

The All Souls krewe often invokes the regalia of its founder's second death to impart the Key of Blood to the wearer of the Regalia.

Krewe Action

Krewe actions are projects agreed on and planned out by a krewe, to achieve an outcome that a single person couldn't normally do alone. A krewe action is always a long-term project; an opposed roll or an activation roll for a krewe Social Merit never count as krewe actions. The core of a krewe action is the generation of *Effort* by members of the krewe undertaking smaller steps of the action. Sometimes a krewe action enables individual characters to do something big on their own, while other times the outcome of the action is all that is required. Effort contextualizes the outcomes of krewe actions, showing the difference between a trail of broken lives behind the krewe or a clean project where nobody was hurt.

This system is about bringing the full power and resources of the krewe to bear on a situation. This is usually a means to an end of furthering the krewe's Doctrines. Perhaps the krewe is looking to rescue a particular ghost that has been dragged down unwillingly into the Underworld, or the characters are calling on the krewe to locate a living relative of a particularly fearsome Reaper. Maybe the krewe just really doesn't like somebody and wants them to suffer.

Step One: Determine the Desired Outcome

The first step of a krewe action is for the krewe to decide just what they are trying to accomplish. Are they looking to dig up dirt on a local politician? Find the Avernian Gate that's letting Reapers out into the world? Uncover a lost Ceremony in the depths of the British Museum archives? Having a clear goal makes the rest of the process much easier, so make sure everyone is on the same page before going any farther.

Step Two: Determine Complexity

Small actions that could easily be completed by a character in a scene or two, such as making sure a film team of ghost hunters doesn't disturb the dead, are relatively simple. Herculean tasks that are the all-consuming focus of the krewe throughout an entire story, like cementing a new, permanent cultural practice of sacrifice to the dead among the city's forensic investigators and morticians, are considerably more complex.

Complexity

- **Rating:** The Complexity of a krewe action is set by the Storyteller, with input from the players. Use the table below as a guideline.

Complexity

Complexity	Example
1	Locate the anchor of a ghost famous in life. Influence the vote of a city councilor. Discover the last living descendent of a recently deceased ghost. Expand the membership of the krewe within the local population.
3	Locate the Anchor of a ghost who was unknown or unremarkable in life. Induct a local politician into the mysteries of the krewe. Discover the last living descendent of a ghost that died years ago. Expand the krewe's influence and territory across a district of the city.
5	Locate the Anchor of a ghost who went unrecorded by history or intentionally purged from it. Draw multiple powerful or wealthy local players into the krewe's ranks. Discover the last living descendent of a ghost that died generations ago. Establish multiple branches of the krewe throughout the region.
7	Locate the former Anchor of a geist that has long since shed their mortal identity. Elevate a true believer of the krewe to a position of national attention or stardom. Discover the last living descendant of a ghost whose entire bloodline was thought killed. Expand the krewe's membership to include adherents throughout a major region.
10	Locate and acquire the former Anchor or the closest thing to it of one of the Kerberoi. Infiltrate a national scale organization like a corporation or intelligence agency with several true believers in the krewe. Discover the last living descendent of a ghost that has shed most of its identity in the Ocean of Fragments. Unify the disparate Bound and dead of a region under the krewe's beliefs.

Step Three: Determine the Tasks

The krewe must determine how it are going to go about accomplishing its goal. Questions to consider while creating tasks are "Where did they send him?" "What is she hoping to do here?" and "How is this going to help?" These are the basic leading questions that help establish the situation, but pay attention to what details the krewe provides and ask questions to elaborate on them. If no one can come up with any ideas for how to accomplish their goal, or if it seems like accomplishing it would require more steps than the krewe's Task limit, that may be a sign that the goal needs to be split into multiple, smaller krewe actions, or that the first step is a krewe action to gather the information they need to actually tackle this goal.

Tasks

- **Defining Tasks:** Define a number of Tasks equal to the action's Complexity.

Step Four: Establish the Structure

Now that you know what the steps of the action are, it's time to translate those into game mechanics. Is the Task contested? How long will it take? What are the relevant dice pools? Do the Tasks have to be undertaken

"I Want to be the Ghost President!"

Complexity is only one element of gauging the feasibility of a krewe action. Everyone at the table must *also* agree that the chosen Tasks make logical sense for getting the krewe from where they are now to where they want to be. In other words, it's not enough for a small krewe with no political influence to say "We want to win a presidential election, so our Tasks are 'get nominated (Intelligence + Politics), name a running mate (Wits + Manipulation), and win the election (Presence + Subterfuge).'" That might be enough to win a small-town mayoral race, but national campaigns require vastly more money and political clout.

Particularly big goals are usually a series of krewe actions, laying the groundwork for a final, big push to complete the ultimate goal. Ultimately, it's up to the group as a whole to decide whether a course of action is feasible — and if not, to figure out what they need to do first.

Beware Extended Actions

When determining the structure of Tasks, avoid the temptation to make them extended actions, even if they're things that would take a long time. Krewe actions are already effectively a kind of extended action; putting another extended action within them rapidly bogs things down with excessive rolling.

in a specific order, and if so, what happens if they fail in a key step?

Structure

For each Task, decide the following:

- **Action:** Simple or contested.
- **Time Required:** Determined by the Storyteller in consultation with the players, but should be at least an hour.
- **Task Order:** Based on the described Tasks, determine which, if any, must be done first.
- **Dice Pool:** The default dice pool for Tasks is (relevant krewe Attribute) + Esotery. If a player's character or major Storyteller character undertakes the Task, they may use their own dice pool most relevant to the Task. For contested Tasks, the Storyteller, in consultation with the players, determines the opposition dice pool.

Step Five: Generate Effort

Effort is the fruit of the krewe's labor. Each point of Effort represents Tasks successfully performed to ensure the desired outcome. Failed Tasks instead generate complications when the krewe action is resolved.

Generate Effort

Action: Determined by Task

Dice Pool: Determined by Task

Suggested Modifiers: No relevant skill set (−1 to −3), working with a krewe Leader (+2), violating krewe Doctrine (−5), being watched by the authorities (living or dead) (−2), thorough planning (+1), limited timeframe (−2), requires specialty equipment (−1 to −3), potential breaking point (–1 to –4)

Success: The krewe generates a point of Effort.

Exceptional: The krewe generates *two* points of Effort and creates a Condition relevant to the task. Connected and Leveraged are almost always appropriate, but any Condition the Storyteller deems appropriate is fine.

Failure: The krewe generates no Effort, and the Storyteller applies one Complication immediately. If the Task was a prerequisite for other Tasks, those Tasks suffer a −2 penalty.

Dramatic: Additionally, the krewe gains a negative Condition of the Storyteller's choice. If the Task was a prerequisite for other Tasks, the krewe lowers its Task Limit for this action by 1 as its members scramble to find alternate Tasks.

Effort

- **Exclusive:** Effort can only be applied to the krewe action for which it was generated. Effort lasts until the end of the story.
- **Complete Action:** If the krewe has accumulated Effort for the scale of the project, they successfully complete the krewe action.
- **Spending Effort:** A character may spend Effort, one for one, to gain temporary dots of a Social Merit related to the krewe action. Retainer or Staff, for example, after calling in aid from specialists in the field that the krewe contacted. These temporary dots last for a chapter.

Step Six: Repeat

Once one Task has been resolved, repeat Steps Four and Five for the remaining tasks.

Step Seven: Resolve Action

Once the krewe has resolved all its Tasks, the krewe action is finished. Krewe actions always succeed unless they're abandoned, so at this stage it's about determining the cost of the final outcome.

Jesus Take the Wheel

Most Tasks in a krewe action are abstracted to a single action for a reason: They're the sort of drudge work that isn't terribly interesting to play out. But sometimes, a more exciting Task presents itself: stealing a potent Memento from a rival krewe, attacking some necromancer's hideout to free his imprisoned ghosts, or a tense negotiation with a rival krewe.

In these cases, it's fine to "zoom in" on the players' characters as they tackle the Task directly. Rather than resolving the Task with a single roll, play the whole thing out using the normal rules — when the Task is over, the Storyteller assesses how well the group did and determines whether that counts as a success or not (or, in more extreme cases, an exceptional success or a dramatic failure.)

Yes, But...

A krewe action is a powerful thing. With enough celebrants, most mundane actions will succeed eventually, so failure becomes a question of time and stakes. Don't imagine failure as just being the opposite of the krewe getting what they want — play with the results. Maybe failure in a certain situation means a member of the krewe does manage to complete their part of the project, but he is marked for reprisal by a rival krewe. Maybe the krewe succeeds in figuring out the identity of a ghost, but not in time to stop their last Anchor from being destroyed.

Failure doesn't mean that the krewe can't succeed, it just means who and what they lose along the way is going to be more severe then they originally planned.

Running Krewe Actions

Generating a point of Effort may take as little as a few brief lines of conversation or it may stretch out over weeks, such as hunting down one specific haunted house based only on urban legends. In these cases, determining what information a character present in such a scenario may be lacking is vital. Somebody that has been out for hours may not know about the growing unease in the krewe or even the death of one of their krewemates.

Pace the generation of Effort out over the rest of the story, especially in situations where the characters are not directly participating in a krewe action. Use krewe action scenes as a way to provide dramatic pauses or reorientations to aspects of the story that have been neglected.

Additionally, if the krewe system becomes too much the center focus it can be limited outside the narrative with Effort only able to be generated once per session, allowing for it to happen as a sort of "B plot" like the non-linear storytelling of many popular television shows. Players see a small sampling of how the krewe is going about their plans, but don't see the final payoff of such action until the climax of the story.

Resolve Action

- **Effort:** If the krewe generated Effort equal to the action's Complexity, the action is completed successfully with no further complications.
- **Shortfall:** For every point of Effort short of the action's Complexity, the Storyteller adds a number of complications equal to the difference.

Bringing a Krewe to a Knife Fight

What happens when a Sin-Eater comes to a duel with her entire krewe backing her up? If an antagonist doesn't have a way of fighting a small crowd of people that are probably armed, it's safe to assume the best course of action is to use Down and Dirty Combat, with the krewe providing a Teamwork bonus to the character's combat dice pool equal to the krewe's Power.

If the antagonist can fight back against such a large group, or happened to bring a similarly well-armed group of people, treat it as a krewe vs. krewe action with a time frame of seconds or minutes as the brawl rages.

Complications

- A member of the krewe is badly injured or killed carrying out the plan. The krewe gains the Casualties condition.
- Some within the krewe begin to question their motivations. The krewe gains the Shaken Faith condition.
- The action severely taxes the resources and goodwill of the celebrants. The krewe suffers 2 lethal damage.
- The krewe makes an enemy of somebody that was negatively affected by the outcome of the project.
- It required significantly more resources than originally planned: the krewe is Indebted to someone who picked up the slack.
- The krewe comes to the attention of someone higher in the social food chain.
- The krewe undergoes a schism.
- The action revealed a deeper problem of which the krewe was previously unaware.
- The project has its intended outcome but unintended side effects. The krewe gains a negative Condition such as Leveraged or Notoriety.

Krewe vs. Krewe

Sin-Eaters sometimes find themselves facing off against other Bound over philosophical incompatibilities. Sometimes both sides agree like rational adults that the only way to resolve those difficulties is to wipe each other off the face of the earth. When a krewe goes to war, it's rarely the kind of the battle that ends after a single firefight. Krewes are multifaceted organizations made up of beings

that have defied death itself, and faith is a substance somehow harder to completely destroy then the Bound that spread it. While some Bound subscribe to the "Just to be Safe" doctrine of overwhelming force, most krewes find the idea more than a little distasteful. When the average krewe goes to war with another organization they don't rely (exclusively) on violence, but instead go after the cohesion of the krewe that keeps them unified in their faith.

Destroying a krewe or similar organization is a krewe action with no set Scale. Every point of Effort generated on such an action deals 1 lethal damage to the enemy krewe's Congregation. The krewe can continue the war with the other krewe until they're destroyed or the leadership decides the price is too high. If a krewe action succeeds in generating Effort equal to the enemy krewe's Congregation it immediately inflicts the Coup d'Etat Condition (p. 183) on that krewe.

These sorts of wars are rarely one sided, however. Krewe vs. krewe actions are contested, with the winner of the roll gaining the Effort. In conflicts with higher-Esotery krewes the lower-rank krewe may elect to begin a second krewe action to continue opposing the offensive. If the smaller krewe doesn't elect to begin another action, the rest of the higher-Esotery krewe's Tasks are unopposed rolls with a penalty equal to half the smaller krewe's Power. Complications for failing these rolls often come in the form of the Casualties (p. 183) or Shaken Faith (p. 183) Conditions.

War rarely ends well for any krewe, especially those that are equally matched and focusing exclusively on destroying each other. The world is full of stories of krewes going to war, only to ensure the mutual destruction of both sides. Most successful wars happen when a krewe maneuvers the conflict to happen during a time when their victims are stretched too thin dealing with their own agendas to fight back effectively.

Harm, Healing, and Schism

Rather than directly mapping to physical damage, Congregation tracks how devout the krewe's celebrants are to the cause. Bashing damage indicates a general slipping of religious attitudes, observant but distracted from the faith by material concerns. Lethal damage reflects a true unease with the current state of the krewe and its leadership. Aggravated damage is outright apostasy and flight from the organization as celebrants fear for their lives or are horrified at the actions they're being asked to commit. Organizations are slower to heal than the scars inflicted on the bodies of individuals. Without direct action to bolster the faith or numbers of the krewe, organizations can only wait for tempers to cool, rumors to die, and the faithful to return to the flock. Congregation recovers at the following rate:

- **Bashing:** One point per two days.
- **Lethal:** One point per week.
- **Aggravated:** One point per month.

Once a krewe's Congregation track is filled with lethal damage, it enters a schism: a tumultuous period where the core ideologies of the krewe are in jeopardy. The krewe's leadership must act quickly to resolve the issue, or the krewe may disband. The krewe has three options for mitigating a schism.

- **Purge:** The krewe may elect to silence dissent with a show of force. The krewe permanently loses a dot of Power, but clears all damage from Congregation. Most people find this a little drastic and it tends to have the bad result of only encouraging dissent; the krewe gains the Notoriety Condition.
- **Resolve:** The krewe comes to a resolution between the leadership and dissenting members of the krewe. The krewe loses a dot of Finesse but clears all damage from Congregation. The krewe gains the Leveraged condition.
- **Splinter:** The krewe allows those that wish to leave the krewe to do so. The krewe loses a dot of Resistance, but clears all damage from Congregation. The krewe gains the Diminished condition.

If the krewe leadership cannot come to an agreement over the best course of action, or simply decides to let the schism continue, then the krewe slowly implodes on itself. The krewe loses the ability to perform krewe actions and takes 1 aggravated damage. If the situation remains unaddressed, the krewe continues to take 1 aggravated damage a day as celebrants begin leaving en masse. Once the Congregation track is completely filled with aggravated damage, the krewe disbands. The characters retain all dots of Merits under Sanctity of Merits but lose all dots of Esotery and permanently lose access to their former krewe's Regalia. If the characters come together to form a new krewe, then it will be a different creature as they have turned their backs on those avenues to power they originally cultivated.

Krewe Conditions

Krewe Conditions represent factors affecting the organization and its ability to function cohesively as a whole. Some of them only reflect the actual circumstances of a few members of the krewe, but they nonetheless have wide repercussions to the wider group. Krewe Conditions are gained when the krewe's Congregation track is filled with damage or as a complication from a particularly poorly thought out krewe Action.

The following is only a small sample of the sorts of Conditions that may befall a krewe, and Storytellers shouldn't feel limited to just assigning these Conditions but should use these as a guide to improvising Conditions that reflect the story.

CASUALTIES

Members of the krewe are hurt or even hospitalized.

Effects

- The krewe suffers a −2 penalty to Power.
- When the krewe gains this Condition, choose one named Storyteller character celebrant who is among the injured.

Possible Sources

- A dramatic failure on a krewe action.
- The krewe is involved in a serious brawl.
- Somebody tries to kill a member of the krewe.

Resolution

- Declaring that the named Storyteller character has died of their wounds (or been permanently destroyed or lost to the Underworld, for a ghost). All players must consent to this resolution.
- The krewe undertakes no krewe actions for an entire chapter (not including the chapter in which the Condition was inflicted).

DIMINISHED

Demoralized and running frightened, the krewe has had the fight beaten out of them by some spectacular show of force.

Effects

- At the beginning of every krewe action, a member of the krewe's leadership must spend 1 Willpower.

Possible Sources

- A complication on a krewe action.
- A concerted effort by enemies to undermine the krewe's faith.
- Resolving a schism.

Resolution

- The krewe fulfills its Virtue.
- The krewe successfully completes a krewe action with no complications.
- The krewe gains a point of Esotery.

SHAKEN FAITH (PERSISTENT)

The krewe's faith is troubled by something, and now they're questioning everything they believe in.

Effects

- Whenever krewe members fulfill the krewe's Virtue, they regain only a single point of Willpower *or* Plasm/Essence.
- At the start of each chapter, the Storyteller rolls (10 − Resistance) dice and keeps any successes. Once she's accumulated 10 successes, replace this Condition with either the Coup d'Etat or Heresy Condition. If another action inflicts this Condition a second (or subsequent) time, immediately replace it with either the Coup d'Etat or Heresy Condition.

Possible Sources

- The krewe learns of one of its leaders having violated a Doctrine.
- The krewe's Congregation track is filled with bashing damage.

Resolution

- The krewe gains a dot of Esotery.
- The problem grows worse and is replaced with the Coup d'Etat or Heresy Condition.

COUP D'ETAT (PERSISTENT)

The krewe's leadership has burnt enough goodwill among the krewe that a new potential leader has stepped forward to take up the reins — whether they like it or not. A coup may be a bloodless power play, or it could be a bloody civil war.

Effect

- All krewe actions are reduced to a chance die. In addition, once per chapter the Storyteller may introduce a complication related to the coup: an assassination attempt, a block on the characters' Social Merits, etc.

Possible Sources

- The krewe's Congregation track is filled with lethal damage.
- The Shaken Faith condition worsens.
- Another organization tries to undermine the krewe.

Resolution

- The krewe leadership disbands the krewe.
- The characters purge the disloyal and reestablish their dominance over the krewe.
- A larger threat forces the krewe to unify — at least for the time being.

Beat

- The characters are abandoned by their disloyal krewemates.

Heresy (Persistent)

The road to hell is paved with good intentions, and no matter how well-intentioned a krewe is, they can still lose their way.

Effect

- A krewe suffering from Heresy gains a temporary Doctrine that describes their specific heresy. Whenever the krewe indulges the Heresy and gains a Beat through this heretical Doctrine, the Storyteller makes a note of it.
- All tasks in krewe actions become contested rolls of Attribute + Esotery versus (the number of Beats generated by the Heresy Doctrine). If the Heresy wins, it gains Effort instead of the krewe action. If the Heresy has more Effort than the krewe action when all the tasks are resolved, the Storyteller replaces one of the krewe's Doctrines with the Heresy.

Possible Sources

- The krewe's Congregation track is filled with aggravated damage.
- The Shaken Faith condition grows worse.
- The krewe experiences a religious epiphany without the characters present.

Resolution

- The krewe undergoes a Schism.
- The heretical branch of the krewe is destroyed.
- The Heresy is adopted by the krewe as a new Doctrine.

Beat

- The krewe fulfills the heretical Doctrine.

Krewes and the Chronicles of Darkness

The krewe action system offers a new toy in the Storytelling system toolkit that Storytellers may want to import to other games in the line. Any small to mid-sized organization — a vampire's blood cult, a police precinct, or a Russian *mafiya* — can be given Traits using this system, with minimal modifications

For most games, the basic Attributes and Advantages of a krewe need little alteration, though large organizations are most likely made up of krewe-sized departments under common leadership. You might also wish to rename "Congregation" to something more appropriate, like "Membership."

Instead of Esotery, mundane organizations have Standing indicating the group's relative scale and importance within their field. Organizations still create Regalia, but they tend to reflect the mundane or particular strangeness of each group such as "Owners of the Eastside" or "Firstborn Amongst Equals" rather than a defining mythological concept of the new Underworld.

Ghosts

Imagine waking up at home, with no idea how you got there. Your mind has trouble grasping onto events, and your memories are full of holes. It feels like you're suffering dementia or a stroke, but it's much worse than that. You know something happened, something terrible, but you have no idea what. You can't touch anything; objects may as well be made of smoke. Your loved ones ignore you. Worse than ignore you — they don't even know you're right there in front of them, screaming at them, begging them to notice you.

This is what it is to be a ghost.

Whenever something is destroyed, it leaves an afterimage formed of *ephemera*, the non-manifested form of Plasm. Ephemera is naturally insubstantial and invisible (a state occultists and the Bound call being "in Twilight"), so most people have no idea it even exists. These afterimages last as long as the living still feel loss over the absence of whatever was destroyed — fueled by the instinctive expectation for something to be present while knowing it won't be, which shores up the afterimage's ephemeral form. Eventually, once no one is unwittingly maintaining it, the afterimage collapses through the nearest Avernian Gate. These portals, also in Twilight, stand in every place associated with death: sites stained by murders or disease, quiet, lonely places, as well as every graveyard, morgue, crematorium, and even pet cemetery in the world. The gates lead to the Underworld, a realm formed entirely of ephemera, where the forgotten detritus of the living world is slowly eroded by the trickling movement of Plasm, carried down the Rivers to the Ocean of Fragments, piece by microscopic piece.

Nothing is exempt from this cycle, though most broken objects last seconds at most in Twilight before joining the heaps of trash clogging the Underworld's arteries. Buildings and possessions of great emotional significance, or those lost in a deeply traumatic way, can last much longer, at least until someone builds over their original footprint and the living begin to move on. The sites of famous disasters linger in Twilight, haunted with ghostly populations that resist new development with their powers. Eventually, though, even they will fade and fall to the Great Below. Everything does.

When the afterimage is an object, a building, or even a family pet, it is of interest only to Sin-Eaters and occultists capable of perceiving things in Twilight. Some harbor dormant powers that can erupt naturally or by supernatural prompting — a newly built suburban home fills with the smell of the squat that burned down on the same site after a medium performs a ceremony, or a loyal hound instinctively protects its master even after death — but most go unnoticed until the Underworld claims them.

When the afterimage is a *person*, suffering ensues.

The Nature of Ghosts

When a living person dies, she leaves herself behind. Ghosts aren't, strictly speaking, the deceased people they resemble. Rather, they're copies — copies with varying degrees of fidelity, who gradually evolve and change over time after their death. How closely a ghost resembles her former self depends on how healthy her living sense of self was. Many ghosts are every bit as self-aware as a living person, although often with gaps in their memories they aren't aware of unless prompted. More are trapped in a train of thought, reliving their death or another significant memory over and over again. Within that loop, they're as sapient as anyone else, but they lack the capacity to break out of their cycle, and frequently don't even remember that they've lived this moment dozens or hundreds of times. A few aren't even humanoid, just shapeless forms of ephemera that briefly change into body parts or objects in response to their broken thoughts.

A ghosts' ephemeral form degrades over time, but ghosts can replenish themselves with *Essence*. Combination currency and food for the dead, Essence is the

Poor Unfortunate Souls

Although Bound and mortal occultists alike often call ghosts "souls," they're not. Souls appear just before birth and vanish shortly after death, and ghosts don't possess them. In fact, a living person deprived of their soul suffers long-term effects strikingly similar to the damage to many ghosts' personalities. Someone without a soul can leave a ghost, and the existence of ghostly buildings and animals underscores the point.

Some occultists aware of the distinction cling to beliefs that the soul moves on to an afterlife closer to their expectations than the Underworld is, or justify their enslavement or abuse of ghosts with the difference, but just because a ghost isn't a soul, doesn't mean he isn't a person.

psychic energy created by memory and emotion. When a ghost first appears, she is sustained by *Anchors*; the sympathetic ties to particular people, places, and things from her living days that shore up her identity and feed her Essence. When her husband grieves, when teenagers tell stories about Chop-'em-Up Charlie who haunts the old mill, or even when loved ones visit her grave, her Anchors produce Essence and hold off the Underworld for another day. If something should destroy her ephemeral body, it will reform at the closest Anchor as long as she still retains any Essence. Away from an Anchor, ghosts' ephemeral forms bleed Essence faster (which causes pain), so ghosts haunt their Anchors except in desperate circumstances.

Most ghosts don't have the power to do anything but lurk, unseen and unheard, in Twilight near an Anchor. Some learn to possess their Anchors, slumber inside them, or become briefly visible. These *Manifestations* only work on Anchors — one ghost could appear as an apparition to his wife, but not to anyone else. Another comes to inhabit the car that killed her in a DUI.

Less powerful ghosts have specific Anchors, while more powerful ones that have descended to and returned from the Underworld have more general Anchors; a geist called the Candle Man can inhabit any flame or possess any third-degree burn victim.

Only the weakest Manifestations work on an Anchor without preparation; most need the ghost to prepare its future host carefully. Mortal necromancers and the Bound alike summon or exorcise ghostly Manifestations by creating or destroying the appropriate setting for the ghost. Would-be exorcists spread salt and burn ghosts' bones, while mediums hold séances with prized belongings of the dead as offerings.

A ghost able to protect his Anchors can remain safely in the living world for centuries. Some try to move on to alternative forms of an Anchor, with mixed success: for example, haunting the building constructed after the original Anchor is demolished. Once a ghost has no Anchors remaining, and the last of her Essence bleeds away, the Underworld beckons. She feels pushed, as though borne along by a raging current, to the nearest Avernian Gate, which swallows her whole into the Underworld. Some ghosts voluntarily pass through the Avernian Gates, through despair or a desire to move on. Others are forcibly relocated by the Bound, Reapers, or other supernatural beings.

Ghosts don't travel well, thanks to the pain of being away from an Anchor, and only a sizable minority is sapient enough to recognize other ghosts and Bound as beings with which they can interact. Most, then, go their entire time in Twilight isolated, unaware of what would hasten or put off their descent. Graveyards are the exception that proves the rule; the presence of multiple mid-Rank ghosts with Anchors (the graves) next to each other means those sapient ghosts haunting their final remains often form tight-knit communities. These camps' cultures vary from mutual fear of the graveyard's Avernian Gate and

The Birth of a Ghost

Ghosts are "born" from death or trauma, but every ghost's rising is unique. Some, especially those who expected death and prepared for it, rise sometime after their own funerals, usually at their own grave or memorial but sometimes near another Anchor. Others rise moments after death, awakening to the agony of Essence bleed and the need to reach an Anchor. Still others, especially those who died instantaneously and totally unexpectedly, don't even realize anything has happened — they go about their day unperturbed by the bus that flattened them or the sudden aneurysm that killed them, and only realize something is wrong when people completely ignore them or they try to touch something.

GHOSTS

- **Ephemera:** Ghosts are comprised of *ephemera*.
- **Twilight:** In the living world, ephemera exists in the state of Twilight. Twilight is invisible and intangible to anything not in Twilight.
- **In the Underworld:** In the Underworld, Twilight does not exist.

Other Entities

The various Chronicles of Darkness games have used these rules to represent many different beings, from spirits, to demonic owls made of smoke with a strange connection to vampires, to the inhabitants of an astral world visited by mages.

Although some beings have rare powers that affect other "ephemeral entities," for the most part the different types of ephemera are mutually exclusive — spirits and ghosts are both made of ephemera, and both exist in a state of Twilight when in the physical world, but they remain "out of phase" with one another and don't interact. They can't even sense one another's presence.

the Underworld beyond, to pacts between ghosts to assist one another in protecting their Anchors, to communities made up of all those who died at specific disasters, or hailed from a certain community when alive.

To a ghost, physical objects and beings have no substance (and vice versa). They can touch other ghosts, and lean on a phantom wall long-since demolished, but physical objects, animals, and living people are as little barrier to the dead as the dead are to them, appearing pale and insubstantial. To ghosts, material light sources are dimmed and sounds distorted as though underwater.

Unlike the world of the living, the Underworld is entirely made of ephemera, and the state of Twilight does not exist there. Should one of the living find her way to the Great Below, she finds the dead as solid and visible as she herself is.

Ghost Traits

Ghosts no longer have souls, nor the divisions between body and mind that living beings possess. In game terms, they are represented by simplified Traits.

Rank

All ghosts have a rating in an Advantage called Rank, which notes how self-aware and powerful the ghost is.

Rank 0 ghosts are non-sapient: most ghost objects and animals are Rank 0, as are ghostly phenomena like phantom handprints or bleeding statues.

Rank 1 ghosts are sapient, but trapped in a loop repeating their death or another significant memory of their lives. They lack the capacity to break out of these loops without an outside agent; most don't clearly remember anything from before the current loop, and some don't even seem to exist except at certain significant times: midnight, the anniversary of their death, etc.

Rank 2 ghosts are sapient and fully aware: Except for the fact that they're in Twilight, they're mostly indistinguishable from living people.

Rank 3-5 ghosts, or geists as the Bound call them, are sapient, but their human nature is buried beneath a thick scum of Underworld-tainted Essence. Their forms are twisted and exaggerated by the manner of their death, but their humanity is still there if you know where to look.

Rank 6 and higher ghosts were almost certainly never human: ancient Chthonians and Kerberoi fall into this category. They have no game statistics or Traits; when they appear in a chronicle at all, it's as plot devices.

Rank

- **0-10:** Rank ranges from 0-10, though entities with Rank 6 or higher are not represented with game mechanics.

Ephemeral Entities by Rank

Rank*	Traditional Name	Trait Limits **	Attribute Dots	Maximum Essence	Numina
0	Spectre/ Phantasm	3 dots	3-4	5	1
•	Lare	5 dots	5–8	10	1–3
••	Lemure	7 dots	9–14	15	3–5
•••	Lesser Mane	9 dots	15–25	20	5–7
••••	Greater Mane	12 dots	26–35	25	7–9
•••••	Lesser Kerberos	15 dots	36–45	50	9–11

* Each Rank levies a –1 modifier on attempts to forcibly bind that ghost and acts as a Supernatural Tolerance trait.

** These represent permanent dots, not temporarily boosted ones.

- **Starting Rank:** Most ghosts are created at Rank 1 (if they died with an Integrity of 6 or lower) or Rank 2 (if they died with an Integrity of 7-9). Ghosts created at Rank 3-5 are the result of mystical convergences, occult rituals, and similar effects.
- **Gaining Rank:** Unless a specific mechanic says otherwise, ghosts only gain Rank by drinking from the Rivers of the Underworld.
- **Losing Rank:** Ghosts cannot normally lose Rank unless a specific mechanic says otherwise.
- **Effects of Rank:** Rank determines a variety of Traits, as described on the above table.
- **Dominance:** A ghost's natural attacks count as the Bane (p. 190) of any ghost two or more Ranks lower than herself.

Essence

Essence fuels ghosts' powers, sustains their insubstantial bodies, and allows them to continue existing.

Essence

- **By Rank:** Maximum Essence is determined by Rank. A ghost may not have more Essence than her Rank-derived maximum.
- **No Per Turn Limit:** Ghosts have no limit on how much Essence they spend per turn.

Ghosts use Essence in the following ways:

Living World

- **Activity:** 1 Essence: Remain active for one day. A ghost who does not pay enters *hibernation*.
- **Essence Bleed:** Outside the Anchor Condition: Lose 1 Essence per hour. A ghost who runs out of Essence suffers 1 lethal wound and enters hibernation.
- **Essence Sense:** Ghosts sense the presence of an Anchor or Avernian Gate from up to a mile away. The Seek Numen (p. 195) increases this range.
- **Manifestations:** Essence fuels Manifestations (p. 191).

Underworld

- **Activity:** Remain active for one day. A ghost who does not pay is Trapped in the Walls (p. 203).
- **Old Laws:** Follow the Old Laws of a Dominion for 1 day: Gain 1 Essence.

Both Worlds

- **Anchors:** Spend 1 day within the Anchor Condition: Gain 1 Essence.
- **Memory:** Be remembered as the living person you once were, by a living person: Gain 1 Essence.
- **Attribute Boosts:** Spend X Essence up to Rank + 2: Gain a total of +X to one or more Attributes; instant action.
- **Numina:** Essence fuels Numina (p. 192).
- **Ectophagia:** Inflict bite damage on another ghost: Steal Essence from the victim up to damage inflicted.

Attributes, Skills, and Merits

Ghosts use a simplified set of the Power, Finesse, and Resistance categories mortal Attributes fall into. They retain Skill dots important to their living identities, and Merits that aren't invalidated by their ephemeral nature. A Giant ghost remains Size 6 even after death, but with-

Dead Memories

The Bound are metaphysically dead, even though they are medically alive. This means that their memories alone cannot give ghosts Essence. They must encourage living people to honor the dead or use supernatural means to share Essence with the dead.

out a ready means to speak with the living Merits like Allies and Contacts don't carry across the grave.

Attributes

- **Power** describes the raw ability of the ghost to impose itself on other ephemeral beings and the world at large. It is used in all rolls that call for Strength, Intelligence, or Presence.
- **Finesse** describes how deft the ghost is at imposing its desires with fine control. It is used for all rolls that call for Dexterity, Wits, or Manipulation.
- **Resistance** describes how well the ghost can avoid imposition from its peers and how easily it is damaged. It is used for all rolls that call for Stamina, Resolve, or Composure.
- **Core Competency:** Ghosts must spend at least one point in each Attribute.
- **By Rank:** Newly created ghosts divide a number of dots determined by their Rank between their Attributes, up to a maximum determined by their Rank.

Skills

- **Key Skills:** Ghosts retain Skills that were important to them in life, but lose Skills that were tangential to their identity, as determined by the Storyteller.

Merits

- **Key Merits:** Ghosts retain Merits as long as those Merits are still applicable to a ghost. Merits that do not carry over may be replaced as per the Sanctity of Merits rule (p. 85).

Advantages

Ghosts possess Integrity, Virtue, and Vice, but treat the traits slightly differently than living characters. They also have Anchors.

Integrity

- **Fixed at Death:** A ghost's Integrity is a holdover from her living self, set at the level she had before death, barring any final breaking point (see p. 72.)

Simplified Skills

For Storyteller characters, tracking the full Skill dots of a ghost along with the Manifestations and Conditions it's using can be a pain. To simplify matters, just use the ghost's Rank instead of Skill dots for any roll relating to something with which the ghost should be familiar.

- **Limited Breaking Points:** Ghosts do not suffer breaking points except in the situations described below, or if a mechanic specifically says otherwise.
- **Rank Independent:** Changes to a ghost's Integrity after death do not change her Rank.

Ghost Breaking Points

- Losing an Anchor without resolving it
- Realizing that they are dead for the first time
- Drinking from a River of the Underworld
- Breaking an Old Law in a Dominion
- Committing ectophagia

Virtue and Vice

- **Vice:** Fulfill Vice: Regain *all* Willpower; once per chapter.
- **Virtue:** Fulfill Virtue: Regain 1 Willpower; once per scene.

Anchors

- **Nature and Number:** Anchors are people, places, and things that held great significance to the ghost's life or death. Most ghosts have at least one (their own body or grave), and few have more than three.
- **No Ghosts:** Ghosts, including ghostly objects, cannot be Anchors for other ghosts.
- **Anchor Condition:** A ghost's Anchors all have the Anchor Condition (p. 303) keyed to that particular ghost.
- **Losing Anchors:** An Anchor that is destroyed or dies loses the Anchor Condition. Certain occult techniques can also strip an Anchor of its Condition.
- **Losing All Anchors:** A ghost who loses all her Anchors is immediately and irresistibly blown through the nearest Avernian Gate and into the Underworld.
- **Resolving Anchors:** Resolving an Anchor means that the ghost is willing to let go of that Anchor and move

on. Ghosts always know when one of their Anchors is resolved. Resolved Anchors lose the Anchor Condition.

- **Resolving All Anchors:** A ghost who resolves all her Anchors is no longer subject to Essence bleed and is not dragged into the Underworld. She may Pass On with the appropriate Ceremony.

Other Traits

Because they have simplified Attributes, ghosts calculate derived Traits a little differently than mortal characters.

- **Corpus:** Resistance + Size, replaces Health
- **Willpower:** Resistance + Finesse, maximum 10
- **Initiative:** Finesse + Resistance
- **Defense:** Lower of Power or Finesse. Ghosts apply Defense against all attacks, even firearms
- **Speed:** Power + Finesse + 5
- **Size:** As their living selves

Bans

All ghosts with Rank suffer from a mystical compulsion known as the *Ban*, a behavior that they must or must not perform under certain conditions.

Bans increase in both complexity and consequences with Rank.

Rank 0 ghosts don't have Bans.

Rank 1 ghosts have mild Bans that are easily triggered but don't endanger the ghost. e.g. *The ghost of a nun must immediately use an offered rosary.*

Rank 2 and 3 ghosts have moderate Bans that curtail their activities in a more serious way than mere distraction. e.g. *A Reaper must immediately dematerialize when it hears a cat.*

Rank 4 and 5 entities have complicated Bans that put an end to whatever the ghost is trying to do — often in an explosive fashion. They have consequences in game traits or long-term actions, but esoteric requirements. e.g. *The Smiling Corpse, a geist summoned back from the Underworld by a mystery cult, is immediately banished back to the Great Below if anyone should sing a particular nursery rhyme in his presence.*

Ban

- **Compulsion:** A ghost cannot resist his Ban.

Banes

The interaction between a ghost's ephemeral form and physical substance always contains a flaw — a *Bane* — that damages his Corpus through symbolic or mystical interference. The Bane is a physical substance or energy that the ghost can't abide.

Banes are increasingly esoteric and obscure with increasing Rank.

Rank 0 ghosts have ubiquitous Banes. A phantasm melts away in sunlight.

Rank 1 ghosts have common substances and phenomena as Banes, such as salt or fire.

Rank 2 and 3 ghosts have difficult to obtain but still "natural" Banes such as holy water or silver.

Rank 4 and 5 ghosts have highly specific Banes that require great effort to acquire. A dread Reaper hunting wayward ghosts can be destroyed by an obsidian blade marked with the names of 13 gods of death.

Banes

- **Aversion:** Ghosts voluntarily attempting to come into contact with the Bane must spend a Willpower point and succeed on a Resolve + Composure roll with a dice penalty equal to their Rank.
- **Solid:** Banes are solid to a ghost, even when the ghost is in Twilight.
- **Contact:** Touch the Bane while in Twilight or in the Underworld: Suffer 1 lethal damage per turn.
- **Materialized Contact:** Touch the Bane while Materialized: Suffer 1 aggravated damage per turn, end the Materialized Condition unless the ghost succeeds on a reflexive Rank roll every turn.
- **Fettered Contact:** Touch the Bane while Fettered: Suffer 1 lethal damage per turn. The ghost must use the Unfetter Manifestation to escape.
- **Weapon Damage:** If the Bane has been used as a weapon against the ghost, the wounds suffered are aggravated for Materialized ghosts, and lethal for those still in Twilight or in the Underworld.

Influence

Although the effects are subtle for those still in the living world, ghosts have the ability to influence the world around them, protecting and directing Anchors, deepening their connection to loved ones, or recreating the manner of their death.

Influence

- **Based on Rank:** Ghosts begin with dots in Influence equal to their Rank, and a maximum Influence rating equal to their Rank. At least one dot is usually Influence (Anchors).
- **Multiple and Specific:** Ghosts may have multiple Influences, each representing a specific area of control, such as Influence (Car Crashes) or Influence (Cats).
- **Sanctity of Influences:** If a ghost loses or resolves an Anchor related to her Influence, she may reassign those Influence dots.

Influence Effects

Level	Effect
•	Strengthen – The ghost can enhance her sphere of influence; she can add her Rank to the Defense of a loved one, make an emotion strong enough to create a Condition, or give an Anchor her Rank in bonus Health or Structure. This Influence can shift the Anchor Condition to Open for its duration. The cost is 1 Essence.
••	Manipulate – The ghost can make minor changes within her sphere of influence, such as slightly changing the nature or target of an emotion, or making minor changes to an animal's actions, a plant's growth, or an object's functioning. The cost is 2 Essence.
•••	Control – The ghost can make dramatic changes within her sphere of influence, twisting emotions entirely or dictating an animal's actions, a plant's growth or an object's functioning. This Influence can shift the Open Condition to Controlled for its duration. The cost is 3 Essence.
••••	Create – The ghost can create a new example of her sphere of influence: creating a new Anchor, instilling an emotion, creating a new sapling or young plant, or creating a young animal or brand-new object. The ghost can cause a temporary Anchor Condition in a subject for the duration of the Influence. The cost is 4 Essence.
•••••	Mass Create – The ghost can create (Rank) examples of her sphere of influence: triggering emotions in multiple people or creating new copses of trees, small groups of animals, or multiple identical items. Alternatively, the ghost may create one instance of her sphere of influence — including creating the Anchor Condition — permanently, although a ghost can't permanently alter the mind of a sentient being. The cost is 5 Essence.

- **Numina Exchange:** Rank 2 or higher ghosts may forego learning Numina to learn Influence dots on a one-for-one basis.

Influence Effects

- **Using Influence:** Spend Essence according to the tables on this page and roll Power + Finesse (vs. the higher of Resolve + Synergy or Composure + Synergy if the target is sapient).

- **Scale and Duration:** Add together the dot ratings of the desired effect and duration from the charts on this page. The ghost's Influence dots must exceed the total.

Influence Durations

Level	Duration	Cost
0	One minute per success	No additional Essence cost
•	10 minutes per success	No additional Essence cost
••	One hour per success	1 additional Essence
•••	One day per success	2 additional Essence
••••	Permanent	2 additional Essence

Manifestation

Far from staying safely invisible in Twilight, ghosts can interact with the mortal world in many ways, from physically Materializing to possessing a living host. Just as Influence traits determine what level of control the creature has over their environment, Manifestation traits indicate which forms of Manifestation are possible for a particular ghost.

Manifestations

- **Starting Manifestations:** Ghosts begin with the Twilight Form Manifestation and a number of Manifestation Effects from the list below equal to Rank.

- **Numina Exchange:** Rank 2 or higher ghosts may forego learning Numina to learn Manifestations on a one-for-one basis.

- **Prerequisites:** Manifestations require certain Conditions, which much be keyed to the Manifesting ghost or universal.

- **Living World Only:** Manifestations only function in the living world.

- **Using Manifestations:** Spend Essence according to the Manifestation and roll Power + Resistance.

- **Plasm Creation:** When a Manifestation effect ends, it creates Plasm equal to its Essence cost at the ghost's location. This Plasm lasts until the end of the chapter.

Manifestation Effects

Manifestation	Effect
Twilight Form	If the ghost is in the living world rather than the Underworld, she is in Twilight (see p. 185). The Effect has no cost, but produces the ghost's Size in Plasm in the Underworld when it ends, such as when the ghost passes through an Avernian Gate.
Avernian Gateway	(Requires Open Condition) By spending 3 Essence and touching an Avernian Gate, the ghost may open it and apply the Underworld Gate Condition to the location. This Manifestation works in the Underworld if the ghost is Rank 3 or higher.
Bargain	(Requires Rank 3 or higher) By spending 10 Essence while touching a dying mortal, the ghost may offer them the Bargain. If accepted, the mortal becomes a Bound and the ghost her geist, subject to the Bound Geist Condition. This Manifestation works in the Underworld.
Claim	(Requires Controlled Condition, Fetter, and Possess) By spending 5 Essence, the ghost gains permanent control over an object, creature or corpse, applying the Claimed Condition to the subject. Living subjects contest the roll with Resolve + Composure + Supernatural Tolerance. A ghost must be capable of both the Fetter and Possess Manifestations to buy Claim. This Manifestation works in the Underworld.
Discorporate	In emergencies, the ghost can voluntarily Discorporate as though it had lost all Corpus to lethal injury — a painful way to escape a threat. The Effect has no cost.
Fetter	(Requires Open Condition) By spending 2 Essence, the ghost adds the Fettered Condition to itself. Living beings targeted by this Effect contest the roll with Resolve + Composure + Supernatural Tolerance. If the Effect is successful, living targets gain the Urged Condition.
Image	(Requires Anchor Condition) By spending 1 Essence, the ghost may make its Twilight form visible to material beings for a scene.
Materialize	(Requires Open Condition) By spending 3 Essence, the ghost may shift from Twilight form into the Materialized Condition.
Possess	(Requires Open Condition) By spending 3 Essence, the ghost gains temporary control over an object, corpse, or creature, applying the Possessed Condition to the subject. Living subjects contest the roll with Resolve + Composure + Supernatural Tolerance.
Unfetter	(Requires Fettered Condition) By spending 1 point of Essence, the ghost temporarily suppresses the Fetter Condition for a scene, allowing it to use other Manifestation Effects or roam in Twilight. When the scene ends, any Manifestation Effects used during it immediately end. If the ghost isn't back within range of its Fetter (see p. 305) when Unfetter ends, it immediately goes dormant.

Numina

In addition to Influence and Manifestation, all ghosts have a number of discrete magical powers called Numina. Each Numen is a single ability linked to the ghost's nature — activated by a successful Power + Finesse roll unless stated otherwise.

ANCHOR JUMP

The ghost vanishes and reappears instantly at another of her Anchors, chosen upon activation. The Numen costs 3 Essence and activation is only contested (with Strength + Athletics) if another character is grappling the ghost.

AWE

The ghost causes terror in anyone who can see it. The Numen costs 3 Essence and activation is contested individually with Presence + Composure + Supernatural Tolerance by anyone looking at the ghost. Anyone gaining fewer successes than the ghost is unable to move or speak for a turn. If the ghost gains an exceptional success, the effect lasts three turns.

BLAST

The ghost may wound opponents at a distance, projecting freezing Plasm at his victim. Range is equal to 10 yards per dot of Power and the ghost does not suffer range pen-

alties. If the activation roll succeeds, the Blast wounds as a +0L weapon. The ghost's player may increase the lethality of its Blast by paying Essence — every two Essence spent increases the "weapon" by +1L. The maximum weapon bonus is equal to the ghost's Rank.

DESCEND

This Numen requires Rank 3 and at least three ghosts acting in concert, all of whom possess the Numen. One ghost makes the activation roll, the other participants may assist using teamwork (p. 152). The ghost tears a location subject to the Open Condition into the Underworld without using an Avernian Gate, leaving only empty space and Plasm behind in the living world. This Numen costs 10 Essence per area roughly equal in size to a city block, which may come from any of the participating ghosts.

DRAIN

The ghost can steal Willpower from a material being. The activation roll is contested by Stamina + Resolve + Supernatural Tolerance. Whichever character — ghost *or* target — gains the most successes receives points of Willpower equal to the number of successes, while the other party loses the same number.

EMOTIONAL AURA

The ghost sends out a wave of powerful — and distracting — emotion. This Numen costs 1 Essence and lasts for a scene or until the ghost uses another Numina. The activation roll is made once but anyone coming within five yards of the ghost must make a Resolve + Composure + Supernatural Tolerance roll. If the activation roll has more successes, the victim suffers a –2 dice penalty to all actions as long as the aura remains. If the victim gains more successes, he is immune to the aura unless the ghost uses the Numen again.

EMPOWER GHOST

This Numen requires Rank 5, and as such is only used by Kerberoi and the most powerful Chthonians. The entity instills a ghost with power. This Numen costs 3 Essence, and raises a ghost of Rank 3 or less by one Rank dot. The empowerment lasts for a scene.

ENGULF

This Numen requires Rank 3 or higher. Upon winning a grapple (p. 158) against a ghost or filling the target's rightmost Corpus box with lethal damage, the ghost entraps the target, placing her into a dormant state within his own form. Apply the Engulfed Condition to the victim. This Numen costs 3 Essence, and a ghost may have a number of engulfed prisoners up to his Rank.

FIRESTARTER

The ghost causes flammable materials to combust. This Numen costs 1 Essence and causes one small fire to break out per activation success within the ghost's Power in yards.

HALLUCINATION

The ghost may create an illusion experienced by a single target: it can be anything from a sight or sound to an imaginary person who holds a conversation. The Numen costs 1 Essence and is contested by the victim's Wits + Composure + Supernatural Tolerance. Each success over the contesting roll alters one of the victim's senses.

HOST JUMP

The ghost may leap from host to host when using the Possess or Claim Manifestations. The current host must touch the intended host while the ghost spends 3 Essence; the new host must be under all necessary prerequisite Conditions. If both prerequisites are met, the ghost immediately transfers the Possessed or Claimed Condition to the new host, although Claimed hosts must begin the process of Claiming again. The ghost does not need to re-spend Essence on the Manifestation Effect when jumping hosts with this Numen. Living Claim victims who are vacated with the use of this Numen still suffer the aftereffects listed under the Claimed Condition.

IMPLANT MISSION

This Numen grants a mortal a vision of a task the ghost wishes him to accomplish as well as a magical determination to see it through. The ghost pays 2 Essence and rolls Power + Finesse. On a success, the subject receives a short vision of whatever the ghost wishes him to do and is under the Obsessed Condition regarding carrying that mission out.

INNOCUOUS

The ghost is very good at being overlooked. Perception rolls to notice the ghost are penalized by 2 dice. This Numen does not require a roll to activate and has no cost.

LEFT-HANDED SPANNER

The ghost disables a device, paying 1 Essence and touching the object if Manifest, or moving its Twilight form to superimpose with it if not. The device must be a human-manufactured object with at least three moving parts. If the activation roll succeeds, the device malfunctions for a number of turns equal to the successes rolled. Using this Numen in combat requires the ghost to grapple and gain control of the object, and so can't be used this way in Twilight unless the target is in Twilight as well.

MOLIATE

This Numen allows a ghost to alter her appearance by sculpting her ephemera like putty. Using the Numen costs 1 Essence, and the pliability of the ghost's form lasts for a scene. Any alterations made are then permanent unless the ghost uses the Numen again. By paying 2 Essence, the ghost can Moliate other ghosts she can touch, although the process takes long enough to only work on willing or restrained subjects.

OMEN TRANCE

Once every 24 hours, the ghost may enter a trance in order to gain a glimpse of the future. The Numen costs 1 Essence if the ghost is trancing on its own behalf or 3 Essence if it is searching for omens for another. The activation roll is an extended action, lasting at least one scene. If successful, the ghost sees a vision of an event sometime in the next week. The visions are predisposed to be warnings of danger.

PATHFINDER

This Numen allows a ghost to know the quickest route to a destination in the living world. The fastest route isn't always the safest, of course; the Numen doesn't reveal any dangers on the way, only a set of directions to the target. If the destination is the subject of the Safe Place Merit, the activation roll is contested by the lowest Resolve + Supernatural Tolerance among any owners. The Numen costs 1 Essence and lasts for a scene. If the destination is too far away to reach that quickly, the ghost must use the Numen again. The Numen does not function in the Underworld.

PROXY

This Numen allows a ghost to lend one of its own Manifestations, Numina, or Influences to another ghost by spending 3 Essence and making physical contact with the subject. The ghost using Proxy must have sufficient Rank to be the subject's bane in unarmed violence (i.e. two Ranks higher or one Rank higher for a Kerberos.) Unwilling subjects contest the activation roll with Rank + Resistance. All prerequisite Conditions for the power used must be met, and the ghost using Proxy still pays any activation costs, but in all other ways treat the power used as though the subject had activated it.

PUPPETEER

This Numen allows a ghost to spend compel another ghost to use any of her own Manifestations, Numina, or Influences by spending 3 Essence and making physical contact with the subject. The Puppeteer must have sufficient Rank to be the subject's bane in unarmed violence

(i.e. two Ranks higher or one Rank higher for a Kerberos.) Unwilling subjects contest the activation roll with Rank + Resistance. All prerequisite Conditions for the power used must be met, and the subject must be able to afford any activation cost.

RAPTURE

The ghost forces a response from the pleasure centers of a living being's brain, granting ecstatic visions, a feeling of communion with the universe, and sensations of bliss. The Numen costs 2 Essence to activate. If successful, the victim suffers the Insensate Tilt (p. 296). If the victim fails a Resolve + Supernatural Tolerance roll, she gains a temporary Condition for the ghost's Power in days, in a form that binds her closer to the ghost's wishes.

REGENERATE

The ghost can use Essence to heal bashing and lethal wounds on its Corpus. This Numen does not require a roll to activate, but costs 1 Essence and heals one level of damage — the ghost must reactivate the Numen each turn to heal more severe wounds. Bashing damage is healed first, then lethal.

REAP MEMORY

The ghost may harvest Memories (p. 285) from a living person. The ghost must touch the target (or at least overlap part of her Corpus with the target's head) and must know, at least in general terms, the memory she is trying to steal ("the first car you stole," for example, or "the smell of your father's aftershave"). The Numen costs 4 Essence and is contested by Resolve + Composure + Supernatural Tolerance. On a success, the ghost gains the Memory, the target forgets the experience, and the target gains the Spooked Condition. On an exceptional success, the ghost can instead choose to give the target no Condition or the Addled Condition.

SEEK

The ghost can sense the presence of suitable Conditions from a distance. The base range is two miles per Rank; entities may spend an Essence to multiply this by 10. If successful on a Finesse roll, the ghost becomes aware of the direction and distance to the nearest suitable Anchor, Infrastructure, or Resonant Condition.

SPEED

The ghost accelerates into a blur of movement. The ghost chooses whether to spend 2 or 4 Essence when activating this Numen. Spending 2 Essence doubles its Speed for the remainder of the scene, while spending 4 Essence triples it.

SIGN

The ghost creates messages or images in any medium — it can write in the condensation on cold glass, produce images on computer screens, and send audible messages via phone lines. The Numen costs 1 Essence to activate, and if successful creates a single message.

STALWART

The ghost appears armored in Twilight form and uses Resistance as its Defense score instead of the lower of Power or Finesse.

TELEKINESIS

The ghost can manipulate objects without using a Manifestation Effect. This Numen costs 1 Essence. Successes on the activation roll become the ghost's "Strength" when attempting to lift or throw an item. Fine motor control is impossible using this Numen.

Damage

Where living characters have Health, ghosts have Corpus. The two function identically, except as noted below.

Damage

- **Essence Loss:** Suffer aggravated damage: Lose Essence equal to damage suffered.
- **Bashing Damage:** Ghosts suffer bashing damage from all attacks, unless those attacks use their Bane or a specific power says it inflicts more severe damage against ghosts.
- **No Unconsciousness:** Ghosts never risk falling unconscious when their rightmost Corpus box is filled.
- **Reforming:** A ghost with at least 1 Essence whose rightmost Corpus box is filled with lethal or aggravated damage dissolves into (Size) Plasm and reforms in hibernation at her nearest Anchor (in the living world) or on the shore of the nearest River (in the Underworld).
- **Hibernation:** A ghost remains in hibernation until she regains (Corpus) Essence, at which point she awakens with all Corpus boxes empty. A hibernating ghost cannot act and is insensate.
- **Destruction:** A Rank 1-2 ghost with no Essence whose rightmost Corpus box is filled with lethal or aggravated damage dissolves into (Size) Plasm and is utterly destroyed. A Rank 3+ ghost leaves behind a Deathmask Memento instead of Plasm.

Legions of the Dead

Mortal occultists and krewes alike have attempted to put labels on the endless varieties of ghost, usually classifying them by potency, but no one scheme has ever caught on. To most Bound, the difference between an unthinking, barely-formed "Phantasm" and a self-aware, desperate "Lemure" is academic. They're all ghosts. That said, some distinctions are useful, and a few names circulate for those ghosts who differ from the norm.

Doppelgängers

Many cultures have ghost stories about people seeing loved ones when the person in question is far away — and, as the story goes, in mortal danger. Amputees feel the presence of limbs they no longer possess. People who have suffered grave accidents or undergone extreme changes of circumstance sometimes feel "haunted" by the pasts they left behind. These stories all describe the ghosts the Bound call Doppelgängers. If someone suffers a life-changing trauma, or is on the brink of death but survives (whether naturally or by supernatural means), sometimes they leave a ghost behind anyway.

Doppelgängers vary as much in power and self-awareness as any other ghost, but thinking examples are especially tortured compared to the truly dead; a Doppelgänger has to watch a twin of herself living her life, evolving and maturing from the person she was when the Doppelgänger was birthed into ephemera like a shed skin. Some try to use their powers to influence their living counterpart, forcing them to regress or stay as they were when they "died." The least Doppelgängers, the equivalents of the weakest half-formed ghosts, latch onto their Anchors unseen, provoking feelings of nostalgia or phantom limb syndrome. Curiously, when two ghosts formed from the same person touch, they merge, the weaker of the two destroyed and consumed as essence by the stronger. Some new ghosts find themselves hunted by much stronger and dangerous enemies sharing their face, and a handful of legendary Sin-Eaters have claimed to have their own Doppelgängers as geists.

Doppelgängers

- **Rank:** "Phantom Limbs" and other ghosts that aren't made up of a whole person are Rank 0, while other Doppelgängers use the normal rules for determining initial Rank.
- **Multiple Doppelgängers:** Multiple ghosts of the same individual always count as one another's Bane.
- **Ectophagia:** A Doppelgänger who fully consumes another ghost of the same person gains 1 Rank.

Barghests

Most creatures don't leave ghosts — without a person realizing they died to supply the psychic "spark" of loss, they never form in the first place — but a minority do. Bound call the ghost of a non-human animal a Barghest, a name traditionally used only for ghostly dogs but in modern times applicable to deceased champion racehorses, legendary "man-eater" predators killed by human hunters only to rise again as Twilight-bound monsters, and even the occasional zoo exhibit mourned by the public. Without a sapient mind, Barghests resemble lesser human ghosts, following ingrained instincts and behaviors. A spectral tiger hunts, and a family dog doesn't let the fact that he's dead stop him from protecting his former owners. Without thinking minds, though, Barghests are more vulnerable to the myriad of forces tugging at them, especially the Underworld. Once Barghests move on to the Underworld, they feel the call to move deeper much more strongly than human ghosts do, instinctively enter the Rivers and dissolve into their Plasmic waters. Some ghosts with power over animals can draw a Barghest's attention away from the Rivers and train them as companions and pets.

Barghests

- **Rank:** If the death that created the Barghest resulted in a human losing a dot of Integrity through a breaking point, the Barghest is Rank 2. If the death prompted a breaking point but not Integrity loss, the Barghest is Rank 1. All other Barghests are Rank 0.
- **Speed Factor:** Barghests use their species Speed factors when calculating Speed.
- **Defense:** Barghests use the higher of Finesse or Resistance to calculate defense.
- **Natural Weapons:** If an animal has natural weaponry such as claws or fangs that inflict lethal injuries, so does its ghost. These natural weapons inflict lethal damage on other ghosts.
- **Count as Animals:** Supernatural abilities that affect animals work on Barghests.
- **Ectophagia:** Committing ectophagia on a Barghest is not a breaking point (or a crisis point for the Bound).

Castoffs

Much like animals, inanimate objects only leave ghosts behind when someone cares enough to miss them. While rumors abound about higher-Rank castoffs possessing some degree of (usually malign) intelligence, most of the dead agree that the ghost of a house is just a place to shelter from the ghost rain. Most castoffs lack Anchors

and are dragged into the Underworld as soon as they are created, but ghost buildings are usually Anchored to the site they were built on, and occasionally an object remains Anchored to a piece of its former self or the place it was destroyed, like a phantom roadster Anchored to its own Keys or the stretch of M-14 between Detroit and Ann Arbor where it crashed.

Castoffs

- **Rank:** If the destruction that created the castoff resulted in a human losing a dot of Integrity through a breaking point for any reason, the castoff is Rank 2. If the destruction prompted a breaking point but not Integrity loss, the castoff is Rank 1. All other castoffs are Rank 0.
- **Object Rules:** Castoffs have all the Traits of the objects they were before becoming ghosts (Durability, equipment bonus, vehicle Traits, etc.). Castoff weapons inflict lethal damage against ghosts.
- **Attributes:** Castoffs have Attributes, but only use them for Numina, Influences, or Manifestations.
- **Mindless:** Castoffs have no minds and cannot act, except to use their Influences, Numina, or Manifestations in specific, prescribed circumstances (for example, a ghost house uses Sign to write "Get Out" in blood on the walls when a living person spends the night inside).
- **Operator:** Castoffs that function as equipment allow their users to employ the castoff's Influences, Numina, and Manifestations. The user employs her own Attributes for the activation, but may spend her own Essence or the castoff's.
- **Ectophagia:** Committing ectophagia on a castoff is not a breaking point (or a crisis point for the Bound).

Geists

Something fundamental shifts inside a ghost when she first drinks from a River. Assuming she survives the process, she emerges stronger and forever marked by a connection to the Underworld as strong as any Anchor, a connection that even replaces an Anchor if she still had any. Some mortal necromancers' tomes call a ghost that's undergone this transformation a Mane, a ghost evolved to embody a kind of death rather than a single person. These empowered ghosts rarely venture beyond the communities clustered along the Riverbanks in the Underworld's depths, outnumbering those not brave enough to drink but still subject to the Old Laws. Those who do venture upward to (and through) the Gates come in two main forms — geists, who Bargain with dying mortals to create the Bound, and Reapers, who take on Masks and hunt the dead, believing all ghosts belong in the Underworld.

Geists and Reapers

- **Anchors:** Geists do not have Anchors, do not suffer Essence Bleed, and are not subject to being dragged into the Underworld for lacking Anchors.
- **Influences:** Geists replace all their former Influences with their innate Key, with dots equal to Rank.
- **Iconic:** Geists are barely recognizable as the people they once were. Even those who knew them in life must succeed on a reflexive Resolve + Composure roll to recognize them.
- **Broken:** Geists' humanity is buried beneath the corrupting power of the Underworld. Any Social rolls, other than to intimidate or frighten, that they make or that are made against them, are reduced to a chance die.
- **Remembrance:** All geists have a Remembrance (p. 266)

Kerberoi

The Kerberoi are the tyrant-rulers of the Dominions, keepers of the Old Laws, demigods of death presiding over kingdoms of lesser ghosts. Kerberoi are so tied to the Underworld that they can't easily leave. In its Dominion, though, a Kerberos is the closest thing to a Chthonic God any ghost or Bound will ever meet, sensing whenever anyone breaks one of its edicts and able to control the physical structure of the Underworld within its territory. Kerberoi often stray from humanoid appearance, tending to compound or assembled bodies made from humanoid "parts," such as multiple torsos fused together, or a snake made of human skulls. Whether Kerberoi were ever alive remains hotly debated among occultists.

Kerberoi

- **Dominion Influence:** All Kerberoi have Influence (Dominion) •••••.
- **Numina:** All Kerberoi have the Dominion Sense and Enforcement Numina (p. 233).
- **Essence Font:** Kerberoi gain their Rank in Essence every scene while within their Dominion, up to their Rank-derived maximum.
- **Universal Bane:** Kerberoi count as the Bane of all ghosts of lower Rank, not just those they outrank by two dots.
- **Essence Bleed:** A Kerberos suffers Essence bleed even in the Underworld if away from its Dominion.
- **Ban:** A Kerberos' Ban is always his Dominion's Old Laws.
- **Violation Sense:** Kerberoi sense whenever another ghost in their Dominion suffers a breaking point from

breaking the Old Laws. They retain knowledge of the offender's location until the offender leaves the Underworld.

Chthonians

Billions of ghosts have entered the deep below, eking out an existence in the upper reaches, then the Dominions, before succumbing to accident, somehow passing on, or entering a River (or the Ocean they flow to) and being destroyed. The human species is the Underworld's great tide of immigrants.

The Underworld has *natives*.

Superficially, a Chthonian resembles a ghost. It has a body formed of ephemera, and its supernatural abilities resemble those ghosts learn to develop over time. Although many ancient ghosts and Kerberoi stray in form from their human origins, they're usually still humanoid. Chthonians look like admixtures of upsetting images of death, carrion, and decay; e.g. yards-long maggots with distorted human faces, chitinous beetle shells covering a core of congealing blood. Their mindsets are so inscrutable as to be alien. Most Chthonians don't respond to ghosts at all, or "talk" in waves of pain and flies buzzing. The few Chthonians with whom ghosts have bargained appeared to view the interaction to be like scratching an itch.

A Chthonian's touch tears Essence away from a ghost, so ghosts give them a wide berth. Sin-Eaters record tales of Chthonians destroying whole Dominions — not for any sin, but simply because the domain was in their way. On the other hand, many Chthonians are coated in Plasm, which drips and congeals in pools as they pass. Some ghosts follow in their wake, collecting Plasm, worshipping them as avatars of the Chthonic Gods (the Chthonians don't notice) or trying to follow them. Eventually, these pilgrimages come to an end at a River. Chthonians are immune to dissolution from entering the Rivers, and appear to use them as migration routes. Ghosts who journey as deep as the Ocean of Fragments tell stories of gigantic, never-alive things, to the Chthonians as the Kerberoi are to ghosts, swimming beneath the still waves.

Chthonians

- **Alien Minds:** Chthonians have no Virtue, Vice, or Aspiration. They regain one point of Willpower every fifth point of Essence they gain.
- **No Manifestations:** Chthonians have Influences and Numina, but not Manifestations.
- **Gaining Essence:** Chthonians regain their Rank in Essence per day in the Underworld, or their Rank in Essence per hour submerged in the Rivers or Ocean of Fragments.
- **River Dwellers:** Chthonians are immune to the deleterious effects of the Rivers and the Ocean of Fragments.
- **Alien Ephemera:** Chthonians count as the Bane of ghosts they outrank by two dots, but ghosts of higher rank do not count as their Banes in turn.
- **Alien Essence:** Ghosts who commit ectophagia on Chthonians suffer 1 lethal wound per Essence they would gain, and gain no Essence.
- **Plasm Trails:** Chthonians leave a trail of (Size) Plasm behind themselves every scene. This Plasm evaporates at the end of the chapter.
- **Materialization:** A Chthonian who enters the living world gains the Materialized Condition, but suffers one aggravated wound per turn when outside an area with the Underworld Gate Condition.
- **Avernian Gates:** Chthonians automatically open any Avernian Gate they touch in the living world, but cannot open Avernian Gates in the Underworld.
- **Ectophagia:** Chthonians commit ectophagia against non-Chthonian ghosts with a touch attack (p. 158).

Ghost Advancement

Player character ghosts have Aspirations and earn Experiences like living characters do, but their simplified traits require different Experiences costs.

Attribute dot	6
Numen	3
Manifestation	3
Influence dot	5
Skill dot	2
Merit dot	1
Specialty	1
Rank*	5

* To increase Rank, a ghost must have the Experiences needed to buy both the Rank dot and purchase dots in Attributes, Numina, Manifestations and Influences to bring herself up to the minimum for the new Rank as soon as it increases. Then she must drink from a River (p. 204). If she survives, her player may spend the Experiences to raise Rank and buy the other attached traits.

The Underworld

The veil that separates the world of the living from the land of the dead is thin as a knife's edge, insubstantial as a faulty brake pad, and slippery as an icy step. It rushes up to greet those who cross over, but for those who wish to venture into the Great Below before their time has come, the way is not so easily traversed. The Avernian Gates stand in Twilight, opening and closing seemingly on their own schedules, as if to add insult to injury. With a little insight, though, even such obstacles may be overcome. After all, it's not as if the Underworld is *trying* to keep you out — it just hasn't gotten around to you yet.

Avernian Gates

Morgues. Graveyards. Crossroads. Battlefields. Once you can see them, Avernian Gates are almost impossible to avoid. Anywhere that death has marked as its own births one, standing silent and dripping with phantasmal water just out of mortal sight. The Gate forms without pomp or circumstance — even if keenly watched for, it appears between blinks, between frames of video, standing as though it always had, already weathered and seemingly ancient.

A cold dampness pervades the area around them, clinging to every surface in Twilight. Every so often, the living notice it on the subconscious level, shivering at the presence of a chill they cannot feel. Normally, the Gates stand closed, though the presence of a ghost without any Anchors always causes an Avernian Gate to open, to draw the unfortunate through.

Crossing Over

Avernian Gates stand locked for most of their existence, grim monuments to the fate that awaits all who live. Each Gate has a key, however, and this key may or may not be a physical object. One Gate opens to any who hold a certain worn, ceramic doll with an uncanny stare — which vanishes as one passes through, always seeming to find its way back to the same empty nursery. Another Gate opens in the presence of tears. A third, to the final lines of T.S. Eliot's *The Waste Land*. Avernian Gates always open for Reapers, or for their Deathmasks, allowing them free passage to carry on their dread work. The Bound, and Sin-Eaters in particular, only seldom realize what that means: that Avernian Gates *can* be opened without the presence of their key. In other words, the Gate may be locked, but any lock can be picked.

Bloody-Handed Payment

The simplest method for forcing open an Avernian Gate is, of course, to give it what it wants: death, either in quantities sufficient to confuse the Gate or of great enough significance and in such fashion that it would open anyway. The trouble with the former is that it doesn't always work, and the trouble with the latter is that not only does it require human sacrifice, but the body must be wholly destroyed, else it will serve as an Anchor. This method is preferred mostly by amateurs and those with no sense of ethics.

Bloody-Handed Payment

Requirement: Near an Avernian Gate

Cost: Living beings or objects to be sacrificed

Target: Avernian Gate

Action: Contested Extended; 10 successes more than Gate; one-hour interval); each roll requires a sacrifice.

Dice Pool: Wits + Subterfuge vs. 6 dice

Suggested Modifiers

Expensive Sacrifice (Resources •••+): +2

Roll Results

Success: The Avernian Gate opens, creating the Underworld Gate Condition.

Exceptional: The ritual's interval becomes 30 minutes.

Failure: The Avernian Gate does not open.

Dramatic: The ritual is noticed by an unsympathetic party, living or dead.

Picking the Lock

The more successful spectral locksmiths take a step back, into the realm of the symbolic. Through ritual, they encode all the things that accompany death — grief, tears, ceremony, and so on. Done properly, the Gate senses the semblance of mourning, and opens in response. Any ritual works for this, regardless of its origin or context — pouring out a 40 is just as good as a church service with incense and a priest — but it must have *meaning*. The grief must be honest, or at least honest enough to tap into the resonance of death and through it manipulate the Avernian Gate into opening.

Picking the Lock

Requirement: Near an Avernian Gate

Target: Avernian Gate

Action: Instant; 30 minutes

Dice Pool: Attribute + Occult; Attribute varies according to method of mourning

Suggested Modifiers

Mourning an actual death: +3

Roll Results

Success: The Avernian Gate opens, creating the Underworld Gate Condition.

Exceptional: The ritual used to pick the lock becomes a new key for the Gate.

Failure: The Avernian Gate does not open.

Dramatic: The Gate will not open for any attempt to pick the lock for the rest of the story.

Pay the Toll

Every ghost, whether she knows it or not, can reach into her pocket at any time and find two ancient, leaden coins inscribed with the profile of a woman of indeterminate age and ethnicity. If she doesn't have pockets, that's fine, too — the coins appear in a purse or pouch or just her loosely cupped hand. These coins are her toll to enter the lands of the dead, and can open any Avernian Gate — but only once, and only for the ghost herself.

Pay the Toll

Requirement: Ghost only; touch the Avernian Gate; a given ghost may only pay the toll once in her existence.

Target: Avernian Gate

Action: Instant

Result: The Gate opens, creating the Underworld Gate Condition.

Crossing Back

The Upper Reaches lie. Tunnels slant ever downward, ever leading the dead deeper into the machine that flenses them for their Essence (unless they, in turn, flense others). Coming back isn't easy. For most of the dead, it's impossible — the Gate only swings one way. Reapers can always open an Avernian Gate, and pass through without difficulty — such, they say, is the blessing that comes of serving the Chthonic Gods. Others must make do as best they can.

A Different Key

A gate's key only works on the living side: ghosts who think to escape the Great Below with a bit of old doggerel about the world's end are in for a rude surprise. But there are keys and there are Keys, and what's a Key good for if not opening a locked door?

A Different Key

- **Doom:** The Bound, geists, and anyone else capable of unlocking a Key may suffer the Key's Doom to open an Avernian Gate. They gain no further benefit from unlocking the Key.

Picking the Lock

The dead and the living alike use another method to convince the Avernian Gates to grant them passage to the living world. Every Avernian Gate sits in a place marked by the same resonance that suffuses the Underworld, and the crafty can, with ritual and wild celebration, confuse the Gate for long enough that it treats the Underworld as the living world and vice versa.

Picking the Lock

- **Mirror Ritual:** As Picking the Lock (p. 199), but the ritual must be one of celebrating life rather than mourning death.

Crash the Gates

When all else fails, sometimes excessive force succeeds. Destroying an Avernian Gate is difficult, but not impossible — especially for crafty Bound with access to high explosives and heavy-duty trucks.

Crash the Gates

- **Durability and Structure:** An Avernian Gate has exactly enough Structure and Durability that a pound or two of semtex can blow it up. Destroying the Gate opens it, creating the Underworld Gate Condition until the end of the story.

The Guardian Geist

Every graveyard starts with a single burial. Every mortuary has its first tenant. Every battlefield has its first casualty. Death touches the world and the Avernian Gates rise where it does so — but so too do the guardian geists. For reasons no one quite understands, the first person interred in such a location inevitably rises as a Rank 3 ghost. The few who have witnessed the event report geysers of brackish water welling up from the soil, the geist clawing desperately for dry earth as it crawls from the body it can no longer call home.

But though every Avernian Gate ought, according to this process, to have a geist bound to it, no few stand deserted. Perhaps their geists were consumed by one of the Bound, or else made the Bargain and no longer stand their cold, dark vigil. No one can be sure, just as no one is sure *why* the geist always precedes the Gate. Perhaps their presence is the foot in the door the Underworld needs to create a passage between itself and the world of the living. Perhaps it's simply a byproduct of the effort, a reverse echo of an event yet to come imprinting the earliest traces of its hold on the ground it will stand on. The geists, their identities and memories washed away by the waters that birthed them, are silent on the matter, if indeed they ever knew to begin with.

Dead Roads

First-time travelers are often nonplussed by what lies on the other side of an Avernian Gate — often, they wonder if the thing hasn't just spat them back out somewhere else. It's only when they follow the trickling streams of water downwards, and the tunnels or caverns become a patchwork of styles and eras, that they realize the truth. It's usually around that time that first-timers also realize that they're hopelessly lost.

Those who know what they're doing have several ways to navigate the Great Below. These methods rely on feel as much as knowledge — it's not a question of marking or planning one's way as it is of following one's gut. Set paths through the Underworld do exist, but even these are best not relied upon — they tend to lead ever downward, and rarely safely. Usually content to wait, the Underworld sometimes grows impatient, and carves great gouges into itself. Sinkholes swallow up individuals, passageways, even entire River Cities. Sometimes the unfortunate targets survive, but often they do not, the only evidence of their existence the gaping maw of stone that replaces them.

Navigation Basics

- **Legs:** A journey in the Underworld is divided into legs, determined by the Storyteller. A leg is the time it takes to travel between two landmarks within the same layer, or the transition from one layer to another.
- **Navigation:** Characters must navigate using one of the methods below for each leg. If a leg is interrupted for a scene or longer, a new navigation action must be attempted.
- **Cartographic Research:** Identifying the correct legs to reach a destination is typically a Research action (p. 150).

Architecture

This method of navigation relies upon knowledge of architectural and engineering styles over a range of historical periods. The Upper Reaches usually mimic certain styles in each region, and being able to track those changes helps one find one's way. Regrettably, this method is of less use the deeper one goes, as buildings and infrastructure from disparate eras, to say nothing of architecture no living society ever built, combine in bizarre ways.

Navigating by Architecture

Action: Reflexive

Dice Pool: Intelligence + Academics

Suggested Modifiers

Upper Reaches: +1

River Cities: +0

Lower Mysteries: –5

Roll Results

Success: The character navigates to her intended destination for this leg.

Exceptional: The character is Informed about the area of the Underworld she is navigating.

Failure: The character goes off trail and encounters a hazard or threat, but may backtrack if so desired.

Dramatic: The character is Lost (p. 301).

Society

People are people, no matter where one goes. Their ways may differ, but they're still people, and that commonality is a compass the knowledgeable can steer by. Knowing the cultures in an area, and knowing other cultures, older cultures, and even how modern cultures existed in premodern times, gives one a rough map to steer by. Better yet, it lets one blend, lets one take advantage of ancient rules of reciprocity — even in the Underworld, vicious and draining though it is, people are still people.

Navigating by society may encompass any number of Skills, including Empathy (reading locals to pick up on their habits of travel), Persuasion (to offer payment for services rendered), Intimidation (to force them to guide the way), or Subterfuge (to trick them into it).

Navigating by Society

Requirement: Must move among the dead and speak with them.

Action: Reflexive

Dice Pool: Varies

Suggested Modifiers

Large Population Centers: +2

Sparsely Populated Area: –2

Deserted Wastes: –5

Roll Results

Success: The character navigates to her intended destination for this leg.

Exceptional: The character is Connected (p. 299) to the culture at her destination.

Failure: The character goes off trail and encounters a hazard or threat, but may backtrack if so desired.

Dramatic: The character encounters a hazard that must be dealt with immediately.

Instinct

Some people just know how to get around. Call it a good sense of direction, call it an internal compass — whatever it is, it works, even in the Underworld. For all its twisting and turning, for all its changing tunnels and caverns, the human mind can still work out some glimmer of understanding, if only subconsciously. This method is

most often used by the dead themselves, who have spent so much time in the Underworld that they've grown accustomed to its ways, but the Bound may learn it as well. To someone with this talent, the objective is simple — just keep moving. Every moment wasted is a moment the Underworld has to change something.

Physical Attributes are most likely to be important when Navigating by Instinct, as overcoming barriers and maintaining a steady pace are key. Athletics and Survival are the two most applicable Skills, though others may work at the Storyteller's discretion.

Navigating by Instinct

Action: Reflexive

Dice Pool: Varies

Suggested Modifiers

First time in the Underworld: –5

Have spent days in the Underworld: –3

Have spent months in the Underworld: –1

Have spent years in the Underworld: +0

Have spent decades in the Underworld: +1

Have spent centuries in the Underworld: +2

Roll Results

Success: The character navigates to her intended destination for this leg.

Exceptional: The character is Steadfast.

Failure: The character goes off trail and encounters a hazard or threat, but may backtrack if so desired.

Dramatic: The character is Lost (p. 299).

Key

The Bound have access to a fourth kind of navigation, unique to their condition: they can navigate through their Keys. Only innate Keys, or Keys inherited through ectophagia, work for this method of navigation, as Keys bound up in Mementos provide too tenuous a connection to the relevant resonant deaths. With the Doomed Condition of an inherent Key active, the character can sense all resonant deaths in the Underworld. The first experience of this is often shocking and numbing, but with experience one learns to tune out the rushing flood of sensation and focus on specific signals.

Navigating by Key

Requirement: Doomed Condition of the relevant Key

Subject: A ghost to be found, whose death resonates with the Key

Special: The character does not need to know where the subject is or how to get there.

Action: Reflexive

Dice Pool: Key's Unlock Attribute + Occult

Suggested Modifiers

Subject died an identical death to the seeker: +3

Roll Results

Success: The character navigates toward the subject for this leg.

Exceptional: The character resolves the Doomed Condition on arrival.

Failure: The character goes off trail and encounters a hazard or threat, but may backtrack if so desired.

Dramatic: The character is Lost (p. 299).

The Ever-Hungry Maw

The first thing a new arrival in the Underworld feels as she picks herself up from the sopping floor is the absence of her Anchors. She no longer feels them tugging at her, brimming over with Essence to sustain her. She is without any form of support — each moment she is active drains her, slowly but surely. She feels herself wasting away, a gnawing and painful hunger growing in the memory of her stomach as the chill air numbs more and more of her skin. But nature abhors a vacuum, and the Essence that the dead lose is not lost, but *taken*, a tribute to the Underworld, a tax on one's very existence. The Underworld, just like the dead, feeds.

Needs Must: Survival in the Underworld

The first rule of existence for the dead in the land of the living is simple: Stay close to your Anchors, lest the world rasp away your very being. In the Underworld, this is no longer the case — the dead move freely, needing only to spend a point of Essence every 24 hours to stay active. This is quite untenable in the long term, however, as even a very fortunate ghost has only enough Essence to survive for a week or two at the very most. Many go several days without learning the awful truth — to survive, they must consume the ghosts of *things*, beloved items laden with memory that they strip away in what remains of their stomachs.

Finding a meal on one's own in the Underworld is half wilderness survival and half antiquing. The streams of the Underworld carry memories ever downward, waiting to be fished out. Some ghosts construct makeshift traps to filter out debris, hoping to glean a meal from their harvest. Others take a more active role, something akin to spear fishing, hoping to pinion an item of value. Most can eke out a meager living doing this, but occasionally someone gets lucky, and a stockpile of Essence-laden goods is always a lucrative target.

Underworld Survival

Action: Basic, instant; a few hours

Dice Pool: Wits + Survival

Eating the Pomegranate

The living can find things to eat in the Underworld, be it weird fungi in the tunnels of the Upper Reaches or a luxuriant meal of Barghest Essence cooked up in one of the River Cities. While it may seem filling and possibly even flavorful, none of it will sustain a living body. To dine on the fare of the Underworld is to dine on ash without realizing it, the first hint of the hunger is not an ache in the belly but a lightness in the head. Some starve to death without ever realizing *why*, only to wake up experiencing an entirely new kind of hunger.

The Bound don't have this problem. The world recognizes them as dead, and the food of the dead nourishes them even as it fills them with Plasm. The problem isn't so much finding food as it is finding ghosts willing to share.

Roll Results

Success: The character finds something from which she can strip a single point of Essence. **Exceptional:** The character fishes up a cornucopia of phantasms worth 5 Essence.

Failure: The character doesn't catch anything. **Dramatic:** The character caught something, but it sure isn't food, or particularly safe for that matter.

Don't Starve

For ghosts, to starve in the world of the living is simple enough — wander far enough from your Anchor, and the biting winds begin to tear at you, hollowing you out inside. If the dead go long enough without Essence, they slip into a kind of torpor, somnolent until revived. Those trapped in the Underworld are not so fortunate. True, the bleeding is staunched, no longer arterial, but it continues nonetheless, and the consequences of starvation are far direr.

Without Essence to keep it sated, the Underworld feeds directly. The walls close in, pulling at one's heels, rock flowing like sticky, impregnable molasses, trapping the dead and slowly digesting them. Their features slowly wear away over the next few days, outstretched limbs vanishing beneath the surface — the face, twisted in agony and terror, is always the last to go.

Starving

- **Essence Leeching:** Spend 1 Essence: remain safe for 24 hours.
- **Trapped in the Walls:** Ghosts without Essence to expend are pulled into the walls, floor, or ceiling of the Underworld.
- **Integrity Leeching:** Ghosts who are Trapped in the Walls lose one Integrity every 24 hours.
- **Last Chance:** Spend 3 Essence: Restore 1 Integrity to a ghost Trapped in the Walls.
- **The End:** When a ghost Trapped in the Walls reaches Integrity 0, she is gone forever.

Dark Markets

At the furthest edges of the Upper Reaches, where trickling streams from the Avernian Gates merge to form the mighty Rivers of the Underworld, the dead harvest the forgotten debris of 1,000 cultures to sustain a mean existence. Clinging to what passes for life here, the dead are exploited by the powerful and hunted by the Reapers, the "fortunate" merely paying tribute for protection. Here, the only sustenance is memory, consumed whole or in part, and if the people who dwell here can no longer kill for it, they consent to do the next best thing.

The River Cities are the cosmopolitan centers of the Underworld, where fleets of jury-rigged fishing boats drag wide nets behind them, tempting fate and Chthonians to feed those who remain on shore. Despite being trapped on the wrong side of death and left destitute in the process, they are nonetheless free from the Old Laws and the Kerberoi who enforce them. This means that virtually anything to be found in the Underworld can be had — if one knows where to look and can afford the (often exorbitant) price.

There's always someone who knows how to lay hands on highly desired items, and if she can play her cards right, she can amass a surprising amount of power and influence in these makeshift communities. Eventually they grow to become hidden commercial titans moving behind the scenes, staying under the radar until they are too indispensable to the local economy to be casually threatened by Reapers. With their own hired toughs at hand, such ghosts often become an approximation of order, but even they are ultimately self-interested. To them, "order" almost always means "got mine, fuck you."

Among the dead, these merchant kings live the high life. Their meals taste almost like real food, the nourishing

Let the Buyer Beware

The most powerful and lucrative items to be found in the Underworld end up in the hands of River City merchant kings, or in the hands of someone desperately trying to sell to them without being taken completely for a ride. In either case, Bound or others hoping to acquire the item in question find themselves embroiled in a game of cutthroat capitalism that regularly descends to the level of outright banditry.

phantasms palatable (and artfully concealed); their hovels are sturdy, built of the most stable detritus to wash down the Rivers. The difference between their longings and the longings of the masses who squat in hovels only feet away is that with wealth and power come opportunity. As long as they don't overreach, the Reapers leave them and theirs be, and they almost always have something in their collection to entice Bound who pay a visit into service. Down here, such connections might as well be a hotline to God.

Deeper in the Underworld, among the Dominions of the Lower Mysteries, similar figures exist. The difference is the degree of power they hold, for they are ever constrained by the Old Laws, and travel between Dominions is rarer than between the River Cities. Even in the most miserable of Dominions, however, the clever can eke out a living far in excess of their fellows' quality of life, and if they don't have the immediate power of their peers above, neither do they live with the same threat of privation.

The Autochthonous Jungle

The Upper Reaches and the River Cities can be exceptionally dangerous places, and being better off than virtually everyone around does make one a rather obvious target. Driven by their survival instincts, many ghosts descend to a level of amorality they would have thought quite impossible when they were alive (some, of course, were just as terrible alive as they are dead). Theft and violence are commonplace, and only a fool ventures out alone. The Bound are used to a certain degree of respect from the dead (if only because they tend to be dangerous), but desperation is the mother of action, and more than one Bound has been attacked by a hunger-crazed ghost. Frequent visitors learn not to underestimate the dead.

More dangerous, though, is the organized violence one finds in the shallowest reaches of the Underworld. Here, might makes right. This might mean relative stability, or it might be nothing more than a protection racket. When it's at its worst, the gangs might as well be Reapers. Sometimes, they are. The more enterprising gangs see opportunity when the Bound visit the Underworld, and do whatever they can to ingratiate themselves — eventually, to trap the Bound in a cycle of debt and repayment, favors leading to favors that further the interests of the gang far more than they do the Bound. Such gangs have, after all, had a long time to practice.

The Politics of Passing

New or naive Bound step through the Avernian Gate for the first time and see the wounds of their death spring into existence upon them — they are, after all, dead, even if their bodies have long since healed in the world of the living. They take in the dripping stab wound in their side, the wet cough, the itchy bullet hole seeping blood and gray matter from the back of their skull, and think they can pass themselves off as any other ghost. They're wrong, of course, because their liminal aura exists.

The Bound are obvious to the dead, especially in the Underworld, and especially when they've come on krewe business. Even the newest and rawest of the Bound, even Bound who know to consciously dampen the strange energies that course through them, all but *bleed* life into their surroundings in the Underworld, making them as unmistakable to the dead as they are uncanny to the living. The Bound stands out as a living, breathing anchor to the world they have all lost, drawing the desperate to flock to her side. As one might imagine, this makes getting around difficult in the River Cities, where population density and material need combine to form a powder keg just waiting for a spark.

The dead have three common reactions to one of the Bound showing up. The first case is alluded to above, and is common in less organized River Cities: mass hysteria, grasping, pulling, begging, pleading. The mass of the dead is unlikely to listen to reason, and such a situation might well become dangerous if not handled well. The second case, more common in cities marked by the presence of a single strong gang, resembles the first case initially, but quickly becomes an exercise in the gang sequestering the visitors, either to be ushered into an audience with the boss or quietly disposed of — some dead tyrants only grow more paranoid with age, after all.

And the third case? The Bound arrives in a River City only to be greeted with nonchalant surprise. They stand out, to be sure, but only a few come to bother her, and these receive looks of pity or even disgust from those around them, who go about their business — perhaps trying to sell the Bound something. Familiarity, as ever, breeds contempt, or at least disinterest, for the third case is that of a River City whose master, too, is one of the Bound, or perhaps a Sin-Eater

The Rivers

Water ever trickles from the Avernian Gates, rising to a torrent when the Gate is opened. These trickles become streams one might jump over, then grow wide enough that crossing is a choice between getting one's feet wet and finding a bridge. In the River Cities, it flows through channels, pours over cliffs in little waterfalls, serving to quench the thirst of the dead (or else as their common sewer). But in time, these streams grow wider, deeper, until they can no longer truly be called streams; their waters take on a strange pallor, boil with hidden flame, or run so cold they freeze over. The Cocytus. The Eresh-ki-gala. The Anahita. The Phlegethon. These and many others are the Rivers of the Dead.

Dead Waters

It's hard to say exactly where the waters of the Upper Reaches become the Rivers, but the dead can tell the difference. While the streams bring life — or at least a

prolongation of death — the Rivers bring dissolution. The waters of the Rivers are anathema to the dead… anathema, but also power, for those brave enough to drink from them.

The Rivers

- **Submersion:** A ghost fully immersed in a River suffers 1 lethal damage per turn.
- **Imbibing:** Drinking from a River inflicts 1 aggravated wound per turn for (10 – Integrity) turns, but also increases a ghost's Rank by 1.

The Ferryman's Bond: Travel on the Rivers

Few dare to swim the Rivers of the Underworld, fewer still to dive into their depths, but throughout the land of the dead curious figures ply their trade upon them: the Ferrymen. Nondescript to a fault, seemingly washed of any trait but their duty, they have little identity outside that of the task to which they are sworn: to carry passengers across or down the Rivers, but never to do so without cost. Payment *must* be made, for it is the payment itself that renders travel safe. Ferrymen have an unerring sense of where they are in the Underworld relative to their passengers' destination, and deliver them there without fail — though, requesting that a Ferryman put to shore (if, for example, something there has caught the passengers attention) ends the journey early. If the former passengers wish to contract the Ferryman again, it requires a second round of payment.

Sailing the Tides of the Dead

The dead have little recourse but to make payment, but the Bound who venture into the Underworld have another option — become the Ferryman themselves. For reasons unknown, any Bound may assume the role of Ferryman, and thus, for payment, guide her fellows on the Rivers. All one needs is a vessel that floats and a pole (or engine, or sail) by which to steer it. Any method of navigating the Underworld works while sailing the Rivers, but the same rules apply — putting to shore ends the journey.

Bound serving as Ferrymen gain an additional sense, one for the entropic resonance of a Dominion. Dominions do not endure forever, after all, and when they fall they sink ever deeper into the Underworld, perhaps to be swallowed by the Ocean of Fragments. Bound Ferrymen — perhaps all Ferrymen — can intuitively feel when the center

More Things in Heaven and Earth

Humans have rubbed shoulders with the beasts of land and air for a long, long time, and we know more or less what to expect from them. Not so for the creatures that dwell (or dwelled of old) in the deeps, where we have scarcely begun to explore. The living world has biodiversity enough to astonish even the most stoic observer, and the Underworld has been reaping the memory of that biodiversity for untold ages. In the Rivers of the Underworld one may find Chthonians mimicking plesiosaurs or ambulocetids. Without respect to pressure or light, deep-sea life lines even the shallows; the Phlegethon, for example, is known for its black smokers and the sort of strange creatures that cluster around them.

In short, Storytellers should not feel in any way limited when designing marine dangers for their players to encounter in the Underworld. We promise that no matter what you come up with, oceanic evolution has almost certainly outdone you for weirdness at some point in Earth's long history.

cannot hold, when the demand for resources exceeds the supply, even those rarest of moments when the Old Laws crumble and the Kerberoi are no more. More than one Sin-Eater philosopher holds that this is the ultimate purpose of the Ferrymen, to shepherd the dangerous and ambitious to destinations that facilitate the collapse of anything that might grow powerful enough to threaten the Chthonic Gods.

Becoming a Ferryman

- **Vessel and Oath:** A Bound who has a vessel fit to sail the Rivers and swears an oath to convey his passengers safely to their destination for a fair price gains the Ferry Bound Condition.

What Lies Beneath

Hidden in the dark depths of the Underworld's Rivers, Chthonian beasts that have never touched the land swim hungrily, their rotting flesh and scales drifting in their wake. One may see them, breaching here, spyhopping there, their dead eyes staring, even from a ship protected by a Ferryman's charge. When an unprotected vessel passes carelessly by, though, such Chthonians often strike, dragging the inhabitants under, drinking down the Essence of their dissolving prey to slake their eternal thirst.

Nearer to the great Dominions and the River Cities, fishing boats take to the Rivers, armed with Banes and nets woven from the roots of Underworld vines. The flesh of Chthonian fish does not nourish the dead, but it can hide the taste of Mementos, making the dead feel almost as though they haven't been reduced to their current state. That many fisherfolk are lost to half-glimpsed pelagic nightmares seldom troubles the elites who dine on their catch.

These Chthonian mockeries may resemble sea life in the living world, but the price for being proof against the Rivers' dissolving touch is an endless drive to consume, to grow. Anemones cling to skin, desperate to strip what they can; crabs march on the shore en masse, pincers clicking; and marlins prowl the waves like wolves, waiting to pick off the unwary even from aboard ship.

Staying Silent

Action: Basic, instant; duration of the voyage

Dice Pool: Composure + Stealth

Suggested Modifiers

Hushed Conversation: –1

Normal Conversation: –2

Shouting: –3

Roll Results

Success: The character does not attract the attention of a Chthonian.

Exceptional: The character gains insight into the nature of the River she sails. Ask the Storyteller a single question about it — the Storyteller will answer truthfully.

Failure: The character attracts the attention of a Chthonian and is in imminent danger.

Dramatic: The Chthonian's attack is the first hint of its presence.

Houses of the Dead

The Rivers are the keys to the Dominions, flowing throughout the Underworld on their way to the Ocean of Fragments. The geography may shift over time, confluences drying up and new ones being born, entire Dominions crumbling to dust, but one can always find a way to the Dominion one seeks. Here, where the Old Laws hold sway, the dead have some respite — but only some.

The Aegis of the Old Laws

Sheltered behind the strange walls of Dominions, ruled by the dead of centuries long past and ever watched over by the terrifying Kerberoi, the dead are no longer forcefully stripped of their Essence as they are above. Instead, they are victimized in other ways, perhaps more recognizable to the living. Few Dominions are kind to their inhabitants,

"What happens if a Kerberos breaks its own Old Laws?"

It won't. That is to say, it never chooses to and it can't be made to with force, guile, persuasion, or any other means available to the Bound. Still, it *might* be possible to create, with a truly stupendous amount of preparation and a potentially inhuman degree of understanding of a given Kerberos's modus operandi and its Old Laws, to create a paradox situation — a choice wherein all possible options result in the violation of an Old Law. No one has ever, to modern Sin-Eater knowledge, managed to do such a thing, and no one has any idea what would happen if someone did.

It is, however, probably safe to say that the answer is "Bad Things."

using them for labor in bizarre engines, drafting them into armies of the dead for wars against other Dominions, or even peeling them apart for the very energies and substance of their Corpus. Desperation drives many to the shores of the Dominions, where Gatekeepers greet them and inform them of the Old Laws. The wise keep those laws, even in the face of wickedness, pain, and even destruction, because what the Kerberoi do to those who violate them is almost always worse.

The best advice one can follow if one wishes to keep the Kerberoi out of one's business is simply, "don't break the Old Laws." Many krewes and Bound take this one step further and steer well clear of the Dominions, never venturing that deep into the Underworld out of a desire to avoid the Kerberoi altogether. Yet, the Dominions hold possibilities in too lucrative to ignore, reasons to descend to those depths despite the dangers. Sooner or later, unless one is exceptionally careful, a line is crossed. The Kerberoi are ancient and powerful, as incomprehensible in thought as they are predictable in action. They cannot be bargained or reasoned with, and can only be stopped with great difficulty and more than a little luck.

Dominions

- **Essence:** Ghosts who spend 24 hours in a Dominion gain 1 Essence.
- **Oathbreakers:** Characters who violate the Old Laws gain the Defiant Condition.

Irkalla's Gates

Rare but well attested are Irkalla's Gates, so named for their resemblance to the one-way passage to the Sumerian afterlife. These gates often serve as the entrance to a Dominion; though some lie defunct and seemingly grant passage to nowhere. More than one River City has sprung up around such Irkalla Gates, relying on them for a measure of security and isolation. The dead dread these gates, for when they enter them, they often cannot pass back through them. Each gate exacts a unique toll on those who pass — one's left arm, one's voice, and so on. Some demand seemingly innocuous things, like a particular item of clothing, but when paid, the true cost becomes clear, as any replacement rots away in moments. Those without appropriate payment to offer cannot pass — and thus, one who has paid the toll generally cannot pay it again without some form of trickery. Some, of course, will be unable to pass at all to begin with.

Each Irkalla Gate has a guardian, armored and armed in varying styles, who demands payment from all who pass. Like Ferrymen, guardians of Irkalla's Gates have little in the way of personality, and while they can be tricked, they are unmoved by pleas, bribery, or other forms of influence. The guardian is always the one who takes the payment. One guardian simply devours a newly acquired severed hand, while another takes the hand and nails it to the gate (its surface already likely hidden beneath successive layers of previous tolls paid in full). Once the toll is paid, the guardian opens the gate. If it is possible to force an Irkalla Gate open, no one has ever been known to do so.

Two exceptions stand to the toll: geists and Reapers. Touched by the Underworld's Rivers, geists have already given up so much of themselves that Irkalla's Gates know them not, and so demand nothing of them — indeed, many guardians will not even acknowledge their presence — a trait that carries over to their Bound companions. Reapers, of course, pass without payment by dint of their service to the Underworld, and some have grown rich by acting as coyotes, passing through Irkalla's Gates with a belly full of passengers to be vomited up on the other side.

Irkalla's Gates

- **The Guardian:** The gate guardian is a Rank 3-5 ghost. If destroyed, it reappears at the gate instead of the nearest River.
- **The Price:** The price to pass through an Irkalla Gate often takes the form of a Persistent Condition, Tilt, or Essence payment.

The Undiscovered Country

For all its dangers, for all its wickedness, violence, and exploitation, the Underworld holds many treasures, for those who know to seek them. Every aspect of humanity can be found there, from ancient cities to unfinished novels with their missing chapters intact. Some krewes do nothing more than dredge the depths for the forgotten lore of humanity, sifting the ashes of history for lost gems of wisdom that they spirit away to reintroduce to the living world. Others are more mercenary — knowledge is power, after all, and they mean to have the knowledge to themselves.

Hindsight is 20/20

Everybody dies. Almost everybody leaves a ghost behind. What, then, of every genius that death has taken too young, or who never had the chance to demonstrate their capacities? Are they any less geniuses for no longer being among the living? The Underworld is littered with brilliance, if one can find it among the suffering — the answer to almost any question, the solution to almost any problem. If it's beyond any given Sin-Eater, it's not beyond someone she can find in the Underworld.

But the Underworld is a cruel place, and many of the best and brightest are lost to Essence starvation, pulled into the walls and consumed. Seeking answers in the Underworld is often a rescue mission, pure and simple, if finding a needle in a haystack can be called simple.

There are ways of making such a Sisyphean task possible, however. The dead trapped in the Underworld may no longer have Anchors, but things that belonged to them still carry a shred of their individual resonance, which can be amplified to create ritual sympathy with the dead individual in question. Using such an item as a compass, it becomes possible to find a single ghost in the teeming masses of the Underworld. Getting them out, of course, and keeping them from being rasped apart by the living world, is another matter entirely.

Ghost Tracking

Action: Contested extended; five successes; one day interval

Dice Pool: Wits + Investigation or Empathy vs. (10 – ghost's Integrity)

Suggested Modifiers

Tracker has no tie to target: –3
Tracker has object owned by target: –1
Tracker has important object owned by target: +1
Tracker has target's Anchor: +3
Subject's Rank –1 for every Rank above 2
Subject died recently (less than a week): +2
Subject dead for weeks: +0
Subject dead for months: –2
Subject dead for years: –4
Subject dead for a decade or more: –5
Subject is in the Autochthonous Depths/River Cities: +2
Subject is on or near a River: –2
Subject is in a Dominion: –3
Subject is near or on the Sea of Shards: –5
Tracker uses Oracle Haunt: +2
Tracker personally knows subject :+1

Roll Results

Success: The character finds her quarry.

Exceptional: The character gains the Inspired Condition applicable to any rolls relating to her quarry.

Failure: The character suffers the Obsessed Condition.

Dramatic: A serious roadblock jeopardizes the search and must be dealt with before the search can resume.

Uncanny Tableaux

The physical reality of the Underworld is only one dimension of its power over the dead. Along the Rivers, here and there, cloaked in the mist along the shore, scenes torn from myth and memory play out. But these are not individual ghosts — rather, they are the dead stories that bind disparate lives connected by circumstance, stories that echo again and again throughout history and culture. Sons who unknowingly murder their fathers, fathers who devour their own progeny (literally or otherwise), prophets whose foresight went unheeded; all these and more can be seen from the ferries that ply the Rivers, rendered in twisted and tortuous metaphor.

Some Sin-Eaters believe that these stories are the true underpinnings of the Underworld, the very concept that death should be a punishment animated in spectral flesh and blood, bound to the shores of the Rivers and condemned to endlessly play out scenes from myth they never lived. And perhaps they are right, for the truth about these tableaux is even more curious than their very existence: *they can move on*. Doing so is a task no less legendary than the stories that spawned these tableaux in the first place, but it has happened before and nothing, save inaction, stops it happening again.

Part of the reason such an undertaking is so rare is that these tableaux's unfinished business is bound up in the unfinished business of countless others. The Underworld feeds on their resonance as stories play out again and again in myriad lives, carving a deep groove into the collective death of humanity that is reinforced every time a death echoes the story. Breaking the cycle requires conscious effort and no small amount of risk.

It's not enough to simply interfere with the scene — to take the killer's knife or hurl the poisoned gauntlet to

Finding Haunts

The power of Haunts comes from the Underworld, ultimately, and so the Bound must descend to the Underworld to learn new ones. Simple enough, but what to look for? What moment or item should unlock that power?

The answer is: whatever works for the story. If your player is in the process of tracking down the Reaper that abducted the Krewe's seer, consider making her first dot of Oracle contingent on finding the creature and rescuing the seer in proper Orphean style. If your player has Experiences falling out of her pockets, her Sin-Eater just helped a ghost move on from the Underworld, and she really wants to buy the first dot of Caul? Go for it. Epiphanies can be found in the most prosaic of things as well as the momentous, after all, and the most valuable wisdom is often not what we set out to find.

the ground — that just disperses the tableau to reform elsewhere in the Underworld. Like most things involving the Underworld, you need a key. Specifically, you need a symbol of the cycle broken: a Memento from a ghost who has moved on, a keepsake of a tragic death averted. Whatever it is, it has to come from a death that resonates with the tableau.

Lives or deaths that resonate with aspects of a specific myth or reflect archetypal deaths need not be confined to the Underworld, or even dead, but the living must be in some way marked for death —on death row, fighting terminal cancer, living under a death curse; prosaic or supernatural, a death mark is a death mark. In the case of the dead, the Sin-Eater must aid them in moving on, whatever that requires. For the living, the situation is slightly more complicated. The Sin-Eater might work to change the circumstances of her death, or effect changes in her life that prevent the death in the first place — what matters is that the resonance feeding into the tableau is dispelled.

The former Anchors and Mementos the dead leave behind — or, in the case of the living, keepsakes or trophies — are bound up in the act of liberation, rather than in the Essence of the tableau. By wearing or otherwise holding these objects, Sin-Eaters may ritually insert themselves into the tableau in question, ephemeral actors vanishing as their roles are taken. All that remains then is to go off script, and see the scene to its end.

Break the Cycle

Requirement: A number of characters bearing appropriate objects equal to the number of key roles in the tableau; all players participating must succeed at least once to successfully liberate the tableau.

Action: Basic, instant

Dice Pool: Synergy + Attribute (Storyteller chooses the most appropriate Attribute based on the role being played)

Suggested Modifiers

The character's death resonates with the role she plays: +2

Roll Results

Success: The Underworld's grip on the tableau slips. If all other players have succeeded at least once, the tableau moves on and the krewe takes a Krewe Beat.

Exceptional: The tableau is shaken by the character's defiance. The next Break the Cycle action (whoever takes it) receives a +3 modifier.

Failure: The tableau reasserts its narrative, and the actor is compelled to act out their role — possibly leading to damage, crisis points, or worse.

Dramatic: The character suffers the Insensate Tilt as the tableau drags her into its narrative.

The results are immediate and nothing short of astonishing. Freed from the bounds of so many resonant deaths, the tableau slips its chains and sublimates into pure Essence that trickles out into the Underworld, creating for a brief time a flourishing dead ecosystem of ghostly flora, an Eden where hellish scenes of torture once stood.

Ylem

Perhaps the strangest things to be found in the Underworld are the ylems, vortices of Essence and emotion found in and below the deepest Dominions, and even on the shores of the Ocean of Fragments. Similar to Mementos but seemingly indestructible, some of the dead claim they're nothing more than fonts of Essence — wars have been started over the possession of an ylem — but the true value of the ylem is what is contained within.

An ylem can take any shape, but is always something that can be held in the palm of one's hand. Rumors tell of ylem that appear as twisting, shivering gobbets of flesh, or of carved bones that continuously bleed black ink. It may be a prosaic object as well, but its unusual nature always shines through — figures in the Polaroid photo move when one looks away; the cracked chalice fills with blood regardless of what liquid is poured into it. Few have ever seen an ylem, and fewer still have touched one, so rumor is much of what drives Sin-Eaters to search for them — for it is said that the ylem contain the condensed hope of those who came before, and perhaps the seed of stillborn potential.

With focus, a Sin-Eater can connect with the heart of

the ylem, sending them into a trance where they experience vivid waking dreams of other lives. Their subjective sense of time is wildly distorted, and what seems like days or weeks, or even months or years, passes by in just a few moments in reality. Waking from the trance, they remember few details, but the weight of what they experienced will never entirely leave them. These visions may be evoked more than once, and more than one Sin-Eater may participate in an individual trance.

An ylem trance is reflected with a Condition, crafted by the Storyteller, that represents the crux of what was left behind, the resolution of which grants a Krewe Beat. The vision ends either when the people the characters are inhabiting "die," or when the heart of the mystery is understood or solved — if the latter, the Condition is fully resolved, and the ylem dissolves into pure Essence. Ylem carry within them the encysted hopes and dreams of Sin-Eaters past, thus making them an excellent source of occult knowledge and power, and resolved ylem may serve as the core of Krewe Regalia.

Care should be taken when accepting the Esotery of another krewe into one's own mythology, however. Ylem contain more than memories, after all — some believe that the ylem are the conjoined shades of geist and Bound, or possibly a mélange of an entire krewe. A universal truth lies at the heart of every ylem: The krewe responsible for its creation failed in its chosen task. Perhaps it was through no fault of its own, or perhaps theit was misguided in its Doctrine — it's impossible to know. Either way, it's a radical act to accept something of another krewe so utterly. Depending on what is adopted, doing so may represent redefining or breaking Doctrine (p. 175).

As Below, So Above

Many believe that the Dominions are held together by their Old Laws, and that the Kerberoi are the expression of those laws. Without the Old Laws, without the Kerberoi, would the Dominions slide into the Ocean of Fragments? Is that what happens when Dominions fall? These questions and others like them have puzzled Sin-Eater philosophers since the beginning of modern Sin-Eater culture (and probably long before), and answers are few and far between.

The Old Laws certainly seem, however, to be something artificial, something grafted onto the Underworld in the name of false stability rather than a natural feature of the place. Certainly, havens from the constant, draining hunger the Underworld inflicts would seem to be at cross-purposes with it. If the Old Laws *are* artificial, that means someone or some*thing* made them, which means someone should be able to *un*make them. Some krewes, the desperate, the brave, the reckless, the zealous, go one step further, and seek to make the Old Laws (and the Dominion they support) their own.

Suborning a Dominion

Suborning a Dominion requires only that the krewe locate a Dominion with an Old Law that shares at least some similarity with one of their Doctrines (or, if they wish, krewe members can change one of their Doctrines to match the desired Dominion). Using this point of correspondence as the thin end of the wedge, the krewe slowly inculcates itself into the body politic, requiring a full story dedicated to the effort. At appropriately climactic moments when the balance of power in the Dominion shifts — the downfall of a wicked tyrant, the gathering of a massive throng of the dead outside the halls of power, and so on — the Storyteller should call for a Taking Control action to replace an Old Law with a New Law. The first New Law is always the one corresponding to the Old Law used to begin the process of suborning the Dominion.

When all Old Laws have been replaced with New Laws or erased, the Kerberos of the Dominion finally lies down and, for lack of a better word, dies, its Corpus slowly absorbed into the substance of the Dominion. The Sin-Eaters of the krewe feel this happen regardless of where they are at the time, for they are now bound through their Doctrines to uphold the New Laws of their Dominion. They are not compelled, as the Kerberos was, to stand an endless vigil, but violations of Doctrine now have sympathetic effects throughout the Dominion, and if they do not enforce their Doctrines, the damage to the Dominion will become quickly apparent. If the Sin-Eaters themselves should violate Doctrine, the sympathetic effect strikes *them* instead — not just one, but *all* Sin-Eaters bound to the Dominion — and Storytellers are encouraged to get creative with appropriate persistent Conditions and Tilts.

Taking Control

Requirement: Doctrine with similarity to Dominion's Old Law

Action: Contested, instant

Dice Pool: Esotery + appropriate Krewe Attribute vs. Kerberos' Resistance + Rank

Roll Results

Success: The targeted Old Law is erased, and replaced with a New Law corresponding to one of the Krewe's Doctrines.

Exceptional: All krewe members gain the Connected Condition (p. 299) for the targeted Dominion.

Failure: The Old Law remains in force.

Dramatic: The Kerberoi treats the krewe's effort as a violation of the targeted Old Law.

The Ocean of Fragments

When the Rivers have run past the last and deepest of the ancient Dominions, when their banks dwindle out until they cease to be, then the dead and the Bound know they have come to the end of all things — the Ocean of Fragments that swallows memory and identity. The black waters of this ocean hold uncountable secrets, the flensed memories of every being to suffer its touch. Some cling to the shores, casting lines and nets, to fish up bits of what used to be people. The courageous (or foolhardy) sail it, and inevitably meet the Admiral.

System

- **Waters of Oblivion:** Every turn, a character immersed in the waters of the Ocean of Fragments loses a dot in a single Trait. Merits go first, followed by Skills, then Willpower, then Attributes. If the character has any supernatural powers or Traits, these are lost as Merits.
- **Sanctity of Traits:** Player characters affected by the Ocean of Fragments receive refunded Experiences for lost Traits.
- **End of Everything:** When every Trait is lost, the character ceases to exist.

Navigating the Final Frontier

The Ocean of Fragments is wide and vast, the confluence of all Rivers, the foundation of the Underworld itself. It follows, therefore, that the Ocean that ends all things touches on those things as well, and the brave or desperate can sail from one shore to another, risking Leviathan's wrath and the Admiral's curiosity. Without the benefit of the stars, sailors here must rely on the lights of the deepest Dominions, those hanging precariously above their own oblivion in the roof of this incomprehensibly vast cavern. There is little else on this featureless expanse to mark one's way.

Navigating the Ocean of Fragments

Action: Basic Instant; one voyage

Dice Pool: Resolve + Occult

Suggested Modifiers

Has never sailed the Ocean of Fragments before: –5

Has sailed the Ocean of Fragments before : –3

Has visited one or more Dominions bordering on the Ocean: –1

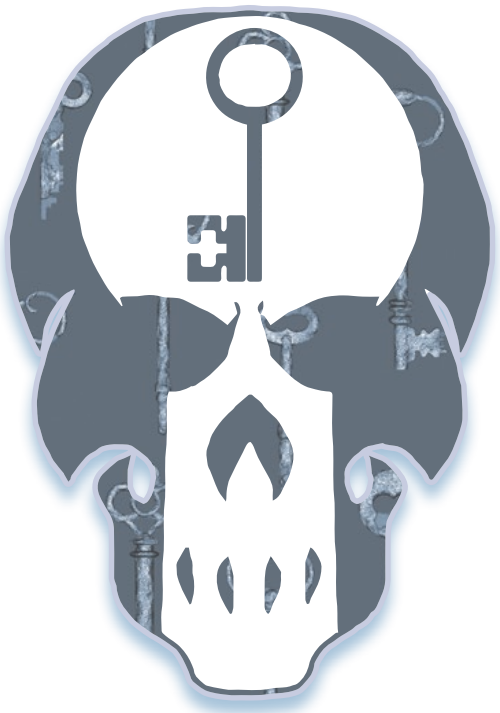
Roll Results

Success: The character navigates to her destination.

Exceptional: The voyage takes a disturbingly short length of time.

Failure: The character is Lost (p. 299).

Dramatic: The character encounters the Leviathan or the Admiral. Pick one; neither is feeling charitable.



A Brighter Morning
— Part IV —

They followed the tunnel for what felt like hours. The sound of rushing water grew louder as they traveled, but the River was nowhere in sight. Without food, water, or medical supplies, their pace slowed to a crawl. When Jade begged to rest, Leah obliged.

Hari's eyes opened. His sunken eyes wandered around, settling on Oliver. "Such a troublesome boy," he muttered in Hindi, between labored breaths.

Oliver knelt down to meet his gaze. "Sir, I am so sorry."

"It wasn't your fault," Leah said. She had her ear pressed to the tunnel wall. She hoped to hear the sound of rushing cars or public transportation over the current. Instead she only picked up muffled screams and sobs. The Abandoned One kept watch some distance away.

Hari sat up. "It's yours," he said to Leah in English. "They said you would keep us safe."

Leah kept her ear to the wall. "I told you to leave. That was not just a suggestion."

"You let my house be destroyed." Hari wheezed. "You put my daughters in danger."

"No," Oliver said. "None of this would have happened if I had just run away or if I stayed quiet, or…"

"Shut up!" Trisha stood up. "It's nobody's fault! No one could have known this would happen!"

"*You* wanted to talk to him," Jade said.

Trisha sighed. "What's it matter, Jade? We're all exhausted, but blaming someone isn't going to get us out."

Hari let out a sharp chuckle. "You sound like your mother." His head rolled up to look at the ceiling. "I wonder if she will believe you when you return."

"When *we* return, Dad."

Hari said nothing. A pleasant, tinny melody echoed in the tunnel. Jade's eyes widened and she reached for her pockets.

"That's my phone!" She pulled it out. "I got a text!"

Leah turned to her. "Give it here!"

Jade tossed it over. Leah dialed a number. After a moment of silence, a voice came through an intense hiss of static.

"Baker Consultancy," the voice said. "This is Mark speaking."

Leah raised her right hand, for tradition's sake. "As a High Priestess of the Church of the Brighter Morning, I greet you, O High Priest."

"Jesus, Leah, is that you?" So much for tradition.

"It's me, Mark. I'm down here with Oliver and the Patels. Where are you?"

"The hospital," Mark said. "I had to drive us over. I've been trying to keep my story straight for the nurses for the past couple hours. Is the Reaper still tailing you?"

"I took care of her. We're trying to find an exit. Everything's still stone down here, but I can hear a River and voices. I don't think we're that far down."

"Oh, thank God. Oumil already knows what happened. We're getting ready to go down and look for you. I don't think it'll be too long if you're close to the surface. How long 'till your battery runs out?"

Leah looked at the phone. The battery was completely empty, but the phone still ran. "I don't know."

"Wonderful. Just stay on the line with me."

Hari gasped for air. "Dad?" Trisha asked.

He slammed to the ground and began convulsing. Trisha compressed his chest. Jade cradled his face.

"Come on, Dad, stay with us!" she said.

"What's going on down there?" Mark asked.

"It's Hari Patel. He's dying," Leah said.

"Do you have a Saint's Knife with you?"

"No."

"You'll just have to improvise. I'm getting in the car now."

Trisha laid her head on her father's chest. "Come on…"

Hari grasped Jade's hand and mouthed silent words. She blinked back tears.

Leah called out to the Abandoned One. "Give me something sharp," and then to Oliver: "Grab some of the dirt and make a circle around his body."

"Yes, ma'am!" Oliver gathered clumps in his arms. The Abandoned One felt along the wall for a chunk to rip off.

Jade stood up. "What are you doing?"

"Your father won't make it. I'm going to slow down the process so you can say goodbye."

Jade stumbled to Leah, eyes red and overflowing with tears. "He's not going to die."

"Jade, he's wasting away. Before he rises as a ghost, we need to help him pass on."

"You don't know that!"

"We're running out of time! Let me perform the last rite!"

Oliver finished the circle. The Abandoned One gave Leah a sharp fragment of the wall. She pressed it against her open palm. Jade pushed her down before she could pierce the skin.

"No! We're getting him to a doctor!"

Trisha pulled her sister off of her. "Just let her do this!"

Jade shoved Trisha away. "How can you trust her?"

"He's going to die, but he doesn't belong here," Leah said. "There is a Brighter Morning that we all deserve. This isn't it, Jade. We call this the Perilous Night, and no one should be here. I need to send him to the Morning before it's too late."

"Shut up!" Jade backed away. "You don't know anything!"

Hari coughed once, then slipped out of his corpse as a ghost. Trisha watched with her hands clasped to her mouth. Jade collapsed to the ground and sobbed. Hari's ghost opened empty eyes and made no expression of emotion as it regarded them.

Nearby, a portion of the wall collapsed. The ghost turned towards the new opening. "I hear your call."

"Leah?" Mark asked. "What's happening now?"

"Hari's a ghost and he's being lured somewhere."

"Come back!" Jade leapt up and ran after her father's ghost.

"Jade!" Trisha ran after her, and the others followed. Beyond the wall was a sharp slope, falling away to a village within a large swamp. Hari was at the bottom of the slope, Jade close behind. An arch stood above the swamp, half covered in fog.

Into her phone, Leah said, "We've found a Dominion."

"Leah, I'm almost at the house, don't go in."

"Jade, stop!" Trish ran down the slope. Oliver followed.

Leah cursed. "They went in."

"They're not our concern, we…damn it. What's it look like?"

"Wetlands with a village in it. The Reaper mentioned an Arched Shelter, this might be it. Mark, I have to go before I lose them."

"Good luck, Leah." She hung up.

— chapter five —
Antagonists

It is a man's own mind, not his enemy or foe, that lures him to evil ways.

— Gautama Buddha

From the moment the Bargain is struck, Sin-Eaters face enemies from all sides. In the world of the living, necromancers and the eaters of the dead exploit and feast upon ghosts. In the world of the dead, Reapers and Kerberoi deceive and enslave them. Ideological differences between krewes spark bloody wars spread across both worlds. No matter their origin, they will all ensure that fighting for the dead is a perilous task.

Reapers

Some ghosts claim to be empowered by the Underworld, and that they serve its needs in return. Through the force of their Deathmasks (p. 131), Reapers travel into the world of the living to drag ghosts into the Great Below. They use their authority and prestige to defend the Underworld from those who would see it destroyed.

One simple truth drives a chill into the heart of a Sin-Eater: Underneath all their power and clout, Reapers are the very same dead they have sworn to protect.

A Ghost Like You

Any ghost can become a Reaper. Becoming one is as simple as finding a Deathmask buried in the soil or floating down one of the many tributaries of the Rivers of the Underworld. Donning the mask triggers a startling transformation.

Wearing a Deathmask is an exhilarating experience. A Reaper feels cold water running down his body, possibly the only sensation he's felt in years. In an instant, the Reaper's Corpus is infused with a monstrous visage. He is freed from the restraints of humanoid form and crackles with newfound death energy. After the initial rush of strength, his mind clears and he becomes focused on his true purpose: to capture ghosts above and drag them back to the Great Below.

Quite a few Reapers take on the role out of opportunity or simple curiosity, but most have a more elaborate origin. They describe experiencing psychedelic visions of beings known among Reapers as Chthonic Gods, whom they believe to rule the Underworld and write the Old Laws. Descriptions of these gods vary: gray stalks topped by blood-red lips, stone spirals spewing orange smoke, and blinking red eyes pressed together in a pyramid.

Without his Deathmask, a Reaper is indistinguishable from any other ghost. His thoughts, feelings, and opinions are still the same, though he may find himself adjusting them to better suit his new work. As long as a Reaper keeps his mask hidden, he can interact with others as if nothing ever happened.

The Chthonic Gods

They don't exist. You could map every tunnel, plumb every River, comb every book in every Dominion in the Lower Mysteries, and never find the way to Eljudnir or the palaces of the Lords of Xibalba. And what is the measure of a god's existence if not an actual, physical presence you can go and visit?

They do exist. The dead venerate them, pray to them and sacrifice to them and commit atrocities in their names. Even the living sometimes find their way to the Church of the Gods Below. And what is the measure of a god's existence if not the impact of its worshippers upon the world?

The Dead Belong Below

Astute Sin-Eaters are quick to point out the obvious similarity between themselves and the Reapers they oppose. They claim to have accepted an offer to stave off their own personal oblivion at the cost of working with a powerful, enigmatic intelligence. In other words, both Sin-Eaters and Reapers have made a Bargain, with the difference lying in who the parties have bound themselves to. While Sin-Eaters enter a partnership with their little god of death and the human underneath its terrifying form, Reapers are shackled to pure forces of entropy. Every action a Reaper takes is in hopes of serving the agenda of their Chthonic Gods, whatever that might be.

As Reapers come from all walks of death, they enter their position with a wide variety of opinions on the Underworld. Some have no problems with the current state of affairs, especially now that they have avoided the ultimate fate. Others may dislike or even despise the Underworld, even going so far as to try to use their powers to fix the system from within.

Ultimately, most Reapers come to agree on a single tenet: the Underworld's current state of affairs is necessary. Ghosts must be kept within the Great Below, for their own safety or the safety of the living. The wasting away of ghosts is a natural part of the world's ecology and must be encouraged.

Each Reaper develops their own reasons or rationalizations as to why this must be so. Perhaps it keeps the population healthy, or it feeds the power of their gods. Perhaps it is a grim reality of being dead, or perhaps a mystical placeholder for a true paradise to come.

With these philosophies in mind, Reapers view the Doctrines of Sin-Eater krewes with a range of emotions, from mild disdain to sheer ire. Sin-Eaters are outsiders, bound to amnesiac ghosts high on stolen power. Their claim that the system is broken has no validity. Even reformist Reapers reject their ideas. Sin-Eaters want too much change, too fast. Their ideals are understandable, even laudable, but invite chaos.

Faced with the potential destruction of the world they know, Reapers fight back by installing themselves into the Underworld's day-to-day life. Reapers serve as teachers, spiritual leaders, and even folk heroes. Some Reapers work as messengers, carrying important news while making sure their destinations are still holding the proper beliefs. Leaders and beloved pillars of riverside towns and graveyards may have a Deathmask hidden away, ready for use. Together, they present the idea of a world that works, and many Reapers take great pride in doing so.

Of course, no amount of public service can stave off the desire to reap.

Harvesting Methods

All Reapers travel to the surface to capture ghosts. Their need to do so is just as strong and innate as any Sin-Eater's Burden. This drive can even take a physical form; Reapers who spend too much time shirking their task feel the sensation of dry, cracked skin all over their corpus, remedied only by catching a ghost.

While bearing their Deathmasks, Reapers have no difficulty leaving the Underworld and may stay in the world of the living as long as they like without suffering Essence bleed (p. 188). Many Reapers take advantage of this, whether it's to visit missed families or to wreak terrible vengeance against their still-living enemies. No quota is required, but a Reaper who spends too much time on the surface without any ghosts in tow risks censure by his peers.

They rarely have to travel far to find their victims. Every graveyard in the world holds an Avernian Gate, and the ghosts that reside there cannot easily travel to their other Anchors (p. 189). A graveyard that has lost its guard can make for a bountiful harvest, but the wider world is just as rich. In the world of the Chronicles of Darkness, the dead are in eternal surplus.

Reapers often hunt alone; few ghosts can stand up to one. When a ghost is in their grasp, nothing short of a well-prepared krewe can save them. Every Reaper has their own method for capturing ghosts, based on the skills and techniques they had in life. One Reaper may stalk their quarry for hours, forcing them into dead ends. Another may create ephemeral traps and snares. Some Reapers use a riskier method: They remove their Deathmasks and present themselves as psychopomps, ready to guide the dead back to their place of rest. By the time their target realizes that something is wrong, the Reaper has already slipped his mask on.

Whatever form the chase takes, the end is as singular as it is horrific: The Reaper Engulfs (p. 193) his prey. The Reaper's Corpus twists and stretches, ribs unfolding and snapping like a bear trap, or jaws unhinging to swallow the

ghost whole. Engulfed ghosts remember little about their time between capture and release in the Underworld. Recovered memories come in fragments: the muted sounds of distant noise, panicked feelings of claustrophobia, the scent of stale water. Reapers hunt down their victim's Anchors and destroy them to prevent the ghost from returning to the world of the living. Others prefer to leave Anchors unmolested, in hopes that an escaped ghost may flee to a more haunted area on the surface and serve as unknowing bait.

When a Reaper feels his task is finished, he returns to the Underworld and vomits up all the dead that he has Engulfed. Some Reapers take pity on these new arrivals and try to guide them towards River Cities or Dominions. Others abandon them entirely and seek out the next batch of ghosts to reap.

In cases where a ghost proves too difficult to consume, or when an Anchor is too large to quickly destroy, Reapers use a different tactic. They Descend (p. 193) the area around the ghost, condemning the land to tumble into the Underworld. Houses and buildings vanish in the blink of an eye. That the living can be caught in this process isn't a problem: Those who don't die in the initial collapse waste away in the Great Below. Other loose ends tie up on their own. The living rationalize the incident as a sinkhole or a freak accident. People with direct ties to the land quickly sicken and die. A sadistic Reaper may Descend an area just to reap the ghosts of people marked for death by the fallout.

Strength in Numbers

Threats to the Underworld can become too large for a single Reaper to handle. An unbound geist escapes in search of a body to hide in. A ghost has too many Anchors to Descend alone. When situations like these arise, it's time to round up a posse and put the problem down for good.

In cases where a ghost has several Anchors that cannot easily be destroyed, a posse will Descend them all at once, with one Reaper at each Anchor. With large enough groups, neighborhoods, city blocks, or even entire districts can be pulled beneath the earth, never to be seen again. The wave of illness and death that results from this can reach far and wide. A large enough number of Reapers could destroy an entire civilization this way, Descending cities and letting the aftereffect do its work. Whether this has ever actually happened is hotly debated among Sin-Eater historians.

Mechanics

Reapers are ephemeral entities. When they aren't wearing their masks, they are Rank 2 ghosts with no special powers or abilities. Putting on a Deathmask grants the Reaper the following:

- **Rank:** The Reaper's Rank increases to 3, 4, or 5. Attributes, Traits, and Maximum Essence increase accordingly.
- **Aspiration:** The Reaper gains "drag ghosts back to the Underworld" as an Aspiration.
- **Numina and Influences:** The Reaper has access to the Engulf and Descend Numina and may gain additional Influences and Numina befitting their new Rank limit.
- **Manifestations:** The Reaper has access to Manifestations according to their new Rank limit.
- **Ban and Bane:** Deathmasks that raise the Reaper to Rank 4 or 5 change his Ban and Bane to a form befitting their new Rank.
- **Essence Bleed:** The Reaper no longer suffers Essence bleed.
- **Donning and Removing:** Donning or removing a Deathmask is an instant action. A Reaper's Deathmask can only be forcibly removed in the presence of the Deathmask's Bane.

Faces of Death

Traits before the slash are the Reaper's Traits without the Deathmask. Traits after the slash are their Traits when wearing the mask. Influences, Numina, and Manifestations in italics are only accessible when the Reaper is wearing their Deathmask.

DESPERATE SPOUSE

"Don't worry.
I know another place we can look for her."

Background: The happiest day of Andy Yang's life was when he married his high-school sweetheart, Olivia. It would also be his last. Not long after they left the reception, the newlyweds were caught in a head-on collision. Andy saw the other car sway into his lane but turned too late. The airbags failed and Andy slammed into his steering wheel. His last living memory was his wife's look of terror before the impact. The two died together, but Andy awoke in Holly Grove Cemetery alone.

Andy refused to believe that Olivia would move on without him and spent his early years among the dead looking for her. His search led him into the Underworld, to no avail. He became convinced that Olivia must still be on the surface and investigated means of escape. While contemplating drinking from one of the Rivers, he found the Pale Bloom washed up on its banks. Now he stalks both worlds until he can see his wife's smile once more.

Description: Andy is a lanky Chinese-American man in his late 20s, dressed in a well-tailored blue suit lightly spattered with fresh blood. His left eye is swollen shut and his nose is shattered. He always wears a sad smile.

When he dons the Pale Bloom, he becomes the Mourning Groom. His suit transforms into a classic tuxedo. His face is replaced by the blossom of a white rose with small, bright red veins running through each petal. When he Engulfs a ghost, his white-gloved hands burst into deep green vines lined with thorns that drag the ghost, screaming, into the ruined cage of his ribs.

Storytelling Hints: No matter what form he takes, Andy's search for his wife takes precedence. Among the dead, he serves as an information broker, selling rumors to anyone who will pay while sifting the data for any sign of Olivia. When he is reaping, he offers leniency to anyone who can take him to her. It is a lie: He follows up on whatever lead they may give him, but he takes them just the same.

If Olivia's ghost still exists and can be found, she could get him to give up the mask forever. It's also just as likely that she would inspire him to reap with renewed fervor, now that he has someone to provide for.

Virtue: Loyal
Vice: Obsessive
Aspirations: Reunite with Oliva
Rank: 2/3
Attributes: Power 2/5, Finesse 4/8, Resistance 3/7
Influence: Yang Wedding Rings 1, Regret 1, *Chance 1*
Corpus: 8/12
Willpower: 7/10
Size: 5
Speed: 11/18
Defense: 2/5
Initiative: 7/15
Numina: Pathfinder, Innocuous, Sign, Awe, Omen Trance, Speed, Telekinesis, *Engulf, Descend*
Manifestations: Twilight Form, Materialize, Avernian Gateway
Essence: 15/20
Ban: Andy dematerializes when he sees a car crash
Bane: Motor Oil

AMBITIOUS REFORMER

"I can't do this without you!"

Background: Agathe Richter wanted to change her country forever, and paid the ultimate price for it. The harsh economic climate of Germany after the Great War led her to the Social Democratic Party and later the Communist Party. She took part in what would later be known as the Spartacist Uprising and met her death at the hands of one of the *Freikorps*, voluntary military units ordered by the German chancellor to put down the revolt by force. She was beaten, shot in the stomach, and left to die in one of the buildings she helped seize.

Faced with the bleak oppression of the Great Below, Agathe resolved to transform the world before her into something better. With like-minded individuals, she helped build the small community of New Berlin. The community organized itself into workers' councils, united by a direct democratic system. They collectively farmed their stretch of the Cocytus for survival. A challenge soon arose: the city lost its inhabitants as fast as it gained them, lured away by the temptations of the capitalist River Cities. The merchants in these cities shunned New Berlin for standing against their way of life, and it became clear that spreading the city's political ideas would need some kind of backing force. The krewes Agathe joined either fell apart due to petty bickering or fell to Reapers. When she found the Whispering Shells, she saw an opportunity to subvert the system and bring about the changes she craved.

Now, New Berlin is a significant force in the Underworld. It is a common stop for many of the newly dead, especially those reaped by Agathe herself. Smaller communities using New Berlin's economic model have formed, but none seem to last as long. One day Agathe will reveal herself as a Reaper and begin a new revolution, but she fears that day may be a long time coming.

Description: Agathe is a broad and powerful German woman in her mid-40s. She has a stare that can unsettle even the hardiest ghost. She makes no attempt to hide the gunshot wound that bloodies her simple dress, but will occasionally grasp at it, as if it still sends out twinges of pain.

When she drapes the Whispering Shells around her neck, she becomes Ocean's Last Whisper. She transforms into a shadowy humanoid figure with gleaming aquamarine eyes, her features hidden by an intense whirl of thick, blood-red mist peppered by sharp seashells. When she Engulfs a ghost, those seashells slam into its Corpus and fierce winds drag it into the mist.

Storytelling Hints: Agathe genuinely wants to make the Underworld better. Most of the time she doesn't even need to wear her Deathmask to reap: Her assurance that New Berlin is a better life is convincing enough for many ghosts. She couldn't be prouder of her community, but fears for its integrity. While the workers' councils are still important for day-to-day governance, Agathe is not afraid to be the final authority. If the dissent grows too great, Agathe uses her Deathmask to silence all argument.

Lately, Agathe has become frustrated that, after years of spreading the revolution, only New Berlin stands. She believes she has found a solution: She must gain enough power to transform the community into a Dominion. She hopes that increasing her reaping will convince the Chthonic Gods to grant her this boon, but the idea of drinking from one of the Rivers is tempting her. Whether this would transform her into the Kerberoi of her new domain or something more monstrous remains to be seen.

Virtue: Righteous
Vice: Controlling
Aspirations: Transform New Berlin into a Dominion
Rank: 2/4
Attributes: Power 6/12, Finesse 5/9, Resistance 3/9
Influences: Unpublished Essay 2, *Stillness 2*
Corpus: 8/14
Willpower: 8/10
Size: 5
Speed: 16/26
Defense: 5/9
Initiative: 8/18
Numina: Aggressive Meme, Emotional Aura, Seek, Awe, Blast, Implant Mission, Regenerate, Rapture, Left-Handed Spanner, *Engulf, Descend*
Manifestations: Twilight Form, Image, Avernian Gateway
Essence: 15/25
Ban: Agathe loses all Willpower when she hears the lullaby "Abendlied." When she is Ocean's Last Whisper, the song sends her fleeing back to the Underworld.
Bane: As Agathe, ground concrete dust. As Ocean's Last Whisper, any object shot by a Gehwer 98 rifle.

RUTHLESS JUDGE

"It's a settled matter. You're coming with me."

Background: Judge Bart Evans was the terror of Ripton County. His verdicts were cruel and rumored to be up to the highest bidder. Stories of him thrashing strangers with his cane for acts of perceived rudeness were common. Though he was unmarried, he adopted a daughter near the end of his life and showered her in uncharacteristic kindness.

One night, someone had enough. The culprit has been lost to history, but the county will never forget when Evans Manor went up in flames. The story that the tour guides tell is that Bart smelled the kerosene, ordered his maid to escort his daughter out of the building, and then sat in his study with a glass of brandy as the house burned around him.

Not long after, a rash of freak fires and building collapses plagued Ripton County. Superstitious locals called it "Evans' Revenge." They weren't wrong: Soon after his death, he rose from the Underworld wearing the Raptor's Milky Eyes. As a Reaper, Bart took to clearing up the areas he considered criminal and uncouth. Today, Bart wreaks havoc beyond Ripton County, sending the dead to the Great Below and subjecting the living to his new brand of judgement.

Description: Bart is a bald, rotund man with a strong nose and chin, which he often attributes to his noble British heritage. His flesh is horrifically burned, but his salt-and-pepper Shenandoah beard is still thick, strong, and the only hair on his body. He carries the ghost of his charred black cane.

The Raptor's Milky Eyes is a pair of eyeglasses that transforms him into The Grasping Talon. He becomes a man-sized vulture with bloodshot humanoid eyes. When he opens his beak, a human mouth, crowded with rows of teeth, speaks. His wings are feathered with black obsidian. When he Engulfs a ghost, his flint claws spark as they stuff the shade whole into that terrible maw.

Storytelling Hints: Among the dead, Bart presents himself as an arbiter, someone who will resolve disputes between communities and even Dominions for a price. He is known for his wise counsel and fair compromises, a far cry from his living reputation. While he is satisfied reaping stray ghosts, his real passion lies in using his abilities on the living. On the surface, he becomes obsessed with punishing crimes to the point where both the "guilty" and "innocent" parties find themselves trapped in the Underworld.

He has a special delight in menacing Sin-Eaters. These people are the worst criminals of all: trespassers of two worlds who refused to accept their station in life or death. Simply reacting to their transgressions isn't enough for him, and he hopes to instill this attitude in a new generation of Reapers. When a posse comes for an unlucky soul, The Grasping Talon can usually be found leading the charge.

Virtue: Prudence
Vice: Wrath
Aspirations: Find a respectable protégé
Rank: 2/5
Attributes: Power 2/10, Finesse 5/12, Resistance, 9/14
Influence: Evans Manor 2, *Pyre Flame 2, Grave Dirt 2*
Corpus: 10/19
Willpower: 10/10
Initiative: 14/26
Numina: Awe, Blast, Dement, Drain, Firestarter, *Emotional Aura, Hallucination, Host Jump, Telekinesis, Engulf, Descend*
Manifestations: Twilight Form, Avernian Gateway, Possess, *Materialize*
Essence: 15/50
Ban: Bart must obey a request if it is presented in a legally binding document. The Grasping Talon is only so bound by a document sealed with the original Seal of the County of Ripton.
Bane: As Bart, brandy. As The Grasping Talon, direct descendants of his daughter, Constance Evans. Constance changed her name and moved away after the fire, leaving few if any records behind.

CANNIBAL GEIST

"You seek oblivion? Here I am."

Background: Reapers share horror stories, just like anyone else. Posses swap cautionary tales of being trapped in the deeper parts of the Underworld or being bound by practitioners of esoteric arts to do their bidding. This story is not only true, it's about one of them.

She calls herself Mass because that's the only name that matters to her. She hates talking about who she was before she put on the Deathmask, and no one has ever seen her without it. Those close enough to Mass get pieces of her past. She was involved in an organization called The Theosophic Union, she was disturbingly familiar with the Great Below in life, and she obtained the Body Eternal almost immediately after her death.

Whatever her history, her present is clear: She hungers for her fellow geists, and her appetite is insatiable.

Description: Mass is a free-flowing accumulation of gray ectoplasm. Within her body, the broken Deathmasks of geists she has consumed are visible. Her Engulfing looks like an infection, her ephemeral form leaking into its Corpus and corrupting it. When she communicates with others, she pulls herself into a humanoid shape, combining the shattered masks into a makeshift skeleton. No one has seen Mass without the Body Eternal. She claims that she has never taken her Deathmask off. If she's lying, she could look like anyone.

Storytelling Hints: Mass is a living contradiction of the careful social constructs Reapers settle into. She provides no service to the Underworld, and all their philosophy means nothing to her. The only reason she hasn't eaten her compatriots is out of a need for companionship. That other Reapers know this and defend her anyways could be a severe blow to their greater narrative.

Mass still ventures to the surface to reap, but with two caveats. First, any geists she captures on the surface she does not bring back. She eats them on the spot and their Deathmask becomes part of her Corpus. Second, she only drops off half of her harvest. She keeps the rest inside herself until she arrives at a River. One by one, she forces the ghosts to drink from it, then consumes them after they become geists. A few Sin-Eaters have claimed that their geist was an escapee of Mass's procedure.

There are several possibilities as to who Mass is under the Body Eternal. She may have been an eater of the dead (p. 221) who wished to continue practicing her dark art. She may be the ghost of one of the more predatory creatures of the surface. She might even be a ghost of one of the Bound, hoping that the next geist she consumes will serve as a new Bargain.

Virtue: Patience
Vice: Gluttony
Aspirations: Find a true friend

Rank: 2/5
Attributes: Power 7/15, Finesse 3/15, Resistance 4/15
Influence: Chalices 1, Faith 1, *Disease 3*
Corpus: 9/20
Willpower: 10/10
Size: 5
Speed: 15/35
Defense: 4/15
Initiative: 7/30
Numina: Awe, Drain, Stalwart, *Blast, Dement, Essence Thief, Hallucination, Left-Handed Spanner, Pathfinder, Regenerate, Seek, Engulf, Descend*
Manifestations: Twilight Form, Image, Materialize, *Discorporate*
Essence: 15/50
Ban: Quoting a passage from one of the *Three Steles of Seth* in its original Greek will force Mass to take off her Deathmask. If her Deathmask is off, one only needs to quote a Bible verse, and she must pray.
Bane: Pages from the original print of *A Treatise on the Beyond Lands* by Dora Kensington. If her Deathmask is off, holy water.

Eaters of the Dead

Dig up the bones in Neanderthal ruins, and you'll see the butcher's trade plied by ones who count as mostly human: the cuts left by stone knives, the cracked hollows exposing rich marrow, the gnaw marks on the ribs. Look in the pits of their cousins, our ancestors, and you'll find the same thing. We've consumed the dead since before we called ourselves human. Look at the Donner Party, a crashed airliner, or a starving castle under siege. Say you wouldn't *consider* it in a desperate spot, and be named a liar. The taste for our own flesh lurks within our genes.

The taste of human remains sits within our souls, too, but knives, hands, or teeth cannot consume it. Sin-Eaters know this; they cannot process the Essence of death directly, instead rendering it into the liminal, physical substance of Plasm. The Bargain struck between geist and Bound facilitates this process. But the Bargain isn't the only way to eat the dead. Certain esoteric techniques — mystical, alchemical, technological — can allow an otherwise normal person to devour ghosts, shredding their Essence into slick, milky Plasm suitable for consumption. Once devoured, this Plasm fuels any number of Dread Powers, from staving off death to pursuing a warped sense of transcendence.

Like the Bargain, eating ghosts requires some sort of personalized technique, some ritual unique to the practitioner — and, perhaps, whomever they share their secrets with. Few ghost eaters possess more than one trick, for once you've become acclimated to a way of processing Plasm it's nearly impossible to develop another. But when you have a ready supply of the dead, one trick is all you need.

Ghosts and Shadows

Ghost eaters come from all walks of life; the only true commonality between them is an avaricious hunger and the ability to consume ghosts through some means. Ghosts may be echoes of the living, but they are echoes that think and feel, retaining personhood even in death — a ghost eater must be a person capable of repeated murder. Thus, ghost eaters don't stick together very long, for even among sociopaths, they're outcasts when they hunt openly. Most typically learn their trade from a mentor, who took their secrets from some other gustatory necromancer. Once the mentor's shared all they're willing to, mentor and protégé go their separate ways — they're competing for the same source of power, after all, and the longest lasting techniques prize secrecy and anonymity, preying upon the already unnoticed. Still, these relationships often form rough lineages stretching back centuries or more. No few ghost-eating lineages have come from long-standing krewes whose Bound members regularly practiced ectophagia. Some outlast the Sin-Eaters who inspired them, like the remnant krewes of Viking raiders whose wives drew the ghosts of the slain into beasts to be hunted and consumed once again, Plasm running thick alongside the animal's blood. The practice survives today in Sweden, where the elk is a popular animal to receive a human ghost as passenger on a hunt, driving the animal into irrational fits that render it easy to stalk and kill.

Most ghost eaters end up shedding mortal concerns such as jobs or families, focusing on their hunger as a full-time pursuit. It's rare that one manages to balance both their work and living concerns, although the longest-lived ghost eaters manage to do so in disproportionate numbers. Far too often, they make themselves a target for Sin-Eaters or any number of vengeful entities, including powerful ghosts. Successful ghost eaters study ghostly lore, accumulate weaponry and artifacts with efficacy against the dead, and find a way to temporally profit from their hunger.

Haute Cuisine

Every ghost eater has a *Cuisine*, taught to them by their mentor, that allows them to commit ectophagia (p. 99). Most often, a ghost eater's Cuisine is based on some odd occult principle, though since the 19th century there's been a number of Cuisines based primarily on pseudo-scientific principles — treating ghosts as emanations of the ether or Plasmic echoes or self-sustaining psychic waveforms capable of materialization or some other quantum nonsense.

Most Cuisine require the ghost eater to trap ghosts in objects or food, though some allow ghost eaters to touch ghosts and revolve around more direct consumption. Not every Cuisine is equal, and not every Cuisine is inherently functional; if a Cuisine involves a specific location that

later becomes inaccessible, the ghost eater will quickly degenerate. The Occult Skill is virtually ubiquitous among ghost eaters; almost all of them are able (and required) to perform exorcisms, abjurations, and bindings during feeding, physically trapping and subduing the ghosts they consume. Many also show cultivated talent in Investigation and Stealth, allowing them to gather information on the ghosts they devour.

Inevitably, ghost eaters turn to escaping their own mortality, and most Cuisines readily accommodate this —many of the oldest and most stable Cuisines began as life-extension techniques, and all Cuisines allow a ghost eater to arrest (and reverse) the aging process on a day-by-day basis. Ghost eaters often prep an Alternate Identity ahead of time to smooth the transition, though the practice is becoming increasingly difficult in the modern age.

Five Cuisines

No matter what their Cuisine is, a ghost eater ultimately draws a ghost within themselves and consumes that ghost's Corpus. It's an act of avarice that bends towards selfishness. Despite this commonality, Cuisines can be radically different:

One ghost eater surveys the changing land around Louisiana's cemeteries for a natural gas company, constantly uploading highly detailed digital files to the company's servers. They're detailed enough to defy the ancient principle that the map *isn't* the land—the code embedded in the map files contains some vital link to the Anchors of the ghosts in the cemeteries, allowing her to consume them remotely at broadband speeds.

Sugarcane is a hardy plant, and the remains of old sugar plantations dot Jamaica, a relic of colonialism. It's strong enough to grow in salinized land, albeit with some serious crop losses. This doesn't bother the ghost eater who keeps ghosts bound within her own special strain of the plant, however; the sugarcane absorbs them even as they're trapped in the salt, rendering the ghosts into Plasm-laden molasses. Despite the inferior crop, she makes a truly spectacular rum.

Many of Milwaukee's hotels show a notable Art Deco influence, with finely veined marble and granite walls. It's easy to miss the veins of salt, ground into the pillars and the support beams. So long as ghosts are caged and bound, the Eater's Cuisine allows him to grasp them and tear them asunder with superhuman strength, stuffing his face with smoking Plasm that reeks like dirt and old moss. He stalks the hotel hallways, an eternal concierge in a prison of salt and old gilt.

Coney Island has a reputation for being haunted, but only rarely do the ghosts stick around. A ghost eater is responsible for the maintenance of the souvenir penny-press, where the oily, tarnished gears roll and elongate pennies to make cheap souvenirs. Small hollows in the

blessed gears snag the Corpus of ghosts who flit by, ripping chunks of them off into the gears and lubricating the stained metal with Plasm. Every Sunday, he replaces the full gears with empty ones, retires to his workshop, and opens his chest to change out the gears in the little clockwork pump he uses for a heart.

A ghost eater works as a clinical therapist for the severely depressed. She has a high success rate, except when she doesn't. So far, no one has noticed that all the patients she fails to treat take their lives at the same bridge, and everyone who sees the strange, attenuating loading coils on the underside of the bridge thinks it's for some part of the city's electrical grid. They don't see her bathing in the radiance of the coils at night, ozone-tinged Plasm surging into her. They don't see the ghosts of the suicides forced to grip the coils by arcane magnetism, their Corpus constantly frying and sloughing off in Twilight until it's a fine mist of Plasm.

New Advantage: Rapacity

Rapacity represents a ghost eater's capacity for storing and manipulating the Plasm she's consumed. Occult or Science may represent the breadth of knowledge she's accumulated in her studies and ghost hunting, but Rapacity is the degree to which her thievery has distended and swollen her spirit.

Rapacity controls the number of Dread Powers the ghost eater can bring to bear and the amount of Plasm she can store in her body. Most don't grasp the mechanics of Rapacity, but as their hunger grows, they know it takes more and more ghosts to sate them.

Elder ghost eaters tend to burn out, or seek illimitable sources of the dead. Some ghost eaters develop unique physiological features, expressing Chthonian mutations. As an eater who must consume the skull and flesh of his prey's head to consume their ghost grows in Rapacity, he'll find his incisors and molars growing tougher and sharper, his jaw elongating to better cleave through bone, until he resembles the carnivorous beast he is.

Rapacity

- **Grande Cuisine:** Eaters of the Dead have a Rapacity trait (1-5) based on the total amount of Plasm they've consumed.
- **Plasm Pool:** Total Plasm pool is determined by Rank. Ghost eaters can spend up to their Rapacity in Plasm per turn.
- **Rapacious Immortality:** Ghost eaters must spend (Rapacity) Plasm per week to arrest the aging process. Failure to do so causes them to age rapidly to their actual, chronological age. Assuming that doesn't kill them, they may spend (Rapacity × 2) Plasm to reverse the process.

Rapacity

Rank*	Plasm Stolen	Max Plasm/ Turn	Dread Powers
1	10	10/1	4
2	70	12/2	8
3	400	14/3	12
4	1,000	17/4	16
5	10,000+	20/5	20

**Each rank acts as a Supernatural Tolerance trait.*

Dread Powers

A ghost eater's Dread Powers are emanations of the Plasm they've stolen, and most relate to the nature of the Cuisine in some manner.

ANCHOR EATER

What a ghost cared for in life remains long after they do. The ghost eater may identify a consumed ghost's Anchors on sight, and eat the Anchors for one point of Plasm per item Size. This does not give the ghost eater the ability to digest the Anchor, merely absorb Plasm — a prized bottle cap collection may be rich in Plasm, but quite painful on the other end.

DEATH INUREMENT

Requires: Rapacity 3. By devouring a ghost killed by anything other than natural causes, the ghost eater becomes inured to that ghost's particular cause of death — gunshots, car accidents, or drowning, for example. Often, a ghost eater preparing for violence will seek out a murder victim, while an eater seeking relief from disease will seek out a former patient in a hospital cemetery. This Dread

The Ghost of Marilyn Monroe

Ghosts oft-remembered gain Essence with greater rapidity than other ghosts. In-game, this can be abstracted as providing a point of Essence per week for every dot of Fame. Such popular ghosts tend to drop a dot of Fame for every decade they're dead, but despite the surfeit of Essence they're no more powerful than any other ghost, and are thus a prime target for ghost eaters. Consuming a popular ghost grants the ghost eater the ghost's share of Essence in Plasm per week, making them even more attractive. A single celebrity can keep a ghost eater sated for decades.

Power costs (Rapacity) Plasm per week, and a ghost eater may only have one inurement at a time.

ABMORTALITY

Requires: Death Inurement, Rapacity 5. The ghost eater has redoubled his efforts to escape death, and he's been *mostly* successful. He's not unkillable, not truly, but this is the closest he's capable of coming. The ghost eater gains a Bane related to their Cuisine — destroying their gear-heart, injecting them with a chemical that causes an electrical allergy so they can't use their Tesla Death Coils, etc. If they're killed by anything other than their Bane, they simply come back in a later scene, whole, hale and hearty.

NUMEN

The ghost eater permanently masters a single Numen as a ghost would. He pays all Essence costs in Plasm, while the activation roll is tied to a particular Attribute + Ability combination.

REGENERATION

(• to • • •)

Plasm fills the rents and tears in the ghost eater's wounds. As a reflexive action once per turn, the ghost eater may spend 1 Plasm per dot in this power, provided it does not exceed their Plasm-per-turn limitation, healing one level of lethal or two levels of bashing damage per Plasm.

KNOW VICE

Ghost eating arises from avarice, and they know their own. By spending 1 point of Plasm, which boils out of a character's mouth, the Eater may identify a character's driving Vice or equivalent Anchor.

LEARN MEMORIES

The ghost eater devours the Memories of the ghost, taking them for their own (p. 285). The Eater may only hold one set of Memories at a time. These Memories can supplement a Skill roll, but once used, they fade. A ghost eater may suffer from Memory Bleed. Using this Dread Power reduces the Plasm gained from ectophagia by 2.

SUPERNATURAL MERIT

(• to • • • • •)

Ghost eaters often master abilities related to their Cuisine. They may purchase Supernatural Merits as Dread Powers, with each dot of the Merit counting as a Dread Power. A Science-based ghost eater who boils ghosts with electrical energy could easily develop Electrokinesis, for example. She pays any Willpower costs for using the Merit in Plasm instead.

THE DEAD IDENTITY

Requires: Learn Memories. So long as they possess a remaining set of Memories, a ghost eater may adopt the mannerisms and superficial identity of the deceased. This doesn't change her physical appearance, but she may choose to use mundane disguise to supplement her now-perfect imitation. Using this Dread Power reduces the Plasm gained from ectophagia by 3.

MR. WONG, CORPSE-UNTIE-IMMORTAL

Please don't touch that.
It's very old and very valuable.
Ah, but you're very young, aren't you?

Background: Mr. Wong runs a gardening shop in Manhattan's Chinatown, and he's been old for as long as anyone can remember. He's cranky toward the kids, sympathetic to the middle-aged, and deeply compassionate toward his fellow elderly, even if their age cannot possibly match his own. He's an 1,800-year-old *shijie xian*, a type of Taoist lich. While the kingdoms that would become China were riven by war, the man who would take the name Wong learned the trade of ghost eating from a hedge wizard in the hinterlands of Cáo Wèi. Having survived the wars, Wong indulged in Taoist fortune telling, which revealed his impending death by disease. Arrogantly, he aspired to join the ranks of the immortals to avoid such an ignominious fate. Wong consumed the venerable ghost of his own paternal grandfather, then left a Plasm-soaked shoe behind to die "of disease" in his place; he then took on another identity in a different province, a process that he has repeated for thousands of years. His techniques no longer restore his youth and vigor, but they do maintain his life. He's the spider in the vast Twilight web around Chinatown, plucking the dead at his leisure and consuming them with relish, digesting them with the strange, nodulated organs in his chest that he first noticed sometime during the Crusades. Wong has seen Sin-Eaters come and go, and he has no reason to believe the current crop will last any longer than those in the past.

Appearance: Just a simple old Han Chinese man, with nothing truly remarkable about him. In public, Wong dresses in whatever clothing is unfashionably typical of the elderly. In private, he prefers silks or sweatpants made of wool or cotton, wearing them loosely. Under an X-ray, Wong is a horror — strange organs cluster around his vitals, and his bones have developed looping scrawls along them, like scrimshaw art on still-living bone. Wong worries these scrawls will spread to his teeth, but he figures he has a few more centuries before it becomes an issue.

Storytelling Hints: Be polite to the elderly — you know how they feel, and besides, it gives you a good lead on ghosts who can sate your hunger and sustain your abmortality. In fact, you're polite to everyone, since politeness costs nothing and impoliteness can cost a great deal. You're powerful and wise enough to know how fragile your hunger makes you, and you haven't lived this long by being stupid enough to stick your neck out and challenge the powers of the dead. You are proactive in identifying potential threats to your nature and skilled at suborning Sin-Eaters with morality issues. Nothing is worth the unlife of a corpse-untie-immortal, and if things get too hot you'll gladly bolt.

Virtue: Enduring

Vice: Arrogance

Mental Attributes: Intelligence 5, Wits 3, Resolve 5

Physical Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 2, Stamina 5

Social Attributes: Presence 2, Manipulation 4, Composure 5

Mental Skills: Academics (Chinese History, Politics) 5, Investigation (Research) 5, Medicine (Chinese Alchemy) 5, Occult (Ghosts) 5, Politics 3, Science (Chemistry) 1

Physical Skills: Athletics 2, Larceny 2, Stealth (Stalking) 3, Weaponry 4

Social Skills: Empathy 4, Expression 1, Persuasion 1, Socialize 1

Merits: Allies 2 (Fellow Abmortals), Fleet of Foot 2, Hoarder 5, Influence 3, Language (many), Sympathetic

Health: 7

Rapacity: 5

Plasm/Per Turn: 20/5

Dread Powers: Abmortality, Death Inurement, The Dead Identity, Anchor Eater, Learn Memories, any relevant Numen

Bane: Eating the ghost of a paternal grandfather with no living descendants.

Notes: Mr. Wong has had millennia to perfect his skills and establish contacts. He's not a combatant, though — he hasn't kept living this long by being a fantastic fighter, but by establishing caches and bolt-holes and knowing when to use them judiciously. He suffers from the Obsession (Immortality) Condition, and the tumors that would have originally killed him, and which require placating treatment with medicinal herbs. Wong's Cuisine allows him to trap ghosts in their own Anchors, which Wong then ritualistically buries to "consume" them, slurping up Plasm on his hands and knees as it seeps through the ground in a thick, chalky mist. Every 37 years (his mortal life span), Wong must consume the ghost of a paternal grandfather. Wong must then cut ties with his old life and create a new one elsewhere; until he does so, he cannot consume Plasm.

Ghost Eaters as Antagonists

Ghost eaters are sneaky, subtle, and bent toward a goal that puts them at odds with any compassionate Bound. They're best used as Old Man Jenkins at the end of a haunting mystery, except that Old Man Jenkins has Plasm in his teeth. Despite their cockroach-like survivability and tenacity, ghost eaters are purely of the mortal world, and won't stand up to a krewe that's dedicated to figuring out why ghosts are disappearing before they should. They physically *can't* stand up to a krewe in open combat, which is why so many simply pack up and leave at the first sign of trouble rather than jeopardizing their abmortal lives.

Conversely, the longest-surviving ghost eaters may know things firsthand about the nature of death and the Underworld that are mere legend to Sin-Eaters. They represent a unique, if abhorrent, source of sympathy and alliance to a krewe willing to tolerate some degree of consuming the dead. These alliances can be cemented if the krewe mythology involves some element of judgment after death or a "might makes right" attitude towards devouring the defeated.

Necromancers

With the right tools, anyone can interact with the dead. Living people can use Ceremonies, Mementos, or even stranger magic to access the power of death. Sin-Eaters sometimes encourage this, especially among the living members of their krewes, as another way to assist the dead. A local priest who performs Pass On at every funeral becomes a blessing to ghosts who wish to move forward, and a woman who learns how to blindfold herself to speak to the dead can receive messages from her ancestors, even when her Sin-Eater teacher can't be around to mediate.

Necromancers, on the other hand, disrupt the balance between the living and the dead, stealing power from the grave with no intentions of giving anything back. Some of them just don't see ghosts as people, and so see enslaving or destroying them as a victimless crime. Others have a more nuanced understanding of death and the Underworld, but their ambitions are hardly inconvenienced by destroying anyone who opposes them, living or dead.

Even if a krewe can find a necromancer and stop him, figuring out what to do next is its own challenge. Killing a necromancer almost never helps: Deathly power gained in life translates into power after death. At best, the krewe finds itself facing the same enemy again, now

More than Human

The Bound are not the only supernatural beings in the Chronicles of Darkness who can affect the dead. Living mages, elder vampires, dark-dwelling changelings, and creatures stranger still have powers that can affect ghosts, the Underworld, and other forces under the purview of death. Sin-Eaters might call any such practitioner a necromancer, either mistaking them for a living human, or just lumping them in with everyone else who's messing around with ghosts for their own selfish ends.

with a grudge and powerful Numina on his side. At worst, necromancers find new bargains to strike, returning as Reapers, or Bound to geists of their own.

Graverobbers

Despite Sin-Eaters' best efforts, living people stumble across Mementos all the time. Haunted objects are bought and sold in estate sales and pawn shops, or left to linger in attics or dusty dining-room shelves. Though the living have no easy way to tell a Memento from any other piece of slightly creepy bric-a-brac, sometimes someone stumbles upon the secret of a Memento's effect, and discovers how to use it to their advantage.

Most Mementos are harmless, if a little unnerving, but touching the supernatural doesn't tend to sit well with mortal minds. Memento collectors become jealous and possessive of their charms, or worse, they get greedy. Grave robbing is a common first step for necromancers looking to expand their collection, common enough that "graverobber" is a ubiquitous insult for any living person who owns a Memento. Many collectors are first brought to the attention of Sin-Eaters by frantic ghosts whose most cherished belongings they stole. Others lurk around funeral homes and estate sales, seeking the same trinkets through less illegal methods. The least successful, or the most insatiable, turn to finding more Mementos by ensuring there are fresh deaths around to create them.

To someone with a taste for haunted objects, a Sin-Eater with a Memento collection of her own is a tempting target. Living collectors don't have Plasm or Haunts to back up their hunt, so they make up for it with other forms of power: Money, connections, and training can bring more trouble to a krewe than any amount of magic. A well-to-do necromancer might buy out a Sin-Eater's Cenote, hire thieves, or even start legal proceedings to try and reclaim "stolen property" that he wants to own. Graverobbers can also put the effects of their Mementos to good use, even if the greater power of their Keys remains out of their reach, especially when given time and space to prepare. A lamp that turns itself off in the presence of a ghost might simply act to warn the necromancer of an incoming Sin-Eater, but combined with electronic light sensors it could become the trigger for a dangerous trap.

Mortal Obsession

If a breaking point roll caused by a supernatural artifact like a Memento results in failure, a mortal character may gain the Obsession Condition (p. 302) instead of one of the usual options. A dramatic failure may produce a more serious, persistent version of the same Condition.

Dr. Jordan Thames

"There's no need for this to get ugly. Look, how much do you want for it?"

Background: Doctor Thames was already the head of a major pharmaceuticals company when he came across his first Memento: an ornate reliquary owned by an impoverished church. It was said to have the power to prevent decay, and when he tested this gift through experimentation, Thames was shocked to find that it actually worked. The wealthy businessman bribed the pastor into parting with the relic, and devoted his life to finding more objects like it. With enough samples to study, Thames thinks, he can figure out the secret to how they work, and harness their power over life and death.

Appearance: Thames is a lean, imposing man in his late 60s, with salt-and-pepper hair and perpetual frown. He prefers subtle quality over flashy displays of wealth, but is never seen wearing less than a three-piece suit.

Storytelling Hints: Dr. Thames is obsessed with discovering the secret of immortality, and thinks Mementos might hold the key, though seeing what a Sin-Eater can do to recover might motivate him will cause a shift in his priorities. He is a man of science, and considers himself above anyone who holds with "petty superstitions." Money is his favorite tool for solving problems: first offering to buy someone out, then hiring someone to renegotiate if the offer is refused.

Virtue: Honor
Vice: Greed
Integrity: 6
Mental Attributes: Intelligence 3, Wits 2, Resolve 3
Physical Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 2, Stamina 2
Social Attributes: Presence 2, Manipulation 3, Composure 3

Mental Skills: Academics 2, Computer 1, Investigation 3 (Finding Mementos), Medicine 1, Politics 2 (Big Business)

Physical Skills: Drive 1, Firearms 1, Larceny 2

Social Skills: Empathy 1, Intimidation 3 (Veiled Threats), Persuasion 2, Socialize 1, Subterfuge 2

Merits: Library (Occult) 1, Resources 4, Staff (hired muscle, Intimidation) 3, Untouchable

Willpower: 6

Health: 7

Speed: 9

Initiative: 5

Defense: 2

Attacks

Handheld Revolver (3 dice, 1 damage, range 20/40/80, clip 6)

Notes: Thames owns at least half a dozen Mementos, but rarely keeps more than one on his person at a time. The rest are scattered among bank boxes and private vaults. His personal favorite, the Ornate Reliquary, possesses the Key of Disease, and the effect of stopping all diseases and decay from advancing so long as it stays within a few yards of the sick person or rotting corpse.

Ritualists

Ceremonies are not innate to the Bound. Anyone who follows the right steps can make the ritual happen, regardless of whether they are alive or dead or even aware of what they're doing. Most living people who stumble across one do so without context, and with no idea what, or whom, they're learning to manipulate. More educated necromancers know exactly what they're doing and, with research and practice, find out how to do it better and more often. Ceremonies take time and energy, but a dedicated necromancer can use them to threaten everything from a peaceful neighborhood up to the entire Underworld.

Even simple rites become dangerous in the wrong hands. A shopkeeper learns how to turn a drop of his own blood and a broken mirror into an irresistible lure for ghosts. He uses it to haunt his competition's business, trapping the dead and terrifying the living. A young man learns to speak with ghosts, coaxes them into telling him their troubles, then turns around and uses what he's learned to bilk their living, grieving relatives.

A different sort of danger comes from necromancers who use rituals by accident, or who don't understand exactly what they're really doing. A priest who thinks he's exorcising demons might actually be exorcising ghosts, forcing them into the Underworld with a rite passed down from generation to generation. A curious teenager decides to try out the creepy instructions she found on the internet, a half-accurate account of a real Ceremony that gets just enough right to open a door, but not enough to close it again. She'd already shared the link with all her friends, and news of her disappearance starts a grisly fad.

The most powerful ritualists find other people to make their sacrifices for them, either the living or the dead. A necromancer who wants to summon something terrible from the Underworld might start by binding several ghosts to her service, then use a second Ceremony to dissolve them into Plasm to fuel the working she really wants to perform. Through trial and error, careful study of the Underworld, or just dumb luck, some necromancers manage to modify a Ceremony to better suit their purposes, creating twisted new rites the likes of which Sin-Eaters would never even consider.

ERICA GREENWOOD

"Stay the hell away, you have no idea what I can do to you now."

Background: Erica never fit in. Eighteen and friendless, she spent her evenings searching for anything strange and new, anything to set herself apart. She got into the occult as a hobby, until something she found on the internet actually worked. The first time she bound a ghost, trying out the instructions in an abandoned building, it was like something out of a horror movie: shaking walls, breaking glass, and horrible unearthly wailing. The second time she bound a ghost, it was in a classmate's backyard.

Unfortunately, Erica is performing the Ceremony she knows incorrectly. What's supposed to be a simple binding Ceremony (Black Cat's Crossing, p. 129) has been turned into an improvised form of torture. Ghosts trapped within her binding circle experience constant agony until they're able to escape, or until the binding ends. So far, the hauntings she's caused have only hurt the dead and terrified the living, but it's only a matter of time until she catches the wrong ghost, or pisses off the wrong people.

Appearance: Erica is a typical teen going through a halfhearted goth phase. She wears baggy black t-shirts and drugstore black eyeliner. Lately she's been favoring skull and ghost imagery, often hand-painted onto plain t-shirts, to silently claim credit for what she's been doing.

Storytelling Hints: Erica doesn't really know what she's doing, but this is the first time in her life she's had power over anything. Telling her that what she's doing is wrong could make her double down just as easily as it might make her stop. When scared, or approached by adults, she runs, looking for safety in either crowds or familiar environments.

Virtue: Faith

Vice: Anger

Integrity: 7

Mental Attributes: Intelligence 2, Wits 3, Resolve 3

Physical Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 3, Stamina 2

Social Attributes: Presence 1, Manipulation 3, Composure 2

Mental Skills: Academics 1, Computer 2, Crafts 1, Investigation 1, Occult 1 (Ghosts)

Physical Skills: Athletics 2 (Running), Brawl 2, Larceny 2, Stealth 2

Social Skills: Animal Ken 1, Empathy 1, Expression 1, Persuasion 2, Socialize 1, Streetwise 2, Subterfuge 3 (Lying to Authority Figures)

Merits: Eye for the Strange, Fleet of Foot 2, Resources 1, Safe Place (booby-trapped abandoned building) 2, Ceremony (Shattered Bone Binding) 2

Willpower: 5

Health: 7

Speed: 12

Initiative: 5

Defense: 5

Attacks

Fists (4 dice, 0 damage)

Necromantic Cults

One necromancer is dangerous. A whole group of them is a disaster. Working together, they share knowledge and resources, turning a few fragmentary Ceremonies and stolen Mementos into an organized system of belief and understanding. The oldest and most powerful have existed uninterrupted for longer than the oldest krewe, since they've never needed to rely on the making of new Bargains to maintain their membership.

Necromantic cults work much like any other Mystery Cult that happens to be organized around matters of life and death. Some could be mistaken for a krewe that's missing its Sin-Eaters, as they seek to answer the same sorts of questions: What is death, how should it make us feel, and what do we do about it? But unlike a krewe, founded by people with one foot in the grave, necromantic cults are run by, and for, the living. Most consider ghosts to be either a danger to fight against or a source of power to harvest, sometimes both at once.

As with other cults, necromancers who work together share resources, amassing wealth, knowledge, and tools to serve the group. Established cults can have dozens of Ceremonies at their disposal, modified over the years to suit their purpose and doctrine. Some of them collect Mementos as well, either to study, use for their effects, or tear apart to fuel their rites. Cult members might gain Merits such as Resources, Contacts, or Allies just for joining, and be initiated into the cult's Ceremonies as they become more trusted. Some large cults keep their newer members in the dark about Ceremonies on purpose, using them to make the sacrifices needed for large rituals without ever teaching them how to perform them on their own.

Ceremony: Shattered Bone Binding (●●●) (Manipulation + Subterfuge)

Subject: The nearest ghost within 30 yards.

Duration: Until the water in the bowl used in the ritual is gone (evaporated or spilled, for example).

Symbols: A circle of salt and crushed animal bones. A bowl of clear water. The fresh blood of a living human, willingly given.

Ritual: Fill the bowl of water, then place in the exact center of the circle. Cut into your own flesh, and speak the names of every dead person you can think of until something answers.

Dice Pool: Manipulation + Subterfuge vs. Resistance + Rank

Success: The subject is drawn into the circle, where they experience complete agony, as if every bone in their body were breaking at once. This does not damage their Corpus, but it reduces all actions to a chance die. The ghost's agony is reflected outside the circle: lowering the temperature, breaking glass, and otherwise mirroring their suffering in destructive, uncontrollable ways.

The Church of Death's Shards

This necromantic cult was founded in the late 1960s, by a group of men who'd witnessed a krewe doing battle with an unusually vicious Reaper. The founders all had a clear view as a wounded Sin-Eater knit her flesh back together and pulled a horrific-looking mask off the ghost. In trying to make sense of what they'd seen, the founders came to one main conclusion: That woman had power over life and death, and they wanted some, too. Misunderstanding just what had occurred, they linked the mask she pulled off the ghost to the life she had restored.

Nowadays, the Church of Death's Shards consists of some three dozen members, spread out across several cities. They collect Mementos religiously, believing each to be a piece of death itself. With enough of them, they believe they can become death's masters.

The cult has believed since its inception that ghosts are evil, extrapolating from the terrible Reaper its founders once witnessed. Recently, the cult's last surviving founder has stumbled across something new: an old ritual that claims it can destroy any ghost. Having seen ghosts leave behind Mementos before, the church is preparing for a glorious new crusade: one that will rid the world of evil, and win them some new prizes at the same time.

The Church of Death's Shards

Initiation	Benefits
•	New recruits are taught everything the church knows about its ghostly foes. They gain an Occult specialty in Ghosts.
••	Church members take care of one another. Established recruits gain one dot of Contacts or Resources.
•••	Having honed their perception through rigorous training, initiates gain the ability to recognize Mementos on sight, just like Sin-Eaters.
••••	Priests of the church are given access to the cult's Memento collection. Each is entrusted with one Memento of their own, and may borrow others for cult business.
•••••	The inner circle of the church are researching a new Ceremony for their own purposes. They have access to a variation of the Ghost Trap Ceremony (p. 129) that allows them to harm the trapped ghost with physical weapons.

Enemy Bound

For some, the Bargain is a second chance, the opportunity to return and redo. For others, it is simply their due, a just and righteous universe delivering what is deserved. Maybe they were born into privilege and see the Bargain as just another part of that. Maybe, after a lifetime of struggle against bullies, the Bargain is karma's radioactive spider bite of reward. Whatever the interpretation, the bottom line is this: not all Bound are on board with the idea of helping the dead find peace. After all, what about *their* needs? Who's going to help *them*?

Good things come to those who help themselves. Or something.

And that's not even selfish. Something inspired every Bound to hang on, to cling fiercely to the world, to cry out for a second chance. It's easy to say that this is like calling to like, that it's some kind of merging, but maybe it's a cry for something else altogether. Maybe it's the simple will to power.

Bound who reject the idea of the Sin-Eater naturally come into conflict with krewes working to help the dead, and when that happens, the laws of nature favor the strong, the bold, the beautiful. Human law and ritual, after all, were created to elevate the undeserving. But it's a whole new ballgame now. This is the beyond, and here? We do not serve. The dead do.

Archetypal Mirrors

Not all Bound — maybe not even a majority — ascribe to the krewe archetypes common among Sin-Eaters. Many find themselves on a different path, one that sets the living above the dead or sees Twilight as a resource to be tapped. Some are ignorant or misguided; others are as fiercely committed as any Sin-Eater, and work fervently to bring their visions of the Underworld to life.

Mysteries

Dawn's Veil is a detached krewe dedicated to the pursuit of beauty and pleasure above all else. Most members of Dawn's Veil began their second lives as members of other krewes, but boredom with the plebeian concerns of the common Sin-Eater drove them out in search of something else. Muses of the Veil particularly appreciate haunts and block other krewes from coming into those spaces. "Haunting," says Madeleine Lapp, a Muse of the highest order, "is beautiful in its own way. The chaos. The pain. The struggle of mortals to understand sensory evidence the mind rejects. What could be more thrilling?"

The Seventh Empire is a small secret society who'd simply rather forget they're Bound at all. Marked by a strict, tyrannical control of their geists and a dedication to minimalist ceremonies, The Seventh Empire foresees a future collapse of the separation between the Underworld and the realms above, and they just aren't interested. Members work to maximize wealth and power for one purpose: to oppose those who would disrupt the delicate spiritual balance.

Old blood, though not as old as they pretend, **Les Niveaux Supérieurs** are a small krewe in the Eastern U.S. with ties to American political dynasties. They're great contacts if you need someone to cover an incident...if you can afford the cost.

Elysians

Death is for the little people.

Death may be the great equalizer, but with enough money and power, it's possible to keep it at bay and look great in the process. High-end skin creams, personal trainers, exotic vitamin regimens, and all the best medical care go a long way toward staving off the end, and if the worry gets to be too much? There's a pill for that. Whatever the problem, money provides the solution. How sweet it is.

Still, the end comes for us all eventually, though the drive to transcend the petty problems of mortals leaves the Elysians ripe for something more. For them, death is not the end, but simply *an* end, a stop along the road to something even greater. For the ancient Greeks, the Elysian Fields were the home of distinguished souls, the best and brightest, the cream rising naturally to the top

Tyranny

Not all of the Bound practice Synergy in their relationship with their geists. Some choose a different path: a terrible ritual that destroys a geist's Remembrance and breaks the shade's will to the Bound's. These characters replace Synergy with Tyranny, which functions, mechanically, the same way, except that Tyrannous characters always roll Tyranny + Intimidation for crisis points.

of society, but they weren't the ultimate prize. Those souls who achieved entrance to the Elysian Fields could choose to be born again, in the hopes of attaining something even greater: eternity in the Isles of the Blessed. Though Elysians arise from various backgrounds, and have myriad religious beliefs (or none), they share this unique idea of an afterlife reserved just for them. It's no more than they deserve.

Elysians aren't much interested in cooperating; they may have accepted the Bargain, but they never agreed to a relationship on equal footing. They're at their best when controlling their geists, trading Synergy for Tyranny and ruling with an iron fist. The geist's reason for pulling the Elysian back from the brink doesn't matter, because it all comes back to the same thing: something more, something extra, was just the natural outcome. Expected. And it isn't that they don't know or understand their geists. It's that they just don't care. Maybe they'll get around to it eventually, once the rest of the business is handled. Just like those last-minute charitable donations at the end of the year.

Ceremonies: Ishtar's Perfume (•), Ghost Trap (••), Black Cat's Crossing (•••)

Mysteries

Founded in the 1980s in New York, **The Metis Society** was founded by three real-estate developers who went down in the same small plane. If they have a religious base, it's the worship of accumulation; their krewe headquarters looks like Trump Tower on steroids, but what the Metis Society lacks in taste, they make up in skill. They work with Bound all over the world, helping to secure property, space, and security — for a small fee, of course. And that fee isn't always paid in cash.

The Golden Stair is a rising young krewe headquartered in Poland, capitalizing on political anxiety to make money and collect mementos. Collectors, known more for their determination than anything else, they will pursue what they want at all costs.

Bonepickers

Death is a gold mine.

The upstarts and flashy entrepreneurs of the Underworld, Bonepickers wheel and deal, trafficking with necromancers and eaters of the dead. Nothing is off-limits if the profits are high enough. The lust for power does not exist in a vacuum, however. Like anyone else, the Bonepickers have hopes, desires, dreams — and crippling insecurities that keep them awake at night. When they win, it's because they deserve it. When they lose, it's because someone is out to get them, and they know how to hold a grudge.

But there is an emptiness that lurks under the drive. Ambition is a monstrous hunger never satisfied. Scratch the surface of hope and reveal a bottomless fear. Every desire springs from envy, the need not only to have, but to take. Every dream may turn on a dime, only to become a nightmare. For those on the fringe of the fringes, never quite fitting in anywhere else, this second life is one long, precarious gamble. Everything is on the line, and they know no one wins forever. They are dangerous, but predictable: They'll always go for broke, at any cost.

Ceremonies: Dead Man's Camera (•), Ghost Trap (••), Bloody Codex (•••)

Thanatologists

"Faith? Why would I want to stop at not *knowing?"*

Death is a puzzle. Thanatologists are a recent phenomenon. Once simply "free agents" who didn't quite fit in anywhere, these separatists began coming together and forming loose krewes of their own. So what sets them apart? Among other things, their stoic refusal to participate in anything that resembles close community... even down to communing with their own geists.

After all, the Bargain doesn't guarantee any respect for the trappings of the world of the dead. Thanatologists aren't here to wash away sin for the sake of making the world a better place; Thanatologists are scientists, studying a new and strange field of academia. They traffic in information, leveraging technology, research, and their geists to amass data and to exploit the strange powers of the Underworld to their own advantage. Once they think they know everything about a situation, they might act... and they might simply observe. This, for them, is worship. These are their practices. They may call themselves skeptics, but self-reflection was never their strong point anyway.

A deep rift, a fundamental mistrusting angst, haunts the heart of Thanatologists. They never quite believed in an afterlife, in ghosts as echoes or leftovers or anything else, much less the actual spirits of real people. Even when they died, when they were saved, they were waiting for the other shoe to drop. For the bucket of pig's blood. For the ring of bullies to jump out of the shadows and yell "Gotcha!" In a way, they are still waiting. Their retreat from traditional krewes is just another part of that. If you never go to the party, the party can never turn on you.

Mysteries

The Nameless operate on the fringes of the hacktivist collective Anonymous. While they avoid the pranks for pranks' sake, the Nameless are deeply involved in the efforts of Anonymous to expose criminals, killers, and rapists, and often sell the information gained from their connections to Sin-Eaters struggling with unsettled spirits. Because the Nameless are rarely in physical proximity to one another, they have developed a number of solo Ceremonies, or Ceremonies strengthened by performance over video and audio chat.

The Society for the Preservation of Digital Artifacts is made up of collectors, and boasts a vast collection of information on Ceremonies, the Underworld, and Mementos. Members take an academic approach to study of the afterlife and Underworld, focusing on legendary krewes, the mechanics of Plasm, and maximizing the power of their geists. While they are often distracted and non-confrontational, they are rumored to be very powerful; only initiates able to leverage their geists in a controlled manner rise in the Society's ranks.

Mysteries

The Scales of the Heart is an Aztec-inspired krewe that believes in order to maintain the delicate balance between worlds, humans and ghosts must periodically be sacrificed. How better to achieve this than through other Bound? The Scales spend months purifying themselves and potential sacrifices through ritual use of mild poisons, fasting, and extensive ceremony, and all members must be present at a sacrifice lest they become the next on the altar. The krewe's practices remained secret for well over a century until an escaped Sin-Eater revealed all they'd witnessed, and other krewes nearly wiped out the Scales in retaliation. Since the turn of the century, however, they've been slowly building membership back up, and the Scales have become a force again in West Texas, where they relocated in 2005.

After Lucas Lee woke up from a car crash, he discovered his strict Lutheran belief in the inerrancy of the Bible couldn't quite explain the new life he'd been given. He founded the **Evangelical Church of the Beyond**, a Missouri Synod-inspired krewe dedicated to fitting their experiences as Bound into the Bible through extensive explanatory notes and ritual. Their annotations become sacred texts, and they defend the order of things as they understand it through their militant arm, the Silver Knights of the Gate.

They're not really villains, they're just trying to find a way to explain the unexplainable, and no information is off limits. Thanatologists maintain vast repositories of data, from credit-card numbers to random emails. They'll spend weeks searching out a century-old ghost haunting the old mill, learn what binds her to the living world, and then they'll file it away, another part of a carefully curated system. Every file is a badge earned. A potential weapon. A tool for the right situation. Some have compared this tendency to the Mourners, but Thanatologists aren't interested in helping the forgotten — or anyone else — without a good reason. And they're certainly not interested in debating the vagaries of preservation versus cultural appropriation.

Ceremonies: The Diviner's Jawbone (•), Skeleton Key (••), Bloody Codex (•••)

Gatekeepers

Death is as it should be.

Sometimes fascination turns to obsession. What starts as opinion settles into stone. So it is with the Gatekeepers. Deep exploration of the Underworld turned to a determination to preserve it, to the idea that all the light and darkness that ever was existed for a reason. As they changed, so too did their relationships with their geists. The Gatekeepers grew colder, less concerned with resolution than with simple persistence. What already is must remain. So mote it be.

For the Gatekeepers, life after life is simple, or it would be if so many others weren't standing in their way. The universe is a system, a machine, and for all the parts to function properly, well, they need to be allowed to *function*. True status quo warriors, they dedicate their time to encouraging everyone to leave well enough alone. Or they would, if allowed, but with everyone else sticking their noses where they don't belong, the Gatekeepers have learned they need to work to keep a balance by any means necessary.

At least, that's how the Gatekeepers see themselves. They're the good guys. Everyone else suffers from the disease of ego, but not them. They *see*.

Gatekeeper krewes can be dangerously unpredictable. Some are merely passively resistant; these krewes maintain synergy with their geists and aren't usually keen to start fights, but their calm detachment can't be trusted. They may seem laid back, but these krewes often specialize in disruptive Ceremonies meant to unsettle, to interfere, or to summon other enemies who'll do the work for them while the Gatekeepers kick back with their feet up.

Others are more militant. These Gatekeepers trade synergy for an iron-fisted control of their geists, with no thought for the inherent hypocrisy of subsuming their own Bargains. They're working in service to a greater good, and for them, that is enough.

Ceremonies: Death Watch (•), Ghost Trap (••), Crow Girl's Kiss (•••)

Kerberoi

Every Dead Dominion has a Kerberos to enforce the Old Laws. Nobody knows whether the Kerberoi wrote the Laws, or the Laws birthed the Kerberoi — they're the chicken and the egg, but that doesn't stop every Sin-Eater from having a theory. Most agree that Kerberoi must be a natural product of the Lower Mysteries, vital as they are to the functioning of the Dominions, but a few Sin-Eaters mutter of lost Bound corrupted by the Mysteries, trapped there as punishment or simply by bad luck, molded to the will of the Dominions they now serve.

Wherever they come from, Kerberoi are as old as the Dominions they guard, and just as varied. Each is a creature bound to its Dominion, and each is dedicated to enforcing its Old Laws, but that's where the similarities end. Every Dominion shapes its Kerberos into a fitting denizen, a symbol of justice and fear in keeping with the landscape it watches over, and Kerberoi range from the unsettlingly innocuous to the viscerally terrifying.

Though they're some of the most vicious denizens of the Underworld, Kerberoi are easy to avoid — if Laws aren't broken, the Kerberoi aren't interested. They have no motivation outside the pursuit and punishment of lawbreakers, and ignore any conflict or transgression that remains within the bounds of the Laws they enforce. Kerberoi are completely removed from the politics of their Dominions and the ghosts that reside in them, doling out punishment regardless of Rank and standing.

On the other side of that coin, Kerberoi are impossible to reason with. A Kerberos doesn't care if you broke its Old Laws for a good reason. It *especially* doesn't care if you didn't realize you were doing anything wrong. They have their atavistic drive to hunt down and punish, and anything outside of that is beyond their scope.

When they're not hunting, each Kerberos tends to have a favorite place to settle in its Dominion. It's often a place it can use its physical assets to augment its natural Dominion Sense — assuming it has any other way to survey the world around it. Groups of Bound can pass by a Kerberos at rest with no repercussions, as long as doing so is in accordance with Dominion Law, and they rarely seem bothered by the presence of Sin-Eaters, in particular. Peaceful Kerberoi are not necessarily any more unsettling than the rest of the Underworld around them; frequent travelers often appreciate a Kerberos' predictability in the midst of chaos. A Kerberos' Laws might look nothing like the laws back home, but the principle is there, the familiarity of cause and effect to help ground visitors from topside.

Crime and Punishment

When a Kerberos comes into existence, it knows its Old Laws the way an animal knows how to breathe. It knows every intricacy of its Domain, always instinctually aware of the goings-on in its territory. If a Law is broken within the borders of its Dominion, it immediately knows which Law it was, who did it, and where they are.

Despite this local omnipotence, Kerberoi are still single creatures, and they're limited by their bodies. Once a Kerberos senses a lawbreaker, it still needs to physically hunt them down. It might be nearby, or, as is often the case with larger Dominions, it might be on the other end of its territory, dealing with another transgression. Some Dominions have multiple Kerberoi to help share the load, but even then, a lucky Sin-Eater might manage to escape the Dominion before they can be caught.

Once a lawbreaker has left a Kerberos' Dominion, it no longer has an exact lock on their location, only a general impression of how far they've gone, and in which direction. Kerberoi will follow their quarries outside their own borders, but they draw power from their home Dominions, and lose strength the longer they're away — not to mention the risk of other Laws being broken while they're away on a chase. A Kerberos gives up a hunt outside its borders if it grows too weak to keep pursuing, or if it senses another lawbreaker within the borders of its Dominion. That doesn't always mean the lawbreaker is home free, however; some Kerberoi have agents to help them pursue escapees, anything from Reapers to other Bound who hunt down lawbreakers as punishment for their own lawbreaking.

But for all that escape is possible, it's rare. Kerberoi are built to catch their prey. If they're not distracted by another trespass, they will track a lawbreaker to the edges of the Underworld. Though they can't leave the Underworld themselves, they'll send their agents topside to drag the lawbreaker back for their discipline. And an angry Kerberos is not open to negotiation.

Kerberoi don't kill as punishment if they can avoid it – after all, many of the creatures they punish are already dead. Instead, they assign a task or limitation, something that will repeatedly hinder the lawbreaker and force them to regret their crime. Kerberoi are in the business of teaching lessons, making examples, reminding every witness exactly how hard the hammer of justice falls in their Dominion. A dead Sin-Eater can't pass along their warnings.

When it comes to discipline, each Kerberos has its own internal logic, and to anyone else, the link between crime and punishment can seem tenuous at best. But once the punishment is assigned, the lawbreaker feels it like an itch. They're physically unable to resist following the Kerberos' demands. The task might not make sense, and it might not be something the lawbreaker would ever do of their own volition, but for as long as the Kerberos deems necessary, it's compulsory.

Because Kerberoi exist to serve their Dominions, their strengths and abilities are based entirely around the complexity of the Old Laws they uphold. A Kerberos with more Laws to enforce has a wider range of abilities by necessity. This doesn't mean a Kerberos with fewer Laws is

less dangerous — a Kerberos with only a handful of Laws to worry about can become a single-minded machine, relentless as it exacts the same perfected punishment over and over again.

Larger Dominions have more laws governing them, and more powerful Kerberoi protecting them. Sin-Eaters traveling through the Underworld won't encounter the most formidable Kerberoi right away; those live in the sprawling, shifting Dominions closest to the Ocean of Fragments, difficult to find and almost impossible to escape without breaking at least one Law.

Numina

All Kerberoi possess two Numina unique to their kind.

DOMINION SENSE

A Kerberos' Old Laws are engraved in its very being. It has complete knowledge of their every intricacy, and can out-loophole any Sin-Eater trying to break them. It also has omnipotent awareness of its Dominion, and is aware the instant any Law is broken. It is physically drawn to the trespasser, and will hunt them across the Dominion. Even after the lawbreaker has left the Dominion, the Kerberos knows how far they have traveled, and in which direction. If a Sin-Eater attempts to mask their presence in some way, the Kerberos may engage in a Clash of Wills (p. 101).

ENFORCEMENT

When a Kerberos catches a lawbreaker, it attempts to punish them without exception. The Kerberos spends a point of Essence and rolls Power + Finesse, contested by the lawbreaker's Resolve + Synergy. If the Kerberos succeeds, they impose the Lawbreaker Condition on their target.

The Moth

"It never stops moving, like a dog waiting for you to throw a ball. If you didn't know better, you'd think it was excited to see you. Who knows? Maybe it is."

Background: The Cavern of Flame is straightforward: Visitors must follow their course until its end, and they must guide others with the knowledge they gain. The two Laws might seem simple, but a Sin-Eater traveling through the Cavern must take care to obey them to the letter. A step into the dirt off their chosen trail is enough to catch the Moth's attention, and what might seem like a path's end to a casual observer might only be a bend in the road. Withholding any relevant information in response to a question is withholding knowledge, no matter how embarrassing it may be to tell the full truth. Perhaps because it has so few Laws to enforce, the Moth is notoriously picky, and if it understands bargaining, it doesn't give any indication.

Appearance: The Moth is impossibly large, with 12 thin legs and two pairs of wings. Its body is long and finely furred with no discernible head; three pairs of legs face toward one end, three toward the other, each triplet with its own corresponding set of wings. The Moth might seem like two creatures smashed together if its halves didn't cooperate so eerily well, scuttling back and forth in perfect synchronization.

Storytelling Hints: Despite its size, the Moth is unsettlingly playful in its chases, hovering above its quarry at dizzying heights before it descends. When it does catch a lawbreaker, it gives punishments that will bolster its Dominion — a Sin-Eater may have to spend a month lighting every candle she sees, with each little fire appearing in the Cavern of Flame once it's burned out topside.

The Scribe

"You think everything in the Vault comes from volunteers? Even lawbreakers have knowledge to impart."

Background: The Vault's Old Laws are long and complex. Visitors must always leave a book exactly where they found it, they may not copy or otherwise document the texts they read, and they can't consult the same text twice during the same visit, just to name a few of the dozens of Laws that govern the Dominion. When a Sin-Eater inevitably tries to sneak a book out or pull a scroll back off the shelf to double-check their memorization, the Scribe appears, clicking impossibly fast down the aisle, a whirlwind of eyes and ink.

Appearance: Matron of the Vault, the Scribe is deceptively small. From a distance, it looks something like a spider, perhaps with a few extra legs, but closer inspection reveals that each of its dozen limbs is tipped with a fountain pen. It leaves delicate spots of ink behind as it walks among the endless shelves in the Vault, peering at the books in its care with its hundreds of dark eyes, covering its round body and pointing out in every direction. Bound who frequent the Vault insist that every time they visit, the Scribe has more eyes, nestled together and unblinking.

Storytelling Hints: For even the smallest infraction, the Scribe insists on an exhausting punishment: it demands that lawbreakers add to its collection. They might find themselves tasked with bringing every text on archery they can find back to the Vault, one at a time, over the course of a year. They might be forced to obsessively document their lives, with their journal added to the Vault when their period of punishment is over. The Scribe might insist the lawbreaker bring it some precious document from the material world, regardless of that document's value, or how well its owners protect it.

A Brighter Morning
—Interlude II—

The Patel house, which Mark had walked through only yesterday, was completely gone. In its place was a large hole shaped like a perfect circle, as if someone had taken a knife and carefully carved the property from existence. This was not too far from the truth.

Mark had seen the aftermath of Reaper attacks before, but he had never seen one leave such a dramatic mark so close to other homes in the neighborhood. Shattered glass and twisted metal spread around parts of the hole's circumference, the remnants of the cars that had parked around the house. A crowd was forming, talking and snapping pictures.

"Saint," Mark said, "We've got to split this crowd."

Mark patted his chest. The Open-Throated Saint pressed her hands on it and climbed into his body. Once she was fully inside him, Mark stepped out of his car. He violently coughed, expelling a thick cloud of mist around him. When the cloud dissipated, he was gone, at least in a physical sense. His body shifted into an invisible and intangible state, like the ghost he would have become if not for the Saint's intervention. He was one with her now, and his mind buzzed with her feelings. She couldn't get the image of the Tycoon's geist out of her mind and could barely contain the desire to make him pay.

"Easy, easy," Mark said. He looked around. The lights from the phones of the crowd were harsher and wider spread. It illuminated the congregation, who were hiding in what remained of the backyard, underneath a partially uprooted tree. It would only be a matter of time until the crowd noticed them.

Mark moved into the crowd. "Let's make a scene."

Walking through people was more difficult than ghosts made it seem. Maintaining the integrity of a ghostly body as it moves through living flesh needs a strong sense of self and a keen focus on the task at hand. It took weeks of practice for Mark to master it.

For most of the crowd, having a ghostly being walk through them was enough. The sensation felt like being brushed by thin threads of viscous jelly, and the human mind was momentarily exposed to the tempest of heightened emotions that lay within its mind. Withstanding that kind of sensory overload needed a mental fortitude that the usual bystander couldn't muster. For the rest, it was simply a matter of tossing the metal and glass around the hole into the air and then into the hole once people started running.

Once they dispersed, the Open-Throated Saint tore herself out of Mark's chest. He gasped, taking in air for the first time since he became a ghost. He knelt down and grasped the dirt as he became solid again.

He looked up to see that the congregation was in bad shape. Some of them, like Yennifer and Walter, were badly cut. Scott, one of the newest members, made his robe into a makeshift sling to hold his broken arm. Kamala, heavily bruised herself, distributed medical supplies from a half-torn emergency bag.

The Golden Tycoon's words swam in Mark's mind: *Do you know how many medical bills you made us pay?*

He frowned. "What happened to the Patels? Where's Leah?"

For a moment, the congregation said nothing. Then, Kamala spoke up. "They're gone. The Reaper dragged them down. It took the ghost, too."

Mark shut his eyes. "Oh."

The Open-Throated Saint flew into a rage, swiping at empty air. In his mind's eye, Mark saw a woman in a religious habit sobbing alone in a field. She tore her coif off her head and beat it against her breast.

He opened his eyes. The members of the congregation were pulling themselves up.

"I felt it coming," Scott said as he adjusted his sling, "But before I could even say anything it attacked."

"We weren't ready." Kamala's voice hitched. "We tried to fight back but…"

"It's okay," Mark said. His geist calmed at his words. "You did what you could. You're here, and that's what matters."

"But…" Kamala started to protest but Mark shook his head.

"Don't beat yourselves up." Mark pulled Yennifer to her feet. "It knew it wasn't going to win a fair fight, so it had to hope for an ambush."

Just like Fifth Street. That's what Mark wanted to say, even though he knew it wasn't true.

"Remember, when we put our own to rest, they think that we're spitting in their eyes. That's because we are. When we tell them that there's more to all this than just sadness and decay and fighting over little bits of trinkets, they say we're tearing their world apart. *That's because we are*."

His speech was improvised but the words weren't exactly his. Leah had said something like that to him before he joined the church, back when he was just a vengeful young man trying to get back at the business partner who poisoned him.

"So, we're going to pull through this." He took a moment to look every member of the congregation in the eye. "And we're going to come back stronger than ever. Leah knows what she's doing. I've seen her pull through worse. She's going to save them, she's going to come back, and we're going to have our Brighter Morning."

His gut churned with doubt, but he didn't care. They believed him. For now, that was good enough.

"Come on," he said, "let's get back to the car. It's gonna be a tight squeeze, but I think it'll fit everyone. Scott, you ride shotgun with me. I don't want that arm getting any more messed up than it already is. Anyone need help walking?"

"I think we'll be fine," Kamala said. "Someone needs to tell Oumil."

"Once I'm sure you're all getting seen to, I'll let her know." Mark flashed his phone light into the hole, and saw a dirt bottom several feet deep. "Looks like it won't leave a Gate."

"Thank God for that," Scott said. "I don't want to see another one these for as long as I live."

In the distance, Mark heard the sound of sirens. "Aw, hell."

"So, what are we going to say to them?" Kamala asked. "We need an alibi, right?"

"It's not like we can blame it on ghosts." Scott chuckled.

"You sure about that?" Mark stretched his back.

Scott raised an eyebrow. "What?"

Mark waved the congregation away.

"Stand back," he said. "If I do this right, we're not going to need to say anything 'til we're at the hospital. Watch and learn."

He patted his chest. "Saint?"

– chapter six –

The Quiet Places

I, too, sing America.
I am the darker brother.
They send me to eat in the kitchen
When company comes,
But I laugh,
And eat well,
And grow strong.
– Langston Hughes, "I, Too"

No story happens in a vacuum, and doubly so the stories of the Bound, born as they are from strife and tragedy. Stories are born in specific places and specific times, and much like the Bound themselves, they're born out of conflict, loss, and determination.

In the Room Where It Happens

Washington, D.C., USA 1968

1968 changed the world. Yes, it's true of every year in every decade, but the impact of what happened during the 1960s is still felt today, full of tragedies and triumphs. The 60s are like that kid in the back of the class that slung one liners at teachers and left them stunned. The decade had the Rights Movements (Civil, Women, LGBT, Latino and Indian), the Vietnam War, Loving v. Virginia, *Star Trek* (with the first interracial kiss on television), and the tragic assassinations of great leaders fighting for change. The decade saw hippies, the March on Washington, riots that left communities reeling for decades, and the Space Race putting the first man on the moon. There can be no change without holding onto hope in the darkness that we can make the world a better place. The 1960s highlight that struggle against the impossible to bring progress.

History

Washington, D.C. is the embodiment of stunted transformation, corruption, revolution and power. It was a sleepy

little backwoods pit stop that became the capital of the United States. The seat of power for a country dedicated to freedom, it is the only city whose citizens are denied a meaningful voice in the republic, as they still don't have full voting representation in Congress. The leadership structure of the city has changed as, in 1967, it replaced its Board of Commissioners after 80 years, changing to a mayor-commissioner, currently Walter Washington.

After many compromises by the founding fathers in 1790, Washington was conceived as the new seat of power, moving the capital from Philadelphia in 1800. The north wanted Revolutionary War debts paid by the government, the south wanted slavery for their agricultural needs and lust for profit over human decency. Washington was between the two regions, created by taking land from Virginia and Maryland.

Washington remained a city of a few thousand souls who returned to their homes elsewhere in the summer until the outbreak of the Civil War in 1861. The influx of soldiers and need for additional federal government caused a population boom, but the infrastructure couldn't support the expanding needs. The city grew painfully over the ensuing decades, with new governmental agencies and urban renewal targeted at the underclass, shuffling them all to one section of town.

World War II changed Washington into what it is today, a seat of power on a global scale. The war boom increased population, jobs, and housing demands, with 200,000 people rushing to Washington for work. This migration, of sorts, forced minorities out of their jobs, out of their homes, and onto the streets. After the war, conditions did not improve substantially, and people of color were locked into the lower class.

Rocketing into the 60s, Washington is a hotbed of activism, from the injustices it placed on the backs of the underclass to the failing propaganda war over the Vietnam conflict. The city has one of the nation's largest African-American populations due to blacks fleeing the south during the Great Migrations of the 1910s.

Everyone knows that something is on the wind. Every day, people leave their homes, pick up signs and protest on the National Mall. Walking down the Mall provides a front-row seat to Students for a Democratic Society providing teach-ins for all who will listen, protesting the war. In January, the government's propaganda machine collapses, with the Tet Offensive exposing the truth of the war: No end is in sight. Shocking the nation, more and more protesters take to the streets, including many Vietnam War veterans who arrive on crutches and in wheelchairs, throwing away their medals on television.

Being the seat of the government creates a lush middle class for those considered the average American. White unemployment hovers around 4%, although black unemployment is more than twice that. Even though the Civil Rights Act was signed four short years ago, segregation is the pervasive law of the land. Blacks are

trapped in ghetto neighborhoods thanks to the oppressive housing laws established before '68, forcing them into the southern quarter of the city, largely into dilapidated homes. Few wish to sell to them, and even when they do, outrageous contracts, where a family can lose their home for missing a single payment, are enforced. This redlining limits the education opportunities that blacks can receive, as schools are built along neighborhood lines. With so-called "white flight," white parents placed their children in private schools. This practice escalated in the late 50s after schools were integrated, turning most of the public schools into black majorities. These schools do not receive any federal grant money.

The mounting frustration continues, as two-thirds of the population of the city is black but 80% of the police force is white. Police militarization is in full swing to oppress the civil rights and anti-war protesters. The boiling pot is near erupting. Washington explodes into riots for six days on April 4, 1968, after the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King.

After the riots, the city slowly moves toward a new normal. President Johnson signs the Civil Rights Act of 1968 (Fair Housing Act), on April 11, 1968, which prohibits discrimination for sale, rental, and financing of housing based on race, religion, national origin, or gender — a small step forward on a long road.

1968 spins on as Washington recovers from the riots, the National Guard units recede into painful memories, and activists go back out onto the street to continue the slow march of change. Looming on the horizon, Richard Nixon will become president, the first metro transportation system will open in few short years, and the Vietnam War will come to a messy end.

Washington, D.C. embodies what Sin-Eaters are struggling to find: the best way forward, one step at a time.

Geography

Washington D.C. is broken down into four unequal quadrants based on their direction from the compass set into the floor of the empty tomb of George Washington under the Capitol. It was rumored that the city's street system was made to confuse invaders and intimidate foreign nationals.

Northwest is the largest of the quadrants, making up roughly a third of the city and the most prosperous of the four. The lines of demarcation are apparent when one enters Northwest. A few of the main neighborhoods are DuPont Circle, Georgetown, Embassy Row and Cleveland Park.

Northeast contains parts of Capitol Hill, and the Atlas District and Fort Totten neighborhoods.

Southwest is the smallest of all the quadrants. Government renewal has led to the evictions of nearly all residents, many local businesses have been demolished.

Southeast is split by the Anacostia River snaking its way through the quadrant. Southeast houses many of the overlooked and oppressed, an area with spiking poverty and crime rates.

Hook: AWOL

Allen L. Adams joined the army in 1965 and served in both Kentucky and Korea before being stationed at Fort Myer, Virginia in '67. The young man, barely 20, is killed in a drunken bar battle by a Marine who hides the body.

The krewe encounters the ghost, who doesn't know where his body is. He doesn't want revenge, he just wants to be buried with honors so his mother knows he wasn't a deserter or a coward.

The heart of U Street began as a silent movie theater, Minnehaha, in 1910 and eventually transformed into **Ben's Chili Bowl** restaurant in 1958. In the midst of the riots of 1968 following Martin Luther King's assassination, Ben's is one of the few parts of the city to stay open, providing food, shelter and a safe haven for activists, firefighters, and soldiers alike. Ben's is a shimmering gem of hope is in the void. It is a place for community. The Rattlers, a Fury krewe, have adopted the restaurant as a second home, and they will fight for it. They are frequently found there after 7 p.m. The National Guard has been receiving orders to keep the peace and they are harassing the Rattlers for some reason. They can't explain it, but the attention has been getting more and more heated. A misstep could lead to a deadly riot in the streets.

A popular hangout for the soldiers stationed in the D.C. metro area, **Crown Bar and Grill** on E Street boasts the cheapest booze and best pool tables in the city. Brawls are common in the three-story bar, though few are ever reported.

A stone's throw from the White House is the **House of the Temple of the Scottish Rite**. It's mostly a bog-standard Masonic lodge, but a dozen or so Brother Masons have been inducted into the Order of the Keystone Eternal, a Memento cult that believes Mementos are the dismembered viscera of God.

Hook: Freedom Ride

The krewe takes part in a Freedom Ride down south, to carry the message of peaceful equality. The journeys are fraught with dangers: local cops watching the roads for the buses, Klan mobs in their white costumes illuminated by burning crosses, and dark roads from which some travelers never return. The dead are all around them, as they have lost friends and families, and witnessed atrocities only humans could carry out.

Howard University (Mecca, HU, or Howard) is a hub of African-American scholastic achievement. The school plays an important role in American history and the Civil Rights Movement, even inventing the "stool-sitting" technique during the early 40s, in which protesters peacefully fill available space at a local business to economically force change by costing them business. When the 1960s hit, students actively took part in the Movement, protesting against segregation in the Jim Crow south and beyond.

Any Sin-Eater traveling near the **Octagon House** is overwhelmed by desperate pleas for help from the ghosts forever tied to it. The manor, one of the oldest buildings in the city, was designed in 1801 by William Thornton for the richest plantation owner and slaver in Richmond, Colonel John Tayloe III. Tayloe murdered both of his daughters in that house, the first in 1812 and the other in 1817. Their shades, and those of countless slaves, remain bound to the house, and even among the living it's known as one of the most haunted buildings in Washington.

The long-gone servants' bell can often be heard ringing in the distance, and apparitions range from the crumpled body of Rebecca Tayloe at the foot of the stairs to phantom footfalls and clanking sabers, to, if the stories can be believed, Dolley Madison hosting ghostly receptions in the parlor are frequent appearances. The grounds of the house have the Open Condition, and in the basement, directly below the last step of the stair, is an Avernian Gate.

Having seen better days decades ago, **Union Station** no longer serves crowds of 200,000 travelers by train and bus daily. The neoclassical-style building filled with granite and polished marble greets a few lonely commuters. The federal government is desperately funneling money to turn it into a lavish visitor center, to no avail. A once-thriving lifeline for the city is slowly fading away. Sin-Eaters riding the rail hear the pleas of long-dead travelers, just trying to make it to destinations that have moved on without them.

No Sin-Eater can pass unmolested through **Independence Avenue**, which include the remnants of the city's two largest and most notorious slave markets, The Yellow House and Williams Slave Pen. The slaves were chained in a windowless basement to await their torturous future. Even the living report hearing the screams of the dead and the constant clinking of chains. A line of hundreds of ghosts relives the worst moments of their lives: men and women being dragged from the basement to the auction block, a child taken from his parents, or husbands and wives separated and sold to different slavers.

Minister John Kinard and Secretary of the Smithsonian Institute S. Dillon Ripley opened the **Anacostia Community Museum** in 1967, reaching out to the African-American community in Anacostia. As director of the museum, Kinard is actively trying to increase attendance and solidify the museum for the community. After the initial exhibits of various arts and statues, the community requested exhibits that represented them.

Hook: Painting the Past

Kinard puts out flyers asking for local artists. Ana Green spent her life painting but died in a tenement fire, unknown and starving. She asks the krewe to have one of her pieces displayed in the museum. Only two have survived, one in the hands of an elite art dealer who refuses to part with it, and the other hanging on a vampire's wall. The vampire is willing to sell, but at what cost?

Arlington National Cemetery is well-protected by ghosts, Sin-Eaters, and living magicians alike. The cemetery itself is considered neutral ground by all. Anyone coming to honor the dead is welcomed. The Unknown Soldier, a very old and powerful geist who guards the cemetery, has repelled every Reaper that has dared to breach the Avernian Gate in his tomb. The Platoon krewe frequently visits the cemetery to talk to old friends.

Liberal, Conservative or Undecided

A newish krewe, the **First Church of Shepard, Psychopomp** came into existence as man looked to the stars and Yuri Gagarin touched the unknown. Joan Alder, one of the Abiding, founded the krewe after she wondered what would happen if someone died in space. Would their ghost be sucked back to Earth and into the Underworld? Would they ascend? Or are they trapped in limbo? The Shepards mostly work in the government, using their security clearance to acquire as much knowledge about NASA as possible, hoping to be aboard the first flight to the moon. Each of the group has spent a week at NASA and are expert pilots.

Washington's marble halls of power turn the world. Few know that as well as **The Children of the Republic**. They stroll through the corridors of power without resistance, using their geists to ferret out secrets better left unknown. They blackmail those who oppose their conservative views, ever to the right. One group is holding out against them, the **Winchells** (named for Walter Winchell), using the press as their weapon to quell the politicians. But each published story that kills a legislative bill through public opinion brings them one step closer to taking their fight into the streets.

Hook: Party Politics

The krewe is approached by the Children of the Republic to find dirt on the Winchells or to make them go away, without it all leading back to them. If the krewe refuses, the Children make sure the National Guard, local police, and others take an interest in the krewe.

Since long before the term krewe became a thing, the **Platoon** (though they don't call themselves that) have been a thing. They are soldiers who have fought, killed, and in most cases, died for their country. They have seen battles the way few can imagine. They have died on the field only to come back and keep fighting. But each time they are killed, some random Joe in their unit dies in their place, and they come back with the random Joe's blood on their soul. It happens over and over again until they're sent home. Soldiers can't just leave, they have orders and going AWOL in a warzone is a death sentence, but for whom? Most do whatever they can to get kicked out. Coming back home in shame, their families looking down on them, spouses leaving and children left asking why. Others are still in the stockade. The geists of Sin-Eaters never leave; they try to help the Bound resolve their Burdens and then move on to a new soldier dying on the battlefield. Each member is a fully trained soldier but prefers not to fight; they understand the cost of each life and the burden of living with that death.

The **Howard Knights** walk the halls of the University as a symbol that death does not stop the cause. Each returned to Washington as a Sin-Eater after a fatal trip into the deep Jim Crow south. They don't speak of it often, but are ready to protect their brothers and sisters, as the struggle continues.

Frenemies

The ghost of **Reverend Zen** lords over the **Washington National Cathedral** with kind words, a friendly smile, and an uplifting message about how it is time to move on. Once a ghost is hooked, the pastor escorts then down to the bowels of the cathedral to an Avernian Gate. If they resist, he reassures them the entire way that this is the order of things. Zen smiles and understands, and lets them go about their way if he can't convince them, but always tells them that they are welcome to come back. Once the ghost has departed, Zen dons a Deathmask to hunt down the ghost as the Reaper, Sacrament of the Consumption.

During riots, the **National Guard** and **Police** sweep into the streets, militarizing the city and doing whatever it takes to institute order. If the players find themselves on the streets during this time, they are likely targets of tear gas, assaults, beatings, and arrests.

Protesters weren't the only targets of the new militarization. Nixon once called Washington the "Crime Capital of the World." **Roland "The Pick" Mitchel** lived up to the moniker by stabbing rivals to death and sent his crew onto the streets to keep selling heroin. The Pick is one of the most established drug lords of Washington, D.C. Everyone seems to have heard stories about him killing eight cops with nothing but a pick, and surviving an attack where he was filled with hot lead. No one can account for it, but any room he enters holds its breath until he decides the occupants' fate. His right hand is **Julie West**, a deadly gun moll and getaway driver. The Pick himself is responsible for more deaths than the heroin he sells.

Hook: Brother, Can You Spare Some Plasm?

Jimmy needs a solid; he needs some help keeping his business open as he has become the target of audits. Seems like someone wants his building.

High Rollers

Jimmy "The Unofficial Mayor of 9th Street" Lake embodies what a Necropolitan should be, and that is why people (living and dead) flock to him. Always ready to drink, tell a joke and embrace life, he is on his way out of the city. He lost his haunted nightclub of 40 years, the Gayety, and moved his burlesque business to the Central Theater, but business is slow. He needs help. His spirits are low, but his jokes are top notch.

The **Demon Cat (D.C.)** stalks the bowels of the Capitol through the Crypt. Centuries ago, 100 cats were released into the crypt to quell a rat problem. Somewhere along the way, one of those cats died and became a barghest (p. 196), and somewhere else along the line, that barghest became a geist. Rumors that D.C. is Bound to a Sin-Eater Senator remain unconfirmed.

Disgruntled and in constant conflict with his geist, **Sergeant Charles Blake** haunts Washington with his very presence, helping ghosts resolve their burdens or banishing them. With a Synergy rating hovering between 0 and 1, the man is an open wound on the world, looking for a cause.

Predicting President Kennedy's death on May 13, 1956, seven years before it happened, propelled **Jeane Dixon (Lydia Emma Pinckert)** into the spotlight. She has quickly become a bestselling authority, journalist, and psychic. Rumors of the origins of her powers vary, she has issued an adamant claim that they are a gift from God. Lately her predictions have turned toward a great

Hook: Never Leave a Sin-Eater Behind

The krewe stumbles over Sgt. Blake as he peacefully lays a ghost to rest, after hearing rumors of him devouring the dead. His internal conflict is apparent; if attacked, he fights back to escape. Looking into the man, the krewe discovers his family doesn't know why he goes from anger to happiness to depression. The krewe needs to either help the man find peace or stop him from killing more of the dead.

calamity that will drop half of Washington into a great pit, "from which none living will emerge."

In 1967, **John Richard Nichols** became one of the first Americans to openly talk about his homosexuality on national television, only to suffer countless death threats from his FBI-agent father. He co-runs the D.C. Mattachine Society branch, one of the first gay rights groups in the United States. He's also haunted: The ghost of his father's former FBI partner is Anchored to him, and blames Nichols' homosexuality for his father's loss of security clearance.

In January, **Jeannette Rankin Bridge** organized the largest women's march in Washington since Women's Suffrage in 1913. 5,000 women supporting the anti-war movement march from Union Station to the Capitol, as another group protests Arlington Cemetery to highlight the limited role women are forced to take as wives and mothers. Iris Jackson, one of Bridge's lieutenants in the march, went missing for a few weeks and came back different. She blacks out and awakens in unknown places. Iris doesn't remember making the Bargain when she was killed by "Pick," and her geist wants vengeance.

Need help, a friend to see if your spouse is cheating, or a drinking buddy? **Jackson Wright** is your man. A former lightweight boxer who was better at taking a hit than dishing them out, he had to retire from boxing, disappointing his father, a former middleweight boxer and 761st Black Panther veteran. Jackson is one of lucky ones who has a small apartment in Northeast D.C., which he uses as an office for his private eye business. What he lacked in boxing talent, he seems to have made up for with his Holmesian attention to detail, but he still can't get a steady gig. So, for a few bucks and a bottle of scotch, he'll take your case.

Southern Hospitality

Mobile, Alabama 1910

The skyline of 1910 Mobile is dotted with newly renovated factories, billowing clouds of grayish smoke being pushed skyward, and ever-taller buildings under construction. Everything leads back to the bay: Imports and exports are the city's lifeblood. The rising industrialization stands in contrast to the rich history of the city, peppered with rituals steeped in French culture and customs, including everyone's favorite party: Mardi Gras. The first Mardi Gras was held in Mobile in 1704, nearly two decades before New Orleans existed.

The city's wealth, like much of America's, was built on the backs and lives of minorities.

History

The Muscogee people lived peacefully in what would be named Mobile. The Spanish invasion ended that with death at sword point in 1540, and destroyed the fortified the city of Maubila, that would become Mobile. The Spanish held the city until it fell into French hands in 1702 and became the capital of French Louisiana. An outbreak of yellow fever swept through the city in 1706, decimating the surrounding indigenous peoples and the slave population at the time, which led to a sizable Sin-Eater culture whose traditions still extend into the black and indigenous communities today.

Mobile fell into British hands in 1763, then back into Spanish hands in 1780, and eventually joined the United States in 1813 as part of the Mississippi Territory. It became part of the Alabama Territory a few years later, and joined Alabama when it became a state in 1819.

Mobile's main economic trades were slaves and cotton. Mobile was in an economic boom and began large-scale construction within the city, continuing its industrialization for decades. The Civil War forced Mobile to surrender to Union forces to avoid destruction, but the damage it sustained cost numerous lives and significant parts of the city.

Mobile prospered as the Port of Mobile rose to prominence. The increased wealth led to the city's population exploding, up to 51,000 in 1910. Social and racial tensions spiked with the passing of a new constitution in 1901 that stripped blacks and poor whites of the right to vote. A boycott was launched to protest the new constitution, but was quickly quelled.

Mobile in 1910 is a city on the rise: Money comes in and cotton goes out. Every day, a new wonder of the decade blooms into existence, be it a new hotel, electric trolley cars that traverse the length of the city, a new dance for next year's Mardi Gras, or a mint julep to die for on the veranda.

Geography

Three miles north of downtown Mobile, **Africatown** was founded in 1860 in the aftermath of a failed plot to continue the outlawed slave trade practice. Timothy Meaher, a shipbuilder, along with his brother and several others, illegally brought 100 West African slaves into the Port of Mobile aboard the slave ship *Clotilde*. The scheme was discovered, the ship burned and scuttled, and the surviving slaves were left to fend for themselves. Thirty-two slaves, who were taken to Meaher's farm north of Mobile, built shelters, grew food, and learned to adapt. Over the years, Africatown became a self-governing society, preserving the language and traditions of their homeland. Charlie Poteet is their chief, and Jabez is their medicine man.

Every krewe in Mobile wants a piece of the **Magnolia Cemetery**. The sprawling cemetery houses over 60,000 burials. The massive cemetery contains the Old Hebrew Burial Ground, The Coal Handlers Union, Colored Benevolent Institution Number One, The Confederate Rest and other sub-cemetery plots. In 1883, a fence was erected around the cemetery, and by 1910 plans for a gatehouse

Jim Crow

Mobile, as most of the southern states, followed Jim Crow, a set of state and local laws that enforce racial segregation from 1890 through 1965 (the official end, but in reality, the same treatment continued). The laws dictated "separate but equal" treatment of blacks, when the reality was anything but. Jim Crow, and the high rate of lynchings, led to the Great Migrations of 1910 and 1970, where blacks moved north and westward.

Handling racism and Jim Crow can be tough, and it's a subject some people would rather sidestep, but that's not truthful to the setting or the spirit of the game. The first step is to establish what level of realism the players are comfortable with. Discuss it with the players and establish some rough guidelines and be prepared to use the Geist Card (p. 275).

Remember an important basic rule when playing a character of a race other than your own: don't try to be "black" or act like a racial stereotype, including putting on an accent or voice. Storytellers, don't use vulgar language. The N word is never allowed. Instead, focus on how people interact with the characters: the way they are overlooked, the people that won't engage with them, and the assumption they are always wrong. Every encounter is starting from scratch. Use the description of actions.

The following examples of Jim Crow laws are just a sampling of what was on the books. Violating any of them can result in the offender being killed:

Black men can't extend hands to white men because it would imply social equality.

Displays of affection between black people are not allowed and are considered offensive.

Blacks are expected to step aside for whites and let them pass.

Daily Life in 1910

In 1910, over two-thirds of Americans live in small rural towns of 2,500 or less. The United States leads the world's production of iron and steel, while also producing half of the world's cotton, corn, and oil, and a third of the world's coal and gold.

In cities, most people work in factories and live in crowded, unsanitary tenements, but people also have more buying power than anyone in decades. Department stores, mail-order catalogs, and an efficient postal service become staples of everyday life. More and more cities are moving away from gas lighting in favor of electric lighting for public use, though the trend is slower to catch on in private homes.

Middle- and upper-class white people have a spring in their step and hope in their hearts for a brighter tomorrow. They enjoy yearly vacations, weekend orchestral concerts, family picnics, and lawn games. A lucky few have phonographs in their home, but it's still not uncommon to see a young man courting a young woman on the veranda playing a banjo.

Cars have just begun production and are rolling out into towns. Speed limits are established in some places and not others because of the limited number of cars on the road.

with iron gates are in the works. The dead buried here are lively and passionate, and they have, collectively, vast knowledge of Mobile's history and its secret doings. Sin-Eaters willing to sit down for a long, meandering conversation about local politics or the hottest theater premieres of 1873 can learn a great deal. Plus, the cemetery's annual "Morti Gras" party is not to be missed.

By contrast, **Church Street Graveyard** is a nightmare. Founded outside the city in 1819, the four-acre cemetery has almost become the center of downtown as Mobile grows. Ever since the vanishing of the cemetery's guardian geist, the ghosts who dwell here seem to suffer from some unknown malady that accelerates their descent into madness.

The two-story brick **Richards-DAR House Museum** houses the history of antebellum Mobile. Many of the historical artifacts housed within are Anchors, and the museum has a reputation as one of the most haunted buildings in the city.

Opened in 1900, the **Bienville Hotel** is a ghost of its former, luxurious self. The hotel did fine business until the Cawthon and Battle Houses were constructed a few years later, built with Mardi Gras and their money in mind. Now the Bienville is a seedy flophouse, trading

Hook: Reflections and Rewards

Otto Adler, a glassmaker for Franz Mayer & Co., traveled with the windows from Munich to oversee the installation. Always a strapping man, ever since installing the new window, his health and luck seem to be increasing dramatically. He is engaged to the mayor's daughter, a windfall of cash has come his way, and he just opened a new show. Otto's windows refract the light of the sunset just so, pinning any ghost who died in that long-ago ammo explosion like a butterfly and allowing Otto to devour them before the light fades. Three days ago, he tracked down and ate the last ghost from that fire. If he's going to continue to feed, he's going to need fresh ghosts killed in a massive fire.

on its steadily declining glory, haunted by the memory of what it once was. Literally — parts of the old hotel linger on in Twilight, and local Necropolitans use it as a halfway house for recently risen ghosts.

Mobile Cotton Exchange (St. François and North Commerce Street) is vital in allowing cotton factors and merchants to control the sale, storage, and distribution of cotton from the Port of Mobile. By 1910 it was the third largest cotton exchange in the states.

Cathedral Basilica of the Immaculate Conception (2 South Claiborne Street) has been home of the Archbishops of Mobile since 1850. During the Civil War, a Union ammunition depot exploded, killing hundreds of people, burning most of Mobile to the ground, and blowing out the entire north wall of the cathedral and all of its windows. The wall was reconstructed and the windows replaced with beautiful stained-glass windows from Germany. The last window was added in 1910, under the watchful eye of the current Bishop, Edward Patrick Allen.

Built in 1902, the value of the **Mobile Public Library** (Cont and Hamilton Street) quickly established itself to city leaders, and it received additional funding in 1910. The additional funding is used to construct additional buildings and add more collections to the library — collections that include journals, sermons, and other writings from many of Mobile's early Sin-Eaters. Segregation has left African-Americans without access to the library, and it will be decades before an additional building is constructed for Mobile's black community.

Union Station connects Mobile, Columbus, and Kentucky as part of the Mobile & Ohio (M&O) Company that transports cotton along its 260-mile line; it is the longest route in the world. Hundreds died building the rail, and many still haunt the track.

Mobile Bay is the city's lifeline. Built in 1885, the Middle Bay Lighthouse is a beacon to all ships coming and going. On warm summer nights, huge numbers of crab, shrimp, and fish swarm the shallow end of the bay, where they're easy prey for the locals. This "Jubilee" is rapidly becoming a favorite holiday for the living, but the dead see the correlation between the Jubilee and sightings of the ghost ship *Clotilde*, and are less charmed.

Mystic Societies

Mobile's history of secret societies dates to 1711, when the Boeuf Gras Society formed as part of the city's annual Carnival celebration. Officially, the mystic societies of Mobile are merely groups of like-minded folks who participate in Mardi Gras parades, but more than a few have occult ties and inner mysteries. Some are krewes, others are Memento cults, and others are stranger still with intentions incomprehensible to the living or the dead.

The **Order of Myths** was the oldest mystic society embracing Mardi Gras in Mobile. It was founded in 1867 and disbanded in 1901. The geist of one of the original members has since made a new Bargain and re-founded the krewe in 1908, exploring the true meaning of the Bargain and trying to understand the power between the two. A few of their numbers have supposedly Bound themselves to multiple geists, magnifying the Sin-Eaters' power.

Southern Crossers represents a long line of Southern pride, including the children of plantation owners looking to keep the status quo and themselves in power. With the power of their Bargains, family connections, and wealth, the small krewe of Bonepickers sees no reason the dead of Mobile should not serve their families, as they have always done.

Radically opposing Southern Crossers, the **Old Glory** is the largest Mystery in Mobile. It accepts members from all walks of life, but is principally made up of former slaves, children of slaves, and those crushed under the heel of segregation. Their chief goal is undermining Jim Crow through actions both political and occult, but some of their dead celebrants are beginning to grumble about the krewe's overt focus on living affairs.

Sipping 30-year-old brandy in the parlor of the Mobile Country Club, the **Visionaries** meet weekly to discuss the next phase of their grand plan. Unlike the others in the city, they are thinking big picture. That means money, and lots of it. The Visionaries fund krewes, occult researchers,

Hook: Lost Tomorrows

The Visionaries never leave Mobile, their power base, but their money does. Unmarked cash shipments go out on the Mobile Line regularly — but a string of brazen train robberies has hit the last four trains carrying Visionary money.

and historical preservation societies all over the country. Throw enough money at the problem, they insist, and the whole, systemic problem comes crashing down.

Rabble Rousers

Taller and stouter than most, "**Billy**" does most of the heavy lifting on the dock and is well-paid for it. He never speaks out of turn, nods when addressed, and does what is asked of him. Random accidents seem to befall those around him, and have for a long period of time. He claims to have no knowledge of this strange coincidence, but the ghosts who follow him say otherwise.

Widow Ann Miller came into a tidy sum of money after her second husband Walter passed a few years back. She still dresses in black to mourn him. Now her stepson Francis and his wife, Anna, have passed as well, leaving her the family mill business and a tidier sum of money. The ghosts of Walter, Francis, and Anna still hover around her in Twilight, their ethereal hands reaching out, endlessly whispering a warning: "Don't drink it!"

Colonel Bartholomew Mullis died on the battlefield fighting the Union. Mullis was a vengeful piece of shit in life, and that has only magnified in death. His specter blames the defeat of the south on abolitionists, blacks, and moral degenerates. He is anchored to the anniversary of the Battle of Mobile Bay, and every year on August 5th, he materializes and stalks the city. So far, he has killed nine people and injured 20.

Arthur Pendleton Bagby, the former Governor of Alabama, House of Representatives member, and United States Minister to Russia, was a born politician and has remained so in death. The shrewd ghost has turned Magnolia Cemetery into a thriving necropolis, rich with the Essence of living memory. He maintains relations with numerous mystic societies in Mobile, but his priority is always Magnolia — and the power it gives him.

Bettie Hunter, a former slave, earned her wealth through a carriage business. After the Civil War destroyed New Orleans' transportation market, Mobile became the major port city in the South. Bettie took advantage of this situation, which enabled her to buy a fine home rivaling successful white business owners. Operating through proxies, including a medium frequented by the carriage company's current owner, she still directs her empire today, with a healthy side business in relocating ghosts and their Anchors. The coming rise of the auto industry worries her, but so far even the most vigorous of séances hasn't convinced the man to diversify.

Everything a good person should be is embodied by **Bishop Edward Patrick Allen**. Immediately upon becoming the Bishop of Mobile in 1897, he got to work doubling the number of priests, more than tripling the number of Catholics in Mobile, and overseeing the construction of new churches, schools, orphanages, and hospitals. He reaches out to the African-American community by fostering an environment for education and the introduction of the Knights of Peter Claver (the largest and oldest Catholic African-American society).

Ezekiel Washington, born a slave and never knowing his true family, turned to the Word for relief. Now that he is free, he is beginning to lose his faith. He dreamed that freedom would wash away the racism, but has only encountered the harsh reality of the world.

Mae Watson has turned convention on its head, taking up journalism and publishing an independent paper about Mobile government. Much to the chagrin of the sheriff, Mae goes where the story is, and never minds petty things like segregation. Her latest story is an exposé on the Mystic Societies of Mobile and how deep their ties to local government run.

Mobile owes its drive toward modernization to one man, **Mayor Pat Lyon**. He stepped into the role in 1904, authorizing utility upgrades, paving streets and adding streetcar lines throughout the entire city. During his three terms as mayor, he also orders the construction of waterways to sanitize the drinking water. To date, six construction works have drowned under mysterious circumstances, and he needs more works, but people are too scared.

Hook: The Merry Widow

The old mill has been plagued by apparitions and phantom noises since the latest death, and the three ghosts haunt the Widow Miller near constantly. A suspicious Sin-Eater might suspect the old "murder for the inheritance" scheme, but in truth, the family's drinking well contains lead, and the widow is also slowly dying. The ghosts are trying to warn her, but all three are Rank 1 and can't meaningfully communicate the danger.

Hook: One Man's Faith

Washington witnesses a Bargain and has no idea how to process it. He begins to preach about what he saw around town. If not stopped, the locals will go on a witch hunt, killing anyone they deem less than them.

Edinesis

Edinburgh, Scotland

Beneath the warm gaze of the sun, Edinburgh is the crown that sits on Scotland's brow. Old architecture

dots its skyline as the vertebrae on the back of a sleeping giant, warring endlessly with encroaching modernity on its many shapely hills. The Athens of the north is a city whose dichotomies reveal themselves at every coiling causeway, whose streets resound both with the echoes of progress and the memories of its innumerable centuries. Its Old Town is studded with a mish-mash of brick buildings that compete with one another for equal footing, and entire streets overlap one another in a crazed patchwork of antiquated urban sprawl. Each cobblestone and every alley echo with the history of the place. No street looks entirely the same twice, for Old Town remembers itself anew minute to minute, day to day. It squats atop the decaying corpse of its labyrinthine underground streets, long left to fester in the dark. At its apex sits the prominent Edinburgh Castle atop a lushly greened basalt rock. Meanwhile, New Town unfurls itself: a resplendent, verdant-studded patchwork, filigreed with staid Georgian and looming Grecian Revival facades. Like Rome before it, Edinburgh is built on seven great hills, the foremost among them being Arthur's Seat, which lies at the direct heart of the metropolis.

Instabilities

Among the jewels of the city are the universities, which stand prominent among the thriving arts scene of Edinburgh. Ensconced within those institutions, as well as in its Surgeons' Hall, the **Siege Perilous** is a krewe most notable for its high-brow eggheaded leanings. Theirs is a tradition marked by staid academia: The universities of the city have stood for centuries, and rumor holds that the Siege Perilous has existed for just as long. They constantly seek new treasures among the Bound's tatterdemalion refuse: objects of power or objects that *speak* to power are among their favorites.

Warring with them for nearly as long as they have existed is the krewe **Asterion's Vengeance**. Over the decades, Asterion's Vengeance has lost its stable footing on the underworld that snakes beneath the city. Where the dowdy airs of the Siege lean towards lofty, starry-eyed rites, Asterion's Vengeance delves into the ecstatic. It is this dichotomy: one pushing ever towards the light, and the other forever toward the primal dark, that causes such strife. It is for this very reason that they are hunting each other, and hunting *you*: Powerful rumors of deals made with the lords of the sundered Underworld have been flying across both krewes' various informational networks. And they are both looking to stop whoever might have struck such a devil's bargain.

Setpieces

One of the curators of the Surgeon's Hall has been ferrying specimens that have long fallen out of the catalogues to the black market. Jocasta, dying in her hospital bed, asks Asterion's Vengeance to purchase one of them: the haunted bones of a martyr with the power to cure any illness. She's willing to pay any price, but a changeling lord is looking for them as well.

The cold war between the krewes is growing hotter by the day. Alliances shift daily as unattached krewes close ranks, and choose their side of the chessboard.

Seventeen coffins with have been found — and lost. Asterion's Vengeance is threatening mayhem if they aren't collected and properly buried. With their discovery, grisly murders like those of Burke and Hare are beginning to crop up in the news.

Bald Agnes has been seen again in Holyrood Palace, stripped to the waist and bleeding. But this time, she promises any krewe that can ease her suffering the formulae for incredibly powerful rites — even the secret hiding place of Mementos that the Siege Perilous doesn't know of.

Axel, one of countless baristas in Edinburgh's café scene, says that he's been hearing the ghost of his grandfather every night coming up from the very ground. The Vaults have a long history of suffering and death, but the turf war between the two major krewes refuses to budge. Fight or not, the voice from below is gaining power — over the dead and parts of the Underworld alike.

Run Away Home

Quilombo dos Palmares, Brazil 1654

Founded by survivors and free-born African slaves, Quilombo dos Palmares has defended itself tooth and nail from its very inception. It was said to be the biggest fugitive community in Brazil, and has warded off Portuguese invasion six times over. It will take an army to quell the community, which rules itself as a confederacy. They are mighty in their difference, a brotherhood among the palms.

Story Hooks

Palmares has constantly reimagined itself with each new conflict, internal or otherwise. The wars that it fights to merely to exist are punctuated by the decades it has remained. And the Portuguese are coming again to bring Palmares to heel, through might and other means.

Sin-Eaters of the region speak of capoeira fights in the dark between rival krewes. The ghosts here are beginning to take notice, and each new bit of violence is beginning to have a strange impact on the dead, who are gaining unimaginable power over the course of weeks. Is this a Ceremony? A Memento? The rash of possessions speaks to the former, yet no one knows just who these krewes might be, or just what they're doing to the ghosts...

A ghost has been seen stalking through the fields and jungles that surround Palmares. She begs for help: She was one of the many native captives originally taken as a bride for one of the men in the settlement. Now she wishes to find his spirit in the Underworld, for good or ill.

One of the many dead from the first conflicts Palmares

faced has resurfaced. In exchange for a steady stream of offerings, he will help the kingdom against the encroaching soldiers. But his story isn't adding up, and a sudden rash of horrible murders has struck the community. The ghost isn't to blame, but something yet unknown from the Underworld might be.

Widows' Walk and Salt Spray

Winslow, Massachusetts

Winslow is a small coastal town about 50 miles southeast of Boston, whipped by chilly ocean winds and filled with an aura of faded glory.

The first inhabitants of the area that is now Winslow were the Wampanoag, who for thousands of years made their living by farming and fishing. A plague struck the Wampanoag people between 1616 and 1619, killing almost two-thirds of the entire nation. Devastated, traumatized, and greatly reduced in numbers, they were thus much more vulnerable to European colonization and subjugation when a group of English settlers from Boston, drawn by the area's natural harbor, founded a town there in 1643. Centuries of salt air have worn away the gravestones in the Old Burying Ground, but the locals still know which markers belong to which families.

In the mid-19th century, Winslow rose from a sleepy fishing village to stunning prosperity when its location and harbor made it an ideal site for the booming whaling trade. Everyone in Winslow made a fortune, and Ocean Street filled up with fine new houses funded by the profits from whaling expeditions. But when the New England whaling industry declined near the end of the 19th century, Winslow's fall was as swift as its rise. Those fine houses on Ocean Street fell into disrepair, paint peeling away in the sharp salt wind and shutters hanging askew because their owners could no longer afford to fix them.

Among Winslow's tragedies was the wreck of the *Ruby*: in 1866, the ship was lost just off the shore of Winslow in a violent storm, killing all on board. The wreck has become a collective Memento, holding onto the death energy of the dozens of sailors who perished. The wood does not decay; barnacles and sea creatures can find no purchase on the ship's keel.

Each successive depression and recession has hit Winslow harder, and each successive recovery has been fleeting. From time to time, mayors or entrepreneurs have tried to revive Winslow with some new scheme — funding the Harbor Museum as a way to honor (and profit from) Winslow's maritime past, bringing in a Haunted Walk company to give tours around Halloween — but nothing has worked so far. In the last decade, drug dealers from Boston expanded into Winslow, taking advantage of the economic desperation and numerous vacant buildings to get a foothold in the town. Today, Winslow is struggling and crumbling, constantly haunted by the shadows of its past.

At the Harbor Museum and Archives, curator Lizete Acosta keeps a collection of items too precious — or too strange — to put on display. One of these items is a scrimshaw necklace made from walrus-tusk ivory, carved with intricate patterns of interlocking circles and five-pointed stars. It's said that anyone who wears it will always return home from the sea. It's not said that they'll do so alive, or even human.

God Will Know His Own

Carcassonne, France, 1360

Carcassonne is a walled city in southern France. Rings of heavy stone walls fortify it; more than 50 tall towers protect it. Even the cathedral is fortified now. A few thousand residents — nobles and merchants, beggars and artisans, Christians and Jews — live here, resilient after plague and war, still seeking fulfillment through profit, bravery, art, and God.

Carcassonne is also one of the strongholds of Catharism, a Christian heresy that holds that all earthly things are sinful. Moderate Cathars simply live celibate and austere lives; more extreme ones go so far as to count the body itself as a corrupt and earthly creation and therefore reject it by starving themselves to death. Cathars also count both church and secular leaders as corrupt, adding political subversion to the religious heresy — and so the church moved against them. In August 1209, the city fell to a swift but brutal siege: The crusaders cut off the city's water supply in the height of summer, and hundreds died of thirst and disease.

Local legend says that during the misery of the siege, some of the Cathars managed to escape through secret tunnels that run beneath the city. Only those in direst need can enter. You always escape your peril here, but you always find something even more dangerous.

More misery and persecution followed. First, the conquering lords punished the Jews of Carcassonne for their resistance by instituting discriminatory restrictions, forbidding them from holding certain occupations or even eating with Christians. Then, the Inquisition came to root out the remaining Cathar heretics in the city and surrounding countryside.

Inquisition Tower, a round stone tower that rises high above the thick, fortified city walls, was claimed by the Inquisition to house their prisoners. The whole village of Verdun-en-Lauragais was imprisoned here in 1305 before their execution. Several of the more devout Cathars starved to death during their imprisonment. Their misery opened an Avernian Gate in the tower, whose Key is a moan of profound hunger.

The Black Death arrived in January of 1348; by April, a quarter of the city was dead. The survivors, seeking to blame someone for their misfortune, accused the Jewish people of Carcassonne of poisoning the water: Several Jews were violently assaulted; others were dragged from their homes and burned to death. Now the plague has receded, and the city is beginning to recover — but the memory of pain and death is never too far away. Neither are the dead themselves.

In 1360, there are three active krewes in Carcassonne, each one locked in uneasy tension with the other two. They are:

The Caravites, Mourners, led by Solomon ben Joseph Caravita. Broken-hearted at the violence done to his people during the plague, he fears that the memory of Carcassonne's Jewish community will be lost. He is known to the rest of the city as the head of Carcassonne's Jewish burial society, a gentle soul who selflessly works to make sure that these lives will be remembered.

The Edict of Verdun, Furies, is led by the Cathar Pierre Bernier. In life, he was from the village of Verdun-en-Lauragais. The first time the Inquisition came for him he escaped; the second time, he was burned at the stake. He is fragile, horribly scarred, and fueled by an unyielding desire for revenge.

The Sisters of Lachesis, Pilgrims, led by Beatris Castanhier. She is a prosperous artisan and skilled weaver. Her husband died in the Black Death; she carried on the business in his absence. The same pragmatic and meticulous attitude that brought her success as a weaver has made her an effective leader for the Pilgrims. If you bring her the right materials, she can weave more than just cloth on her loom.

Solstice Spirals

Bru na Boinne, Ireland

For more than 5,000 years, people have lived at this bend in the River Boyne. Only a few have ever understood how close this area is to the Underworld.

Three massive earthwork domes dominate the landscape: Newgrange, Knowth, and Dowth, a few miles from each other. Each is more than 30 feet high and more than 200 feet across; all were built around 3200 BCE. Around each one is a ring of five-ton stones carved with abstract symbols: spirals, swirls, zigzags.

The entrances of these mounds align perfectly with sunrise on the winter solstice: on the darkest day of the year, a brave and tiny beam of light stretches deep into the interior to illuminate the black, into a chamber that once housed the ashes of the dead. With the correct application of power, these can be passages to the Underworld.

Only the mound at Newgrange is a functioning Avernian Gate. To open it, you must make a burnt offering in a bowl of carved stone at the moment that the light of the winter solstice sunrise strikes the inner chamber. If the Gates at Knowth and Dowth were to be reopened, the earthworks would form an immensely powerful network; nobody has yet discovered how to open them, but krewes make the attempt every year on the winter solstice.

Over time, most people forgot the true meaning of the stones and the solstice chambers, but they continued to struggle over the land. Vikings raided and settled; Normans and English planted castles and the nearby town of Drogheda, then spent centuries tightening their grasp on this land and its people; Catholics and Protestants battle still over the true heart of Ireland. Thousands have died for deep-held causes over the centuries — in battle, in siege, in revolt, in protest — as well as in starvation and in the passing of long years.

The solstice mounds and their standing stones have seen it all, and they hold their power and remember.

Liam FitzGerald, part-time IT worker at the Bru na Boinne World Heritage Site, made a fortune in the Celtic Tiger tech boom, then lost it all again when the bubble burst. Unemployed and despairing, he fell into conspiracy theories, a tendency which only intensified when he got his part-time job at Bru na Boinne. He has plenty of ideas about what the standing stones and earthworks mean. Some of them might even be right, which is the trouble. Every so often, his internet rants stumble into things that are harmful to the local krewes. Until now, his boss, **Dr. Mairi O'Reilly**, has kept him in line. In addition to being a PhD in archaeology and the chief administrator of the Bru na Boinne World Heritage Site, she's a member of the **Three Lions**, the Undertaker krewe in nearby Drogheda. She's been feeding Liam false information to keep him from exposing what they're up to. Now alt.gothic.ghost has found Liam's blog, and they want to bring him into the fold — but the Three Lions are a powerful krewe.

Mega City 4

Beijing, China

Beijing is one of China's biggest cities, with a population of 21 million, although only 13 million have local hukou permits (meaning they're registered to be residents of Beijing). Over eight million, most coming from villages and towns to seek greater opportunities, are not able to access local government benefits and are vulnerable to being displaced in large numbers when the city finds it convenient. This vulnerability continues into the afterlife, as Reapers aggressively target ghosts who died without hukou permits. Even those who died with their permits in good order must pay regular fees of Essence to maintain their hukou status with the Reaper of Public Security.

Beijing is a university town, industry town, and seat of government. Its massive and diverse population mostly lives in close quarters in high-density apartment buildings.

Like many major cities, extremes of wealth and poverty live side by side, painful reminders of people who came to the big smoke with big dreams and were broken instead. Beijing has numerous parks, temples, ancient buildings, and tourist attractions, attracting domestic and international tourism. If someone pauses to boggle at a foreign tourist and have their photo taken, it is probably because they too are tourists. Locals are more likely to shake their heads with embarrassment and move on.

Most people are not particularly religious, taking a practical, syncretic approach. Ensuring good luck is more important than any particular deity, and it makes sense to go with what works. Of those who identify as being seriously religious, 95% of those in Hebei and Henan, the provinces around Beijing, identify as Christian, and it is the fastest growing religion.

Ordinary ghosts are encouraged to fade away as fast as possible, through observances designed to appease, respect, and provide closure. Ghosts that linger beyond a few generations, that have demonic appetites or feel wronged, can manifest with creepy ingenuity and variety. Hungry ghost stories contain painful reminders about what happens when ghosts feel slighted.

The Reapers in Beijing are unusually bureaucratic and coordinated in their efforts. Some say it's because Beijing has been a major city with high population for so long that it has had to get organized or be overrun by hungry ghosts. Others blame Tiananmen Square, and for good reason.

Tiananmen, the Gate of Heavenly Peace, is one of the most famous Avernian Gates in the world. During the 1989 Tiananmen Square protests, krewes from around China and beyond, inspired in part by the ghost of Hu Yaobang, came together to overthrow the old order of the Underworld. While tanks stopped for civilians in Tiananmen Square and up to a million gathered in the living world calling for change, the Underworld trembled on the brink of Catabasis. Reapers in charge of Beijing's administrative district were divided on how to manage the uprising. Eventually Reapers from outside the city bloodily put down the uprising. Many masks were destroyed that day, and even more in a cleanup afterwards, along with Sin-Eaters, ghosts, and humans.

Tiananmen Square is heavily monitored by Reapers and their agents. You can make a deal there, in the same way that airport security can guarantee a level of disarmament, but do not make sudden moves. Never show Ceremonial inclinations unless you have the correct papers and it is very clear to every watchdog that you have them. Many ghosts are drawn to the Mausoleum of Mao Zedong, swirling around his crystalline coffin, and those with hukuo status are not reaped into the Underworld unless they become a public nuisance.

Beijing is full of temples, ancient hutongs and public places of power, history, and culture. Turf wars between krewes over who gets what haunt are frequent and "renovations" are common as secret sigils are wiped away to make way to the new. Six-hundred-year-old temples whose entire structures have been rebuilt many times with fresh, artificially aged materials is just good upkeep, and creates ample opportunity for krewes to claim their haunts. The age of a building is about history, relationship, and culture, not the specific age of any component.

Instabilities

No one is more welcoming to tourist Sin-Eaters than the **Laowai Gentlemen's Club**. They lend a helping hand to everyone far from home, most guests serve as cover for the despicable acts of a smaller number of tourists and ex pats. **Boss Urchin**, one of Geist Nezha's many Sin-Eaters, has a mission to protect vulnerable children in the city. Boss Urchin is brave, impulsive, self-sacrificing, and he sees anyone associated with the Gentleman's Club as a predator that needs to be dealt with.

A swan-shaped paddleboat in Beihai Park is possessed, angry, and hissing. It never forgets a face and has a particular dislike for Sin-Eaters and men who wear hats.

The Reapers who watch over Tiananmen Square — **Enduring Struggle Against Counter-revolutionary Reactionaries** and **Harmonious Society and Vigilance** — are publicly unified in their desire for a peaceful Tiananmen Square. Enduring Struggle Against Counter-revolutionary Reactionaries feels like the Harmonious Society and Vigilance has gained too much power and his hold is too cloying and controlling. Enduring Struggle Against Counter-revolutionary Reactionaries has a very special dinner party planned with Harmonious Society and Vigilance as the guest of honor, who will help her execute all eight courses? The favors she can extend include a map to Shangdu, an Underworld River City of legend.

Gong Laoshi was the cruelest teacher at Beijing #14C Experimental Junior High School, and saw no reason to stop when she died in 1983. She haunts the halls, savagely punishing the tardy, the left-handed, and anyone with poor penmanship.

Since the 1990s there have been rumors of an intricately hidden Dominion under Beijing called the **Garden of a Thousand Flowers**. If the rumors are true, it is a heavenly place of fearless philosophical inquiry, scientific pursuit, egalitarianism, and rich diversity. Evolving utopian ideals are pursued with curiosity and openness, shaped by communism but recognizing that no system has all the answers. One of the reasons its location continues to be such a secret may be that once you visit, why would you want to be anywhere else?

Setpieces

Burnt offerings fill the air during Ghost Month, but it is not enough, never enough, for hungry ghosts. Sin-Eaters smell so good, and they just want a taste, or a fuck, or to drown you a little bit. Staggering figures with distended bellies go through your garbage and try to eat anything you have touched, moaning as food turns to ash on their fiery tongues. Gossamer beauties float in the window,

lure you to their watery grave and try to take more than you bargained for. You know it's July when a tumorous ghost leans against your leg while it feeds off pus from its own goiters.

The **CowboyPunks** ("Cowboy" is a local slang term for young people who take on a lot of western trappings, often highly fashionable stylings with some neckerchiefed cowboy swagger), a Necropolitan krewe, are about to launch the best nightclub ever. They just need a few bits and pieces; it's no big deal, pick up a few things from some obscure antique markets. They'd do it themselves, but they don't want to bother the **Lucky 8 Krewe** after that smart hutong incident.

The **Pink Lotus Alliance** is going to sneak into the Chinese Ethnic Culture Park and add a whole lot of queer figures into the displays. You can come distract the guards, and run interference with the mischievous ghosts up in the Banyan tree, if you can keep up.

Thousands were forcibly moved to build the Olympic Village in Beijing. Schools, shops, and apartments were bulldozed under, destroying countless Anchors and forgotten bones, stirring up the ancient, sleeping dead and creating a topsy-turvy jungle of ghosts and ghost structures from throughout Beijing's history. Eater of the dead **Wáng Huángsè**'s ghost trap, nestled in the abandoned rowing park and oozing trails of corpus, is one of the many dangers within.

City of Spices

Calicut, India 1526

The Age of Exploration is an interesting lie. Explorers from Spain, Britain, Portugal, and more set out to discover worlds that had long since existed. The New World never was. The lost continents never were. The great discoveries were often rediscovered or revised from methods mastered by past peoples or even forgotten generations. The great voyages often paled before explorers rarely spoken of in the west: the learned Ibn Battuta, the wealthy Mansa Musa, or the massive fleets of Zheng He. The one truth of the explorers' age and the fantasy conjured around it is that the world would never be the same. A wind of want and war came along western sails, and death rode not so far behind.

Vasco de Gama of Portugal found not the first (land), the second (disputed Mediterranean routes), or even the third (the Arabian Peninsula) route to India. What he found instead was a long, arduous, but unclaimed road to a wealth in pepper, cinnamon, and more. With a clear route to the waters of the Indian Ocean trade empires, the Portuguese established a monopoly in the west… and a pirate empire in the east. The merchant princes of Africa, Asia, and Indonesia found themselves negotiating under cannonade, a state of affairs that held out for nearly a century of hostile peace or violent reprisals, only to be followed by the Dutch, the British, and a long, fractious road to eventual independence.

Great journeys and great spoils can all be measured in lives, and the ghosts of 100 peoples can be found in the ground and waters of Kozhikode.

Instabilities

Kozhikode, or Calicut, is a port dominated by Muslim traders under the rule of a Hindu dynasty under the polite, but well-armed thumb of Portugal. Wonders can be found, but costs can run as high as tensions.

Ghosts Do Not Exist

While Europeans have the power in the living world, the Twilight of Calicut is very much a Muslim city. Even the hustle of the dead for memories, Plasm, and a sense of resolution must pass through certain paths and those with no connection to that faith of old are often charged a *jizya*, or tax, to reside in relative peace. To some, this kind of tax is an affront. In a hard, dead world? It may well be more progressive than many other dead ports of call. Dealers in memories and Mementos visit often.

As the ummah of the dead work to reconcile their fate in a faith without ghosts, many in power style themselves as jinn, carving out little kingdoms of their own. Others claim to be qarin, sinful companions of souls long since departed. Geists and their Bound claim neither or both. There is no consensus, with conflicts between ghost cults and krewes being a constant worry. Finding your place among the dead is the first great struggle. Proving that place is the next. Some still reach out for living relatives who expect mere dreams or silence until the end of days. Calicut is an uncomfortable place to die. Most places are.

Due for the Dead

The dead of Calicut are often far from home when the edge of the world catches up to them. The ache to be remembered, to be honored in familiar ways, drives many ghosts to seek out Sin-Eaters of a similar origin. Dead ghettos emerge around the Portuguese fort, the Hindu court of the royal Zamorin, and the many little communities that folk far from home construct. Keeping rituals from home alive can be a turf war or a place of peace. For many who left home looking for answers their homelands denied them, finding meaning in the afterlives of other peoples is difficult, if not uncommon.

The Moura Encantada

A new Reaper has risen from the depths of Kerala, though no one knows how this European beauty came to live or die in Calicut. Her dark hair bound by a golden comb and her face masked above her full lips by a silver-inlaid skull, she walks the streets and harbors demanding "Pão por Deus" — bread for her god. This "bread" comes in the form of dead-white ghosts, drug to her by the enthralled. While feared as a servant of the Underworld, some whisper in the ears of her many agents, eager to see her work complete. Then, surely, she will leave the rest

of the dead in peace? Her preference for bribes and soft power conceal a powerful, relentless foe. If angered, her bare feet shake the ground and stir the sea. For now, she is satisfied being felt in all corners of Calicut.

Setpieces

Vasco de Gama and his armadas made their fortune via gunpowder diplomacy and through forcing ships to trade in their stead wherever they had no right to land. Many viewed them as little better than pirates, or perhaps far worse. In June of 1526, in response to the murder of an entire Muslim vessel and crew at sea, the local people of Calicut rioted and sought to burn down the fort and factory (sovereign trading outpost) of the Portuguese. The Zamorin took the opportunity to strike a blow, burning the fort to the ground. This would not be the end of Portugal's stake in Kerala, nor the end of the age of white imperialism in the region, but the upheaval among the living and the dead may stand as a point where many peoples unite. What shape this takes, and what follows, may well be up to the krewe that stands tallest in the chaos — or the last krewe standing.

Through it all, the Moura Encantada sings, beckoning for her due bread. She promised to take.

She never promised to leave.

Dominion: The Nameless Bridges

They say the road to hell is paved with good intentions, but in truth, all roads to all places are paved by many hands. Every road, every passage, and every bridge above impassable rivers has a name. Every road, every passage, and especially every bridge we take and take for granted has been put together by the sweat and often the lives of those who built them. And not all bridges are made of wood, stone, or steel. Think of every dynasty, every movement, every innovation.

Every bridge has a name, and those who form its bones may well curse that name from below.

Utterly human architecture forms chains, hand to ankle, spine fused to spine, across a foggy void below. Many incorporate half-made wonders, shattered armor from a dozen eras, or ghastly bones so shy of skin that they will never be identified. Perhaps there's a River down there, with its own bounties or curses, down in the void between these tiny island plateaus of no real consequence or feature. The fog is rich, thick, and powerful all its own. Those who descend never rise again. The bridges are the only way, paths made of the many who go unremembered.

Getting There

Few people reach the Nameless Bridges by complete accident, but instead may follow dead ends, lost leads, or hopeless quests for answers. Passing through other Dominions with only an inkling of purpose or a piece of the truth greatly increases the odds of happening across the Nameless Bridges. Rather than one place, it may be many similar connective tissues in the Underworld. Or, if one locale, it may remain unbound to something as secondary as geography. One needs only know half or less of a story to find themselves called to those who yearn to fill in all the blanks.

The hard part is finding the bridge one truly needs. Lifetimes have been lost in telling so many stories.

Old Laws

"One must become part of something greater to move forward." Navigating the Nameless Bridges can be an expensive prospect without some mark of purpose or high station. The many arms and other hazards that form these living chains will pull, resist, or cast down those who try to cross without the blessing of high agency, destiny, or recognition of the struggles they faced.

A calling of note (represented by any Status of 4+, service to a Rank 4 or greater being, or representing a krewe or similarly powerful entity) allows a person and their immediate entourage to pass without resistance. The chains have no choice but to bow to their own purpose — serving as stepping stones to the truly great. While passage is easy, gaining insight into that particular bridge is impossible if this method is chosen. You are using them, not hearing them.

Those without such a calling, or who wish to respect the bridge, can seek the consensus of these many ghosts. This requires either a dedicated period of listening and aligning oneself to the cause the bridge represents, to remember it or perhaps to complete it again in some way. This comes in the form of promises, recounting of similar deeds by the travelers, or tithes of Essence and relevant memories. The most common promise is to carry a name — always one at a time — back to the world of the living as a seed of recollection, bringing a lost soul back to light.

Denizens

The **Bridges** are conglomerations of ghostly mass — people, innovations, relics, and more — that represent the context and time period of their shared sacrifices. While each is a chorus of desires and voices, treat a single bridge as a meta-entity of Rank 3 that draws on a single pool of Essence, a thematic set of Numina, and a singular lack of agency beyond their original purpose and an ache to be remembered. The faces in the masses are never recognizable. They are maimed. Destroyed. Faded. Fused into the mass of flesh or steel or stone. They are forgotten, but never silent. A blur of whispers, a chorus of shouts, sky-writing, even forms of sign language or code are possible.

The **Groomers** are Kerberoi who tend, maintain, and sometimes add new ghosts to the structure of the bridges.

Many-faced in contrast to their faceless property, these skittering hulks insist upon a certain context and either destroy all individual faces they encounter or add them to their own exteriors in patches. If encountered, they will seek to assess the "fitness" of those who would rule over a bridge (for to cross a bridge is to rule it, in their countless eyes). Only the power of a high calling as listed above, or a sacrifice of Essence from the bridge beneath will stay their urge to add material to the greater stories they tend. They are ultimately gatekeepers of a certain history, demanding stories with singular leads. Anything too crude, unmannerly, or out of theme? It will have to be pared down to fit, just another link in the chain forward to progress.

The plateaus themselves are mostly bare juts of rock above the mist and silence, but a few still hold treasures of note. These **Milestones** may yet hold the culmination of a single or several bridges. Mementos, lost fetters to powerful ghosts, clues to old Remembrances, or other artifacts of power may sit here, otherwise unguarded. The Underworld has had many travelers. Few remain.

There's an added boon to acquiring these milestones, if they still exist. So long as one holds such an object, they hold rulership over any bridge that leads to it. Bridges will gladly offer Essence, Plasm, Memories, or whatever meager gifts they might to see these items removed from their heights. They didn't struggle to see their works sit on a pedestal. They want their work to be *felt*.

Dominion: The Nursery

An empty crib. A tiny casket. A painful and bewildered silence when someone asks "How many children do you have?" This is what gets left behind, after the unimaginable tragedy of a child's death.

Never fear. The ghosts of children have somewhere to go. They are kept safe here in the Nursery, never aging, never growing. The Nursery gives these little ghosts what it thinks they want: unchanging safety, comforting brightness, consistent rules.

The boundaries of this Dominion appear as pastel walls lit by achingly bright lights and lined with rows of shelves and cubbies that are meant to hold toys. All the cubbies are empty, though — one wall holds a fireplace, and its blazing heat is constantly fed with the toys abandoned by the ghosts who live here, burned to extract the Essence that keeps the Nursery intact.

If you try to talk to the children in the Nursery, the newer ones cling to you, seeking the love and safety that their parents can no longer give them. The ones who have been here longer shun visitors, and instead return to their endless work at the fireplace, burning away toys and bathing in the Essence that emerges. Sometimes, as they work, they still sing nursery rhymes.

The Kerberos here is a protector of sorts: a massive teddy bear with its face loved off that thunders forth to defend the little ghosts of the Nursery.

Old Laws: Take turns. Share and share alike. Tell a story before the lights go out.

Getting There: Take one sip from the River Eresh-kigala, then sail down it until the water turns pink. Ask the dinosaur for directions, and do the second thing it tells you.

Story Hooks

- Your krewe has painstakingly gathered all the Keys that you need for the Avernian Gate in the ghost town of Atolia, CA. The last one is a wooden toy soldier with chipped red paint that was burned after its owner, 8-year-old Caleb Michaels, died in Atolia in the flu epidemic of 1918. You must find Caleb and the toy soldier here.
- You need Essence. No, you really *need* Essence. Without it, the boundaries of the Dominion of Salt will evaporate, creating an irreparable breach between it, the Autochthonous Jungle, and the River Acheron. The Nursery is the only place that you can get a suf-

ficient supply — if you can convince the small ghosts here to give it to you.

- "...just tell us that she's all right?" the young mother sobs. "Please?"

Dominion: The Cavern of Flame

The Ner Tamid at a synagogue; the Olympic torch; the fire at the tomb of an unknown soldier — all are supposed to be everlasting.

What happens when an eternal flame goes out?

Fire is an ever-changing thing. Its shape shifts, it climbs higher and sinks lower, it changes color in barely perceptible ways, and always, always, it consumes its fuel and burns out.

Then, it reappears here in the Cavern of Flame. This vast canyon of black stone has walls thousands of feet high, dotted with row after row of grottos in which burn tiny fires. Each flame can only light a small area, though, before the darkness swallows it up.

In the center, on a black stone floor, reside those who tended these flames in life, drawn here in death, too; constant souls whose faith keeps these flames alight. Aemilia, the Vestal Virgin who rekindled the sacred fire in Rome by casting a piece of her own garment onto the place where the flame once burned. Takhmurup, who commanded the Three Great Flames of ancient Persia to be brought to him, and who waits for them still.

Where other flames die, these endure. This is a place of purity and faithfulness, for all eternity.

Or at least, until this Dominion fades away, too.

The Kerberos here is The Moth (p. 233), an enormous creature with 12 legs and four wings. It flits in and out of the flickering light, hovering above the flames.

Old Laws: Be faithful: once you have chosen a course, remain on it until the path ends. Share your light: you must guide others with your knowledge.

Getting There: Find a candle made of pure beeswax and place it in a holder made of bone. Light it from an already-burning flame, and then blow it out. Continue walking in the darkness until you see what looks like stars.

Story Hooks

- The Flame of Hope in London, Ontario, Canada is one of the flames here; in the first year after it was lit, a vandal extinguished it. Gordon Davies, the last security guard on duty before the vandal struck, died two years later, still remorseful about what he felt was a failure on his part. That remorse has made his spirit unquiet. Guide him here so that he may be reunited with his flame.
- A member of your krewe thinks that fire from the Cavern of Flame can strengthen the ceremony of Persephone's Return. Bring back three flames: an echo of the fire at the Burning Mountain in Australia; the lost flame from the Helsinki memorial to sailors who perished at sea; and an ember from the Cherokee Nation's council fire. To find which flames are which, speak to the spirit of the Olympic torch-carrier Hermia Stephanides — if you can catch her.

Dominion: The Dead Forest

A dim forest of leafless trees, silent except for the dry clack of branches scraping against each other. But the air is still — so how do the branches move?

This is the Dead Forest. Even here in the Underworld, some souls want to forget who they were: those whose lives or deaths were so painful that they feel it is better to forget all life and all emotion than to hold onto anything of what has gone before. Their existence is still eternal, but it is an existence of oblivion, their minds gradually growing blank even as they take root in the timeless unchanging forest.

Some ghosts come here intentionally; others find themselves in the Dead Forest when they get lost — and then their minds begin to fade, so they cannot find their way out again.

If you touch a tree, it may recoil; if you speak to it, it may speak back. But if you break off a twig from one of the dry, leafless branches, it bleeds. Always.

The Kerberos here takes the form of a cluster of thorny twigs. It clatters over the forest floor, scattering dry leaves and stabbing pinprick holes in its wake.

Old Laws: Speak only of the past, so that you can keep your memories alive.

Getting There: In the valley below the Mountain of the Wolf, you will find a spiral path. Follow it outwards until you reach the banks of the River Phlegethon. Ford the river two by two. Then, you must become completely lost. Blindfold yourself; spin around until you lose your way; cloud your mind with magic — whatever it takes. When your mind and eyes clear once more, you will be in the Dead Forest.

Story Hooks

- A twig from one of the trees of the Dead Forest has somehow found its way into the hands of necromancer Philip Mackenzie, a member of the Church of Death's Shards. He is planning to use the spiritual resonance of the twig to create a link with the Underworld and send ghosts out of this realm and into oblivion. You must not only find a way to retrieve the twig from

Philip, but also to return the twig to the Dead Forest so that it can be reunited with its original tree.

- The spirit of poet Chimuanya Okoro has been lost in the Dead Forest for seven years. Her sister, Kesandu, plagued by nightmares of Chimuanya's torment and oblivion, has asked you to help bring her sister peace. You must make your way to the Dead Forest, find a way to recall Chimuanya to herself enough so that she can be sent to a more peaceful place, and then return safely to tell Kesandu the tale.

Dominion: The Crossroads

The Crossroads is a place to make bargains and trades: A bargain made here is believed to be especially honest. Not all trades are tangible objects, though: you may trade away immaterial things such as abilities, emotions, and especially memories.

There is a marketplace here: a chaos of dim stalls and booths that flicker in and out, all crowded together in an effort to get as close to the Crossroads itself as possible. Running through the center are two roads made of neatly arranged bones crossed at perfect angles, stark white against the dull grayish-brown land.

The spirits who come here trade ghost objects rich in Essence; they trade secrets and services; they make oaths; they meet on what passes for neutral ground here in the Underworld.

At the center, where the roads cross, stands this Dominion's Kerberos, a massive creature that has grown into the shape of an arch. Four thick, stony legs carved into spiral columns curve up to meet at the top, above which rises a massive body and two curved faces so that it may watch all sides of the Crossroads at once.

One of these faces is the Oathkeeper: A bargain or promise made within the sight of its eyes is especially solemn and binding. Many believe that the Oathkeeper can exact punishment for breaking an oath made in its shadow; none know whether this is true, because none have yet dared to break one of these vows.

The other face is the Peacemaker: No harm may be done within its gaze. If anyone tries to do harm, the Kerberos either freezes them in place or crushes them with one massive foot.

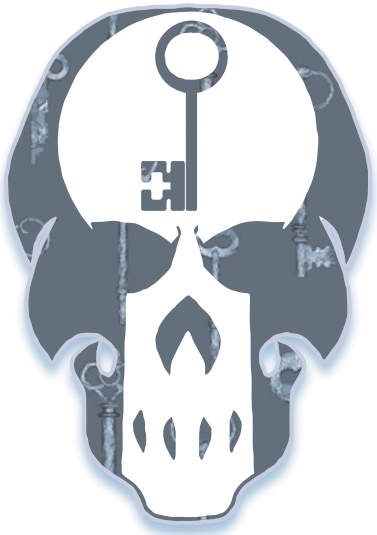
Old Laws: All bargains made here must be honest. All trades made here must be equal. Break not a promise made in Oathkeeper's sight. Do no harm in Peacemaker's sight.

Getting There: To reach the Crossroads, simply begin along any straight path in the Underworld. With the first creature you see, make a bargain. To the second, swear an oath. The third will lead you to the Crossroads.

Story Hooks

- You never thought that your krewe would ever end your feud with Alecto's Fire, the Furies of Melbourne, Australia. It has gone on for years, bringing destruction to both sides. But now the leader, Meg Stuart, has reached out to try to make peace — and she insists upon finalizing the accord at the Crossroads, in order to follow tradition and protocol as much as possible. Which means that you trust her... right?

- Eva Brunelli traded away her Anchor, a silver filigree locket containing a hand-painted portrait of her grandfather. She swears that she thought it was a good idea at the time, and that she received something equally valuable in return — and yet she cannot produce the item that she received, and cannot even remember what it was. She does remember the ghost who traded with her, though: a small hunched man with wispy white hair and burning purple eyes. And she remembers that she made the trade at the Crossroads.



A Brighter Morning
— Part V —

Leah and the Abandoned One wandered the empty village. The shadow of a jagged arch hung above them, dotted by the sharp red glow of candles melted against the swamp's petrified trees. The huts around them were made from whatever materials the ghosts upstream had not consumed: brick, stucco, and logs kept upright by careful placement and hope. The streets they walked were just as slapdash, formed from smashed-together cobblestone and asphalt.

The ghosts that lived here moved in single file through the brackish water of the swamp and kept their eyes cast to the ground. Some of them held their hands at their brows, as if Leah's presence were as bright as the sun itself. They quickened their pace around the Sin-Eater, and especially the Abandoned One. The dead didn't speak to them, and Leah hadn't expected them to. Whatever archaic laws ran this place were almost certainly broken by their arrival. No sense in talking to people who were about to be punished by whatever enforced those laws.

Instead, Leah kept watch on where they went. Oliver and the others didn't choose to come here, and the guardian of this land hadn't swooped in to attack them upon their entrance. There was a greater plan at work. Leah tried to call Mark again, but whatever signal trickled down to make the call possible had long vanished.

The Abandoned One tugged at her arm and pointed. One of the ghosts had torn herself away from the others. The ghost ahead of her turned his head long enough for Leah to see his pained expression. He turned away and the ghost behind him closed the gap. The Abandoned One pursued the lone ghost. Leah followed.

The ghost's destination was in the center of the village. A large bomb shelter lay there, torn directly from whatever building had once housed it. Locks clicked apart as the ghost approached. The blast door opened and closed, slowly enough for the Sin-Eater and geist to slip inside after her. The ghost found her place as part of a large, standing, square formation of the dead, stepping into a single absent spot in the back. She stood at attention and the others followed suit.

Leah heard a moan of despair from the center of the formation. It came from Jade, her skin now completely gray with deep black veins running through it. She shook her father with decreasing vigor. He stood with the formation, at full attention and with no acknowledgement of his daughter in front of him. Leah saw Trisha and Oliver leaning from a pile of burlap sacks in another corner of the shelter. She heard a shuffling of wings and leaped behind a stack of wooden crates.

She peeked around the stack and saw a pillar of wings folded into each other emerge from the shadows, at the very front of the formation. The ghosts showed no surprise or fear. Jade turned toward the pillar. She fell to the ground. The pillar rose into the air and its wings unfurled.

It descended upon Jade as a perfect circle of wings, connected to a beating heart at the center. The ghosts, including Hari, stepped away from her in perfect synchronicity.

Parts of the heart's muscles pulled away to form a simulacrum of a mouth. "The draft is complete. You were not selected."

The Cage of Wings swept Jade's body into itself, becoming a pillar again. The ear-piercing shrieks that followed sent a wave of nausea through Leah's body. Her chest felt tight. A burning heat swept through her muscles, a manifestation of the Abandoned One's growing rage.

"We can't kill it," Leah whispered. "We have to get the others out of here."

The Abandoned One grabbed her arm. His long nails dug into her skin as he tried to drag her forward.

"We can't kill it alone!" Leah grabbed her geist's wrist. "We need to go over to the other two, tell them to stay put. We'll get out and come back with help."

The Abandoned One tilted his head. Leah opened her mouth to say something, but images flashed in her mind.

It's snowing. He's running barefoot through the snow for what feels like ages. The burning ache of the cold is gone now. They're in the forest, shots firing everywhere…

The Cage of Wings snapped itself back open, spraying blood and dust into the air. It turned to the stack of crates. The formation of ghosts turned with it. Leah tried to keep focused, but her thoughts were drowned out by the flood of memories.

"Stay here. We'll be back soon, promise!"

He hears them but he doesn't believe them. The kisses his family gives him are the first time he feels warm in days. There's nothing to eat, the blanket he has is too wet, and the soldiers are all around him. Darkness creeps into his vision, and he begs it to leave…

"The draft is complete," The Cage of Wings said. "Outsiders are not permitted."

He's blind now. He can't move. He wishes that one of the bullets had just hit him. He remembers his grandfather crumbling to the ground after just one shot. He envies him. It hurts so much to die alone, to know that he'll always be alone…

As the Cage of Wings and its army tore through the boxes, Leah reached out to touch the Abandoned One's face. "You're not alone."

The memories faded. The ghosts fell upon them with blow after blow, but it did not break the sense of peace the two felt in that moment, or the assurance of what to do next. Leah's fingers dug into the Abandoned One's face as he melted into a liquid that crawled into every pore of her body. Leah's flesh bubbled and swelled. She swept out her arm, stretching it into a rock-solid wall. The ghosts flew to the sides of the shelter.

Behind them, the blast door came apart with a groan. The Open-Throated Saint bolted through the new opening, brandishing her claws. Mark, Oumil, and Tempest-Bloated were right behind her.

"Run!" Leah shouted to Oliver and Trisha. Her voice was a mix of her own and the voice of a child.

The two ran for the door as the army of ghosts gave chase. Mark pulled out a flare gun from his suit pocket and fired it at them. The ghosts stared at the flying red light in awe. Oumil swept Trisha into her arms.

The Cage of Wings grappled Leah as she turned to run. "Outsiders *will* be punished!"

She shifted her arms to sharp blades, but they only made sparks on the being's wings. It pulled her in close and brushed its mouth against her arm. It felt like a long vine with sharp thorns dragged against her skin.

Leah shut her eyes as the mouth reared back to bite her face. Then, she heard something smash into its back and she fell out of its grip. She saw the remains of a wooden crate on the floor, and Oliver behind the Cage of Wings. He held his shaking arms to the ceiling, and every loose object in the bunker hung in the air above him.

"Come on," he said to the Cage of Wings. "Come and get me!"

He hurled the pile of junk at it. The Cage of Wings flew towards him, knocking crates and sacks out of its path, and soon he was within its wings.

"Leah! Go!"

She turned and ran, up from the Arched Shelter to where the streams flowed. Oliver's screams were finally out of earshot. From there, they went up, into the sewers, and back into the light of day.

— chapter seven —
Ghost Stories

All that you touch

You Change.

All that you Change

Changes you.

The only lasting truth

Is Change.

— Octavia E. Butler, Parable of the Sower

Geist: The Sin-Eaters taps into the very fabric of what makes us human: our stories. No matter who you are, you tell a story, be it a soul-shattering, sweeping tale of surviving the horrors of war or the steps of a mundane web search of how you bought this book. Each of these stories serve as the building blocks of life, and that's the heart of **Geist**. It's a story of death, but also one of celebration. The dead are speaking and the Sin-Eaters listen. They may lend aid to the dead, flee from their calling, or exploit their power for their own gain. Those choices form the story of your chronicle, tell the life of your Sin-Eater, and remember the life of the dead.

If you are reading these words, then you are the Storyteller and get to breathe life into brief snippets, weaving scenes of action, drama, romance, or tragedy. Multiple scenes build into a story, and multiple stories into a chronicle.

This chapter aims to assist you in that privilege.

What does a Storyteller do? Storytelling is an evolving, cooperative art form, equal parts improvisation and planning, and it varies for each Storyteller, as not everyone values the same style of play. In brief, though:

- A Storyteller fills in the blanks for the players — the players are the actors on the stage and their actions influence everything. Those actions may be in response to some world event outside of their control, but more often they're built on the choices made before.

- The Storyteller plays the supporting cast (antagonist, childhood friend, or that harassing coworker that stole their lunch from the fridge), and describes the world and the ramifications of the characters' actions. Do they help that wailing ghost child who doesn't know she's dead, or do they leave her in the streets reliving her last moments of life until madness overtakes her? Each of those actions have consequences.

- Lastly, the Storyteller is the neutral arbiter of the rules, interpreting die rolls, adjudicating mechanics, and ensuring that the game is fair and fun for everyone.

The rules below (and in general), are tools to empower you and are completely optional. Pick and choose what works best for your table, your players, and yourself. Simply summarized, **Geist** is a collaborative telling of a story that is at times mystery, horror, humor, and other genres to be defined as you play. The players' responsibility is to experience the emotions, drive the story, and be willing to take part. It is the Storyteller's job to make that story possible. It's a collaborative experience.

Theme

Let's talk about the big ideas, the backdrop of the world you are trying to create and how to evoke it. Telling the players a main theme of the chronicle lets them shape their characters. If the game's main arc is the crushing weight of the two-tier justice system on minorities versus a theme of the mundanity of daily life, the two can be interwoven, but highlighting the theme of injustice lets the players know their characters will be engaging with police, wrongly accused as perpetrators, and there may be a racist Attorney General returning laws to "separate but equal."

Those Left Behind

Car accidents, slipping in the shower, dying in the line of duty, being struck by a plummeting toilet from a disused space station, falling in a duel for the affection of your parent. Comically or horrifically, death comes for us all. At that moment, the things left undone rush back to you: kissing your daughter on the forehead before dashing out the door, graduating from college, getting one last smoke, finishing your novel. So many unfinished things. Things that define you, empower you, and tie you to the world. Things that haunt the ghost that can't find their daughter, put words to the page, or move on.

That endless frustration of death forces them to lash out, becoming things of nightmares. One inhabits a house and causes the walls to bleed every time a three-year-old child walks in as a way to say "I love you." The child flees and the cycle continues. Any person that passes the site of a burned-down bookstore from some 50 years ago, located at the disused 111 E. Memory Lane, catches the whiff of smoke from the site, then immolates in a flaming column, hearing a cackling laughter before finally dying.

No ghost story can exist without tragedy. Ghost stories are terrifying until one looks deeper at the specter that was once alive. Are they reliving the moment of their death? Have they slipped into madness? Are they simply evil? All can be true. Sin-Eaters see and hear the dead. They seek a sense of understanding and peace with the geist that gave them a second chance at life, along with a sense of what the dead experience. The Sin-Eater's own Burden constantly pulls at them. Sin-Eaters peer into the heart of the ghost and see its true intention, not the ghastly expression of frustrated violence. The Sin-Eater knows that could have been them, if not for the geist and the Bargain. Sin-Eaters and ghosts are still human.

Why We Fight

Do you fight to avoid the senility of the Underworld? For the thrill of feeling alive? Because it is the right thing to do? Did circumstance draw you into it? Or because if you don't, who will?

Sin-Eaters are objects in space, pulled toward the black hole of their Burdens; they can't escape that draw if they ever hope to find a semblance of peace. Their synergy with the death-delaying geist is bound into resolving the spirit's Remembrances. Each can be avoided, but you have a character at conflict with itself and tormented with self-enforced limitations to their second life.

But that does not answer the question of why we fight. The Sin-Eater may dedicate themselves to moving on but that takes time, research, allies and understanding. No being is ever one thing or one task. To truly be alive is to be in conflict with something, be it ideology, fellow Sin-Eaters, or Chthonic Gods.

Breaking the Cycle

We are born into a world that categorizes us, puts us in neat small boxes, and places its expectations upon us. The words of the lofty, privileged elite constantly reinforce their power through threats and deputized, jackbooted goons. That is reality; that is existence. Countless socially accepted slights and actions break down a person's will until they are a husk of what they should be. The Reapers that hunt down ghosts to drag them back into the Underworld to serve, to obey their authority. The CEO that constantly asks a female director to take minutes in a meeting. The black man trailed through a store by the clerks. The ghost-eaters that consume the dead for their own aggrandizement. The cabs that never stop for you unless you have a white friend. But still, we all strive to make it better, or carve out a small piece of heaven for ourselves and our loved ones, or to make it easier for those coming after us.

That reality does not have to be the Sin-Eaters'. They walk in the world carrying the knowledge of what life is for the living and the dead. Both sides of the coin are told to submit, to heel, to know their place, and many do. It's easier to be a sheep and hope something will change. But Sin-Eaters, by their very nature, are radicals, change makers who walk in both worlds with the power and benefits of each.

Sin-Eaters have broken the cycle of death, the thing that comes for all living beings and shapes the world through their fear of it. No defined culture, no defined role, and no purpose other than that what they choose puts them against the grain of the imposed system.

Mood

As the Storyteller, you do a lot to set the scene and mood. The music you use at the start of the session, the challenges the players encounter, the names you choose for places and people. A story with a recurring threat called the Duchess of Ham is going to have a different tone to a storyline focused around returning ghosts in the killing fields of Cambodia to their family.

A story should aim for a consistent mood in terms of consequences and narrative arc (will this be gritty realness with savage lingering consequences? How likely are musical numbers or a protagonist turning into a puppet? However, the tone needs to vary so players don't get worn out hitting the same notes repeatedly — a story about the killing fields might need the Duchess of Ham for a chapter of light relief.

Geist encourages stories where facing death and horror can lead to transformation, finding ways that stretch beyond horror to the hope, resilience, and survival that lies beyond. Dystopias can be easy to imagine just by looking out the window, but as the Storyteller you can challenge yourself and players to stare into the abyss and then imagine how to bridge the chasms we face.

Think big, so that you can make story and detail choices that challenge us to new life, be it in the moment, or into the future.

Hope, Joy, & Healing

Life is precious, adaptive, marvelous, and strange, and no one knows that better than those touched by death. While others fight death, Sin-Eaters sit with death, have beers with death, dance with death until the sun comes up and their feet bleed. A storyline that could superficially be about reuniting a ghost with their family could lead Sin-Eaters to spend time with cultures that have danced their way through generations of dispossession and premature death.

Sin-Eaters help ghosts find closure, sometimes as detectives, sometimes as combat monsters, sometimes as a friend who asks the right questions, and sometimes by teaching someone how to sing the blues or put on some dancing shoes.

Hope is real, even in the darkest hours; Reapers can be and have been stopped, the Underworld can be overthrown, the all-night takeaway still does great kebabs, and today you can taste them. Trauma accumulates, but it can also be faced and overcome; characters can resolve their Burdens and even their shattered geists can find healing. The path is hard, and always uncertain, but **Geist** holds space at the crossroads, a place of transformation, joy, celebration, and transition. Nothing stays the same, not even death.

Modernity

Sin-Eaters tap into ancient forces and cultures, but culture is not stagnant. Culture is adaptive, smart, and draws from many sources. Adapting to the times does not make a culture less real: In a world that struggles to understand its post-colonial self, indigenous peoples order books from anthropologists and can leverage online platforms to challenge interpretations. Message sticks that used to be carried by hand from person to person before a ceremony could begin, can now be express posted. New mediums allow for different cultural expressions and preservation, from paint and dye technology that puts bright colors in the hands of everyone, not just the rich, to colors that endure longer where ochre would flake away. 3D scanning and printing allow us to touch what was reserved for the elite or could only be imagined.

We live in a time with more technology, adaptations, and expectations of dialogue than ever before. Powerful imbalances exist, internet access appears to be ubiquitous to those who live with it, creating equal-access illusions. However, internet is still difficult or prohibitively expensive the further away you live from infrastructure. High-tech and low-tech live next together; more people own cell phones than have access to toilets or running water. People who do not know how to open the hoods of their luxury cars are neighbors with people who keep their cars rolling by using laundry detergent for radiator fluid and stuffing spinifex into a flat tire.

Culture, technology, magic, past, present, and dreams of the future interweave with each other to make a whole; they are not binaries in opposition.

Ghost stories are part of our oral histories, the local important stories that are marginalized by larger historical narratives. Textbooks might not remember who those people were, but the land and the lives they touched remember; sometimes their stories are rediscovered every generation anew.

Each generation discovers innovative edges that are quaintly familiar to other times, cultures, or places. In **Geist**, history, modernity, and concepts of what modernity *is* are embodied and talk to each other. The past always has unexpected layers.

Conflict

The world is full of conflict; no living or reborn being can avoid it. Conflict is the heart of scenarios, it's the driving force behind the story.

Sin-Eater vs. Sin-Eater

Sin-Eaters are individuals, first and foremost. Like most people, they don't necessarily get along just because they have a similar background. Any number of conflicts can arise between the Bound, which can range between battles for terri-

tory, access to Avernian Gates, different approaches to helping ghosts, significantly opposed ideology, or just a gut reaction.

Both sides understand how hard it is to kill one another and the repercussions associated with it. Bring up the issue of how to handle differences. Do they kill each other? Try to starve out the other? Bring in human allies and have the police roust or arrest them?

Story Hook

The players' krewe recently took over an old Baptist church and its attendant cemetery, and now controls access to the only Avernian Gate in the city. A rival krewe believes the only true release for a ghost is being sent to the Underworld, and they need the krewe's Gate to do it. To add an extra layer of tension, the players could have wrested the gate from a third krewe, who charged a hefty fee to use it.

Sin-Eater vs. Ghost

Ghosts populate every corner of the world, unseen by most and constantly in need. They range from desperate people in need of aid, to irritating hangers-on plaguing the living, to monstrous spectral nightmare things killing everyone in sight.

Ghosts see Sin-Eaters as vehicles for their needs. They need someone who can see, hear and understand them. What lengths might a ghost go to for a Sin-Eater to carry out its last wishes?

Story Hook

Shane, eight years old, is a ward of the state who has bounced from home to home and orphanages for the last six years. The young boy is haunted by the ghost of his dead family's dog, Robot. Robot won't let anyone get too close to Shane and has scared every foster family into returning him to the homeless shelter. Robot believes she is protecting Shane, but she's destroying his every chance at happiness.

Sin-Eater vs. Geist

At the moment of the Bargain, both geist and Bound look into each other's souls and see the true nature of the being before them. In most cases, moments before death, the Bound agrees to join with the geist, but once bonded, the two don't necessarily remain in sync.

Story Hook (Example)

The conflict of Sin-Eater vs. geist is a perfect setting for a solo scenario to fully delve into both parts of the character and explore what makes them tick. Susan and Burning One are out of sync. Her powers have been failing her sporadically throughout the chronicle and Arturo is looking for a new host, someone who will help his former business prosper. Susan is looking to have Amanda, her girlfriend, find someone else to help her alleviate her grief. Both have come to a head, the Burning One's business is being foreclosed, and Amanda is walking into a vampire's den.

Sin-Eater vs. Underworld

Sin-Eaters fear few things. They can die 1,000 times and always come back, but the Underworld can destroy them, by Kerberoi and the very world itself. A dip in the river Styx would destroy their minds, corrupt them, and turn them into a hated specter. The Underworld is not treaded lightly and never without consequences.

Story Hook

The players' krewe awakens trapped in the Underworld with no clue how they got there. The thrust of the game becomes about escaping before succumbing to the dangers around them and discovering what happened to them. Has this happened to others? Are others trapped below?

Sin-Eater vs. Society

Sin-Eaters are part of the mundane world by choice, need, or both. Money moves the world and society is all about it. To walk among the living, a Sin-Eater must adhere to some semblance of what is considered normal. That may mean ignoring the dead for hours on end while working the daily grind, finding excuses why that beating you just took did not leave any wounds. This easily leads to a parapsychologist investigating the character and to the government learning of them and doing experiments to create soldiers that don't die.

Story Hook

The players' krewe is getting kicked out of its apartment and all of its possessions are taken, including a recently discovered Key, seized by the local sheriff. The scenario can't focus on them overpowering the sheriff's department but instead on how society functions and what legal course they have to take to recover their belongings.

Being a Storyteller

Everyone can be a Storyteller. The way you build a world and experiences for your players is unique to you, your voice, the way you create space, and how you invite players in.

Sometimes people stop themselves from becoming a Storyteller because they worry about getting the mechanics right, or not improvising well, or getting something wrong. Every Storyteller has their own strengths and weaknesses. Every Storyteller gets better with practice. Nothing beats practice: getting in there, giving something a go, growing from mistakes, growing from what goes well, and trying again. Cultivate kindness in yourself and kindness in your players. This is a learning experience and you will learn a lot from each other.

Some Storytellers master complicated plotlines, others intricate mechanics or characterization, comedy, tragedy, catharsis, or a good night out with friends. Becoming a

Storyteller means exploring the space you want to create, discovering your voice and strengths, and working with them.

If being a Storyteller feels overwhelming, remind yourself that you don't need to learn everything at once. Trying to do everything at once will make you feel scattered. Pick the core aspects you want to focus on, what resonates with you and one or two stretch goals.

When in doubt start small and simple. That gives you the opportunity to practice, gather together people you like to game with, and get the sessions in. Athletes get better with repetition; it's the same with Storytellers. Step one is turning up, so is step two.

The Golden Rule

When asked a question, always say "yes." Every question answered with an affirmation is a chance to further explain the story and bring the players more into the fold. This amazing freedom to impact the narrative, with the understanding that all actions have consequences (some immediate, some delayed) will add a sense of importance to each choice the player makes.

This type of approach requires a lot of thinking by the players and usually leads to some of the greatest stories. Most players nod quickly and take advantage of the freedom given to them, but that enthusiasm for freedom quickly subsides when the consequences rear their usually ugly head(s) to thwart them. Saying "yes" creates story, which is the core of any storytelling game. It also creates a safe space for players to express their ideas and helps bring out shy players who may sit in the back and surf along.

The Chronicle

Creating a chronicle is like creating an ongoing television series. The chronicle is composed of interlinked stories that work toward a goal (exposing a conspiracy, overthrowing the Underworld, becoming President).

The first step is to establish how long the chronicle will be. Is it five big stories and a climax? Or is it a multi-year conspiracy of a fallen Sin-Eater's plot to become death incarnate?

The opening story is the **hook** for the chronicle. It needs to be powerful enough to draw the players in and lay the groundwork going forward, but it shouldn't expose everything.

Every chronicle has an **antagonist**. It could be a shadowy organization, a deranged necromancer, or a well-meaning Bound breaking the laws of the universe for the "greater good." This character is the main, recurring enemy throughout the chronicle. By the second or third encounter, the players should know it's serious business if the antagonist appears.

Not every story needs to relate to the chronicle; some stories can be standalone beats that highlight the characters' relationships or personal struggles. When the chronicle's plot does appear, each story should have solid clues and leads that let the players know this is part of the big picture.

Just as crucial as the chronicle's plot is the **setting**. A game set in 1967 Los Angeles feels different than one in 2013 Tokyo. You don't need to become an expert on your setting, but a basic knowledge and cultural respect for the setting are vital. Consider searching the internet for pictures, or for things like popular music, local slang, and the like to really make the setting come alive.

What is the **vibe** of your game? **Geist** is a game of hope in a shroud of darkness, but other themes run through it as well. The vibe helps the game focus on a certain mood. Is the game a gritty street game with the geists trying to make the world a better place, one existence at a time? Or are they a nonprofit that promotes laws to make massive-scale changes?

The players' world is vast and full of new faces, but **recurring characters** should also appear. These are the people with whom the characters engage regularly. The occasional recurring person with motivation makes the world feel alive and creates repercussions for actions.

Where is the Horror?

Geist is a game of terror; horror and death are the constant companions of the characters. Terror and horror, while similar in the minds of most, are vastly different things. Terror is the more mental, it's the anticipation and intermediate uncertainty something is wrong. It's that loud thump in the next room, and after investigating and finding nothing you hear it in the room you just left, or there is a lengthy period of nothing before it happens again. That knowing dread that something is coming.

Horror is more visceral and obliterates terror by being in your face. It's the wailing wall of boiling blood, the indescribable grotesque that erupts out of the veil, or the serial killer draped in the skin of your parents coming out of the shadows.

Where is the fear for a Sin-Eater? Their geist grants them amazing endurance, regenerative abilities, and a form of immortality. Horror, then, comes not from the threat of harm or death to the characters, but from the vast, impersonal systems that grind down those they love.

Personalize the terror and horror with the characters' personalities and relationships. Keep mundane pressure on the characters; while they have an array of powers, Sin-Eaters must live their daily lives in addition to aiding the dead. They must work to earn money, their partner or children need attention, their friends stage an intervention based on the Bound's odd behavior. Keep the mundane pressure on even as the supernatural permeates their existence. This increases the impact of horror when it happens. For instance, Carl has spent 10 hours working at a call center, stepping out into the night once off duty, and drives home. He orders a pizza and has a beer. Then he lies down for the night, half-asleep and alone. He blinks once or twice and sees a crimson-stained man with blood

pouring out of his eyes, staring at him and repeating the word "murder."

The terrors, horrors, and antagonists are endless, but the true fear in **Geist** comes from inevitability. Lives are taken too soon, and you peer into someone's life only to discover you can't bring them peace. You have failed.

Weaving the Tale

Running **Geist** begins with outlining a story. A good story addresses the theme, mood, and overall plot that the chronicle has established, while also weaving in the players' goals and motivations.

This might sound intimidating, but with a little planning and a lot of flexibility you'll find it evolves as the chronicle goes on. Think of each story as an onion: You peel away one layer to find another layer under it, and keep peeling until you reach the core. The first layer is the main plot of the story: *A Reaper is doing a sweep of the cemetery and taking everything to the Underworld*, maybe. The next layer is something that relates to the players' goals: *Your mother is buried in that cemetery*. The third layer is a little extra something that could be linked to the larger chronicle: *Jinx, a Sin-Eater from whom you stole a Memento, directed the Reaper to that cemetery*. Those three layers give you multiple antagonists (one that is recurring and linked to a previous scenario), a reason to care, a limited time frame ,and a few leads to follow. All of that is before any red herrings, mundane life, or players' plans are added.

The Perfect Session

There is no such thing as the perfect session. A session can be amazing or dull, but not perfect. The story, no matter how well crafted, changes the moment players engage with it. Players are smart and creative, and as a group can think of ways to do things a lone Storyteller cannot.

This is one of the moments to just say "yes, but" and roll with it. If the players are totally off base and need help to get back on track, move a clue to a location they are about to go to, or have an ally reinforce a piece of information that they overlooked. The objective is to allow the players their fun and to give them every chance to succeed without railroading them.

One-Shot vs. Chronicle

A one-shot is a single story, usually played out in a chapter or two, while the chronicle is a series of linked stories played out over an extended time. Which one you choose to run impacts the amount of planning, play style, and the way theme and mood are addressed. Both are solid choices with positives and negatives.

Chronicles are ongoing series of stories that can be loosely linked or directly connected. The characters have long-term goals, evolve over the course of the game, and breathe in the nuances of the world. The plots can be more complex, given the time the characters have to investigate. Actions have repercussions further down the line, as the characters exist after that scenario ends. This requires more planning from the Storyteller.

Prepping a One-Shot

Timing: Set a few key, timed events to help keep tabs on players' progress. Have a few scenes that can be cut without changing the scenario or scenes that can be combined without losing their impact.

Characters: Consider creating the characters, backgrounds, and relationships between them yourself, then let players pick the ones that interest them most. In a one-shot, they won't have as much time to develop organically, so priming the pump with pre-made characters can help. These should be punchy and short, with clearly defined goals, and convey the essence of the characters.

Tone: The tone and theme need to be established early, usually within the first or second scene. Be heavy handed, if needed.

Rules and Rulings: Give the players a quick overview of the rules. Don't spend time debating about rulings or flipping through the book. Focus more on the story, be player friendly, and make quick decisions. Be fair and consistent in rule enforcement.

DOA: Killing players doesn't create a good game or a good atmosphere for the table unless that is what the game is designed to do.

One-shots are great for convention games, introducing people to gaming, and testing out a new system for a group.

The one-shot is more story focused, hitting on the major themes of the game rather than delving into the characters' inner lives.

Prepping a Chronicle

Create a campaign has a daunting feel to it as you are creating a story and theme that could run for years.

Story: Know your overall story. It's impossible to have a detailed campaign plan set in stone that doesn't railroad players. The story needs to be flexible and allow the players' actions to change the course of the story.

World Building: The world around the players is critical for a campaign. It needs to feel like a living place that functions even when they are not there. Recurring Storyteller characters of varying levels of importance should turn up. It could be the same barista at the coffee shop they frequent or a rival Conjure Man harassing the krewe to move on.

Slow Build: The story should be sprinkled throughout the scenarios, with some of them being totally unrelated to the overarching plot. This is a delicate balance, as too little story will only irritate players, while too much dancing on the cusp will feel like railroading.

Antagonist and Goons: Memorable antagonists are one of the greatest parts of a campaign. It could be the villain of the piece that fuels the characters' hate, a

trickster that helps or hinders the party, or a loser mook from whom the party can get information.

Notes: Keep track of major or interesting actions the players make. These can be used to adjust the campaign according to the players' actions and personalize the experience.

Building a Story

Let's get one thing out of the way first: There's no one true way to build a story. These examples are just a couple of approaches, but whatever works for you is the right way. Here's one approach you might use when building out the spine of a mystery story:

Introduction/recap is an optional but useful step. In the first chapter, it's a chance for the players to get into character or for you to set the stage. In an ongoing game, a quick recap, by players or the Storyteller, of what has been going on gets the table back into the swing of things. This step leads directly into the hook.

The hook is the thing that draws the players into the scenario. This is the first layer of the onion to be peeled away and galvanize the characters to action.

For instance, the krewe discovers a stabbed victim in the garden of a socialite and this catalyst starts the action. The socialite could have called them, they may know the victim or this could be the latest in a string of killings.

The truth is the thing behind the hook and is what's actually going on. The Storyteller decides what initiated the hook, how it plays out through the story, and the repercussions if it is not resolved. The arc of the story needs to be logical and something that players can deduce with their abilities, contacts, and know-how.

For this example, the socialite is a Bound who has called the krewe for assistance. The truth is that the socialite has wards that stop an angry ghost from entering the home. The ghost killed one of the servants to draw the police to get the bound arrested outside the protective wards.

Red herrings are the false leads that go down rabbit holes and take the characters by the nose. While these don't help and may hinder the characters from solving the hook, they should be entertaining. No one wants to spend an hour of play to have the Storyteller tell them, "Nope. Nothing of interest."

The krewe discovers some item planted on the victim that links to another crime only to discover that the two are not in fact connected.

The spine is how the scenes of the scenario are laid out and is usually straightforward (before adding red herrings and multiple routes to uncover the clue to the next scene). The scenes can be tightly woven onto the spine or loose and easily movable based on players' actions.

Clues are what allow the scenario to play out. They lead from one scene to the next, whether singularly or in a shotgun-spread approach. Clues are mostly scene-specific, but having a few transferable clues to help nudge the players back on track is useful. The characters may discover a bloodied knife, a boot print, a few scraps of hair in the victim's hand, and an arcane symbol. Each of these are clues that lead to a new scene, which in turn contains more clues, until the characters have enough information to reach the resolution. The scenes narrow down as the players follow up on them.

Antagonists are the forces behind the plot. They won't sit idle and wait to be caught. If they catch wind that the Sin-Eaters are on to them, they will respond in a fashion that fits their archetype. A mastermind creates obstacles, hires goons, and exerts influence. A brawler just attacks the characters.

Directing the scenario is all about balance and gets easier with time and learning the players. Do they need a more action-based game or are they good with a soul searching investigation? Scenes can be tweaked to fit the needs of the group. Add a quick fight for the action junkie, a fast-talking mook for the social character, or a puzzle for the thinkers. Challenge the characters on their strengths.

Ending a scenario is crucial. Players mostly forget any dull parts but everyone remembers how the scenario ends. All of the points of the story need to be addressed if not

The Hollywood Formula

Another approach to building a story, commonly taught to screenwriting students, is called the Hollywood Formula. It goes like this:

Introduction: Leads to the problem.

Problem: The catalyst of the story.

Action: The protagonist comes face to face with the antagonist in some kind of confrontation.

Stalemate: The antagonist gets a hand up on the protagonist and escapes.

Action: The protagonist, now at some sort of disadvantage, rallies to confront the antagonist.

Climax: The zenith of the previous action scene, which ends with the antagonist defeated.

Denouement: The resolution, the protagonist's reward and wrapping up loose ends.

Be careful applying this structure too rigorously: A script, wherein the writer has full control over everything that happens, is not the same thing as a collaborative story in a game, where player actions and the luck of the dice can take the outcome of scenes in unexpected directions. In particular, be prepared for players to find creative ways to shortcut the stalemate and following action scenes. Still, if you plan loosely and are ready to adapt, this method can be useful.

wrapped up. Perhaps the crook goes to jail (to escape later), or the restless spirit finds peace, or a reward is given.

Remembrance

As discussed in Chapter Three, a geist's memories and identity are, by and large, buried beneath the fetid layer of Underworld power that gives them their strength. Only a fragmentary image remains, conveyed across the psychic link of the Bargain. The Bound can, if they're determined enough and willing enough, follow that image back to its source, gradually unlocking the secret history of their geist and bringing them the peace they were denied in life.

Creating a Remembrance

As a Storyteller, part of your job is to develop the Remembrances of your players' characters' geists, sketching out their history and the unfinished business that drove them to drink from the Rivers and become geists in the first place.

Step 1: Talk to the Players

Before you go off and design Remembrances, make time to chat with your players and take notes about what kind of story they want to explore with their geists. You can do this as part of character creation, as short one-on-one conversations outside of the game, or even via email or messaging software, whatever's easiest. The point is that, while you might want to surprise your players with twists in their stories, there's a fine line between a twist that surprises and one that undercuts a player's character.

As part of character creation, each player chooses a crisis point trigger for their geist and an initial Remembrance image. These form the core of their geist's story, and you must keep these in mind as you create the Remembrance. In addition, consider asking any or all of the following questions of your players to get a sense of what kind of story they want to explore:

- What core theme drove your geist to become a geist? Tragedy? Hubris? Greed? Something else?
- What reminds your geist, just for a moment, of the best part of themselves in life?
- What reminds your geist inescapably of their greatest failing in life?
- What impression does your geist give of their relationship with your character? Are they maternal? Protective? Abusive?

Step 2: The Sketch

Taking into account the information you received in Step 1, come up with a quick, ideally one-sentence, sketch

of who the geist was in life and what drove them to drink from the Rivers and become a geist. You don't need to delve into extreme detail here: "Mob bookie who was killed for cooking the books and wants revenge" or "sea captain who swore to return to her true love, but died in a shipwreck" are about the level of detail you want here.

Step 3: The Path

Starting from the Remembrance chosen during character creation, devise three additional scenes that lead to discovering, understanding, and ultimately resolving the geist's story. Each scene should include one or more links to the next Remembrance scene that the player can follow up with investigation. You can do this in any order you want: You can come up with three scenes and then decide on how they link together, or you can devise a scene and, based on what information is present in that scene, figure out what it could lead to.

Keep your links flexible: They're suggestions and inspirations, not rails the player has to follow. If the player comes up with a totally off-the-wall idea for how to follow a lead, run with it. Conversely, if the player seems stumped on how to proceed, it's good to have a couple of ideas in your pocket to provide a gentle suggestion of where to start.

Example: The Broken Bookie's player came up with "Taylor Swift's 'Fifteen' playing from a car radio as a man is buried alive in the desert outside Las Vegas" as a Remembrance image. The Storyteller decides that will lead to a scene where his Sin-Eater learns the geist's real name (possibly by trawling missing-persons cases from 2008, possibly by finding the grave itself and the dead man's wallet, or by some other form of investigation), which in turn leads to learning that he was (falsely) accused of skimming from his employer, which ultimately leads to a scene of revenge — but as a twist on the expected, the Storyteller decides that the geist's revenge is "find the actual embezzler and turn him over to the boss" rather than the expected "kill the people who killed me."

Resolving Remembrances

In brief, a Remembrance scene is considered "resolved" when the character has enough information to start tracking the next scene in the sequence — or, in the case of the final Remembrance scene, the story reaches a dramatically satisfying conclusion. That doesn't have to mean doing what the geist wants — in the example above, convincing the Broken Bookie to let the actual embezzler go, or turn him over to the police instead of the mob, could be just as valid as following through with the geist's revenge fantasies.

There are no explicit systems for resolving a Remembrance scene, because the nature of the scenes themselves is so varied. What follows are *guidelines*, not ironclad requirements.

- **Investigation:** The Investigation rules (p. 150) are ideally suited to research done in downtime: identifying a particular stretch of road based on landmarks from the vision, combing census records, etc.
- **Social maneuvers:** Sin-Eaters don't run into nearly the same problems with cold cases that living investigators do. A Sin-Eater can interview eyewitnesses to events that happened centuries ago, if they're willing to go looking for the right ghost (and maybe brave the Underworld).
- **One scene per chapter:** While Remembrance stories are strong personal elements for the characters, they can derail a plot if given too much attention. As a general rule of thumb, try to limit each character to one scene per chapter devoted to their Remembrance stories — and unless they can get all the characters involved, try to keep those scenes brief.

Rewards

In addition to narrative catharsis, resolving a geist's Remembrance grants powerful mechanical rewards.

Remembrance Resolution

- **Synergy:** *Each* Remembrance scene resolved grants a dot of Synergy.
- **Remembrance Traits:** Upon resolving the second and third Remembrance scenes, choose an additional Remembrance Trait (p. 100). Your character may spend up to (Synergy) Plasm to gain temporary dots in any Remembrance Trait, on a one-to-one basis.
- **Rank:** Upon resolving the final Remembrance scene, your character's geist gains 1 Rank (p. 187), to a maximum of Rank 5.

End Game

A chronicle can end in any number of ways, but **Geist** focuses on three: Catharsis, Catabasis, and Cabeiros. Each resolves the tale of a Sin-Eater and her Bound geist in its own way. If your chronicle is going to build toward one of them, you should discuss it with your players before the game starts: It's much easier to build toward a satisfying conclusion if everyone is on the same page.

Catabasis: The way things are is not good enough, the deal is rigged and it's time to change the rules. As the krewe deepens their understanding of their shared mythology and the decaying corrupt Underworld, the krewe takes on ritual challenges to overthrow the Underworld and create something new. This ending may happen in conjunction with Catharsis.

Catharsis: Resolve both the character's Burden and their geist's Remembrance. This can be a personal ending for one character, or the ending of a chronicle (a krewe working together for resolution, for example). Catharsis allows the Sin-Eater and her geist to move on, bypass-

ing the Underworld altogether. Depending on how the chronicle shapes up, this can happen in conjunction with Catabasis.

Cabeiros: Trade empathy for power. By crushing her geist's will and force-feeding it the polluted Essence of the Underworld, the character ascends to become a living embodiment of the Great Below, a Chthonic God presiding over a corrupt and dehumanizing system.

Catabasis

The Underworld is not healthy. For some, turning a blind eye to its decay and corruption is not an option. To challenge and change the Underworld requires mythic levels of cleverness and more than a few friends. Brute force alone will never change the Underworld, it is too vast and numinous, but the way it responds to Ceremonies and rituals provides clues for how it can be reshaped through epic challenges, akin to stealing fire from the sun or getting the sky and the earth to move apart so there's room for everyone else.

Only a krewe, bound by a common faith and common cause, can face the challenges of Catabasis. These include external challenges and internal challenges, great works undertaken in the Underworld and a constant questioning and honing of belief.

Few krewes have ever realized this is even possible, and fewer still have ever attempted it. If you have Catabasis in mind as a Storyteller, this can be a great opportunity to put the krewemates through a hero's journey where they initially resist the call, but feel forced to step up when they can no longer ignore the harm the Underworld does. The act of survival, facing the full weight of the Underworld, and acquiring the strength to make a difference provide many opportunities for rich storytelling.

Challenges

As the krewe increases in power, it faces several challenges. Even if the chronicle isn't aiming for a Catabasis endgame, you can use these challenges as dramatic fodder; they can even be inciting incidents that cause the krewe to decide Catabasis is a path it wants to take.

In all cases, *how* the krewe reacts to these challenges is less important than *that* it reacts. Don't look at these as tests for the characters to pass and fail, but as formative experiences that shape their identities going forward.

What Do You Stand For?

At Esotery 3, the krewe faces a challenge to its identity. It's grown enough that it needs to articulate who it is. This challenge most commonly comes in the form of a hard decision related to the krewe's Doctrines. When faced with a difficult choice, does the krewe stick to its principles or does it bend? When its Doctrines fail those it's supposed to be helping, does it double down on its dogma or does it rewrite its commandments?

What Will You Sacrifice?

At Esotery 5, the challenge is to the krewe's commitment. Hit it with a scenario where achieving their goals costs them personally, or conversely, where pursuing personal happiness comes at the cost of the mission. What's more important to the krewe? When it comes down to doing the work versus being safe, comfortable, and happy, will it step up or crumble? When asked to give of themselves, do they give so fully that they martyr themselves to the cause, or do they remember that self-care is revolutionary, too?

Who Will You Refuse?

At Esotery 7 comes perhaps the toughest challenge of all: the no-win scenario. It's easy to keep the faith and be true to your ideals when the choice is clear between right and wrong, but the real world is never that neat or tidy. When faced with two choices that bring equal harm, how do they calculate the lesser? If they can only save one, how do they decide who lives and who dies? Or, in either case, do they stubbornly refuse to act, or try to bull through with a third option?

Against Impossible Odds

Finally, at Esotery 10, the krewe knows who it is. Its members have a vision for how the Underworld could be a better place... a vision that is, at last, united enough to come together. They have Ceremonies and rituals the way a carpenter has hammer and nails.

By this point, the krewe is too big and too powerful not to be noticed. Reapers don't want anyone getting too comfortable with that much power, rival krewes see them as an existential threat, and even the living authorities are likely watching "that creepy death cult" for signs of terrorist activities. If the krewe doesn't take the leap, it faces ever-increasing pressure, for even making no decision is a decision. The only options are to take the plunge or self-destruct.

Descending into the Underworld in the fullness of its power, the krewe faces an embodiment of the Underworld itself, crystalized out of its archetype and Doctrines. This embodiment is a direct challenge to the krewe's ethos, a refutation of its entire philosophy of death. This is the closest anyone comes to meeting the Chthonic Gods — and to reshape the Underworld, they must be conquered. Whether that means casting them from their thrones and tearing bloody hearts from their chests, besting them in a dizzying riddle game, or tricking them into their own eternal prisons.

Succeed, and you are rewarded beyond imagining: a new Underworld, created in the image of your krewe and presided over not by callous and uncaring entropy, but by doctrines of justice and equality. Fail… well, no one knows for sure, but some Mourners point to the strange laws of the Deep Dominions as half-formed Catabases and their Kerberoi as the twisted remains of the Sin-Eaters who dared and failed.

Catharsis

Every ghost story is, at its core, a tragedy, and tragedy is best resolved through closure. Catharsis comes when a character resolves her own Burden Touchstone and her geist's Remembrance.

Creating opportunities within stories to improve or slide backward around Touchstones and Remembrances builds a satisfying chronicle. Having occasional stories that focus specifically on one character's past is a way to create opportunities to progress or demolish progress toward Catharsis. Specifically calling out that a chapter or story will spotlight a specific issue or character before you start can be a great way to resolve issues before they happen. Make sure to spread that spotlight around, though, and give each player their moment to shine.

I See You

When the Touchstone and Remembrance are resolved, this is an opportunity to dramatize how far they have come to create a moment of shared recognition and catharsis.

One option is to create a harmless and temporary situation that would normally be triggering for the geist and burdensome for the Sin-Eater, such as an unfair request from someone who smells exactly like the geist's trauma. Neither are triggered or burdened, because of the resolutions they have found they are able to face the situation without losing themselves or harming their other half. The moment creates space for emotional catharsis, euphoria, and celebration of invisible chains removed.

Another option for the moment of Catharsis is to run through a series of flashbacks with the Sin-Eater and geist, they share each other's memories and fragments, only now they can do so with healthy distance and emotional closure.

Moving On

Caught in the power of Catharsis, Sin-Eaters may wish to host the party to end all parties (right now, there is no time to lose), pay the bills and make sure the dog has a good new home, sit quietly with nature, or run from friend to friend as they revel in their Cathartic awakening, as well as the growing sense that their work is done and it is time to move on.

As the euphoria of Catharsis fades, the call to move on grows stronger. It feels right: like coming home after a long journey. The Sin-Eater and geist know that all they need to do is step into each other and they will merge, and vanish in some manner consistent with her krewe's mythology. They know this is the most blissful thing they could ever do.

Refusing the Call

Some Cathartic Sin-Eaters merge fully with their geist to become essentially one inseparable being, but choose not to move on. This is a painful sacrifice and few deny themselves whatever is beyond, but some chose to stay behind, bodhisattva-like, to guide others along the path to enlightenment, or to help their former krewes reach Catabasis.

It's strongly recommended that Cathartic Sin-Eaters be retired from play and become Storyteller characters. Their story is over, and it's time to make room for new protagonists to take the stage. However, if you're okay with allowing a player to continue playing their character post-Catharsis (or if you just need to roll dice for one as a Storyteller character), the following rules apply:

- The character's Synergy is 10, and she no longer suffers crisis points.
- The character no longer gains the Doomed Condition for unlocking Haunts with her Keys.
- If the character dies, she and her geist move on to whatever comes after this world. Her geist no longer revives her.

Cabeiros

Who's afraid of absolute corruption if it promises absolute power?

Following the path of Cabeiros is giving into the corruption and despair of the Underworld. It's most common among the Bound who don't adhere to the Sin-Eaters' creed, but Sin-Eaters know that some of their own have sought Cabeiros nonetheless. Some argue that their Bargain was coercive and they were simply seeking a way out. Others simply grew disillusioned by the endless fight.

The path to Cabeiros starts with a Remembrance scene that goes horribly wrong. Maybe the Sin-Eater is repulsed by what he learns about his geist, or maybe he just handles it badly, but whatever the cause, instead of resolving the issue and moving forward, the Sin-Eater lashes out and pushes his geist away.

Some stagger along a path that could be Cabeiros or Catharsis. Horror and healing, repulsion and acceptance often dance together, and it's hard to tell what's a step forward and what's a step backwards until you're through the tunnel. Synergy can fluctuate wildly as geist and Sin-Eater are drawn toward each other and repulsed in equal measure.

The Beginning

To pursue Cabeiros, the Bound must have intimate knowledge of his geist. Not only must he progress through the first three scenes of the geist's Remembrance, he must also know its Touchstone (p. 83). After all, only those who really know us can truly hurt us.

Committing to Cabeiros

Eventually the geist becomes aware that the Sin-Eater is building towards Cabeiros. Once it cannot avoid the

truth, it tries to escape, cajole, or threaten the Sin-Eater, often attempting wildly differing strategies as it tries to escape its enslavement and destruction.

It's almost impossible to achieve Cabeiros while still walking the path of Synergy. Most Bound who pursue this endgame break their geists' wills and rebuild the Bargain as Tyranny (p. 230).

The Fatted Calf

Once the Sin-Eater has discovered his geist's final Remembrance scene, he forces his geist to drink from the Rivers of the Underworld until it reaches Rank 5. Forcing your geist to drink is a chance die roll for characters with Synergy, or the player's choice of Strength, Intelligence, or Presence + Tyranny for characters with Tyranny. In either case, it's contested by the geist's Power + Rank. The process takes about an hour, and every drink must come from a different River.

The Final Act

With his geist fattened on the polluted might of the Underworld and the final scene of its Remembrance laid bare, the Bound ritualistically devours his own geist. This act of betrayal shatters the Bargain and cracks open the geist like a marrow bone, pouring its power into the Bound. In a hideous perversion of the merging that accompanies Catharsis, geist and Bound become one, but instead of moving on from this world they fall through it, entering and merging with the Underworld to become its new Chthonic God.

Story Seeds

Maybe you don't have time to plot out an entire chronicle on your own. That's fine — everybody has different amounts of free time. Or maybe you're staring at a blank sheet of paper, unsure where to begin. That's fine, too — coming up with that initial spark can be the hardest part of any story.

These seeds can serve as a jumping-off point for your stories and chronicles. Feel free to use them as is or change details to better fit your players and your game.

Art Show Horror Show

This scenario draws on Beijing for specific cues and the flavor that brings a story to life. Consider what would change and why if you set it near the Louvre in Paris, Bourbon Street in New Orleans, or Edinburgh during the Fringe Festival, somewhere with a heady mix of tourism and creativity.

Setting

Creativity abounds in Beijing's public parks, be it erhu masters gathering to play, karaoke setups, ballroom dancing, salsa, tai chi, or calligraphy drawn on the ground with large sponge brushes and soapy water. Many calligraphy masters write letters to the departed that evaporate and disappear almost as soon as they're written. In Twilight, ghosts cradle the words as if they were children.

The calligraphy is gorgeous around the bustling and dynamic Dashanzi Art District, a grim industrial district contentiously turned into a gentrified arts hub. Bustling with BoBo (bourgeois-bohemian), tourists, and innovators, it's the place to party, visit a fetish club, get loaded, or absorb art through every orifice. Con artists and people with wild dreams abound. Getting a foreigner to buy you overpriced coffee with a kickback from the café is an easy con, the fake indie art show selling mass-produced work is another.

Anita Ling is a ghost condemned to repeat her last day. Anita was a young woman who came to Beijing from Shandong to chase her dreams. She told her parents she had a job in a factory, but really, she went to Dashanzi to become an artist. She didn't find a lucrative artistic career, but she did find a dodgy boyfriend who worked for a syndicate. Her job was to draw people to art shows that sold mass-manufactured paintings in the basements of abandoned warehouses. Over time, these art shows devolved to simply drugging and mugging potential buyers. When Anita tried to break up with her boyfriend and be a true artist, he arranged for her to die, locking her inside the art show basement where she asphyxiated to death along with five tourists.

Every month, Anita Ling possesses a young woman who has recently arrived in Beijing from Shandong. Anita then woos tourists (domestic or international) to her art show not far from the art district and relives her last days. Her power grows as she claims more victims, as does her abject misery and inability to break the cycle.

The art show is in an ancient warehouse's bomb shelter. Anita maintains an illusion of a wonderful party with her Hallucination Numen (p. 194). Cushions are thrown around the room and up the stairs, and details are hard to make out in the dim sparkle of fairy lights and candles. Abstract, splashy art lines the walls, paint cans stacked next to fresh canvases in progress. The art show is a blast, and Anita commands the room, charming human tourists and other ghosts alike. It feels natural and right to drink a lot, but not eat a lot.

The moment anyone tries to leave, the illusion falls and the bomb shelter transforms to a decaying charnel house where all of Anita's ghosts relive their deaths, manifest ghastly aspects, distended bellies, rotting flesh or hanging jaws. The stench is overpowering, as the cushions are all rotten corpses. The transformation of the space is as radical as White Bone Demon tricking Tripitaka and then dropping her mask.

Anita screams and sobs as the room descends into chaos, infecting people with her emotional aura. "Not again, not again," "He locked us in... they're all dead, all dead." Anita runs around frantically, trying to wake up

the corpses. Unless someone forces her to change her attention she can only see rotting corpses and can't perceive the distress of the living, who she is going to kill through her flashback. As the trauma deepens she hovers (still in her host) in the air surrounded by swirling sloshes of paint that move like ribbons, screaming her rage, helplessness, guilt, and fear.

Once everyone in the room who can die dies (be it from dehydration, disease, suicide, accidental bludgeoning by a distraught ghost, or CO2 poisoning), Anita's ghost screams and disappears. Next month she will repeat her story, adding to the corpses on the ground.

Story Hooks

- Characters are lured into the art show as one of Anita's victims or have companions suddenly show an unnatural love for art and the "hot new show" tonight when they had never shown interest in art before.
- One of Anita's previous victims is famous person one of the characters has publicly threatened. Now that the person has gone missing under suspicious circumstances they are the chief suspect.
- A relative of one of the missing women from Shandong begs the players to help find out what happened. The police don't seem to care.
- People going missing when they were just going to an art show is making life really hard for all the other artists trying to make a living. The CowboyPunks (p. 250) would owe the players a serious favor if they could sort out this problem.

People in Peril

- Anita's host
- Tourists choking, throwing up, freaking out, and trying to escape
- Anita herself, doomed to repeat her fate with escalating power

Obstacles

- The door is physically barred from the outside (two layers of reinforced steel, durability 6).
- The area around the door is dangerous to approach because of a battering telekinetic wind full of shattered art supplies, Anita's own way of obsessively banging on the door.
- The room is an airtight bomb shelter that has fallen into disrepair and is full of dead bodies. Whatever ventilation system it used to have is broken.

Anita's Anchors

A battered boar's-hair brush that has become unusable with solid blue paint, the last paintbrush Anita ever used. Anita wanted to be an artist but dreams are expensive. The syndicate and a bad boyfriend kept her off the streets and she is filled with grief for the artist she never got to be.

A faded photograph of her family back in Shandong. Anita wanted to be successful and bring pride and joy to them, instead she has gone missing and they don't even know if she's alive or dead.

Possible Solutions

- Help Anita resolve her Anchors. If one is resolved, the supernatural effects stop and the door can be opened without risk of battery. If both are resolved she will realize how powerful she is and unlock the door. She is no longer doomed to repeat the cycle and can move on.
- Destroy all of Anita's Anchors. This banishes her ghost to the Underworld and ends the effects, but Anita will continue to enact her death in the Great Below, dragging other ghosts into her grim tableau.
- Kill Anita's host. The door can be broken down while Anita is disembodied and grieving and she will temporarily go down a Rank, this will not resolve the underlying cycle.

Bad Air Day

Over 5.5 million people die every year from air pollution, through toxic smog and smoke-filled living conditions. Some ghosts are caught in the air that killed them, spinning out of control, colliding with fellow chokers until they are ground like sand.

The weather is hot and awful, a high-pressure system that will not leave, crushing people with headaches and bad tempers. The air gets so bad that it is dangerous to go outside, even with protection. The smog draws in uncountable fragmented ghosts from around the world. The ghostly mass increases hauntings, momentary possessions, and poltergeist activity. Fragmented ghosts are not easy to perceive, despite being drawn to Sin-Eaters' warmth. Fights break out as accusations fly.

If the high-pressure system does not break, within a week the fragmented ghosts coalesce into a Rank 5 ghost, with a collective intelligence that is often in conflict with itself and unusually vulnerable to wind machines.

Creepy ghost eaters are drawn to the area. The haunted smog learns to operate collectively and defensively to deal with threats.

The bad weather and smog intensify and people die, adding more ghosts to the howling horde. The new ghosts start out fairly whole, somewhat able to communicate, but over time tumult will fragment them.

The ghosts are so insubstantial and bound to earthly winds that there is not enough for Reapers to hold onto and suck into the Underworld. To deal with this threat, Reapers and Sin-Eaters will need to combine their abilities. The Underworld has increasing instabilities and irritation from all these ghost fragments clumped so closely together. The clouds of ghosts are desperate for release, desperate for closure, and are drawn to the warmth of Sin-Eaters.

Necromancer Blues

Beauregard Blake Whatley is a very precise man. A skilled surgeon, he is never late. He has spent most of his life helping people, patching them up and donating money to the annual policeman's ball. He has friends on the force, goes golfing with the chief of police, and even saved the mayor's life once.

Detective Daniel Davis works has been trying to solve the Old Jack murders, named by the local papers for Jack the Ripper, for the last 20 years. His obsession with the decades-old cold case made him the laughing stock of the department — until last year, when bodies start turning up matching the killer's MO. Now he has eight officers under his command, and the mayor breathing down his neck for results.

Every two weeks, the police discover a horribly mutilated, partially eaten body. Tests of the wounds show only the victim's DNA and dental impressions, as if they were eating themselves — but that's impossible given the location of some of the wounds. The department is at a loss. It has even hired famed psychics Marcia West and Roland Dean, both of whom suffered sudden, acute hemorrhaging and remain hospitalized.

The killings go back farther than anyone knows. Beauregard Blake Whatley is in fact François Marlow, a 300-year-old necromancer and ghost-eater. For centuries, he has conducted a terrible ritual called the Nacreous Harvest, which combines human sacrifice and ectophagia to open a path to becoming a Chthonic God. The time, at long last, is near; he is 20 kills away from completing the ritual.

His last victim was Lt. Davis. Davis's ghost was only spared by the untimely arrival of one Officer Kennedy, who Marlow captured and plans to use as his next sacrifice in two weeks. Davis flees to the players' krewe and, before being unmade by Essence bleed, demands that they bring this killer to justice and save Kennedy.

This chronicle is designed to be a loose skeleton that the Storyteller can bring in as needed. It allows ample time to tackle Burdens, Remembrances, and other B plots while still giving the game a structural spine. Even one-off stories can be retroactively linked to the plot: A ghost the characters help might have been an earlier sacrifice who

escaped, or a ghost eater the characters tracked down could turn out to be a copycat killer.

The Kennedy hook kicks off the first story, as it gives the krewe an additional motivation: a life on the line. You can seed further clues at whatever location Marlow held Kennedy: eyewitness testimony if the characters get to Kennedy before he's murdered and consumed, tracing ownership of the abandoned warehouse back through shell companies, and so on. Even Marlow's response can be a clue, as he sics his influential friends on the krewe.

Marlow is precise, but still just a man. He may have left hairs at the crime scene, or maybe he is in a blurry photo from the gas-station security camera across the street. If your players seem stuck on the occult angle of the investigation, remind them that good old-fashioned detective work is also an option.

Dealing with Marlow once he's identified brings its own problems. Even assuming the krewe can make charges stick, he has enough mystical acumen to escape most any form of incarceration. If he's killed, the necrotic power he's already ingested means he returns as a Rank 4 geist (Rank 5 if he manages to complete five more sacrifices). As a geist, most of his personality is stripped away, but his Remembrance is fixated on completing the Nacreous Harvest. Marlow is also obsessed with the players who killed him and actively hunts them, hoping to add their family, friends, or loved ones to his sacrifices. He may or may not make the Bargain, but if he does it's with an executed serial killer or similarly nasty customer.

Krewes interested in a magical solution might be able to delve into the Underworld to devise a counter-ritual that undoes Marlow's accumulated power and thwarts the Nacreous Harvest. Finding such a Ceremony could easily be the meat of three or more stories

Dead Letter Drop

Every Sunday, at 4:02 a.m., a letter drops into the krewe's Safe Place. Every letter is different: handwritten on parchment, typed on triplicate carbon paper, scrawled in leaky pen on a coaster. Every letter is the same: a plea for help and a powerful smell related to the challenge (waffles and pancakes for a mystery set in a diner, the distinctive cologne of a murder victim, sulfur for a day that's about to go very, very badly).

The peril is always real, but the person who wrote the letter (ghost, human, or otherwise) never remembers writing the letter. Sometimes they welcome the help, sometimes they are defensive and angry about it.

This structure creates a monster of the week, shared-purpose investigation that carries each chapter, complemented by a discovery-oriented chronicle.

Discoveries and Twists

- Discovering the "rules," for example, people do not know about the letters they wrote, despite the letter matching their syntax/handwriting.
- To start with it's easy to determine who wrote the letter, but determining the where and what the threat is can play larger parts of the mystery.
- What happens when the letter is from a character?

Why the letters, why this krewe?

- A more powerful krewe that is testing this smaller krewe. The way they perform their tasks could lead to being formally invited to be allies, membership invitation into the bigger krewe, or blacklisting. The other krewe is not homogenous and the members of the decision-making committee all have their own agendas, which shape the kinds of letters the Sin-Eaters receive.
- Inhabitants of a domain committed to justice have found a way to reach beyond the Underworld and send messages. They'll be in a lot of trouble should the Old Laws catch up with them.
- A Reaper is at war with itself and what it does, and creates the notes as a pressure valve so that it does not have to reap ghosts that should have a chance to move on instead.

Intensives

Sometimes to go deep it's easier if you know it will be for a short time. An expiration date can be quite attractive.

A well written, self-contained intensive runs three to eight hours and is a complete story. It's a great way to focus on a particular question or moment in time (an intimate one-room ghost story, a detective mystery, or going straight to the five Sin-Eaters at the end of the world).

The Storyteller writes all the character sheets, including:

- A cover page with character name and a few evocative images or phrases. You wrote the characters, ensure the players choose who they play among themselves without your intervention.
- No more than one page of backstory, relationships, conflicted feelings, and seeds for conflicts with other characters.
- The actual character sheet.

Within those pages you can craft complexity: Smith hates her brother in the first paragraph and three paragraphs later we can see how that hatred comes from a deep love as well as shame that she abandoned him. You can place things people have wanted to say to each other, but never dared speak, planting the seeds for moments of truth, heightened conflict, or resolution.

Through this format, players can play characters they never would have explored on their own. You might be surprised by who picks which character when they are given a bounded palette to choose from.

Begin at the Ending

Jump straight into conflict, enjoy the foreboding and create permission to reach for the sky and crash hard.

This intensive is for any group that wants to immediately dive into more intense or cathartic modes of storytelling. In addition to providing an unusual structure to explore it shows good storytelling processes in action and the good hosting that creates the safety and space for stories that go into more dangerous and experimental waters.

The Setup

During character creation make sure each character has identified a safe place, a place they fear, and someone they care about. Pick an antagonist, be it a sadistic Reaper or a beat cop that wants some answers and has resistance to supernatural forces.

Establish ground rules for safety, if the Geist Card (p. 275) is in operation or other techniques (make a T with your hands for "timeout player conversation" or a space, such as the kitchen, which people can go to at any time without giving a reason and will always be an out-of-character space). Discuss with the players if there are any topics they want handled with care or stuff that will kill their enjoyment. When running an emotionally charged game, the more you develop safety, trust, and the choice not to engage, the more people can explore the game in an open hearted and challenging way.

Session One

Throughout this session, everything that is improvised will become the characters' future, building foreboding, narrative arcs, twists, and unexpected acts of courage.

When the players are ready to start, use atmospheric music to set the scene, and let players know it's time to put aside pleasant chitchat and get into character.

Storyteller: It's been five years since you all died and came back. Five long years of heartache and joy, love and loss. And here you are.

Describe an interrogation room that fits the themes you want to explore in your chronicle: a police station, a lavish penthouse with cocktails for everyone and locks on every door, a dungeon in a squalid sewer filled with hungry ghosts

The interrogation is held during a moment of crisis; something dramatic has happened and is still unfolding. Specific details will be discovered as the antagonist interrogates the players. Characters may lie during the interrogation, but as the Storyteller you can always ask players if their character is lying.

Ask questions that allow players to define parts of what's happened. Interrogate each character and ensure everyone has a chance to speak.

Have the antagonist ask questions that give players room and time to come up with details. For players who struggle to improvise, give them time and use leading questions to help them build up an idea "Who decided to drive to Mexico?" "Were you the driver?" "What's in the suitcase?" "Did the air smell like strawberries or rotten milk?" "Did you really think going to [safe place] could help you?"

If you have players that love to improvise, the antagonist can ask more open-ended questions. "Why did you do it? What on Earth did you hope to achieve?" Or even "You did it, start talking."

The interrogation allows the Storyteller to plant tensions and connections between characters. The antagonist asking, "She shot you, and now you're protecting her?" can plant tension.

The character responding with "And I'll shoot her when I get the chance, that's not what this is about," creates one sort of tension and arc.

The character saying "Yeah, and I was mad as hell for a long time, but she did what she had to do with the information she had. She's my friend and I trust her," telegraphs a very different story arc.

Either way, the players now know someone's going to get betrayed in the chronicle.

Knowing that these events are coming, and that there will be a reconciliation, allows players as well as the Storyteller to build a satisfying story arc. Players empowered by meta-knowledge might cause their characters to have a deeper friendship to start with, to make the betrayal more poignant. The betrayal might be more profound because the players know that a reconciliation is coming. Where possible and appropriate, encourage players to stay in the moment and ask leading questions to generate specific details that will shape the campaign

If players struggle with the interrogation, use a timeout mechanism to check in and see if this is still something they want to do or if there are things that could make it more fun for them. It's better to proactively check in early and provide graceful exit points without a fuss than push on and hope for the best.

When the session feels like it is drawing to a natural conclusion or you've got 30 minutes left before someone needs to leave, the antagonist receives a phone call.

Antagonist: What? You're not serious. Where? How?

The antagonist stands up and starts blaming the players for something. He's interrupted by an explosion and a blinding white light.

Storyteller: Next time, we start five years ago.

Debriefing

Make sure to leave enough time after the chapter for folks to chill out, have a few snacks and talk about the game out of character. It'll be a great opportunity to share good moments, speculate about how different elements could come to pass, talk about anything that came up, and relax before going back into the real world. It's important to make this time.

Session Two and Beyond

Feed discoveries into the game, and like any prophecy make some stuff play out logically and put a few interesting twists in. Build out the seeds planted in the first session in ways that allow players to fight for Catabasis, Cabeiros, or Catharsis endings. Sections can be collaboratively fast forwarded through to get to specific plot points. Further flash forwards can be used to build out the story and create tension.

Cutups

Get in touch with your inner Dadaist

Setup

Players and the Storyteller each bring in a page of poetry that relates to their character or thematic elements they want to explore. Any poetry you like: It could be Dante, Rumi, Jay Z, or Jack Kerouac. Pass your page to the person on the left and cut up the page in a way that creates interesting phrases and fragments.

Place the fragments in a box that will be used throughout the campaign. As events unfold, you will add words to the box, such as "the smell of pennyroyal and a profound longing," or "viscous fluids." The first time in the story a character regains Willpower from their Root, they add a one-sentence nightmare from the Underworld. The first time per story a character regains Willpower from their Bloom, they add one sentence about the human condition.

Session One

Each player takes turns drawing a slip of paper from the box. As each slip is drawn, players discuss its meaning and how that can be incorporated into the world. Multiple interpretations are fine if they're not derailing.

- What keeps the krewe together during the hardest times?
- What is something unique hidden in this krewe's celebrations and Ceremonies?
- What is a secret everyone knows, but no one talks about?
- Who is an antagonist to the krewe?
- How does the antagonist harm?
- How is the antagonist admirable?
- What crisis is coming?
- Where will joy be found?

Each player draws two slips for their character; one influences their Burden, the other, their Remembrance.

Later Chapters

Use slips to start each chapter, or at moments that feel appropriate, to create scenes, design space, and give dimension to people the characters meet.

Keep in mind the slips that started the game, they are the refrains you will call back to, feed into, and shape conclusions.

The Geist Card

The "Geist Card" is a variant of John Stavropoulos' X-Card. The card is a tool to facilitate an open, safe space at the gaming table.

The goal of any game is for everyone present to have an enjoyable experience. The first step of any ongoing game is to set expectations of topics that may be covered and to allow the players to make an informed choice about what content they want to engage with. **Geist** is a horror game about systemic oppression and abuse, and that can get too intense for some players. Running a **Geist** game in Jim Crow Alabama, for example, may be more than some players can stomach; there's no shame in that, but it's best to establish that before play starts. No pre-game discussion can cover every potentially triggering topic, though, and that's where the Geist Card comes into play.

Any time during a session, if a topic comes up that anyone at the table feels uncomfortable with, they can tap or hold up the card. That's a cue for the rest of the table to change the scene or back away from the topic. The person who used the Geist Card does *not* need to explain why. Play continues in the new direction, and everyone agrees to keep that topic out of the story going forward.

Note that this is not an optional rule. *Unless the entire table agrees to forego using the Geist Card altogether*, it's as binding as the rules for calculating successes or how many Merit dots a starting character gets. If you never need to use the Geist Card, that's fine — the presence of the card and the talk outlined above may be enough for everyone at the table. But if you do need it, it's there.

Common Questions

I think about running a game, but the thought of dealing with all the mechanics makes my brain shut down! What do I do? Establish up front that your game will be system light, with fewer dice rolls. You can ease your way into mechanics where they add flavor, tension and unexpected twists. You can ask your players which mechanics are most important to them and focus on them one at a time. When in doubt, you can almost always fall back to a simple roll of Attribute + Skill to gauge success or failure.

How do I make the mechanics flow smoothly? Practice and figure out what works best for you and your

players. Invite players into the experiment: "I'm trying a new way of doing combat, I'd love to know what works and doesn't work." As the Storyteller, you'll be leading the experiment, and you don't have to go with anyone's ideas, but with diverse players you'll make interesting discoveries. Stating up front that it's an experiment will make people more comfortable providing feedback, and more forgiving if something doesn't work well.

I have an amazing idea, but I just can't seem to run it! What can I do? If you have been dreaming about a scenario for a long time it can be hard to expose it to the world. The story in your head will never be the same as what the players create with you. If you find you're holding on to something for a long time and it's keeping you from starting, you have two options.

First, write down the obstacles and work on them one by one, with deadlines, so you can't back out. Create a plan of action (action, not perfection), and set the story free.

Second, move on. You either need more experience or a change in circumstances before you can run your grand chronicle, or it has become an idealized burden that is getting in the way of new ideas. If you're a new Storyteller, give yourself smaller, easier projects that haven't been circling your mind for a long time. Focus on short, fun experiments before you engage with bigger idea. As you practice running games and experimenting with your voice as a Storyteller, you might find better ideas or new layers to add to the old ideas.

Do not let a big grand idea weigh you down or stop you from telling stories now.

How can I hold it all in my head? No one holds it all in their head. Figure out a note-taking system that works for you. Focus on what makes the story sing and your players engaged. Priority one is to prepare for what is in front of you, during a character creation session focus on what players need to do that task; if it feels like a crisis point is coming up focus on what you need to prepare for that. The bigger picture will come, break it down into smaller and smaller pieces until you can tackle them.

I meant to reward X with Y when Z happened, and I forgot! What do I do? It happens! Don't beat yourself up if you miss something that would trigger mechanics. Story is more important that any one reward, and players can remind you if it's important to them. Cultivating a gaming environment that is kind and collaborative will build trust that leads to better stories. If you find yourself regretting not capitalizing on something spectacular in gameplay (good or bad), find a way for it to come back and have repercussions through other means.

What if I don't have any ideas? Do what the greats do: Steal an idea and add a twist. What would the **Geist** Iliad in New Orleans be like? Or Huckleberry Finn? The Matrix? Pride and Prejudice? Grab a story that calls to you and shift it into a new space and time. Between your unique voice as a Storyteller and your players, it will be something new. Or try one of the stories, chronicles, or frames in this chapter. Often, "I don't have any ideas" is perfectionism in disguise. Ask your perfectionism to step aside, grab an idea, and explore it. If it's not what you were hoping for, grab another concept and try again.

What do I do if I find out that something in my game was hurtful? If someone tells you something has hurt them it can be feel a little like being a geist in a Remembrance. If that happens, you should take the following measures:

- Take a deep breath and be kind to yourself. This isn't about who you are as a person, this isn't about intention; this is about an action or a trend and someone trusted you with information. Keep the focus on behavior.
- Listen and ask non-defensive questions. Some questioning styles can be aggressive, even when that is not the intention. Books like *Taking the War out of Our Words* can be helpful. When looking at communication tools, make sure you work on how on you apply these tools to yourself rather than using these tools to deflect others.
- Give yourself time and avoid reacting in the moment if you find yourself wanting to go to fight or flight responses.
- Collaborate on tangible solutions, as appropriate.
- Keep it in proportion. It can be easy to beat yourself up or over respond to something that is a small note (which can be scary for the person giving feedback; they just wanted to give you a small note for improvement) or minimize an experience that is unfamiliar or creates a cascade of worries if you let it in. When in doubt go back to breathing and focus on the now.

Why does X feel that way? It's just a joke, it's just a game! One person's joke is another person's repetition of bullying they have received. We don't get to decide what's "just a joke" for other people. Games are wonderful, there's no "just a joke" or "just a game" about them. We spend time there, we like to feel safe there. It can feel scary and unfamiliar to become aware that someone else is experiencing harm where you were unaware. Use new information to learn, modify things, and repeat the tools outlined above.

How do I not screw up? None of us are perfect, we live and learn. A helpful thing to keep in mind to avoid one of the big screw-ups is: Do not decide what is good for a player on their behalf!

Storytellers have fallen into trouble when they have decided a particular character must experience a particular thing, be it public speaking, romance, or less savory experiences, because they have decided it's "good" for the player or character. That is not your power to take. You can always discuss things with a player and what they want to get out of the game. You can create non-coercive opportunities and invitations, but deliberately caging a character and player in a non-consensual way is at best

manipulative storytelling. It is the source of far too many war stories, and has driven people away from gaming.

I'm worried I might have screwed up. What do I do? Beating yourself up because something went off in a way that seemed uncomfortable? Don't endure if alone, check in and ask, it will save you an ulcer and show that person you care. If that person suggests further reading or research, check it out, you'll find some powerful stories that will make you a better storyteller.

What to do about The Fade Away? The Fade Away is when a player constantly cancels (usually at the last minute) and slowly tries to distance themselves from the game without ever "officially" leaving. The Fade Away can eviscerate your chronicle faster than a necromancer devouring a ghost. If a player cancels or calls out three times in a row, speak to them privately. Ask how things are going, check in, float some language around like, "Maybe your schedule has changed and you need to bow out of the game for a while. That's fine — you will be missed, and if your schedule changes in the future and you want to play, let me know."

This approach can save a friendship, and sometimes players can return later with no hard feelings. Saving friendships and saving games is a win/win scenario.

Storyteller Cheat Sheet

Things to think about when running your first game.

Before the Game

Print out a list of first and last names appropriate to the setting. This will make it easier to improvise. When you use a name, cross it out and make a small note about who the person is, they might come in handy later.

Prepare an easy reference sheet with any mechanics or details that will be important in the game. If you're going to use reference books, make friends with good quality bookmarks.

Think about plot beats you'd like to happen and how you might balance light and dark. Do players need some fun and let off steam? Do they need to push further into horror and have options for cathartic resolution?

How are the characters' relationships with their geists going? Is it time to focus in on a particular geist's Remembrance? What will help the game be balanced?

The First Chapter

Lay out any ground rules that are important or need a refresher. Perhaps this session will be more cinematic and run in real time, perhaps people need to be reacquainted with the Geist Card.

Go over anything that happened between sessions, especially if time is being fast forwarded or it's been a long time between sessions.

Give players a sense of place and atmosphere to start the session; this ranges from, "When we last saw our plucky krewe they were squashed in a corner booth at the Frogface nightclub, Patrice smells like rotten eggs and Hammer's hair is dripping with bright green Plasm. What do you do now?" to cinematic sound effects and dramatic staging.

During Play

Note when a player uses actions that are once per story.

Ensure a good balance of attention and collaborative gameplay. Sometimes the players will take the game in unexpected twists, so be ready to improvise in new directions.

If the session focuses more on a particular character, ensure the other characters have opportunities to interact, or play other characters with more proscriptive roles ("While your character is in Geneva could you play the mayor?" "I need you to come in, be loud and unreasonable, and then command your minions to drag the characters off to the tar pits.").

End of Chapter

Make notes while they're fresh. You will forget things you thought were unforgettable.

Track Beats and Experiences.

Allow time for players to relax and discuss the game afterwards.

End of Story

Celebrate and take note of what worked well.

Think about how the story will impact the characters and krewe in the long run. New reputation for hosting a great party? How will they not have their car impounded without a job and that many parking fines?

What are the dangling plot threads and how can you weave them in later? How will antagonists change their plans? Even if they are not seen for a few stories they will be pursuing their agendas.

If there is a break between stories, ask players if their characters are going to do anything in their downtime. Finding out what characters will do on their day off is a great way to find out where their passions are, how they are maintaining their relationship with Root and Bloom, and what would be a satisfying arc for the chronicle.

Encourage players to find in-character reasons for spending experiences (e.g. they spent a few days in Las Cadenas De Los Condenados to develop better contacts).

A Brighter Morning
Epilogue

Trisha Patel knocked on the community center door and relished the sensation. Two weeks had passed since she lost both her sister and father to a world that lay beneath her feet, and her sense of touch was slowly returning. When her mother found her sobbing in the hotel shower, she had told her that she was still in grief. This was only partially true. The real reason she started crying was that she could finally feel the heat of the water.

The official reports had said that it was a freak foundation collapse. The house was too old to be on the market, too fragile to be in anyone's care. An insurance investigator told her that the house should have been demolished years ago. When she asked him why no one had, he told her it was a matter of red tape. He didn't elaborate, and from the pained look on his face as he answered, hoped she wouldn't make him do so.

Despite her mother's concerns, Trisha visited where the house had been as soon as the city would allow her. According to civic records, the hole that her entire life sank into was 20 feet deep. Not a single brick of the building remained. The family lamented that there were no bodies to recover and nothing they could use as a memorial. Watching them mourn and not being able to tell the truth never stopped hurting. The world below had numbed her body, but not once did it numb her heart.

Her mother was adamant on what would come next: Trisha would have to come back with her to Wisconsin, somewhere far away in a new, more stable house. She set down Trisha's future while they were waiting for their meals at a fast-food place, as if it was just another errand to be done. While her mother assured her that she could easily pick up a school's curriculum in the middle of the year, the ghost of an old man wandered through the restaurant's kitchen, running a projector that did not exist.

She could see the ghosts clearly now. She had always been sensitive to shadows where there should not have been or movement just out of eyesight, but now the lingering dead mingled with the world around her like line art on projector paper, placed on top of the world. It reminded her that she had not yet gotten closure. So, after a clandestine phone call, Trisha found herself at the door of the Church of the Brighter Morning.

Leah, the woman who saved her life, opened the door. The creature with the gray eyes stood beside her.

"Hi." Trisha leaned to look inside. The Church of the Brighter Morning held their service in a classroom with dimmed lights and computer-printed esoteric symbols taped to the walls. The desks were arranged into tight rows, and most of the people

who filled them wore bandages and casts. The non-injured ones carried instruments. Ghosts stood in the empty space, in various states of injury and illness.

Mark, the man who had given her first aid, walked past carrying a large chocolate cake. A creature with a gaping throat wound bounded behind him. "As you can see, we're in a bit of a… transitional period."

"We work with what we have," Leah added.

Trisha took a seat at one of the empty desks in the back. A ghost missing the right side of her body gave her a polite smile. Trisha returned it with a half-smile of her own.

Oumil, the woman who had carried her to safety, came in with a photo album. A naked, waterlogged woman floated ahead of her. "I'm glad you could make it, Trisha. Do you have the photos?"

"Yeah." Trisha pulled out two pictures from her purse. Like the symbols on the walls, they too were printed from a computer. One was a picture of her family on a trip to the zoo last year, taken from a social media page. The other was harder to find: She lost her phone in the chaos, and she had only sent the picture of Oliver's handprint to two friends. Only one still had the picture with them.

"Good, good." Oumil pulled a purple robe over her clothes. "Then we're all set. I'll let you know when we need them."

Mark and Leah donned black robes, and the service began. Mark led a litany that switched between English and a language that Trisha could not place. From what she could gather, they were all blessing the cake he had brought. The ghosts, to her surprise, ate the cake. All at once, they became as solid and alive as any one of the living.

One of the churchgoers strummed a tune on his guitar. A woman with a fiddle played to his melody. Another man played a low bass harmony on a trumpet. Some of the injured members kept time by clapping their hands. Leah led a call and response in the Church's language. From the exuberance of the crowd, Trisha felt that she was the only one unfamiliar with it.

When the music reached a fever pitch, Leah and her cloaked friends danced with their spectral counterparts. It was a kind of square dance, each member occasionally swapping with their partner. The rest of the living and the dead stood and joined the dance. The bisected woman, now whole, offered Trisha a dance. She turned her down. Jade had always been more of the dancing type. The woman gave a curt nod and found another dancing partner.

When the dance ended, the living came up to the classroom desk in groups of two. They placed photographs they carried into the album on the desk. Oumil gestured for Trisha to come forward. She came up to the desk, paired with Leah. Trisha looked over at the single glossy photo she had, a picture of Leah with her arm wrapped around an olive-skinned man with a radiant smile. Behind them, the man with the large gray eyes and a woman with a hole in her head where her face should be watched.

Leah slipped her picture into the album with shaking fingers. Trisha's pictures were too big, so she tucked them in between the pages. Oumil shut the book. With her right hand, she drew a hexagram over it.

"Leah?"

"Yes, Trisha?"

"My father's still down there."

"I know."

Oumil addressed the Church. She placed her hand on the album. "These are the Remembered." She gestured to the crowd. "You are the Remembered. We will not spend our eternity in the Perilous Night. The Brighter Morning will touch us all, as it will for everyone."

"Everyone." Trisha crossed her arms. "Hmm."

"That includes your father," Leah said. "We will find him and we will set him free."

Trisha pressed her hands together, taking in a sensation she once took for granted. For a brief moment, she thought about Wisconsin. She cast it away.

"You will," she said, "Because when you do, I'll be there."

– appendix one –
The Absent

I am invisible, understand,
simply because people refuse to see me.

– Ralph Ellison, Invisible Man

The thing is, I know you can't see me. I'm sitting here next to you. I close my eyes and I hear you, breathing shallow in your sleep. You're so fragile right now, so damn delicate and I can see, or maybe sense, that your hold on life is weak.

It's my fault.

Doctors and nurses rush about their work. They ignore me. I'm just your father, the man who lost control of the car. The one who put you here. This is my fault. Even if you did open your eyes and look right at me, you wouldn't see me. I'm invisible. I can't do anything when the doctors joke at your expense. When the nurses are rough with you while changing your sheets. I want to scream at them, but I'm powerless to stop them. Or to help you. I can't even read you stories or tell you how much I love you because I died when I fucked up and now I can't decide which one of us got the worst of this. You may never wake up. You may grow old, or at least older, and never actually live, and I'll be here watching you, trying to touch your hand, and knowing it's my fault. There are people who could help you, I'm sure of it, if I could get them to listen. I snooped once, on a neurologist in the doctor's lounge on the fifth floor. I poked around in his memories — they floated about him as he napped — and found a memory of a lecture on a girl in your condition. The treatment they tried on her proved to be effective in 51% of similar cases. He knew, once, how to fix you, I'm sure of it, but he never got called in. The staff never made the connection between your condition and his expertise. So here we are, you not alive enough and me not dead enough. I'm going to find a way to get him down here to see you. I will do whatever it takes. I just need you to wake up, baby, and then, I'm sure, I'll be okay too.

Being Absent

Most ghosts do little more than exist. They relive their private memories and gather the Essence they can, and hang on just to survive. For the Bound, the Bargain allows them to cheat, to be in both worlds, the living and the dead. Ghosts are not so privileged. Most spend so much energy just staying out of the Underworld that they can't consider that the system is bent against them. The Bound look at the suffering of the well and truly dead as a problem to be solved. For ghosts, survival is job one, and just getting through that takes almost more energy than they have.

No ghost wakes up aware that they have to work with the Bound to make the afterlife better. It's the rare ghost who even has the ability to contemplate their situation and realize that the system — struggling to hold to Anchors and getting dragged away by the Reapers when they lose that struggle — is untenable. Situation and

Absent Mechanics

Unless explicitly overridden by something in this appendix, Absent characters follow the rules for ghosts in Chapter Four (p. 185).

misfortune force them to come at the struggle sideways. Maybe their Anchors are threatened, their cemetery is dominated by a ghost running an Essence racket, or maybe they ran out of their own memories and had to start stealing others' just to survive. Whatever the reason, ghosts who leave their bones behind call themselves Absent, if only to differentiate themselves from the suckers who never would.

For the Absent, every day is a new hustle, and hustle is what they need to survive, not what they do to thrive. Thriving? That's for the living.

What the Absent Do

Ghosts who step out of the cycle of remembering, weeping, clinging, then fading away, they hustle. They skirt the unwritten rules of the dead and create breathing room for themselves without ever crossing the line. The Absent are like the guy who can't get a normal job because of his record for selling CDs on the corner. He doesn't have a business license, but he's not exactly selling drugs. It's not legal, not really, but it's not high crimes either. The Absent aren't facing trigger-happy cops and a litigious society that can't decide when they're finished punishing the "undesirable." Rather, they're facing Chthonic monsters from the Underworld and a population of the living who could help them but doesn't. Of course, the living don't just ignore the dead because it's difficult to face the inequalities of the afterlife: The nature of Twilight means ghosts are literally erased.

Making Room

In **Geist: The Sin-Eaters**, krewe creation requires players to consider the ghosts who join and support their cult. These rules allow players to take this to the next level, mixing a ghost into the player-character group among the Bound. The Absent are playable even in the most straightforward chronicle. However, if players show an interest in playing the Absent at the table, the Storyteller should consider a few things while discussing characters before the final decisions are made.

Do you understand what ghosts do? Do you understand what their limitations are? Questions for players and Storyteller alike make sure they're on the same page.

Who is centered? Is this a game for the Bound with ghosts? Is this a game for ghosts with Bound characters? Can the Storyteller move back and forth between the two extremes easily, or should they flag who is centered when?

Does the Storyteller understand the way memories work for ghost characters and is she comfortable working them into her game? It's possible that a game can include ghosts as player characters without using memories, but it would be unfair for a player to invest a lot of thought and dots into the use and manipulation of memories if the Storyteller doesn't intend to use them.

There are no right or wrong answers to these questions, of course, but they should be considered at the table and agreed to by the group.

Can't Stop the Hustle

For many, the hustle doesn't really start until after they're dead. If life was hard, death is a struggle. But the struggle, and the hustle to endure that struggle, isn't a simple thing the Bound or ghosts can just fix. It's complicated, and fixing one thing can mean breaking a lot of other things and ruining a lot of (dead) people along the way. Why? It's different for every ghost. Life has a lot of rules, a lot of boundaries, and very few of the living ever test them. Death has one rule: Just hang on. It has boundaries too, but to hang on you pretty much have to push them. And the other side of most boundaries is Hell. Death for the dead.

Presented below is a collection of characters that examine many different aspects of ghosts that could be used as a springboard at the table. This collection is a variety of themes, struggles, and possibilities to encourage players to dig in and find a diversity of choice in playing Absent characters.

Concerning the Living

We naturally assume that for ghosts, the world they left behind is the only one that matters. And that's true for a little less than half of ghosts. While all ghosts have at least some awareness of or interest in the living, for these ghosts their hustle and even their existence is deeply tied to those happily living just past Twilight.

The Family Man

Everything I did, everything I do, I do it for you! Why is that so hard for you to understand? Why are you crying? Stop crying all the time! It's like you can't even hear me anymore! Are you even listening?

Who he is: In life he was a bad person. He didn't set out to be, he wanted to be a good father, but what his upbringing taught him it meant to be a good father was pretty shit. He died with his kids and his wife terrified of him, and they remain afraid of his ghost to this day without really knowing it's there. Directly, anyway. He doesn't mean to terrorize them with his Manifestations, he's trying to protect them! His wife's new boyfriend is even worse than he was.

His hustle: His family is his everything and he's more aware than anyone that he failed them and continues to fail them. He's looking for another way, seeking out the memories of good dads he can emulate. He can't yet admit to anyone out loud that he needs help, but he needs to. Soon. Because he family is in real danger now.

Playing the Family Man: You never meant to be the bad guy. You just got so angry sometimes, and at least you never beat on your kids the way your old man beat on you. Sometimes you have trouble remembering you're dead and they're alive and you just get so mad! You want, no, need to make things right, but literally do not have the ability to do so.

Suggested Traits: Wake (Merit), Possess (Manifestation), Telekinesis (Numen)

The Vindictive

I have, literally, forever to make you pay for this. Forever.

Who he is: He was wronged and then he died. And while the afterlife is an awful struggle, it is nothing compared to the agony of knowing the bad guy in his personal drama got away with it. On the bright side, the guy who betrayed him is dead, too. Which makes revenge just a little bit more interesting.

His hustle: His reason to exist is making that guy suffer. This isn't about justice, this is about revenge. This is a vendetta. Making that guy as miserable as possible is everything to him. And unless he can be reached by others, he is willing to do some very, very bad things to get what he wants.

Playing the Vindictive: He has it coming. He did this. He deserves to be punished forever. If there's anything keeping you from grabbing him and yanking him with you into the Underworld, it's an awareness that your obsession is going to consume you and you don't deserve that, even if he does. You just don't know how to stop.

Suggested Traits: Pierced (Merit), Materialize (Manifestation), Blast (Numen)

The Erased

But I really didn't see anything. I don't understand any of this attention.

Who she is: She was killed to protect a secret. She knew or represented something someone needed erased from the world. Of course, there's more to things than the living, and here she is with a secret worth killing over.

Her hustle: People, living and dead, kinda want to know what she was erased to hide. Or, if they don't, they should, because her existence was important, and not just to the Erased. She's a piece in a big terrible puzzle, one that once revealed could change everything. But don't ask her what it is. She doesn't know.

Playing the Erased: You proved, or could prove something. Only thing is, you're not ready to face your death, it would be too much for what's left of your mind. So for now you're trying to hide that you're you and how important what you know is, while trying to find a safe way to rediscover your secret.

Suggested Traits: Dead Meat (Merit), Image (Manifestation), Hallucination (Numen)

Concerning the Dead

The living go on with little regard for the dead, by and large. And for some ghosts, the disinterest is returned. For those who were already steeped in death, or otherwise disconnected from the living, death and existence trump any longing for their life as it was. Holding onto the safety of their current stasis or mastering Twilight becomes the whole of their hustle.

The Banshee

You come in here, thinking you understand this place and what it's like for us? You think you know us because you saw death for a minute, made a deal, and walked away. You know what the living call people who get pulled in, make a deal, and walk away? Narcs. So fuck off, narc. I got a dead city to save.

Who he is: He died by way of betrayal, though not necessarily because someone stabbed him directly in the back. Rather, he died because the system that was supposed to support him failed him. If he wasn't a vet denied treatment for something that didn't have to be deadly, it was something exactly like that. In life, he believed in institutions and community, so he was quiet and well-behaved and died waiting for help. Never again.

His hustle: The Underworld is the perfect example of how systems don't work, and while he'd like to take part in dismantling it, he doesn't trust the Bound. He doesn't really trust anyone besides himself. And so he screams at the first signs of injustice, of corruption, when he sees them. That said, he'll work with people so long as they're really making good on promises to make existence easier for ghosts like him.

Playing the Banshee: Never ever hesitate to call out bullshit. Feelings matter, but not compared to doing the right thing. People might not like you, but they'll respect you because you get shit done. Friendship is nice, progress and security is better.

Suggested Traits: Deep Memory (Merit), Discorporate (Manifestation), Implant Mission (Numen)

The Grinder

Hey. You got memories? Anything juicy? How about your first kiss? No? Well, I got a first kiss you wouldn't fucking believe. Sure, it's yours. Don't sweat it. Let's just say I'll need your help with something in return. Nah, nothing dangerous. You know the guy with the stringy hair that hangs around your Haunts? You get his name for me, his real name, and the memory is yours. Believe me, baby. It's worth it.

Who she is: She was in the game before she died, really, a low-key medium who helped a dead aunt collect memories for sale and trade. But she didn't know much about much at the time. She's not sure how she died, but she's pretty sure it has something to do with the ghost eater that was after Tía for years. But now she's dead and all the weird things Tía asked her to do make so much more sense. She gets it: Death's a game, and the winners are the ones who collect the most memories and favors. Any other possibility is just too terrifying to consider. So, she grinds.

Her hustle: There's plenty of casuals out there, ghosts who pick up a memory here or there, a favor from a friend that they call in when shit goes sideways. That's good enough for most. Not you. You're here to master the game. You don't just find memories; you yank 'em out of heads if you've got to. Your collection of memories is impressive, but you keep 'em moving because people needing what you've got is more valuable than the stock itself. That's a demand economy, right? You're planning to make a move on some much older Absent who've set up one of those Essence-debt situations with a bunch of real low ghosts. If you can break up their deals, you might be able to free their victims. Or use the farm for yourself. Either way.

Playing the Grinder: There's always a deal to be made. You interact (technically) with the living because they're a resource rather than a state you remember with fondness. You were steeped in death before you died, so it doesn't really feel like you're missing out. You're too busy to feel like you're missing out. If you ever slowed down long enough to consider all you didn't get to do, dying young and living life for the dead to begin with, it might be soul crushing. Which is just another reason to keep on grinding. Anyway, you're good at the game, the hustle. You can reap memories with the best of them and everyone's interested in the merchandise you're carrying around.

Suggested Traits: Deep Memory (Merit), Possess (Manifestation), Reap Memory (Numen)

Your Dead Boyfriend

Sleep when you're dead? Nah. They've been telling us that from day one, that life is too short so you gotta live your life. Well guess what baby, death's short too, and I'm going dancing. You can sit here and mope if you want, but don't sleep. Come dancing with me before the Gates open and we're dragged to hell. They don't have dancing there.

Who he is: You had this thing before you died. It wasn't love, but it could have gone that way if you'd just had more time. Then you died.

That sucked. And in dying you realized just how much you wanted, no, needed to love someone and be loved in return. Now, death is bouncing from one dead girl to the next, looking for the one. You're a hopeless romantic, but everyone else just seems hopeless and that's killing you. Are you a vapid party boy? A player? Nah, nothing like that. You just really want to know love, real love, and there's got to be someone out there who can give it back.

His hustle: Your Dead Boyfriend has some high personal ideals, chasing the perfect romance, and it can blind him to the actual social interactions happening around him. Some ghosts get stuck chasing an ideal or dream they never satisfied in life and it becomes an obsession for them. He'll work the memory game like any ghost, but for him it's about finding brief moments of other people's romantic pasts and hoarding them. He's not stupid; he knows people will manipulate him given the chance, but the chase is worth it to him. He's willing to spend eternity having his heart broken over and over again for those fleeting moments of pure romance.

Playing Your Dead Boyfriend: Dance, sing, throw half-remembered lines of poetry around and see who they stick with. Haunt locations where sad girls draw pictures of the boys they lost in the hopes of grabbing a juicy memory of happier times. Flirt with every Bound and ghost you meet. True love isn't picky, you aren't either. Make yourself vulnerable, put yourself at risk. It's worth it, it has to be.

Suggested Traits: Striking Looks (Merit), Materialize (Manifestation), Seek (Numen)

The Priest

Church is a word for a building. I don't have a church. Faith is a word for a feeling, an understanding, and some days, I tell you brothers and sisters, I just don't understand! But love? That's a word did a thing we can't fit into an easy definition, I say, love is a thing we cannot define my brothers and sisters, I say love is just love, and do you know what I got? Do you know what I got? Well I got love! Let me hear you sing it!

Who she is: There might not be a man or woman alive who truly remembers her, who she was and what she did. It doesn't matter, because at the moment of death she understood. She understood why the dead suffer and the living mourn. She understood why the Avernian Gates lead to hell and not heaven, and that reason is simple. Ain't nobody got enough love. So now she preaches to the living and the dead. She believes herself to be a vessel for divine love, and the righteous defender of a better, brighter future for all comers.

Her hustle: while she doesn't bother herself with her own personal connection to the living world, she still ministers to the living that come and bring libations to her grave. Like a local saint, they pray and whisper confessions, and so she is rich in Essence and memories that aren't her own. They leave with a sense of peace. With the dead she is more... proactive and persuasive, building her congregations and therefore her krewe. She leads ceremonies for the Bound and other ghosts, and sees her Bound as beloved tools toward a right and righteous afterlife. She is their rock, or is working to become so.

Playing the Priest: Freely share your love, your ideas, your memories and of course, your opinions. It's not that you know best for each person you meet, it's that you know better for everyone! You know the key to true paradise. And you get the world in that order. You'll make it happen no matter the cost.

Suggested Traits: Common Sense (Merit), Fetter (Manifestation), Omen Trance (Numen)

The Professor

Interesting theory. Let me see how that compares to my research.

Who she is: As an anthropologist already fixated on the traditions of death all over the world, she lingered after death not because life left her with unfinished business, but because death itself was her business, Rumor has it she's already released an Anchor and knows how to release others but chooses not to as a part of her research. She's not saying either way.

Her hustle: She is a bona fide expert in the dead in folklore and mythology. Her most precious memory is an expedition to witness secret burial rites all over the globe and she'll never give that up. Still, there is so much to learn here, now, and frankly, holding on to new knowledge is difficult in her current state.

Playing Professor: Little known fact, but when books are destroyed before they're used, they can enter the Twilight in some places. You have to use your own Plasm for makeshift ink, but blank books are in short supply. Writing the secrets you've discovered about the reality of death is all well and good, but you're hoping to implant that knowledge in minds that can make memories of it and thus deepen your access to the information. (This process is reflected in a Staff merit, they are researchers for you.) It's a process. But anyway, these days? Your real curiosity? The Gates and the Rivers. You're making plans. Great plans.

Suggested Traits: Staff (Merit), Fetter (Manifestation), Pathfinder (Numen)

Concerning the Strange

There are more things in heaven and earth than any of us can imagine, and not all that lingers in Twilight fits the neat narrative of "you live, you die, you become an ethereal being, and things get worse from there." For these rare beings, exploring their own strangeness becomes its own hustle.

The Open Wound

I used to know how to do that, but the knowledge, it's missing. You meant something to me once, the look on your

face says as much. But it's gone now, who we were to each other, and I am so, so sorry.

Who they are: Maybe they were whole once, a Bound's friend or lover or just a sort of dead employee, but the worst happened. It might have been Reapers, or necromancers, or even ghost eaters who took them away. The Bound rescued them from their needlessly cruel incarceration but a part of them is gone. They left behind, possibly literally, parts of their personality. While they are still a thinking person with a free will, who they are and how they felt about existence are just gone. Physically, their Corpus is literally missing pieces, limbs or big horrible bites out of their torso depending on the nature of their incarceration. They don't remember any of it, and probably can't.

Their hustle: the Open Wound has two choices; regret what's lost and chase it to make themselves whole again, or think of this as a fresh start and seek to fill in the blanks on their own terms. The best and worst of that follows how their friends treat them from here on out. Deciding who to be and how to hold on to that when they know it can all be taken away again is one hell of a hustle.

Playing the Open Wound: You're a blank slate in a lot of ways. You have tastes and preferences, even flashes of recall, but nothing to tie them to. Your sense of morality is nascent, mostly built around good is safety and bad is getting taken away again. Then again, you could have been or could become anyone dead, now. Which is kind of exciting.

Suggested Traits: Pierced (Merit), Discorporate (Manifestation), Speed (Numen)

Zombie Baby

Oh hell… you noticed me? Nice! You wanna go dancing? Yeah sure, baby. Just come up to my place real quick. I need a real quick bite to eat before it really feels like living, you know?

Who he is: He is a disgusting abomination, but he's also an innocent victim. He's a murderer and a cannibal, but he didn't ask for any of this. He's a ghost, but he's stuck in a body, and that body needs him to feed. He's doing the best he can, okay?

His hustle: The Zombie Baby just wants to live a little more, and he's kind of doing it. It just takes a lot of Essence and a lot of raw meat. He knows what he does is disgusting and that most ghosts hate him, but maybe they're just jealous. So, he burns through Essence and butcher-shop burglaries to get what he needs. Though he knows it can't go on like this forever, he doesn't really know how to stop.

Playing Zombie Baby: Look, maybe you've got a dead guy in a meat freezer in the basement, but it's not like you killed the guy. You've got control of that! You do okay scavenging instead of killing.

Suggested Traits: Dead Meat (Merit), Emotional Aura (Numina), Moliate (Numina)

The Never Born

What was it like? Do you remember the screaming and the blood? No, no, not death. The other thing.

Who he is: No one is really sure who he is. He might simply be a ghost who lost all his personal memories and became… confused. Or he might, as he claims, have always been a ghost. He says dark magic birthed him, not a living woman, and the shadows were his embryonic fluid. Suffice to say, he's not a lot of fun at parties.

His hustle: He wants to be born. Not in a religious sense, though it's close to that, but in a very real and physical sense. He is desperate to find a way, to know life as he never has, or at least has forgotten. He longs to breathe, to take a real breath for the first time and feel sunlight on skin.

Playing the Never Born: You are obsessed with necromancy from the other side. Any possible tale of rebirth or reincarnations interests you. While you do what you can to stay out of the Gates, your only real goal is to have what you think you never did. Life. Should you ever get it though, oh, the lengths you will go to keep it. Forever.

Suggested Traits: Shackled (Merit), Avernian Gateway (Manifestation), Anchor Jump (Numen)

Memories

The road to hell: It's not good intentions, it's harsh reality. Memories, good or bad, yours or someone else's, they slow you down along the way. If you can grab a good strong one, you can hang on indefinitely, wrapped up in pleasant stasis. Or at least stasis that keeps you out of the Underworld.

For many ghosts, who they were and what happened when they died is simply too hard to deal with. When the dead are remembered by their loved ones and gain Essence, those moments are good times, fights, last words, secret trysts — but only rarely do the living think of the dead at the moment of their death. Even then, it's impossible for the living to truly understand the trauma of entering Twilight until they've done it. To maintain their sense of self, most ghosts work hard to avoid thinking about that one specific moment of transition. The pain and fear, the uncertainty and the betrayal as life is taken away but awareness remains.

For most ghosts, moving on is a rumor or an impossible prospect because they don't know how it works. Breaking, losing Integrity, means becoming an echo stuck in a traumatic moment until oblivion takes you. Or worst of all, falling apart and being dragged into the Underworld. So, while the Bound hold high ideals of freeing ghosts from the Underworld and curing them of their hang-ups, just hanging on is a full-time job and a part-time job to boot. Memories, theirs or other people's, are the stuff of that work.

Potent Memories

Not just any recollection can become a Memory. To have enough power to sustain a ghost, a Memory must have significant emotional context. The following is a non-exhaustive list of circumstances likely to be potent enough to create a Memory.

- A breaking point
- Fulfillment (or failure) of an Aspiration
- Resolution (or acquisition) of a Condition
- Dramatic fulfillment of a Virtue or Vice

New Trait: Memories

A Memory is a short phrase, a description of a significant moment in someone's life, the ghost's or someone else's: When She Walked Out On Us, maybe, or Monday Morning is Always the Same. Memories are born of strong emotions: love, despair, hate, terror. They're little pieces of lives lived, at once bulwarks against the loss of self and priceless currency among the dead.

Memories are experiential: They can be traded back and forth, but while a ghost possesses one, she *remembers* the events it describes as though they happened to her. Doesn't matter how different the Memory's original owner was, or how out-of-place that Memory is with the ghost's own memories, it's exactly as though she lived it.

Memories have Skills attached. These are not the ghost's own abilities or knowledge, not really, but echoes. A ghost singing an ancient lullaby is beautiful and haunting, but it isn't really the ghost singing any more than it's her hand you think you felt on your cheek when you heard it.

***Example**: Baby Doll just sacrificed her Memory of Her Father's Rough Hands (Crafts 2, Athletics 2). It was a rough scene. But at the end of it, a fellow ghost, in gratitude over Baby's sacrifice, offers her My Mother's Middle Name Was June. After Baby accepts the memory, the Storyteller tells her it has Expression and Occult attached. Baby's player assigns three to Expression and one to Occult. If it had only Expression attached, Baby's player would have a dot left over for a new memory to be picked up later.*

Memory Basics

- **Associated Skills:** Every Memory is associated with two Skills.
- **Associated Conditions:** Some Memories come with Persistent Conditions, which remain with the character as long as she hold the Memory.
- **Memory Skills:** The Absent always have 12 dots of Skills to distribute among their Memory Skills. They may reallocate these dots between chapters, or when they gain a new Memory or lose one they possess.
- **Memory Skill Maximum:** No Skill may have more than three Memory Skill dots assigned to it, and Memory Skill dots cannot take a ghost's Skill rating above her Rank-derived Trait Maximum (p. 187).

Memories as Buffers

A Memory is more than a memory: It's a bulwark against nonexistence. The Absent hoard Memories, treasuring them for the warm glimpses of lives once lived that they are, but any good hustler knows when it's time to cut her losses in exchange for a little more existence.

Buffer Basics

- **Essence Buffer:** When the Absent would spend Essence to remain active for a day *or* suffer Essence bleed (p. 188), she may instead sacrifice a Memory.
- **Integrity Buffer:** When the Absent would suffer a breaking point, she may instead sacrifice a Memory.
- **Sacrificed Memories:** A sacrificed Memory is gone forever. The character loses access to the Memory Skills associated with it, and forgets ever having experienced it.

Breaking Anyway

If the ghost has no Memories to sacrifice, or chooses not to, she must make the breaking point roll as the living do. The player or Storyteller rolls the ghost's Resistance + Rank modified by their Integrity score (p. 189).

The character doesn't sacrifice a Memory to use a Skill from it.

Acquiring Memories

The Absent have, broadly speaking, four ways of acquiring new Memories. They can trade them with other ghosts, scavenge them from the oblivious living, harvest them using the Reap Memory Numen, or, rarest of all, make new memories in concert with the living.

Trading Memories

For ghosts, Memories are tangible things, like paper clips. It's tough to describe them, and one could define them by Plasm or Essence or pixie dust as they like. But for ghosts, they are real and touchable in a way the living world is not. For anyone not a ghost? Memories have no substance. They don't exist outside of some neurons firing in a brain somewhere.

Because they are tangible to ghosts, a thing a ghost can pick up rather than just an idea, they can be curried and favored and traded. If Sissy Starved has a Wedding Night Memory, it's hers, and Toothless can't borrow it. It changes hands, and in fact, it changes itself as it changes hands. Sissy attached that memory to herself, and when detaching it to give or trade, it takes some of her with it. A ghost can tell the difference between a Memory that's hers and a Memory that came from someone else most of the time, but she's still imprinted. (Though a ghost with no personal Memories can't tell which aren't hers, as she has no point of comparison.) Memories, especially those that have changed hands a number of times, can't be trusted as facts, only as experiences.

If a ghost gives away a Memory, the moment is gone. She can remember talking about the Memory if she did, but cannot feel the experience again. This is a willing exchange. Ghosts can't pickpocket Memories from each other (the living are another story). A ghost can threaten and coerce another, of course, but while Memories are tangible, they can't be taken away by force.

For most ghosts, Memories are currency, and that has its own value: a nebulous, shifting calculus of "useful Skills" versus "not completely traumatizing" or, rarely, "pleasant." Faced with an angry Reaper and armed only with a Memento pistol she doesn't know how to use, the Crow's Daughter might give you a deal for His Eyes When I Shot Him. In less dire circumstances, good luck unloading a Memory that comes bundled with PTSD and night terrors. As to the goods that currency supports? It's debatable. Trust, safety, secrets, Essence, names and places, a place to hide when the Reapers come. This part of the economy is less concrete.

Trading Memories

- **Willpower Cost:** It costs 1 Willpower to give another ghost Memories. Multiple Memories may be given at once.
- **Consent:** Both parties must consent to the exchange of Memories.
- **Transfer:** The ghost giving the Memory immediately loses all associated Memory Skills and associated Persistent Conditions. The receiving ghost gains them. Both may immediately reallocate their Memory Skill dots.

Harvesting Memories

Have you ever gotten up in the middle of the night, gone to the kitchen, and seen your dead mother weeping blood on the floor over a phantom image of your long-lost sister, secretly murdered by your father in that very kitchen? No? Are you sure? How about this: Have you ever gotten up in the middle of the night and gone to the kitchen, only to forget why you went down there to begin with?

Any ghost with the Reap Memory Numen (p. 195) can reach into a living person's mind and yank a Memory out. Or more likely, force the living to suddenly recall something. The Memory, then, is really of reliving the experience unexpectedly. A harrowing concept, softened only by the thought that the living person loses the experience as soon as the ghost reaps the Memory. It leaves behind only a residual feeling of unease that's easy to sweep away as nothing.

Finding Memories

Memories happen. They follow the living for a while after they're made, then they fade away in most cases. Sometimes they linger in a spot a while where the Memory was made and hang there, waiting to be picked up by passing ghosts. Some places store Memories and, after a fashion, make new, littler Memories. That big oak tree in the woods everyone you knew in high school drank at? That place holds a ton of Memories. When you brought your teenage son there, years later, showing him the spot where you carved his mother's name, you revived that shared Memory as well as creating a new one with your son. Theme parks and museums are rich veins of Memory. Places where important events were held and viewed by a mass of people, especially tragic events like a hospital fire, make Memories as well, but the ghosts made there tend to guard them pretty exclusively.

Memories take time to be formed or recalled, so finding them required patience — something not all ghosts have in great supply.

Making Memories

It is possible, though difficult, for ghosts to make new Memories strong enough to be useful, tangible things. A ghost at Rank 2 is sentient. She more or less remembers her conversation with her Bound friend on Sunday, but it's not really a true Memory in the intrinsic and valuable sense described here.

To make new Memories a ghost can consider personal, the living must be involved, and they must be aware, at least vaguely, that the ghost is present. This is a good argument for working with mediums and the Bound. From there, the ghost must find a way to directly interact with the living. Manifestations work, but are often painful emotionally. Certain Numina work as well. In that moment of contact, the Memory is made. The Storyteller associates

Skills with it, and the ghost's player notes it down and puts a star by it. After this first contact, Memories with the same living person must be formed in a different way in the future. Things have to escalate to be a new-made Memory.

Memory Bleed

A ghost can hoard as many Memories as she has dots in Integrity. More than that and she enters a state of confusion as to who she is and what is real. She gains the Memory Bleed Condition (see p. 301). Her own, personal Memories don't count toward this limit.

Merits

These Merits are all available to the Absent.

Brain Eater (•)

Any ghost can harvest Memories from the living if they know how. You can extract Memories from dead tissue, which you can interact with. It's never pretty.

Requirements: Ghost

Effects

- You can interact with human corpses as if they were in Twilight.
- You can consume important organs to collect Memories, though usually the only Memories that remain are Memories tied to the person's death.
- You can harvest memories at a rate of one Memory per organ, with viable organs equal to the Stamina the corpse had in life.

Dead Meat (•)

You've still got your bones and your meat. It's not pretty, but it's yours.

Requirements: Ghost

Effect

- You still inhabit a body, and therefore have Health instead of Corpus. You can regain Health with Essence as a ghost does, but must supplement this by replacing lost meat, at about 10 pounds of raw nonhuman meat (or one pound of raw human meat) per Health level lost to lethal or aggravated damage. You don't have to eat meat to heal bashing damage.
- People tend to ignore you. To interact with them on any social level, you must spend 1 Willpower. Other people notice you as usual if you attack or act aggressively.
- For every week you don't consume 10 pounds of raw, nonhuman flesh or one pound of raw human flesh, you temporarily lose a point of Finesse or Resistance. When you eat the meat you need, you regain all lost points. If either Attribute falls to 0 before you feed, you enter a frenzy in which you cannot do anything but find and consume an adult's weight of flesh and bone.
- You can't use Manifestations (but since you have a real, physical body, you usually don't need to)
- Your body is an Anchor, and resolving it will be wet and brutal.

Deep Memory (•)

Do you remember how Carl could memorize baseball stats better than anyone? But it wasn't just that. To the day he died he could tell me what color shirt I was wearing the week before, the year before, he was just like that. Always full of memories.

Requirements: Ghost.

Effect

- You can retain more Memories than most ghosts. Add Integrity + Resistance to determine how many Memories the character can carry before suffering Memory bleed.

Wake (• to •••••)

You were well-loved or deeply feared in life, and still get regular visitors who come to mourn at your remains or some other spot of significance in your life. Their visits generate easy Essence for you.

Requirements: Ghost

Effect

- Once per chapter, collect Essence equal to dots in the Wake Merit.

Iconography Merits

By and large, ghosts look like the people they were in life, at least to anyone who can see Twilight. The living, by and large, imagine the dead as grotesque and horrific due to the traumatic nature of Manifestations. But still, some ghosts' Corpus reflect certain widely accepted symbols of death. Called iconography by those who recognize the patterns, they tend to follow cultural lines and vary from region to region. These are merely a few examples. When a ghost Manifests, her iconography is a part of that Manifestation.

A ghost can only have one Iconography Merit.

Ajna (•)

The word specifically refers to the third-eye chakra in some faiths, though in ghostly iconography it can mean any out-of-place eye placement, such as in the palms or belly button. He has an eye where it ought

not to be, and it suggests an ability to see further than the living. He saw it coming when he died. It might bring to mind a beatific Buddhist saint in meditations, images of the White Tara and the eyes in her 100 hands, or certain frightening Japanese yokai like the shirime.

Requirements: Ghost

Effects

- Enjoy a +3 to any perception-related rolls.
- Double any penalties caused by sensory overload.

Banda (•)

Banda is the name of a provocative dance popular in voodoo. In the context of ghosts, It's more about the movement and rhythm. She has a certain crooked, cocky swagger to her steps reminiscent of a strut. She died in service to the dead already, and only now is she coming into her own. This crooked rhythm is alluring as it is absurd and to those who know of it, it immediately brings to mind the dance and behavior of a ghede.

Requirements: Ghost

Effects

- Enjoy a +3 to becoming the center of attention and getting away with it.
- Suffer –2 to any Stealth action. Even the living should get a chance to notice something, even if they can't see the ghost.

Crowned (•)

Present in images of the dead from Ancient Greece to Constantinople to Thailand, the halo or crown is a facet of actual ghost iconography as well. She is bathed in a ray of soft golden light, or carries a gentle spectral mandala about her head. She is certain to have died sacrificing herself for others. She is more likely to bring to mind Egon Schiele's *Child with Halo in a Flower Meadow* than images of gilded Catholic saints, however.

Requirements: Ghost

Effect

- Anyone, living or dead, facing a breaking point or a crisis point around the ghost enjoys a +1 bonus on the roll. The ghost loses 1 Essence when this happens.

Immaculate Heart (•)

An exposed heart, not gruesome but biological. The center of her chest has ribs missing to allow the heart to be seen. It beats and throbs with low light, either red or purple in most cases. She brings to mind the waxwork of Eleanor Crook or Sigrid Sarda, if you can stomach it.

Requirements: Ghost

Effects

- Suffer –2 to hiding your feelings.
- Enjoy a +3 to invoke or inspire trust.

Pierced (•)

Her body is pierced by knives or arrows or bullets and the wounds lightly weep. If the weapon is large, like a spear, it is broken off close to her body. The tines piercing her cannot be removed. She most assuredly died by violence. She brings to mind the suffering of Saint Sebastian or lurid images of fallen soldiers.

Requirements: Ghost.

Effects

- The ghost has a permanent –1 wound penalty.
- The ghost ignores the first instance of damage she suffers in each scene.

Shackled (•)

She is chained, though to nothing in specific. The weight of the chains slows her. Her mouth may be gagged, but she can still speak. If they are ropes instead of chains, they bite into her skin and look painful. She died of neglect or obsession. This binding has no sexuality to it; that's a different iconography. She brings to mind Jacob Marley.

Requirements: Ghost

Effects

- Once per chapter, the ghost regains 2 Essence for spending a day in proximity to an Anchor.
- The ghost's Speed is reduced by half (round down).

Veined (•)

Black or dark red veins, maybe blue, crisscross her body but also seem to extend out past her skin, suggesting a connection between her veins and other ghosts. The veins have a visible pulse. She died without a support network, and because of it. It might be gruesome, or oddly beautiful, such as the works of Frida Kahlo. Specifically, she brings to mind *Las dos Fridas*.

Requirements: Ghost

Effects

- The ghost is treated as 1 Rank higher for the purposes of how much Essence she can possess.
- The first instance of damage the ghost suffers in a scene inflicts an additional point of damage of the same type.

Waters (•)

The ghost is ever-wet and dripping. When angry, water floods from his mouth as he speaks. He may move slowly, his hair and clothing floating just a little around him. He died in the water. He brings to mind Ophelia in the river.

Requirements: Ghost

Effects

- Spend 1 Essence. A portion of a body of water no smaller than a bathtub, no bigger than six by six by six meters, gains the Anchor Condition for the rest of the scene.
- If she enters a body of water that has the Anchor Condition, the ghost cannot be coerced or forced out, magically or otherwise.

Death and Dying: Making Ghosts

The Character

The Absent use simplified character creation, like any other ghost. Their uniqueness as player characters, Absence, follows in the next section.

Aspirations

The Absent have three Aspirations: two short-term and one long-term.

Virtue and Vice

The dead have Virtue and Vice selected just as the living do, though one or both may have changed since their crossing to Twilight. However, their interactions with Willpower have changed.

Once per chapter a ghost can indulge in his Vice and fill his Willpower pool. Once per scene she may do the same with Virtue. Everything is stacked against the dead, seems like.

Memories

Detail four Memories your character has with short, evocative phrases. Put a star next to Memories that are personal memories from the ghost's own life. Not all have to be. For each Memory, choose two associated Skills.

Nickname

When you think of ghost stories, it's always Baby Blue, not Elisabeth Franklin; or the Man in White, not Franky Delgato. Unless they were famous, and not even frequently then, the Absent don't tend to use their real names when dealing with each other or the living. It's not only rude and overly intimate, it can be dangerous. Confronting an unprepared ghost with their real name can trigger a breaking point. Nicknames usually come from another ghost or the Bound when the ghost is discovered, though rarely an isolated ghost names herself or gets named by the urban legends that pop up around her.

Traits

The Absent use the same basic Traits as other ephemeral entities (p. 187). A brief summary is reprinted here.

Attributes

The Absent start with nine dots divided between three Attributes. Each Attribute starts at 0 before dots are applied, and cannot rise above seven dots.

Skills

The Absent begin with no Skill dots except for the 12 dots of Memory Skills described previously.

Skill Specialties

The Abiding don't have Skill Specialties.

Merits

Choose 10 dots' worth of Merits, either from Chapter Three, this appendix, or other **Chronicles of Darkness** books. The Absent cannot take Merits that reflect biological traits of living bodies, like Iron Stamina or Hardy, or supernatural Merits.

Rank

The Absent begin play at Rank 2.

Integrity

The Absent start with an Integrity of 7.

Willpower

Willpower dots equal Finesse + Resistance, to a maximum of 10.

Drink Deep

Can player-character ghosts become geists? Reach Rank 3? Sure, why not? If the players are down, a damn good story could be spun around an adventure into the Underworld to bring some ghost buddies to the River. If they can manage it, they can raise their Rank. This is not a casual job, but the culmination of a huge story arc and not to be expected more than once a character in a normal chronicle. It's either a chronicle-ending climax, or the ghost becomes a Storyteller character — or possibly the geist of your next Bound character.

Rare Manifestations

The Materialize Numen is extremely rare, but not unheard of, in Rank 1 and 2 ghosts. Keep this in mind when creating Absent characters, but there's no restriction on choosing it. Players' characters are, by definition, exceptional.

Corpus

The Absent's Corpus is Resistance + Size. The ghosts of typical adult humans are Size 5.

Defense

Defense equals Power or Finesse, whichever is lower.

Speed

Speed is equal to Power + Finesse + 5.

Ban

The Absent have a Ban appropriate to a Rank 2 ghost. The Bans of Rank 2 ghosts are personal, different from ghost to ghost, or something a little tricky to arrange for. A cat meowing live, not recorded. Legit holy water. The ghost's photo. That kind of thing.

Bane

The Absent have a Bane appropriate to a Rank 2 ghost. The Banes of Rank 2 ghosts are difficult to obtain but still "natural." Water from the lake they drowned in, a cigarette from a cancer patient's pack, or a minivan that has transported at least three children at once during the last month.

Influence

The Absent have two dots of Influences. At least one dot must go to an Influence related to one of their Anchors. They may begin with more dots of Influences by sacrificing starting Numina at a rate of one Numen per dot.

Anchors

The Absent start with a number of Anchors equal to their Resistance. One of those Anchors is usually their mortal remains, but the others can be people, places, or things that were important to the ghost in life. Consider selecting at least one portable Anchor, something tangible to facilitate ghost characters traveling with other characters. All Anchors can and should be included as possible points of drama in a story, but a Storyteller would be wise to not make these threats limit characters, but motivate and challenge them.

Numina

Absent get three Numina to start and can learn more with Experiences. They may start with additional Numina by sacrificing starting Manifestations at a rate of one Manifestation per Numen.

Manifestation

The Absent pick two Manifestations from the list on p. 191, in addition to Twilight Form. They may start with additional Manifestations by sacrificing starting Numina at a rate of one Numen per Manifestation.

Ghost Advancement

The Absent have Aspirations and earn Experiences like living characters do, but their simplified Traits require different Experiences costs.

Trait	Experience Cost
Attribute dot	6
Numen	3
Manifestation	3
Influence dot	5
Skill dot*	2
Merit dot	1
Rank**	5

* Skill dots purchased with Experiences are Skills the ghost has learned herself, not Memory Skills.

** To increase Rank, a ghost must have the Experiences needed to buy both the Rank dot and purchase dots in Attributes, Numina, Manifestations, and Influences to bring herself up to the minimum for the new Rank as soon as it increases. Then she must drink from a River (p. 204.) If she survives, her player may spend the Experiences to raise Rank and buy the other attached Traits.

— appendix two —
Conditions & Tilts

Tilts

ARM WRACK
PERSONAL

Description: Your arm burns with pain and then goes numb. It could be dislocated, sprained, or broken, but whatever's wrong with it means you can't move your limb.

Effect: If your arm's broken or otherwise busted, you drop whatever you're holding in that arm and can't use it to attack opponents — unless you've got the Ambidextrous Merit, you suffer off-hand penalties for any rolls that require manual dexterity. If this effect spreads to both limbs, you're down to a chance die on any rolls that require manual dexterity, and -3 to all other Physical actions.

Causing the Tilt: Some supernatural powers can cripple a victim's limbs or break bones with a touch. A character can have his arm knocked out by a targeted blow to the arm (-2 penalty) that deals more damage than the character's Stamina. A targeted blow to the hand inflicts this Tilt if it does any damage.

Ending the Tilt: If the Tilt is inflicted as a result of an attack, mark an X under the leftmost Health box affected by that attack. The Tilt ends when the damage that caused it has healed. If the damage that inflicts this Tilt is aggravated, the character loses the use of his arm (or completely loses his arm) permanently.

BEATEN DOWN
PERSONAL

Description: The character has had the fight knocked out of him.

Effect: The character cannot take active part in the fight without extra effort. The player must spend a point of Willpower *each time* he wants the character to take a violent action in the fight. He can still run, Dodge, and apply Defense. If he wishes to take another action, the Storyteller should judge whether the action is aggressive enough to require the expenditure.

Causing the Tilt: The character suffers bashing damage in excess of his Stamina *or* any amount of lethal damage.

Ending the Tilt: The character surrenders and gives the aggressor what he wants. At this point, the character regains a point of Willpower and takes a Beat, but can take no further action in the fight. If the aggressor's intent is to kill or injure the character, obviously surrendering isn't a good option.

BLINDED
PERSONAL

Description: The character's eyes are damaged or removed.

Effect: The character suffers a -3 penalty to any rolls that rely on vision — including attack rolls — and halves his Defense if one eye is blinded. That penalty increases to -5 and loss of all Defense if both eyes are affected.

Causing the Tilt: The normal way to inflict the Tilt is to deal damage to the target's eyes, a specified attack with a -5 penalty (see Specified Targets, p. 157). A successful attack normally damages one eye. It takes an exceptional success to totally blind an attacker. An attacker can inflict temporary blindness by slashing at her opponent's brow, throwing sand into his eyes, or kicking up dirt. This requires an attack roll of Dexterity + Athletics with a -3 penalty, and the victim's Defense applies to this attack. If it succeeds, the target is Blinded for the next turn.

Ending the Tilt: If an attack against the character's eye does any points of damage, mark an X under the leftmost Health box affected by that attack. If the damage inflicted is aggravated the character loses vision in that eye permanently. Otherwise, the condition ends when the damage that caused the Tilt is healed.

BLIZZARD
ENVIRONMENTAL

Description: Heavy snowfall carpets the ground and is whipped up by howling winds into a barrage of whirling white.

Effect: Blizzards make it very hard to see for any real distance. Rolls to see things close to the character's person, out to an arm's length away, suffer a -1 penalty. Each additional 10 yards inflicts an additional -1 penalty (cumulative) on all visual Perception rolls. This penalty also applies to ranged attack rolls. Moving through snow is difficult. Every four inches of snow applies a -1 penalty to appropriate Physical rolls, including combat rolls, Athletics, and the like. The Blizzard Tilt rarely applies by itself — the Storyteller may also inflict any or all of the Extreme Cold, Heavy Winds, or Ice Tilts (all found below).

Causing the Tilt: For the most part, the weather is out of the characters' control; the Storyteller should telegraph an incoming blizzard before it hits, but it's ultimately up to her. Some supernatural powers might grant a character the power to create a blizzard.

Ending the Tilt: Without supernatural powers, characters can't end a blizzard. The best they can manage is to escape the weather or wait for it to stop. Proper equipment (such as goggles and snow boots) can add +1 to +3 to a roll, offsetting some of the penalties. If someone is causing this Tilt through a supernatural power, it's possible that the characters could disrupt his concentration.

DEAFENED
PERSONAL

Description: The character can't hear. Maybe he's suffering intense tinnitus, can only hear the roaring of blood in his ears, or has been deafened by a gunshot.

Effect: If the character is deaf in one ear, he suffers a -3 penalty to hearing-based Perception rolls. A character who is struck deaf in both ears only gets a chance die on hearing-based Perception rolls, and suffers a -2 penalty to all combat-related dice rolls — suddenly losing the ability to hear the people around you is tremendously disorienting.

Causing the Tilt: A particularly loud noise within 10 feet of the character may cause temporary hearing loss, as though the character were deaf in both ears. Alternatively, a targeted attack on the ear — at a -4 penalty — can deafen a character. Supernatural creatures with heightened senses can be deafened by loud noises at greater distances.

Ending the Tilt: Deafness caused by loud noises fades after (10 - the victim's Stamina + Resolve) turns. If an attack against the character's ear does any points of damage, mark an X under the leftmost Health box affected by that attack. If the damage inflicted is Aggravated the character loses hearing in the ear permanently. Otherwise, the condition ends when the damage that caused the Tilt is healed.

DRUGGED
PERSONAL

Description: The character's mind is addled by mind-altering substances, such as alcohol or drugs.

Effect: A generic narcotic can be represented with one set of modifiers; the character suffers a -2 modifier to Speed (and static Defense, if used) and a -3 penalty to all rolls in combat, including Defense and Perception. The character also ignores wound penalties.

Causing the Tilt: If the character has chosen to take drugs, he suffers their effects. To administer drugs to another character is a Dexterity + Weaponry attack, suffering a -1 modifier for the improvised weapon. If the drug has to go into a specific body part (such as an arm or mouth), it requires an attack against a specified target.

Ending the Tilt: A generic narcotic lasts for (10 – the victim's Stamina + Resolve) hours. Medical help, such as pumping the victim's stomach or flushing his system, halves this time.

EARTHQUAKE
ENVIRONMENTAL

Description: Everything shudders and shakes, and rents tear the ground wide open.

Effect: Earthquakes don't last long, but they don't have to. When the earthquake's actually occurring, all Dexterity-based dice pools (and Defense) suffer a -1 to -5 penalty, depending on the earthquake's severity. Characters take between one and three points of lethal damage per turn of the earthquake's duration, though a reflexive Stamina + Athletics roll can downgrade that damage to bashing — or cancel it entirely on an exceptional success.

Causing the Tilt: Without tremendous supernatural power, it's almost impossible to cause an earthquake. A

character who detonates a powerful explosive underground might simulate the effects over a city block for a few seconds.

Ending the Tilt: Earthquakes are, fortunately, very quick events. It's very rare for one to last more than a minute (20 turns), so waiting them out is the best course of action.

EXTREME COLD

ENVIRONMENTAL (SOMETIMES PERSONAL)

Description: Bone-chilling winds bite through the character, or trudging through knee-deep snow takes all of the sensation from his limbs. Any time the temperature gets down below zero degrees Celsius (32 degrees Fahrenheit), a character can suffer from the cold's effects. This Tilt can sometimes be personal, as a result of a medical condition like hypothermia or a supernatural power.

Effect: When the temperature is below freezing, characters can't heal bashing damage — the extreme temperature deals damage at the same rate normal characters heal it (a cut might turn to frostbite, for instance). Supernatural beings and characters who heal faster than normal instead halve their normal healing rate. For every hour that a character is continuously affected by this Tilt, he accrues a -1 penalty to all rolls. When that penalty hits -5, he instead suffers a point of lethal damage per hour.

Causing the Tilt: A character can suffer this Tilt from being in a frozen environment — whether he's outside in the Arctic tundra or in a walk-in freezer. Inflicting the Tilt is reasonably straightforward: throw the victim into a freezing lake or lock him in a freezer for long enough, and he'll develop hypothermia.

Ending the Tilt: The best way to escape the freezing cold is to find a source of warmth, either a building with working heat, or warm clothing. A character who has hypothermia requires medical attention.

EXTREME HEAT

ENVIRONMENTAL (SOMETIMES PERSONAL)

Description: The character might be stumbling through the desert with the sun beating down on him, or running through the steam tunnels surrounding an old boiler room. This Tilt can also be personal, the result of a debilitating fever that spikes his temperature far above the norm. Extreme heat is normally anything above 40 degrees Celsius (104 degrees Fahrenheit), whether internal or external.

Effect: When the temperature is far above normal, characters can't heal bashing damage — the extreme temperature deals damage at the same rate normal characters heal it (a cut might heal, but it's replaced by sunburn or sunstroke). Supernatural beings and characters who heal faster than normal instead halve their normal healing rate. For every hour that a character is continuously affected by this Tilt, he accrues a -1 penalty to all rolls. When that penalty hits -5, he instead suffers a point of lethal damage per hour.

Causing the Tilt: This Tilt is usually caused by environmental factors — being out at noon in the desert, or spending too long in a sauna or forge. Even a fever is the result of an infection, rather than something that an opponent can force on a character. It's possible to create this Tilt on a given character: securing someone to a chair right next to an old, inefficient boiler, or stranding them in the desert far from any shade.

Ending the Tilt: The key to ending this Tilt is simple: get out of the heat. In a desert or similar environment, finding shade is paramount. Elsewhere, the character needs to escape whatever is causing the abnormal temperatures.

FLOODED

ENVIRONMENTAL

Description: Some liquid — brackish water, mud, gore, or raw sewage — has risen enough to impede the character's progress.

Effect: Each foot of liquid inflicts a -2 penalty to all Physical dice pools. If the water goes up over her head, the character has to swim (Dexterity + Athletics), with a penalty appropriate for the speed of the flooding. Alternatively, she can try to hold her breath (Stamina + Composure) if she cannot get her head above the rising waters.

Causing the Tilt: Normally, this Tilt is the result of heavy rain, sudden snowmelt, or a broken water main. Characters can cause this Tilt by smashing up a water heater, or blowing up a small dam. Some supernatural creatures may be able to call floods down onto a region.

Ending the Tilt: Characters can escape flooding by getting to high ground, which is enough to mitigate this Tilt. A long-term fix would require draining the floodwaters, but each flood requires its own solution.

HEAVY RAIN

ENVIRONMENTAL

Description: Torrential rain lashes down in knives, bouncing high off the sidewalk. The sound of rain on the ground is a constant hammering rumble that goes on without end, like dropping ball bearings on a tin roof. Thick gray curtains of water obscure vision.

Effect: Heavy rains — approaching tropical storm levels or worse — cause a Perception penalty of -3 dice to both vision and hearing. Rain's hard to see through, but it's also *loud*. If the rains carry on for an hour or more, the Flooded Tilt will soon follow. This Tilt is often accompanied by Heavy Winds; a character trapped out in Heavy Rains might come under the effects of Extreme Cold.

Causing the Tilt: Short of a supernatural power or a fleet of cloud-seeding aircraft, Heavy Rain is the result of natural weather patterns.

Ending the Tilt: The best way out of the rain is to get indoors. Unless it's the start of some sodden apocalypse, the characters can wait for the weather to ease.

HEAVY WINDS
ENVIRONMENTAL

Description: Howling winds buffet at the characters, whipping street furniture into the air and tearing the roofs from buildings. Powerful winds can toss cars around like toys. Anyone out in the winds feels like they're taking a beating just walking down the street.

Effect: Heavy winds are loud, so characters suffer a -3 modifier to aural Perception rolls. Also, the wind inflicts a penalty to all Physical rolls when out in the winds, including Drive rolls. Grade the wind from one to five; one is tropical-storm level (around 40 MPH), three is hurricane level (around 80 MPH), and five is tornado level (150+ MPH). The wind's grade represents the penalty applied to Physical dice rolls. Characters outside in the maelstrom also take damage from flying debris, taking bashing damage each turn equal to the wind's rating. Characters can make a reflexive Dexterity + Athletics roll to avoid damage.

Causing the Tilt: Heavy winds are a fact of life, from siroccos in the desert, to tornados in the Midwest, to wind shears everywhere.

Ending the Tilt: Getting out of the wind is the best way to end this Tilt. Sometimes that's as easy as sheltering in an automobile, as long as nobody tries to drive. Buildings provide more permanent shelter.

ICE
ENVIRONMENTAL

Description: The ground's covered in a mirror-smooth layer of ice that sends wheels spinning and people's feet flying out from under them. The ice can be so thin as to be nearly invisible, or it can be a thick layer that's the only thing keeping the characters from sinking into a frozen lake.

Effect: When a character can't trust her footing, divide her Speed in half, and all Physical rolls (and Defense) suffer a -2 penalty. Attempting to move at full Speed increases the Physical penalty to -4. Any dramatic failure on a Physical roll inflicts the Knocked Down Tilt. Driving on ice is a real pain; halve Acceleration, and characters suffer a -5 penalty to Drive rolls.

Causing the Tilt: This Tilt doesn't just apply to icy conditions, but to any surface that's slick and slippery, including a spill of industrial lubricant or just a well-polished wooden or linoleum floor. Characters can use a Dexterity + Crafts roll to cover an area in industrial cleaner or mix up chemicals into a lubricant. If the Extreme Cold Tilt is in effect, even covering the area with water will do the trick.

Ending the Tilt: "Get off the ice" is good advice, but that can take work. Characters can use heat or fire to melt ice, or throw down copious quantities of salt or grit to increase traction.

IMMOBILIZED
PERSONAL

Description: Something holds the character fast, preventing him from moving. This could be a grappling opponent, a straightjacket wrapped with heavy chains, or a coffin secured on the outside with a padlock.

Effect: The character can't do anything but wriggle helplessly. He can't apply Defense against incoming attacks, and can't take combat-related actions. If someone's holding him down, he can spend a point of Willpower to deliver a head butt or similar attack, but even that might not free him.

Causing the Tilt: The usual way to inflict this Tilt is through the Restrain grappling move. This often uses material means to prevent the victim from moving, such as binding limbs with duct tape or zip ties, tossing the victim into a car trunk or similar tight space, or applying painful holds and joint locks.

Ending the Tilt: An Immobilized target can break free by escaping from a grapple or snapping whatever binds her. If grappled, the character can struggle as normal but can only select the Break Free move on a success. If held by an item, the character must make a Strength + Athletics roll penalized by the item's Durability. If a character's arms and legs are both bound, he suffers a -2 penalty; this increases to -4 if he's hogtied. On a success, he snaps the bindings or breaks free. Each roll, successful or not, deals a point of bashing damage.

INSANE
PERSONAL

Description: The character suffers from a panic attack, sudden imbalance, or a full-on psychotic break. Her pulse races, her mind cannot focus on what she wants. The world's an unstable place, and she's unable to keep her balance.

Effect: Someone suffering a psychotic break isn't the sort of person to go down without a fight. Her stated intent might be irrational or just plain impossible, and she might have fewer ethical problems with using extreme violence to get what she wants. The character gains a +1 bonus to all combat rolls, but takes actions after everyone else (if two characters suffer from the Insane Tilt, both act after everyone else but compare Initiative as normal). A character suffering from this Tilt cannot spend Willpower in combat, and suffers a -3 penalty to all Social rolls.

Causing the Tilt: Faced with extraordinary circumstances, any character with an appropriate Condition may acquire the Insane Tilt. The Storyteller can call for a Resolve + Composure roll to resist a general anxiety that gnaws at the character's mind; if the character fails, he gains the Tilt. If the character witnesses something truly horrific — a daughter watches her father walk to the end of the garden and shoot himself in the head, smiling all the while; a man stumbles into the wrong office at work and sees his coworkers feasting on the intern's organs; a solder sees her unit gunned down by a sniper while she can do nothing — the Storyteller can rule that the Tilt is unavoidable.

A character can work to *inspire* another character's madness in order to cause this Tilt. She could orchestrate events that she hopes will provoke a psychotic break, but that's amateur hour. A professional swaps out her victim's meds, giving stimulants just as his bipolar cycle ticks into mania, or dosing a paranoid schizophrenic with hallucinogenic drugs.

Some supernatural creatures possess mind-affecting powers that can apply this Tilt, even to characters who do not have an appropriate Condition.

Ending the Tilt: The specific effects of this Tilt don't normally last beyond the end of the scene. A character can try to force her mind to a state of balance, but it's not easy. She must sit and focus on blocking out the craziness. She rolls Resolve + Composure as an instant action, contested by a dice pool of (10 - her Willpower). She can't take any other actions that turn, and doesn't apply Defense against any attacks.

INSENSATE
PERSONAL

Description: The character shuts down, either due to extreme fear or sudden pleasure. He may huddle in a corner, cringe away from sudden noises, or stare into space as waves of pleasure lap over him.

Effect: The character can't take any actions until the Tilt is resolved. He can apply Defense to incoming attacks, and if he takes any damage from an attack, he's knocked free of whatever fogged his brain.

Causing the Tilt: Several supernatural powers can leave their victim in a trance-like state of heightened emotion, whether a vampire's mind-affecting tricks, or the pants-shitting terror of witnessing a werewolf take on an inhuman form. A truly heroic amount of alcohol or a hallucinogenic drug might have similar effects; administering such a drug is a Dexterity + Weaponry attack, which suffers a -1 modifier for the improvised weapon.

Ending the Tilt: The Tilt wears off at the end of the scene. The victim can spend a point of Willpower before then to act normally for one turn. A successful attack will also end the Tilt. If a character has been knocked insensible by drugs, then when this Tilt ends it is replaced with the Drugged Tilt.

KNOCKED DOWN
PERSONAL

Description: Something knocks the character to the floor, either toppling her with a powerful blow to the chest or taking one of her legs out from under her.

Effect: The character is knocked off her feet. If she hasn't already acted this turn, she loses her action. Once she's on the ground, a character is considered prone. The character can still apply Defense against incoming attacks, and can attempt to attack from the ground at a -2 penalty.

Causing the Tilt: A melee weapon with a damage modifier of +2 or greater, or a firearm with a damage modifier of +3 or more can be used to knock a character down with the force of the blow. Alternatively, a melee weapon or unarmed attack can knock an opponent down with a targeted attack against the legs (-2 modifier). The attacker declares that he wants to knock his opponent down, and halves the total damage done (rounding down). On a successful attack, the target is knocked down.

Ending the Tilt: The easiest way to end this Tilt is to stand up, which takes an action. A character who hasn't yet acted can make a Dexterity + Athletics roll, minus any weapon modifier, instead of her normal action. If successful, she avoids the effects of this Tilt altogether. On a failure, she falls over and the Tilt applies as normal.

LEG WRACK
PERSONAL

Description: Your leg feels like it's going to snap clean off whenever you move; when you stop moving you feel a burning numbness that encourages you to avoid action.

Effect: If your leg is broken, sprained, or dislocated, halve your Speed and suffer a -2 penalty on Physical rolls that require movement (and Defense). If both of your legs are wracked, you fall over — taking the Knocked Down Tilt — and cannot get up. Your Speed is reduced to 1; if you want to move at all, you cannot take any other action. Physical rolls that require movement are reduced to a chance die.

Causing the Tilt: Some supernatural powers can cripple a victim's limbs or break bones with a touch. A character can have his leg knocked out by a targeted blow to the leg (-2 penalty) that deals more damage than the character's Stamina.

Ending the Tilt: If the Tilt is inflicted as a result of an attack, mark an X under the leftmost Health box affected by that attack. The Tilt ends when that damage that caused it has healed. If the damage that inflicts this Tilt is aggravated, the character loses use of his leg permanently.

POISONED
PERSONAL

Description: You've got poison inside you. It's tearing you apart from the inside, burning like acid in your gut and making your head swim.

Effect: This Tilt applies a general sense of being poisoned to a character without worrying about Toxicity during combat. For the purposes of this Tilt, a poison is either "moderate" or "grave" — a moderate poison causes one point of bashing damage per turn of combat, while a grave poison ups that to one point of lethal damage per turn. If the Storyteller cares to continue the effects of the poison outside of combat, he can apply the standard rules for handling poisons and toxins when combat is complete.

Causing the Tilt: It's possible for a character to not know that he's been poisoned. It could be as innocuous as switching drinks with a pretty girl who is the target of a mob hit, or as simple as walking into a house with a carbon monoxide leak. That being said, the main time poison comes up in combat is when one combatant inflicts it on another. Injecting your opponent with a syringe full of drain cleaner or snake venom counts as a Dexterity + Weaponry attack, and suffers a -1 modifier for the improvised weapon.

Ending the Tilt: Short of immediate medical attention — and how many fights take place in an emergency room? — all a victim can do is struggle on. Roll Stamina + Resolve as a reflexive action each turn that your character is poisoned. If your character intends to act (meaning, takes a non-reflexive action), the roll suffers a -3 penalty. Success counteracts the damage for one turn only.

SICK
PERSONAL

Description: Your stomach churns. You retch and heave but only succeed in bringing up bile. Sweat beads on your brow as you spike a fever. Your muscles ache with every movement. You're wracked with hot and cold flushes as a sickness gnaws away at your insides.

Effect: This Tilt applies a general sickness to a character without worrying about the specific illness. For the purposes of this Tilt, a sickness is either "moderate" or "grave." A moderate sickness, such as a cold, asthma, the flu, or just a bad hangover, causes a -1 penalty to all actions during combat. That penalty increases by one every two turns (the first two turns, the character suffers a -1 penalty, the next two turns the penalty is -2, and so on up to a maximum of -5 on turn nine). A grave sickness, such as pneumonia, heavy metal poisoning, or aggressive cancer, inflicts the same dice penalties as a mild sickness. In addition, the physical stress of fighting or even defending oneself from an attacker while gravely ill inflicts a point of bashing damage per turn of combat.

Causing the Tilt: It's not easy to deliberately make someone sick. Sure, if you can get your hands on a vial of smallpox or deliberately use a disease you've got to make someone sick (a breaking point, especially in the case of grave diseases like AIDS), then you've got a reasonable chance. Some supernatural creatures have abilities that can inflict diseases on others. Aside from that, you've just got to expose your opponent to the sickness long before you fight and hope for the best.

Ending the Tilt: This Tilt reflects the effects of sickness as they specifically applies to combat. The penalties inflicted by this Tilt fade at a rate of one point per turn once the character has a chance to rest, but any damage inflicted remains until the character can heal.

STUNNED
PERSONAL

Description: Your character is dazed and unable to think straight. Maybe her vision blurs. If she's stunned as a result of a blow to the head, she's probably got a concussion.

Effect: A character with the Stunned Tilt loses her next action, and halves her Defense until she can next act.

Causing the Tilt: A character can be stunned by any attack that does at least as much damage as her Size in a single hit. Some weapons have a "stun" special ability. These double the weapon modifier only for the purposes of working out whether the attacker inflicts the Stunned Tilt. Attacks against the target's head (see Specified Targets, p. 157) count the character's Size as one lower for the purposes of this Tilt. The Storyteller might determine that additional effects cause this Tilt, like being caught in the blast area of an explosion.

Ending the Tilt: The effects of this Tilt normally only last for a single turn. The character can end the Tilt during her own action by reflexively spending a point of Willpower to gather her wits, though she suffers a -3 modifier to any actions she takes that turn.

Personal Tilts

Tilt	Effects
Arm Wrack	One arm: Drop anything held, suffer off-hand penalties for most rolls. Both arms: Chance die on rolls requiring manual dexterity, –3 to other Physical actions.
Beaten Down	Cannot take violent action in combat without spending Willpower.
Blinded	One eye: –3 to vision-related rolls. Both eyes: –5 to vision-related rolls, lose all Defense.
Deafened	One ear: –3 Perception rolls. Both ears: Chance die on Perception rolls, –2 to combat rolls.
Drugged	–2 Speed, –3 to combat rolls (including Defense and Perception). Ignore wound penalties.
Immobilized	No combat actions. Can't move or apply Defense.
Insane	+1 to combat rolls, act after everyone else, –3 to Social rolls, can't spend Willpower.
Insensate	No combat actions. Can move and apply Defense. Taking damage ends the Tilt.
Knocked Down	Lose action this turn (if it hasn't been taken), knocked prone. Can apply Defense, attack from ground at –2.
Leg Wrack	One leg: half Speed, –2 penalty on Physical rolls for movement. Both legs: Knocked Down, give up action to move at Speed 1, movement-based Physical rolls reduced to chance die.
Poisoned	Moderate: One point of bashing damage per turn. Grave: One point of lethal damage per turn.
Sick	Moderate: –1 to all actions. Penalty increases by 1 every two turns. Grave: As moderate, but also inflicts one point of bashing damage per turn.
Stunned	Lose next action. Half Defense until the characters next acts.

Environmental Tilts

Tilt	Effects
Blizzard	–1 penalty to visual Perception and ranged attack rolls, increased by 1 per 10 yards. –1 penalty to Physical rolls per four inches of snow.
Earthquake	Penalty to Dexterity rolls depending on severity. Take one to three lethal damage per turn, Stamina + Athletics downgrades to bashing.
Extreme Cold	Bashing damage doesn't heal. –1 penalty to all rolls, increasing by 1 per hour. At –5, further hours deal one point of lethal damage.
Extreme Heat	Bashing damage doesn't heal. –1 penalty to all rolls, increasing by 1 per hour. At –5, further hours deal one point of lethal damage.
Flooded	–2 to Physical dice pools per foot of flooding. Once water is over head, character must swim or hold breath.
Heavy Rain	–3 to aural and visual Perception rolls.
Heavy Winds	–3 modifier to aural Perception rolls. Winds rated between 1 and 5, severity acts as penalty to Physical rolls and deals that much bashing damage per turn, Dexterity + Athletics to avoid.
Ice	–2 Speed, –2 to Physical actions. Can move at normal speed but –4 Physical actions. Dramatic Failure causes Knocked Down; Drive rolls are at –5 and half Acceleration.

Conditions

ADDLED

Something's wrong with your memory. You remember faces but not names, and your sense of time is shot — you're sure you broke your leg falling off the swings just yesterday, but that happened 20 years ago and you have no memory of the guy with the hobbling post who caused this break. You don't forget skills or most facts (though you might slip up on the president's name); it's just that your memories are jumbled.

Effects

- Rolls to remember specific events are reduced to a chance die
- –2 to Composure dice pools

Possible Sources

- Progressive mental deterioration
- Haunts

Resolution: Walk into a dangerous situation or otherwise suffer significant difficulty because of your lack of memory.

BONDING

You had a brief moment of understanding with your geist, and you have an inkling of where it is coming from or what it wants.

Effect

- Your relationship with your geist improves by one step

Possible Sources: Succeeding at a crisis point roll

Resolution: Face another crisis point, improve your geist's Remembrance, or gain a dot of Synergy. Resolving this Condition grants a Synergy Beat.

CONNECTED
(PERSISTENT)

Your character has made inroads with a specified group. While he has this Condition, he gets a +2 to all rolls relating to that group. Alternately, he can shed this Condition to gain a one-time automatic exceptional success on the next roll to influence or otherwise take advantage of the group. Once Connected is resolved, the character is considered to have burned his bridges and is no longer an accepted member. The character may be able to regain Connected with the specified group per Storyteller approval.

Example Skills: Politics, Socialize

Resolution: The character loses his membership or otherwise loses his standing with the group.

Beat: The character is asked to perform a favor for the group that inconveniences him,

DEAD

Something's killed you, and now your geist is free in the world until it can bring you back.

Effects

- Your geist is Unleashed (p. 302) for the rest of the scene. Play as the geist until this Condition is resolved.
- If the geist is destroyed or consumed, the Sin-Eater dies with it.
- Resolving this Condition grants a Krewe Beat, as the Sin-Eater better understands the mysteries of the Underworld.

Possible Sources: Suffering fatal damage

Resolution: Return from the dead at the end of the scene. When you resolve this Condition, you return to life with all your Health boxes filled with lethal damage, all Tilts removed, and 1 Plasm. Resolving this Condition reduces your Synergy by 1.

DEFIANT
(PERSISTENT)

The character has broken an Old Law, intentionally or otherwise, and she is stained with the pall of the lawbreaker. All can sense the mark of the Kerberos upon her, and avoid her for their own safety.

Effects

- The character is aware she has broken an Old Law.
- The character takes a –2 modifier to all Social actions in the Dominion.
- The Kerberos of the Dominion is aware of her location.

Possible Sources

- Violating an Old Law
- The Boneyard Haunt (p. 101)

Resolution: Receive punishment from the Dominion's Kerberos.

Beat: Experience consequences or difficulties because of your transgression.

DEPRIVED

Your character suffers from an addiction. Because your character is without it, she's unable to focus and contain herself. remove one die from her Stamina, Resolve, and Composure dice pools. This does not influence derived traits; it simply influences dice pools that use these Attributes.

Possible Sources: Failing to feed an addiction, placed by a Sin-Eater via Exaltation, failing to perform a Ceremony.

Resolution: Your character indulges their addiction, completes a more powerful Ceremony, or visits the Underworld.

ECHOES

You have echoes of being able to do something despite never learning how, fragments of your geist's experiences lingering in your mind.

Effect

- –1 to all actions involving a Remembrance Trait

Possible Sources: Using a Remembrance Trait

Resolution

- Buy a dot in any Merit or Skill you have used as a Remembrance Trait while possessing this Condition.
- Gain an exceptional success on any roll using a Remembrance Skill without boosting it with Plasm.

FERRY BOUND

The character has taken on the mantle of the Ferryman, tying herself to the Rivers and her vessel. In doing so, she attunes herself to the ebb and flow of the Underworld, to the rise and fall of Dominions, and the twisting skein of entropy behind it all — and how to exploit it.

Effects

- Automatically succeed on Underworld navigation rolls
- Must collect a price from all passengers, commensurate with the length and peril of the journey. Prices may be in Essence, the acquisition of Persistent Conditions or Tilts, or even more esoteric things.
- The journey always deposits passengers in a situation they are suited to destabilizing.
- Carrying a passenger without payment or leaving the ferry ends the Condition without resolving.

Possible Sources: Claim a vessel worthy of sailing the Rivers of the Underworld and swear an oath to carry passengers safely to their destination.

Resolution: Carry a passenger or passengers to a destination they will ultimately help to destabilize.

FLATLINING
(PERSISTENT)

The relationship with your geist has broken down completely; you're not able to communicate enough even to threaten or cajole one another.

Effects

- Cannot gain Synergy Beats or spend Synergy Experiences
- Cannot use Haunts or Keys
- Cannot spend Plasm
- Do not come back from the dead when killed
- Cannot interact with beings in Twilight
- Automatically fail rolls involving crisis points, and cannot prevent your geist from responding
- Cannot access Remembrance Traits or Unleash your geist

Possible Sources: Hitting Synergy 0

Resolution

- Complete a stage of your geist's Remembrance
- Shatter your geist's Touchstone.

Beat: Face a crisis point.

FUGUE
(PERSISTENT)

Something terrible happened. Rather than deal with it or let it break you, your mind shuts it out. You are prone to blackouts and lost time.

Effects

- In circumstances similar to the triggering event, succeed on a reflexive Resolve + Composure roll or lose control of your character for the rest of the scene.
- Left to their own devices, the character will try to avoid the scene and leave the immediate area.

Possible Sources

- Psychological trauma
- Encountering a breaking point
- Some Haunts

Resolution

- Regain a dot of Integrity
- Lose *another* dot of Integrity
- Achieve an exceptional success on a breaking point.

Beat: You enter a fugue state as described above.

GHOST-MARKED
(PERSISTENT)

Something has marked you, and you're no longer entirely a creature of the living. Perhaps one of your hands has had its flesh burned away yet remains intact as an animate skeleton, or your eyes have rotted away even though you can still see just fine. While you can hide the mark, and people who see it at a distance might mistake it for makeup or a prosthetic, those who get up close will not make that mistake.

Effects

- Social actions against anyone living who can currently see the mark are reduced to a chance die.
- –2 on social actions against anyone living who has previously seen the mark.
- Sin-Eaters instinctively know the character has been marked, even without seeing the mark.

Possible Sources: Some Haunts

Resolution

- The Sin-Eater who bestowed the mark removes it
- Another supernatural power removes the mark

Beat: You fail a Social roll as a result of someone seeing the ghost-mark.

INDEBTED

Your character feels a distinct tension that tells her things are out of balance. Either the geist grows impatient and displeased or you're starting to wonder who really benefits from your second shot at life.

Effects

- Cumulative –1 per day to Haunt activation, using Remembrance Traits, or crisis point rolls
- The first point of Plasm you spend in a scene has no effect.

Possible Sources: Neglecting one Touchstone for another

Resolution: Regaining Willpower by defending or supporting the neglected Touchstone

INSPIRED

Your character is deeply inspired. When your character takes an action pertaining to that inspiration, you may resolve this Condition. An exceptional success on that toll requires only three successes instead of five, and you gain a point of Willpower.

Example Skills: Crafts, Expression

Resolution: You spend inspiration to spur yourself to greater success, resolving the Condition as described above.

LAWBREAKER (PERSISTENT)

You have been branded a lawbreaker by the Kerberos of a Deep Dominion. The Dominion itself is raised against you, and you may only shed the label by completing the task the Kerberos sets you.

When you gain this Condition, note it as Lawbreaker (Dominion), with the Dominion in which you broke the Old Law.

Effects

- Your maximum Synergy is reduced by 2.
- Within the Dominion, all of your failed rolls become dramatic failures.

Beat

- Your reputation as a lawbreaker negatively impacts you.

Possible Sources: Break an Old Law

Resolution

- Complete the task set for you by the Kerberos of the Dominion.
- Resolving this Condition grants a Krewe Beat.

LEVERAGED

Another character has blackmailed, tricked, convinced, or otherwise leveraged yours into doing what they wish. You may have the Leveraged Condition multiple times for different characters. Any time the specified character requests something of yours, resolve this Condition if your character does as requested without rolling to resist.

Example Skills: Empathy, Persuasion, Subterfuge

Resolution: Your character may either resolve the Condition by complying with a request as above, or if you apply the Leveraged Condition to the specified character.

LOST

Your character has no idea where he is, or how to reach his target. He cannot make any headway toward his goal without first navigating and finding out where he is. This requires a successful Wits + Streetwise action (in a city) or Wits + Survival action (in the wilderness or Underworld).

Resolution: Abandoning the goal, successfully navigating.

MEMENTO COLLECTOR

Your collection is turning heads.

Effect

- When interacting with other Sin-Eaters, treat your first impression as one level higher.

Possible Sources

A Sin-Eater shows off an impressive collection, such as:

- Five Mementos with matching Keys.
- A complete set of nine Mementos, each with a different Key.
- One exceptionally famous Memento (at the Storyteller's discretion).

Resolution

- The collection is lost or removed.

MEMORY BLEED (PERSISTENT)

Wait, did you *actually* kill that guy at Dottie's Diner outside Reno? Or was that someone else? Come to think of it, was this always your face?

Effect:

- Once per story, the Storyteller replaces one of your short-term Aspirations with one suggested by one of your Memories. You can veto any Aspiration you're uncomfortable with, but you can't choose not to have a new Aspiration.

Possible Sources: Having more non-personal Memories than you have dots of Integrity.

MUTE
(PERSISTENT)

Your character cannot speak. Any communication must be done through writing, gestures, or hand signs. Illness, injury, or supernatural powers can inflict this Condition on a temporary basis.

Resolution: The character regains her voice through mundane or supernatural means.

Beat: Your character suffers a limitation or communication difficulty that heightens immediate danger.

NOTORIETY

Whether or not your character actually did something heinous in the past, the wrong people think he did and now he's ostracized by the general public. Suffer a

−2 on any Social rolls against those who know of his notoriety. If using Social Maneuvering, the character must open one extra Door if his target knows of his notoriety.

Example Skills: Socialize, Subterfuge

Resolution: The story is debunked or the character's name is cleared.

OBSESSION
(PERSISTENT)

Something's on your character's mind and she just can't shake it. She gains the 9-again quality on all rolls related to pursuing her obsession. On rolls that are unrelated to her obsession, she loses the 10-again quality. Obsession can be a temporary Condition per Storyteller approval.

Resolution: The character sheds or purges her fixation.

Beat: Character fails to fulfill an obligation due to pursuing her obsession.

REGALIA

You are crowned with the mythic power of your krewe's mysteries. When your group creates a Regalia, you should rename this Condition and spend a moment or two thinking about how that particular Regalia appears.

Effects

- Improve your impression level (p. 154) with other Sin-Eaters by 1.
- One Regalia Effect (p. 177).

Possible Sources: The Bestow Regalia Ceremony

Resolution

- Act in opposition to a krewe Doctrine, Virtue, or Creed. Gain the Guilty Condition.
- Resolve the Condition as described in the Regalia Effect description (p. 177).
- Resolving this Condition grants a Krewe Beat.

SPOOKED

You have seen something supernatural — not overt enough to terrify you, but unmistakably otherworldly. How your character responds to this is up to you, but it captivates her and dominates her focus.

Possible Sources:

- Face a breaking point
- Encounter the supernatural
- Be in a flared liminal aura

Resolution: Do something that hinders the group or complicates the situation (goes off alone to investigate a weird noise, spends all night researching, runs away instead of holding her ground, etc.)

THEOPHANY
(PERSISTENT)

It was all well and good when it started — faith, works, and a bit of miracle mixed in to spice things up. It was easy enough to understand the little things, the proof of life after death, the ectoplasm, the apparitions. It was less easy to cope with helping family members you thought long gone move on, less easy to ride through the realization that you, too, were probably going to be stuck in that hellish place. Now the faith has torn an archetypal specter from the shadows, set it and all the deaths like it free, made real changes in something ancient, monolithic, and evil. This shit is real, and it's working. How do you cope with something like that?

Effects

- The krewe gains 8-again on all Resistance rolls.
- Individual krewe members gain +1 Willpower (maximum 10).

Resolution: The krewe experiences a schism, grounding their expectations.

Krewe Beat: The krewe suffers harm or a major setback due to their own overabundance of confidence.

UNLEASHED

You are loose, free to act upon the world directly rather than through the powers of the Bargain. An Unleashed geist is a powerful force, but that power comes with increased vulnerability.

Effects

- Immediately Materialize (p. 305), ignoring all requirements of that Manifestation.
- Gain the following Advantages: Size 5, Corpus (Size + Resistance), Initiative (Finesse + Resistance), Defense (lower of Power or Finesse), Speed (Power + Finesse + 5).
- Share Plasm and Willpower pools with your bound Sin-Eater.
- Treat innate Keys as Influences with dot ratings equal to your Rank.
- Use any Haunts your Bound knows with a dice pool of Power + Rank + Haunt.
- Use Down and Dirty Combat against lower-Rank ghosts and living people without a supernatural template.
- This Condition ends (without resolving) at the end of the scene.

Possible Sources: Unleashing

Resolution: The geist's Corpus track is filled with lethal or aggravated damage. When this Condition resolves, the Sin-Eater takes a Synergy Beat and loses all remaining Plasm.

WAVERING

You did something to piss off your geist, and now it doesn't want anything to do with you. You can still communicate, but getting it to work with you is harder.

Effect: You must spend a point of Willpower in order to roll any dice pool including Synergy.

Possible Sources: Failing a crisis point roll or otherwise annoying your geist

Resolution: Make a significant physical or material sacrifice when following your geist's Remembrance. Resolving this condition grants a Synergy Beat.

WEAKENED BOND

You have unleashed your geist upon the world, and it is focused on acting out its own agenda in the world of the living. While this is a powerful state for the geist to be in, it strains the link between both halves of the Bound, leaving the Sin-Eater in a weakened state.

Effects

- Cannot spend Plasm.
- This effect ends (without resolving) when the Unleashed Condition on the Sin-Eater's geist ends (without resolving).

Possible Sources: Unleashing your geist

Resolution: The end of the scene *after* the geist resolves the Unleashed Condition.

Ephemeral Influence and Manifestation Conditions

If something falls into a ghost's sphere of influence, this is handled mechanically by declaring an Influence Condition. Influence Conditions resemble Tilts and character Conditions.

The different forms of the Manifestation Effect are also Conditions applied to the location, object, or character the ghost is Manifesting into or, in cases like Materialized, to the ghost.

Unlike many Conditions, Influence and Manifestation Conditions are tiered and interrelated; Manifestation Conditions have Influence Conditions as prerequisites and vice-versa. The lower tiers are naturally occurring, while the later ones must be created by ghosts using Influences and Manifestations.

In the most advanced forms of Influence and Manifestation, ghosts may attempt to create a long-lasting Condition that has a prerequisite of a very temporary one. When one Condition is advanced into another, the remaining duration of the prerequisite Conditions is "frozen."

If a prerequisite Condition is removed from a character (for example, a Possessed character's Open Condition is removed by exorcism) any Conditions relying on it, any relying on them, and so on are immediately removed. The most advanced remaining Condition then resumes its duration.

ANCHOR

The subject of this Condition — usually a location or object, though it can be a person in rare cases — is within the sphere of influence of a ghost. Ghosts in or within (Rank x 3) yards of their Anchors do not suffer Essence bleed.

Causing the Condition: This Condition is immediately created when a new ghost is formed, based on whatever subject anchors the ghost's identity. Summoning rituals intended to release ghosts from the Underworld or call them from elsewhere temporarily create this Condition in their target. Finally, a high-Rank ghost can use a Create Influence to mark a target as an Anchor.

Ending the Condition: The easiest way to end an Anchor condition is to destroy the subject. Some ghosts cling to Anchors that represent unfinished business, in which case resolving those issues can remove the Condition. Ghosts without Anchors bleed Essence until they fall into dormancy, at which point the Underworld Gate Condition is created and the ghost is banished to the Great Below.

BOUND GEIST

The ghost is now a geist, partnered with one of the Bound thanks to the Bargain. While Bound, a geist's Attributes are replaced with those derived from the host. Bound geists may not use any Influences, Numina, or other Manifestations, but do not need to spend Essence to remain active or suffer Essence Bleed. They use the host's Willpower and Plasm instead of their own Willpower and Essence pools.

Causing the Condition: This Condition is created by a ghost using the Bargain Manifestation.

Ending the Condition: Although low Synergy can cause the Bargain to waver, the bond between Bound and geist is only destroyed by the host's final death.

CLAIMED

A Claimed object, corpse, creature, or person has been permanently possessed and merges with the ghost involved. Unlike Possess, living Claimed aren't put into a fugue state, but remain mentally active while their soul and the Claiming ghost merge together over the course of several days. During the period of fusion, the subject is under all the effects of the Urged Condition, described on p. 306. Once per day, starting with the moment the Claimed Condition is created, add one dot of the ghost's Attributes to the host's, permanently raising them. Power may be assigned to Strength, Intelligence, or Presence, Finesse to Wits, Dexterity, or Manipulation, and Resistance to Stamina, Composure, or Resolve. The host's physical form begins to mutate, taking on an appearance influenced by the original host and the ghost.

Claimed corpses add points to Attributes as above, but start with all Mental and Social Attributes at 0. Inanimate objects use the statistics appropriate for their type (Adding Resistance to Structure and Durability, Power to Acceleration and Finesse to Handling) instead of Physical Attributes, and also start the claiming process with all Mental and Social Attributes at 0. Corpses and inanimate hosts don't spend the claiming period under the Urged Condition, having no minds of their own to warp.

Claimed may use the ghost's Influences, but not Numina or Manifestation Effects. They may develop supernatural powers as Merits. From the moment the Claimed Condition is laid, the ghost is safe from Essence Bleed. The hybrid being that results has the ghost's Essence trait, Virtue, Vice, Ban, and Bane, but is a material being. Claimed that were once spirits may cross the Gauntlet at a Locus with a successful Intelligence + Presence roll. Claimed that were inanimate objects are fully animate, fusions of spiritual power, metal, and plastic.

Causing the Condition: This Condition is created by a ghost using the Claim Manifestation Effect.

Ending the Condition: Claim is permanent in living hosts unless the ghost decides to detach itself, rolling its original Power + Finesse penalized by Rank in dice and contested by the Claimed hybrid's Resolve + Composure, including any dots gained from being Claimed. If the ghost succeeds, the ghost and host are separated. Former hosts are physically and mentally scarred — the physical appearance changes back at the same rate it mutated and the extra Attribute dots fade at a rate of two per day. The Essence trait and any supernatural powers the Claimed developed immediately vanish. Former Claimed, however, retain the Virtue and Vice of the ghost that took them over.

In nonliving hosts, Claim is only temporary — once the Claim has fully formed, the host loses one dot of a Physical Attribute (or equivalent for formerly inanimate objects) per three days. When any of these Attributes reaches 0, the host disintegrates and the ghost is released into Twilight.

CONTROLLED

The object, creature, or person covered by an Open Condition has now been so conditioned that the ghost may attempt to Claim it, permanently merging with it.

Prerequisites: The intended subject of this Condition must have the Open Condition, tagged to the ghost attempting to cause it.

Causing the Condition: This Condition is the result of repeated use of the Possess Manifestation effect by a ghost. She must have succeeded in possessing the subject on a number of separate occasions equal to the Willpower of ghost or subject (whichever is higher). If any Possessed Condition is removed before its duration ends, progress is lost on building to the required number of possessions.

Ending the Condition: Successfully ending the Claimed Condition against the ghost's will, for example by forcing the Claimed subject into contact with the ghost's Bane, removes this Condition and reverts the subject to Open.

ENGULFED

The ghost has been imprisoned within another ghost's Corpus. While Engulfed, the victim enters hibernation as though she had lost all Corpus, but cannot regain Essence. Anything that would cause an Engulfed ghost to gain Essence grants that Essence to the captor instead. The captor may also commit ectophagia (p. 99) on the target without resistance.

Causing the Condition: This Condition is created by a ghost using the Engulf Manifestation Effect on another ghost.

Ending the Condition: Engulfed lasts one day, but the engulfing ghost may pay the Essence cost spent to engulf the victim again to make it last another day. When this Manifestation ends, the victims are expelled from the engulfing ghost and begin regaining Essence.

FETTERED

The ghost has secured itself to an object or creature. As long as it remains Fettered, the ghost is safe from Essence Bleed. The ghost remains in Twilight and must stay within five yards of the Fetter. Most entities Fettering themselves literally hide inside their Fetters if they are small enough.

The ghost pays one fewer Essence for using Influences on the Fetter, but may not use them or Numina on another target as long as the Fetter lasts.

Prerequisites: The intended subject of this Condition must have the Open Condition, tagged to the ghost attempting to cause it.

Causing the Condition: This Condition is created by a ghost using the Fetter Manifestation Effect.

Ending the Condition: Fetters are permanent unless the prerequisite Conditions are ended, or if the subject of the Fetter is destroyed or killed (if a living being). The ghost can voluntarily end the Condition by using the Unfetter Manifestation Effect.

MATERIALIZED

The ghost has shifted from ephemeral to material substance, manifesting in physical form. All the rules for ephemeral entity's traits still apply except for the effects of being in Twilight. This Condition protects the ghost from Essence Bleed for its duration.

Causing the Condition: This Condition is created by a ghost using the Materialize Manifestation Effect on an Open Condition. If the Open Condition used is on an object or person, the ghost must materialize within its Rank in yards.

Ending the Condition: Materialization lasts for one hour per success on the activating roll. When the duration ends, the ghost fades back into Twilight. Physical contact with a Bane or removal of a prerequisite Condition can cause the Condition to end early.

OPEN

The place, object, animal, or person covered by Anchor has now been conditioned to accept a ghost. That ghost can now attempt to Fetter itself to the subject of the Condition, or, if the Condition is on a location, Manifest.

Prerequisites: The Anchor Condition for the same phenomenon to which this Condition is tagged.

Causing the Condition: This Condition is usually the result of fine-tuning the Anchor Condition as part of an extended action, involving the subject and ghost acting in concert for a number of scenes equal to Rank or a living subject's Resolve, whichever is higher. Using a Control Influence allows a ghost to temporarily create the Open Condition as an instant action, and Plasm created by Manifestation causes Open on anything it covers until it decays.

Ending the Condition: The Condition ends if the Anchor Condition is removed or the Plasm creating it decays.

POSSESSED

This object, corpse, or living being is temporarily controlled by a ghost. Living hosts are put into a coma-like state while being possessed — they experience the possession as missing time, except for flashbacks that might come out in dreams or times of stress such as losing Integrity. The ghost may not use Numina or Influences while controlling the host, but is safe from Essence Bleed as long as the possession lasts.

The ghost may pay 1 Essence per turn to heal one lethal or bashing wound or a point of structure lost to damage. Corpses that died through damage begin Possession incapacitated and must be "healed" with Essence.

Entities possessing inanimate objects or corpses have a great deal of control over their host. A ghost controlling an object can't make it do anything it couldn't do while being operated, but it can turn switches on and off, operate machinery, use keyboards, and turn dials. Use the ghost's Finesse if dice rolls are necessary.

Corpses and other articulated hosts capable of movement, such as shop mannequins or industrial robots, use their own Physical Attributes but the ghost's Attributes in Social or Mental rolls. By spending a point of Essence, the ghost can use its own Attributes instead of the host's for Physical tasks for a turn, but doing so causes one point of lethal damage or structure loss to the host.

Living hosts require more time for the ghost to gain full control and always use their own Attributes. The ghost may read the host's mind with a Finesse Roll at a –4 die penalty, use the host's Physical Skills at a –3 penalty, and the host's Social and Mental Skills at –4. These penalties are all reduced by one die per day that the ghost has been Fettered to the host. Most possessing entities Fetter themselves to their intended hosts and use the Possess Manifestation Effect to take full control only in emergencies.

To possess a host, the ghost must remain in Twilight, superimposed over the host. This means that if the host touches the ghost's Bane or is injured by a weapon made of the Bane, the ghost will suffer wounds to its Corpus.

Causing the Condition: This Condition is created by a ghost using the Possess Manifestation Effect. The object or victim must be under the Open Condition, tagged to the ghost.

Ending the Condition: The possession lasts for a single scene, unless the ghost abandons it early or the host is killed or destroyed.

UNDERWORLD GATE

The location has an open gateway between the Underworld and living world, which ghosts may freely use to cross between worlds. All ghosts on the living world side

lose 1 Essence per scene that they are in the gateway's presence.

Causing the Condition: This Condition can be created by using the Avernian Gateway Manifestation Effect on an Open Condition. Existing Avernian Gates may be opened by anyone utilizing the proper Key (p. 121).

Ending the Condition: At the end of the scene, the Condition fades.

URGED

This animal or human host has been used as a Fetter by an ephemeral being. The ghost may read the subject's thoughts with a successful Power + Finesse roll, contested by Resolve + Supernatural Tolerance. Success reveals surface thoughts. The ghost may urge the host to take a specified action with a successful Power + Finesse roll contested by Resolve + Composure with an extra die. If the ghost wins, the urge is created. Following it rewards the host with a Beat.

Causing the Condition: This Condition is created by a ghost using the Fetter Manifestation Effect.

Ending the Condition: The Urged Condition ends whenever the linked Fetter ends.

Haunt Conditions & Tilts

ACTOR

You have become part of a Memoria, taking on the persona and actions of someone involved in the events. Your character doesn't gain any knowledge of who their persona was or what they were thinking, but nonetheless your character finds themselves compelled to do what their persona did and say what they said during the Echo.

Effects:

- Your actions are dictated by the Echo in which you are participating.
- If an action the character is compelled to take would be a breaking point (or a crisis point, or equivalent), or if you suffer lethal damage, you may attempt to break the spell with a reflexive Resolve + Composure roll. Being reminded of your true identity by someone not involved in the Echo also allows an attempt to break the spell.
- While you have this Condition, the phantasmal memories *are* real and solid to you. You can walk up the image of a staircase that collapsed 80 years ago, pick up an illusionary gun, and be injured by phantom bullets.

Possible Sources: Some Haunts, the influence of some ghosts or haunted places

Resolution:

- The illusion plays out to completion.
- The character succeeds at a roll to break the spell.
- The character fails a breaking point roll caused by her persona's actions.
- You are confronted by the Ban or Bane of the inflicting Sin-Eater's geist.
- When this Condition resolves, the Sin-Eater who created it also takes a Beat.

BONEYARD

Description: The Bound's consciousness suffuses the haunted landscape. The walls imperceptibly shudder and shake as if they were breathing. Plasm in the environment seeps into inanimate objects, infusing them with a small amount of the Sin-Eater's awareness and allowing them to move with a life of their own. Pianos play as if automated, lights flicker to life, and doors fling themselves open or lock tight of their own accord. The animated objects are too clumsy and single minded to directly harm someone in the Boneyard, but in some locations, such as old factories or warehouses just the illusion of life can be hazardous enough to harm an unwary trespasser.

Effect:

- The Sin-Eater has perfect awareness of the layout and architectural details of the area they control.
- Characters within the Boneyard cannot hide their presence or location from the Sin-Eater. Supernatural beings attempting to use magic to hide themselves must make a Clash of Wills against the Bound.
- The Sin-Eater may create minor, cosmetic poltergeist effects within the Boneyard, such as flickering lights, slamming doors, or strange sounds as reflexive actions. These effects can't be used to attack, but if someone sticks their hand into a garbage disposal or industrial press, that can inflict damage.
- The area of the Boneyard gains the Open Condition for all ghosts.

Causing the Tilt:

- Using the Boneyard Haunt.

Ending the Tilt:

- Creator leaving the area of the Boneyard, falling unconscious, or dying.
- Creator is confronted with her geist's Ban or Bane.

CAUL

You have invited your geist inside of yourself, merging flesh and Plasm into one horrific being of malleable, protean flesh controlled by a single gestalt mind.

Effects:

Caul has a number of charges determined when it is placed upon you. Spend a charge for one of the following

effects. (Other Haunts may add additional options to this list.)

- Gain an exceptional success on three successes instead of five when your viscous body would aid you (e.g. grappling, squeezing through tight spaces, intimidating the living).
- Ignore wound penalties for one turn.
- Substitute one of your geist's Attributes for yours in the same category for an action. Power may substitute for Strength, Intelligence, or Presence; Finesse for Dexterity, Wits, or Manipulation; and Resistance for Stamina, Resolve, or Composure.

The Condition ends, without resolving, when all charges have been spent.

Possible Sources: The Caul Haunt

Resolution:

- The character dies or is otherwise rendered unconscious.
- The geist is dismissed from their body either willingly or unwillingly.
- The geist suffers a crisis point.
- You are confronted with your geist's Ban or Bane.

CURSE

A Sin-Eater has lain a Curse on you, and the universe is out to get you because of it. Bad luck is out to get you at the best of times.

Effects:

- The Curse has a number of charges determined when it is placed upon you. Each charge can inflict the following effect, as a reflexive action by the Sin-Eater who cursed you. Only one effect can be applied per turn. (Other Haunts may add additional options to this list.)
- Impose a −2 penalty on one roll.

This Condition ends (without resolving) when it runs out of charges.

Possible Sources: The Curse Haunt

Resolution:

- Another Sin-Eater counters the Curse.
- The Curse mark comes into contact with the Ban or Bane of the creating Sin-Eater's geist.
- When this Condition resolves, the Sin-Eater who created it also takes a Beat.

DIRGE

You have been caught by the siren song of a Sin-Eater's Dirge.

Effects:

- You are compelled to listen to the Sin-Eater's song, and you understand what emotion or action the Dirge is meant to evoke.
- If you act in concert with the intent of the song, you get a +2 bonus on all rolls.
- Acting in opposition to the song's intent costs 1 Willpower per action.
- This Condition ends (without resolving) when the Sin-Eater stops singing.

Possible Sources:

- The Dirge Haunt.

Resolution:

- You suffer damage or a breaking point.
- A character without the Dirge Condition uses an instant action to shake you out of it.
- You are confronted with the Ban or Bane of the inflicting Sin-Eater's geist.
- When this Condition resolves, the Sin-Eater who created it also takes a Beat.

MARIONETTE

A Sin-Eater has tangled you with Plasmic strings and can manipulate you according to her whim.

Effects:

- Your actions are under the control of the Sin-Eater who inflicted this Condition on you. Any time the Sin-Eater makes you take an action, you lose your next turn.
- If you are conscious and capable of thought, you may contest puppeteered actions by rolling Strength + Stamina vs. Synergy + Marionette.
- This Condition ends (without resolving) at the end of the scene.

Possible Sources:

- The Marionette Haunt

Resolution:

- Come into contact with the Ban or Bane of the inflicting Sin-Eater's geist.
- Suffer lethal damage or a breaking point due to a command given by the Sin-Eater. Inanimate objects (including corpses) ignore this.
- Break line of sight with the Sin-Eater who created this Condition.
- When this Condition resolves, the Sin-Eater who created it also takes a Beat.

MEMORIA

Your character is haunted by visions of the past at every turn. While the Condition persists, the character experiences hallucinations of the past, replaying again and again.

Effect: Memoria has a number of charges determined when it is placed upon you. Spend a charge for one of the following effects. (Other Haunts may add additional options to this list.)

- The character gains 8-again on one roll related to investigating the event or working to resolve the unfinished trauma, using the revelation of the past as insight into how to put things right.
- You learn something from the memory that could be used as soft leverage in a Social Maneuver. When you use this leverage, remove one Door in addition to improving the impression level.

Events in the vision can trigger crisis points or Remembrance scenes as though they were really happening.

This Condition ends (without resolving) when all charges are spent.

Possible Sources:

- The Memoria Haunt

Resolution:

- You are confronted with your geist's Ban or Bane.
- You fail to intercede in a crisis point caused by the memory.

ORACLE

Your body has died — mostly — allowing your ghost to range far and wide and answer questions put to it.

Effects:

- This Condition comes into play with a number of charges equal to Plasm spent on Consulting the Oracle.
- When someone asks you a question from the list below, expend one charge. The Storyteller will answer it truthfully, along with the suggestive imagery that provided the answer.
- When you gain this Condition, you may specify a number of characters up to your dots in the Oracle who are permitted to ask questions, or you may allow anyone to ask.
- While you have this Condition, you are insensate and can take no actions except to answer questions asked of you.
- This Condition ends without resolving when all charges are spent.

Possible Sources:

- The Oracle Haunt.

Resolution:

- You suffer damage.
- You are confronted with your geist's Ban or Bane.

List of Questions

Other Haunts may add additional options to this list.

- What here is most touched by death? *Thick, red blood dripping from the hands of a person present. The sound of furious scratching and writing coming from an old journal.*
- What here most feels the Underworld's pull? *Illusory chains constricting the body of another ghost present. The ancient groaning of a building in Twilight as it begins to collapse under its own weight.*
- Who here will help me get what we desire? *The sound of fluttering bird wings and the cooing of birds around an easy mark. A glowing aura and the sound of church bells around the target.*
- What here is most treasured by someone? *An item glowing or becoming as new before the Sin-Eater's eyes. Ephemeral chains tying someone present in the room to the object.*
- What here has gone unseen? *The frenzied clawing and screaming from under the floors that follows the Mayor's son. The untanned line on the ghost's finger where once a wedding ring rested.*

RAGE

Your unnatural fury is released in the form of terrifying spectral weapons conjured by your geist.

Effects:

- Your unarmed attacks gain a weapon damage rating equal to Plasm spent on Vent the Rage. Ghosts suffer lethal damage from these attacks.
- You may substitute your Rage dots for Brawl when making unarmed attacks. If you have no dots in Brawl, you don't suffer the untrained penalty.
- This Condition ends without resolving at the end of the scene.

Possible Sources:

- The Rage Haunt

Resolution:

- You are confronted with your geist's Ban or Bane.

SERVANT

Your actions are not your own; an engine of Plasm controls your body.

Effects:

- You obey any command the Sin-Eater who controls you gives, but are otherwise free to act and speak as you wish. Corpses and objects with this Condition either repeat their last command indefinitely or stand inert when not being ordered.
- Servants retain their own minds and emotions, if they have any to begin with.
- Servants use their own Attributes and Skills, if applicable, or the Sin-Eater's Synergy + Marionette for inanimate objects. Corpses use the Physical Attributes and Skills they had in life, but suffer a cumulative –1 penalty to all actions per month since death, and can only be ordered to take Physical actions.
- This Condition ends (without resolving) at the end of the scene.

Possible Sources:

- The Marionette Haunt.

Resolution:

- Suffer lethal damage or a breaking point due to a command given by the Sin-Eater. Inanimate objects (including corpses) ignore this.
- Come into contact with the Ban or Bane of the inflicting Sin-Eater's geist.
- When this Condition resolves, the Sin-Eater who created it also takes a Beat.

SHROUD

Wrapped within a cocoon of Plasm and infused with the power of your geist, you become more like a ghost.

Effects:

You do not need to eat, sleep, or breathe. You cannot be blinded or deafened by non-supernatural means.

This Condition also has a number of charges equal to the Plasm spent when activating the Shroud. Spend one charge for the following effect. (Other Haunts may add additional options to this list.)

- Enter Twilight for a number of turns equal to your Shroud rating.

This Condition ends without resolving when all charges are spent.

Possible Sources: The Shroud Haunt

Resolution:

- You are confronted with your geist's Ban or Bane.
- You do something to draw significant attention to yourself (e.g. attack someone, scream loudly, use another Haunt).

TOMB

Memory and Plasm have woven form out of nothingness, creating a facsimile of what was lost.

Effects:

- The piece or symbolic representation of the object becomes a precise replica of the original at whatever point in its history the Sin-Eater desires. This includes any contaminants, fingerprints, or similar — if the Sin-Eater recreates a knife at the moment it was used in a murder, it has the victim's actual blood, and possibly the killer's actual fingerprints, on it.
- People or animals created by this Condition appear as freshly deceased corpses at whatever age the Sin-Eater desires.
- Objects created by this Condition are equally tangible to the living and ghosts.
- This Condition ends (without resolving) after a number of days equal to the Sin-Eater's Tomb dots. The Sin-Eater may extend this duration by spending Plasm equal to the Plasmic object's Size.

Possible Sources: The Tomb Haunt.

Resolution:

- The object comes into contact with the Ban of the creating Sin-Eater's geist.
- When this Condition resolves, the Sin-Eater who created it also takes a Beat.

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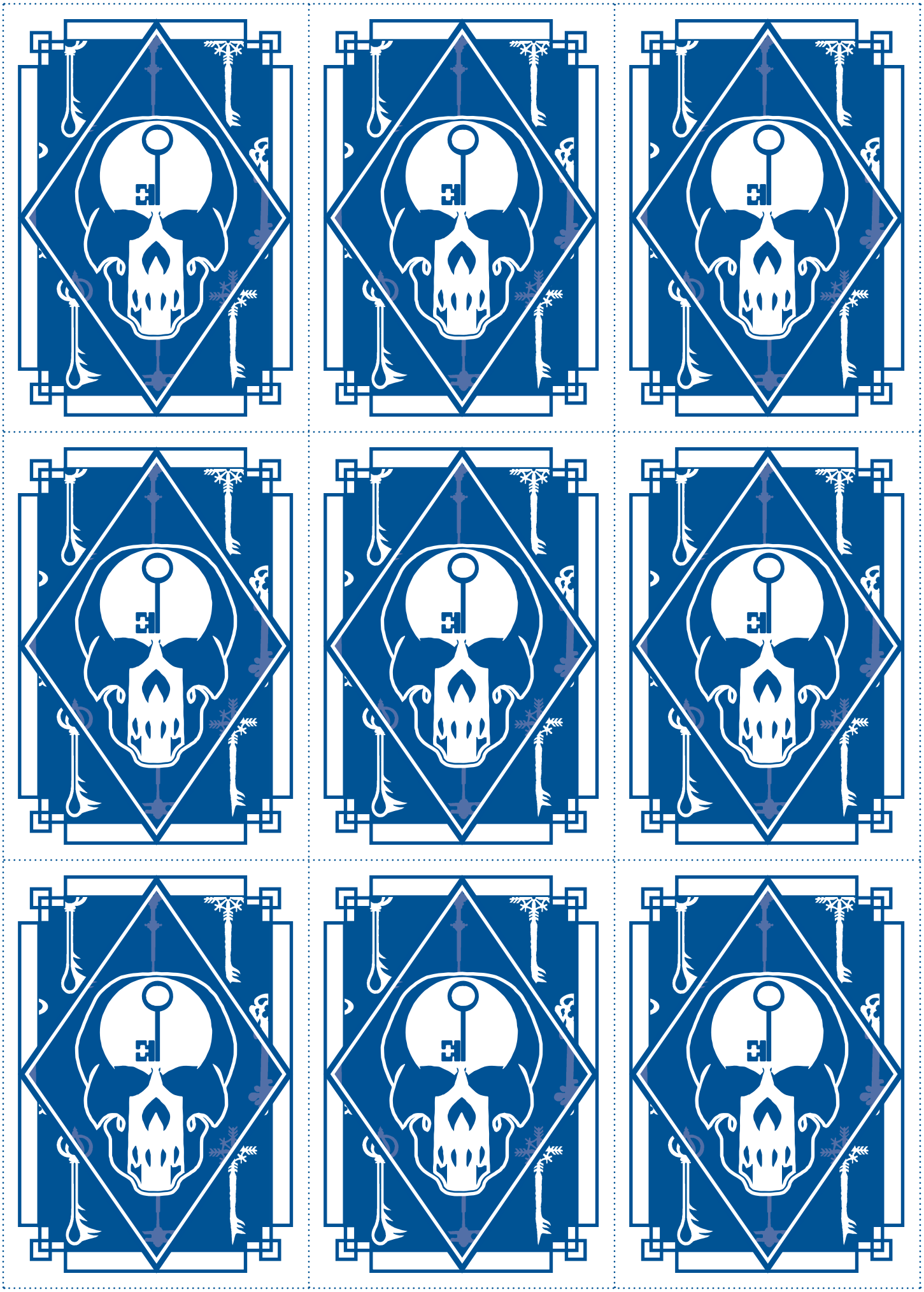

Geist
The Sin-Eaters
Second Edition

Geist: The Sin-Eaters — Second Edition

Name: _____ **Player:** _____

Geist: _____ **Concept:** _____

Chronicle: _____ **Burden:** _____

Root: _____ **Krewe:** _____

Bloom: _____ **Krewe Archetype:** _____

Attributes

POWER	Intelligence	●○○○○	Strength	●○○○○	Presence ●○○○○
FINESSE	Wits	●○○○○	Dexterity	●○○○○	Manipulation ●○○○○
RESISTANCE	Resolve	●○○○○	Stamina	●○○○○	Composure ●○○○○

Skills

MENTAL (-3 unskilled)

- ☐ Academics _____ ○○○○○
- ☐ Computer _____ ○○○○○
- ☐ Crafts _____ ○○○○○
- ☐ Investigation _____ ○○○○○
- ☐ Medicine _____ ○○○○○
- ☐ Occult _____ ○○○○○
- ☐ Politics _____ ○○○○○
- ☐ Science _____ ○○○○○

PHYSICAL (-1 unskilled)

- ☐ Athletics _____ ○○○○○
- ☐ Brawl _____ ○○○○○
- ☐ Drive _____ ○○○○○
- ☐ Firearms _____ ○○○○○
- ☐ Larceny _____ ○○○○○
- ☐ Stealth _____ ○○○○○
- ☐ Survival _____ ○○○○○
- ☐ Weaponry _____ ○○○○○

SOCIAL (-1 unskilled)

- ☐ Animal Ken _____ ○○○○○
- ☐ Empathy _____ ○○○○○
- ☐ Expression _____ ○○○○○
- ☐ Intimidation _____ ○○○○○
- ☐ Persuasion _____ ○○○○○
- ☐ Socialize _____ ○○○○○
- ☐ Streetwise _____ ○○○○○
- ☐ Subterfuge _____ ○○○○○

Attributes 5/4/3 • Skills 11/7/4 (+3 Specialties) • Merits 10 • Health = Stamina + Size • Willpower = Resolve + Composure • Size = 5 for adult humans • Defense = Lower of Dexterity or Wits + Athletics • Initiative Mod = Dexterity + Composure • Speed = Strength + Dexterity +5

Other Traits

MERITS

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REMEMBRANCE TRAITS

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KEYS

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HAUNTS

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HEALTH

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☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

WILLPOWER

○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○
☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

PLASM

☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐
☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐

SYNERGY

10 _____ ○
9 _____ ○
8 _____ ○
7 _____ ○
6 _____ ○
5 _____ ○
4 _____ ○
3 _____ ○
2 _____ ○
1 _____ ○

Size: _____
Defense: _____
Initiative Mod: _____
Speed: _____
Armor: _____
Beats: ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐
Experience: _____

WEAPONS

_____
_____

Krewe Name: _____

Krewe Archetype: _____ **Concept:** _____

Chronicle: _____ **Doctrine:** _____

Virtue: _____ **Doctrine:** _____

Creed: _____ **Doctrine:** _____

POWER	FINESSE	RESISTANCE
○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○	○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○	○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○

MERITS

SAFE PLACE ●○○○○

_____ ○○○○○

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CEREMONIES

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MEMBERS

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REGALIA

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CONGREGATION

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☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

ESTOTERY

○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○

Attributes: 6 • Merits: 7 • Ceremonies: From Archetype • Esotery: 1 • Congregation: 5 + Resistance

KREWE SHEET

Name: _____

Sin-Eater: _____ **Concept:** _____

Chronicle: _____ **Ban:** _____

Virtue: _____ **Bane:** _____

Vice: _____ **Crisis Point Trigger:** _____

POWER ● ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○

FINESSE ● ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○

RESISTANCE ● ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○

REMEMBRANCES

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Rank: _____

Defense: _____

Size: _____

Initiative: _____

Speed: _____

Innate Key: _____

GEIST SHEET

CORPUS

□□□□□□□□□□□□
□□□□□□□□□□□□

Attributes: 12 (maximum 9) • Rank: 3 • Defense: Lower of Power or Resistance • Size: 5 • Initiative: Finesse + Resistance • Speed: Power + Finesse + 5 • Corpus: Size + Resistance

Name: _____

Sin-Eater: _____ **Concept:** _____

Chronicle: _____ **Ban:** _____

Virtue: _____ **Bane:** _____

Vice: _____ **Crisis Point Trigger:** _____

POWER ● ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○

FINESSE ● ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○

RESISTANCE ● ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○

REMEMBRANCES

_____

_____

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_____

Rank: _____

Defense: _____

Size: _____

Initiative: _____

Speed: _____

Innate Key: _____

GEIST SHEET

CORPUS

□□□□□□□□□□□□
□□□□□□□□□□□□

Attributes: 12 (maximum 9) • Rank: 3 • Defense: Lower of Power or Resistance • Size: 5 • Initiative: Finesse + Resistance • Speed: Power + Finesse + 5 • Corpus: Size + Resistance

You are dead. You shuffled off this mortal coil, passed away, bought the farm, or any of a thousand other quaint metaphors we use to avoid staring into the face of our own mortality.

You are not dead. Something else was more important – you didn't have time to lie quiet in your grave, you had things that needed doing. And on the cusp of dissolution, at the crossroads of this world and the next, you met something that felt the same way.

Now you walk the world with living flesh and dead eyes, eyes that can't help but see the plight of the forgotten shades that huddle just beyond the light. Stalked by Reapers, devoured whole by the eaters of the dead, summoned and bound by necromancers, they are your people, and they are suffering. Pulled between your own Burden, the half-remembered humanity of the monstrous ghost to whom you are Bound, and the cosmic injustice of the Underworld, where will you stand?

This book contains:

- **The complete rules for playing a Sin-Eater in the Chronicles of Darkness, including systems for organizing and directing the efforts of large-scale organizations like Sin-Eater cults or organized-crime families.**
- **Burdens, krewe Archetypes, and a host of unique powers to create your Sin-Eaters and the strange death-cults they build.**
- **Example settings from across the globe and history, from the tumult of Washington, D.C. in the 1960s to medieval Carcassone to present-day Beijing.**
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GEIST

THE SIN-EATERS

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