

BLASPHEMIES™

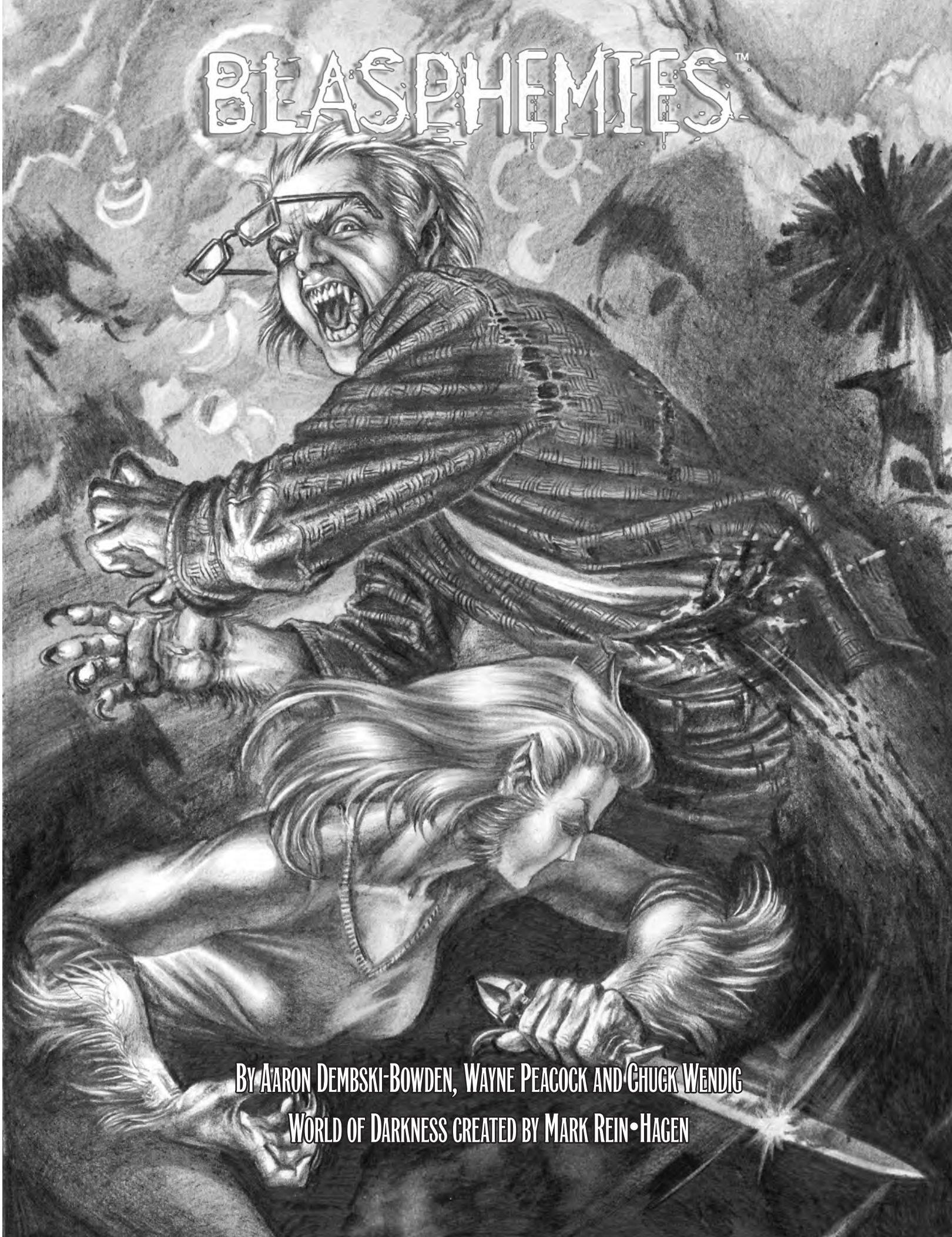
the World of Darkness®



WEREWOLF
THE FORSAKEN™

ABRAR-JUAL

BLASPHEMIES™



BY AARON DEMBSKI-BOWDEN, WAYNE PEACOCK AND CHUCK WENDIG

WORLD OF DARKNESS CREATED BY MARK REIN•HAGEN

DOWN AMONG THE DEAD

"This can't be."

The werewolf ran his hands across the basement wall, feeling his skin tingle at the rough stone under his palm. He brushed his fingertips across the images that looked so much like cave paintings: the cavorting wolves and men, the hundreds of spirit-figures and the howling wolves.

The *nine* howling wolves.

"This can't be," he said again, narrowing his eyes in the darkness and peering hard to make out additional details. He knew his packmate was behind him — he heard her breathing — but he still felt an uncomfortable pulse of shock as she pressed her hand lightly on his shoulder.

"What is it?" she whispered. "You keep saying 'it can't be' as if I should be seeing something unusual here."

The Cahalith trailed his fingertips across the wall once more, roughly circling the howling wolf pack. "Here." He tapped the ninth wolf, which was slightly separated from the others.

"I still don't see whatever I'm supposed to be seeing."

The Cahalith swallowed what would have been a threatening growl. "There are nine wolves here. This looks like the legend of the Firstborn, when *Urfarah's* spirit-children chose the eight tribes. Five Forsaken, three Pure."

"So what's this ninth one there for?" She absently ran her fingertips through her hair to keep a few stray locks from tickling her cheeks as she peered at the wall. "I'm thinking the artist actually knew his math and that there's something significant in all this, right?"

The Cahalith nodded and gestured to another part of the wall. "Look here. Werewolves — in *Gauru* form no less — killing *Lunes*. And here, in the sky, is a lunar eclipse. So this massacre was occurring while Mother Moon was blind to the world below."

"How does that tie in with..."

"Look, look *here*. The same wolf that was apart from the Firstborn in the other piece. He's right here, watching the slaughter of the *Lunes*." The Cahalith took note of the faint trails of blue paint that stretched out from the lone wolf and into a large patch of blackness. Whatever picture was once on the wall was now obscured by an old scrubbing of charcoal. "It looks like this wolf — this ninth Firstborn — isn't tied to the other totem spirits. I don't know if that means he's a false Firstborn or — or maybe

he's just linked to whatever is under the black patch instead. Maybe it means both."

"You're smart, boss." The woman yawned lazily. She had better things to do, and wasn't afraid to let it show. The Cahalith was gripped, and paid her words no heed.

"I think I've got it," he said after a few moments of awkward silence.

"Got what?"

"This black patch." He traced a single fingertip over the blackness, as if he could feel the shapes under the dark cloud. "This isn't a corruption of the original piece. It's intentional. This Firstborn is false, because he's got no connection to the rest of *Urfarah's* children. What he is connected to is the black patch."

"Wow. You sure know your stuff." The distracted Cahalith heard his packmate's words, but his own rushing heartbeat drowned out the soft hiss of a knife being drawn. "And what's the black patch, boss?"

The Cahalith leaned closer to the wall, close enough to smell the charcoal if it had had any smell left after so many years. "This blackness — it's got to be the *Maeljin*." He relaxed back a little, shaking his head. "Shit, it's so obvious now."

"Is it really?" she asked without a smile. The Cahalith missed the edgy inflection in her words, and thought nothing of her stepping a little closer. His wolf senses would have smelled the silver blade clutched in her hand behind her back. His human senses were still overwhelmed by the stench of the basement.

"Yeah, don't you see? This isn't just some Pure graffiti like we thought. This is a *Bale Hound* myth. Some kind of false Firstborn that was created by the *Maeljin*, probably to interact with the *Asah Gadar* as a middleman or something."

"Is that a fact?" She took another step closer. "And you're sure?"

Now the Cahalith did notice something strange, something threatening and predatory in his packmate's expression.

"Are you okay? This isn't freaking you out, is it?" He made the last mistake of his life by turning back to the painted images on the wall. "Damn it — if only there was some way of discovering just who this false Firstborn is."

"His name..." her words came out as a sticky growl as she grew and changed and her blood heated with Rage, "...is Soulless Wolf."

The Cahalith turned, wide-eyed, into the lengthening, almost-Gauru face of his packmate.

"How do you know? What the hell?" His reactions were fast, but not fast enough. He was changing, shifting, when the shrieking blows struck, but they struck too hard and too fast, and the Cahalith hit the filthy floor with his lifespan now numbering in seconds. Stab wounds gushed in sick rhythm to his pounding heartbeat. She had taken chunks out of his body with her slender klaive.

"I paint this." The Gauru drooled as it spoke through trembling jaws. "My work. My art."

Moments later, the Cahalith's body was finally motionless among the others in the stinking cellar. The Gauru shrank back to Hishu, panting and bloody all over.

"Everyone's a fucking critic." She spat on the still figure of the Cahalith and made her way up the stairs, wondering just what she was going to say at the pack muster tonight. In the silent darkness of the basement, her voice could be heard above, jokingly trying out excuses to see how the lies sounded out loud.

• • •

In the near-darkness of the room, the Bale Hound sliced open her wrists with a steak knife and wept at the pain. Sticky gouts of blood spurted from her wounds in time to her heartbeat, and her uncontrollable shivers sent the hot fluid spraying at every angle imaginable. With a creeping, tightening sensation in her palms and wrists, the slashes in her forearms sealed closed.

She didn't stop crying when the pain in her arms stopped. Instead, she crawled around the floor of the basement, sobbing and drooling and near-blind in the darkness, crawling on her hands and knees over bodies that had been dead for weeks in some cases, months in others. Her senses would have served her better in wolf form, but she knew she'd never be able to stand the smell if she shapeshifted in her hovel.

Finally, she reached the corpse of the packmate she had murdered a week ago, and her hands moved over his clothes and skin. He was already sticky with rot, and her hands moved over ruptured flesh that showed signs of the rats getting to him. As she rolled the decomposing body onto its front, the smell was bearable no longer, and she threw up sickening red-brown mush seasoned with nuggets of cracked bone. Even in the semi-light cast by the candle in her right hand, she clearly saw an undigested finger in the pool of vomit.

That did stop her crying, if only for a while. She spent the next few moments laughing drunkenly as she searched the corpse of the Cahalith. She was too rushed, too keen, and —

Burning.
Silver.

"Ow, fuck it!"

— she cut her hand on her silver klaive dagger as she tried to pull it from the corpse's spine.

It came free with slick ease, having been left there since the final stabbing blow seven days before. Now she needed her ritual knife, and had crawled around in the darkness of the basement for five minutes trying to find it. No longer crying or laughing, the Bale Hound crawled back to her makeshift altar by the stairs. Her knees dragged through the cooling vomit, but she didn't notice. Her trembling hand set the lone candle in place in a small beer bottle by her knee.

Kneeling in front of the suitcase of bones she had been saving for just this occasion, she cut crazy, meaningless lines all over her left arm. The knife —

Burning.
Silver.

— sliced through her skin leaving a hissing trail of tiny blood bubbles in the cracks of the thin wounds. It didn't cross her mind that she should have washed the knife first; the infections of a week-dead body meant nothing to her.

Blood pissed out in graceless arcs, spattering on the yellow bones jumbled together in the suitcase.

"Come to me, come now, and hide the sins of my soul." She talked without really hearing herself, and without noticing the sick pleading of her voice. It would have horrified her to have seen just how pathetic she looked and sounded at this moment. "I beg of you, you who I have served since my eyes were opened, I beg that you will send the one who will eat my sins."

More of her blood spurted out onto the bag of old bones, and she felt herself growing faint. For endless minutes, she sat in silence, counting each second in her mind, never realizing how she was just as often counting the furious thunder of her heartbeat.

Then the room shifted somehow. The still and rank air moved for a moment, and a new smell, a smell of power and sweat and filthy animal skin, washed over her senses.

"I have come." The voice was octaves below a mere growl. There was no word for how it registered in her mind. More than a vibration, less than a tremor — the voice was as unexplainable as the creature itself.

She did not turn to see the creature behind her. Instead, she tore strips from her sweater and used them to bind the wounds in her arm. As she tied off the last strip of her cheap and dirty tourniquet, the skin on the back of her neck prickled at the touch of cold breath and scratchy fur.

"Thank you for coming. Thank you so much." Her own voice was now a grateful child's. She was dizzy from blood loss and the gravity of the situation.

"I will eat your sins." The wolf-thing growled as it stepped past her. Their eyes met then, and she recoiled slightly as she always did. The wolf's eyes were dead,

emotionless, like those of a shark. Even his expression was that of a dead thing, for this wolf never sniffed the ground or twitched his ears. It was pure economy of movement, but not out of any grace — this was economy of *life*; the creature showed no more life than it had to. The wolf-thing was simply not that good at emulating something so alien to its nature.

The woman started crying again, this time from relief, and the wolf began to lick the blood from the bones in the suitcase and crack them into pieces with its jaws. As the first mouthful of various human bones slid down its throat, the wolf-spirit drew a shallow, shivering breath. The wolf seemed to be enjoying the taste of its meal.

“You have killed many of your own kind,” the wolf growled, and somehow, the Bale Hound detected amusement in its voice.

“Yes.” Her voice was barely above a whisper. “The pack I was hiding in. I attacked them this evening.”

The wolf spoke even through a mouthful of bloody bones. It sounded like a bear vomiting gravel. “Yes, I taste it in your blood that coats the offering. And you killed them all?”

The Bale Hound narrowed her eyes and shook her head without saying a word.

• • •

Christopher was alone for the first time in seven years. Not literally, for there were other people in the room with him, but alone in the sense that he was now packless, without a totem and with no way to defend his hunting ground.

The one thing he was certain he could do — or at least, certain he could give his best shot — was exact a little revenge.

He considered this fact as he lay on the basement floor. Once Maryann’s betrayal had been revealed and she and all her crazy-ass spirit allies had struck the pack, Christopher had done his level best not to freak out, but the truth of the matter is that Chris Roof-Runner was a coward. He’d seen the overwhelming odds, seen Eric and Jojo go down like twin sacks of kicked shit, and Christopher had decided that it was time to get going from there. He could have (perhaps, he admitted, even *should* have) stayed and tried to fight, but he was certain that the last sun had set on the Inner City Gurus, and his pack was mighty fucked. First she took out Johnny the Blue (and a better singer you ain’t *ever* heard), and then a week later she’s flipping out and handing the rest of the Gurus their own guts.

That bitch was going to get it. Coward or not, Chris wasn’t going to let this go by unchallenged, even if it meant beating the Bale Whore back to her “hidden” crash pad, sneaking into the body-filled basement and hiding under a pile of corpses.

The corpse he was laying under was none too fresh, and the smell of the basement itself was more than

enough to make a guy throw up more than once. But abject cowardice had its own virtues, and being too scared to open your mouth is an advantage that Chris was relatively happy with right then. Breathing slowly and softly through his nose, he swallowed tiny chunks of the puke in his mouth, and as Maryann chatted about sins and sacrifices, he licked his teeth clean of any residue.

The spirit-wolf-thing crunched its way through whatever was in the suitcase. Chris had nearly panicked when that beast had come along and turned things to an ominous bent, but again, Chris’ cowardice kept him rooted and immobile, half-hidden under the body of one guy and half-lying on top of another corpse’s legs. His eyes had adjusted to the darkness a little, and he could see Johnny the Blue’s vacant, rotting face turned toward him a little way away.

Christopher had a hard time swallowing his Rage but managed by letting his fear come back to the fore.

He had to wait for the spirit to leave, because there was no way he was leaping out of a small pile of bodies in order to fight a Bale Hound and her freaky sin-fucking totem. If Chris had known the expression about “discretion being the better part of valor,” he’d have congratulated himself on his caution. As it was, he just lay still, trying not to tremble or twitch or even breathe too loud. He needed a piss, too, and that was hardly helping matters.

Finally, the wolf-thing began to dissolve and vanish, as if it were turning into smoke and dissipating. The mist coiled around Maryann, and seemed to be whispering. Chris didn’t even want to know what the spirit was saying as a parting note, but he hoped to God that it wasn’t anything like, “There’s a guy hiding in here.”

• • •

“Another heart beats in this room, *Asah Gadar*. You have earned this warning because of your gracious offering. Until next time, then...”

The whispering died down as the spirit dissolved before her eyes completely. The Bale Hound, still feeling the ache in her brain from the emotional and spiritual trauma she had suffered this night, was instantly alert.

“Who’s there?” she hissed, reaching for her silver knife. She believed she knew who was down here with her, laying somewhere in the darkness. Slowly, again on her hands and knees, she crawled along the floor. Every time her hand brushed a motionless body, she rammed down with the knife.

• • •

Chris was far beyond simple panic now. He could hear her somewhere in the basement, scabbling around on her hands and knees, and giggling like a clown as she stabbed into the dead bodies all around. *It was time*, he figured, *to make a scene*.

A scuffle from nearby — very nearby — galvanized Chris into action. He tensed his muscles, ready to leap up to his feet.

At that moment, like a sledgehammer to the spine, a silver dagger rammed into his back.

"Got you, little Chris." The Bale Hound pulled the knife out and rammed it in again, and again. Blood made her hands slick almost immediately, and she struggled to keep her grip on the little dagger.

Chris was up in a stumbling scramble, teeth clenched and tears running down his face. His feet knocked against the bodies on the floor, and he couldn't find his balance. He only made it 10 feet before he crashed down to the floor with his legs spasming. He knew something was wrong with the muscles in his back, but had no idea exactly what.

"That's it, Chris. You lay there and think things over."

He looked up at her, his packmate, and swallowed the taste of his own blood.

"Chris, you're so predictable. I knew you'd run away and try to come back with some infantile notion of vengeance." She smiled, and waved the silver knife in the candlelight. "I'll going to peel your skin off and use it as a blanket. As for your bones, well, I can use them the next time I —"

Gunfire rang out, and the darkness lifted for seven momentary flashes. Maryann collapsed to the floor, another corpse in a basement full of them. Chris was a good shot, and at least three of the rounds had taken the Bale Hound in the head.

Christopher Roof-Runner closed his eyes and took a deep breath. It was enough to unbalance his stomach, and he finally threw up properly. It felt like part of his soul was throwing up, too. After he had wiped his mouth on his sleeve, emptier in more than one way, he wasted no time in making his escape.

As he crawled to the stairs, he paused only to spit on Maryann's body, and throw the gun into a corner.

"Predictable, my ass."

An injured wolf limped from the house in the suburbs. He knew he'd have to go back to clean up, soon — to do what he could to make the inevitable discovery look like "cult killings" and "Satanist worship in the 'burbs." But for now, all he could think of was the lonely ache of a wolf without a pack and the need to find someone wise who would listen to his story.



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BLASPHEMIES™

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INTRODUCTION

*WE DANCE ROUND IN A RING AND SUPPOSE,
BUT THE SECRET SITS IN THE MIDDLE AND KNOWS.*

— ROBERT FROST, “THE SECRET SITS”

The tale of Father Wolf is, for various reasons, the most dominant myth told to explain the origins of the Uratha and their struggle.

This is a book about the rest of the story.

Blasphemies is a book about the strange and heretical, the tales that are told further out. Some of the beliefs presented here provide no greater threat than doubt, dangerous though that can sometimes be. Some are nothing short of poison, wooing the Uratha into acts and rituals that hasten the world's decay rather than preventing it. Here you'll find secret lodges that tell stories other than that of the Fall and Father Wolf and codes of honor that violate the Oath of the Moon.

And yes, this book details the worst and most destructive of the faithful — the Bale Hounds, servants of the Maeljin. Here you'll see their cancerous cult dragged out of the concealing darkness for a long, hard look at the rot within Forsaken society.

The secrets within **Blasphemies** are designed to help Storytellers flavor their games with a hint of the unknown and mysterious, ranging to the obscene, sinister and blasphemous. It is not necessarily a book of adversaries — your troupe may want to explore some of the beliefs and lodges presented as protagonists rather than “subversive elements.” On the other hand, adversaries can certainly be found here. From the cults that grow around the denizens of Shadow and the Uratha themselves to the malignant presence of the Bale Hounds, the Forsaken will find some truths that aren't meant to be brought to light.

TO FIGHT OR TO FOLLOW

It should be noted that although **Blasphemies** presents a wealth of information on the various heresies and treacheries that spread through hunting grounds across the world, the intent of the book is to present credible, interesting lore that players discover, and contend with, rather than simply “sign up” for new powers and get in bed with the enemy. Many of the ideas presented are technically *antagonistic* secrets, treasure troves of hidden lore that will mess with the characters' heads as they try to reason and clear everything up. This book also highlights the notion that not all antagonistic features within a story are black-and-white. While right and wrong exist, they are mutable concepts often smudged by shades of gray. Evil is pure evil to some, and necessary evil to others. To others still, the deluded and the fanatical, evil becomes good and even virtuous.

Some of the secrets presented here could well change the course of a chronicle. If the pack decides that the “truth” told by one of the lodges suits the pack's own vision of the world better than the lore of the Forsaken, the pack's shift in allegiance is sure to affect their relations with their fellow werewolves. The pack's allies might become rivals — and then perhaps allies again if the pack successfully brings the word of “truth” to them, or perhaps blood enemies. Though the concept of a shift away from Forsaken culture might be daunting, this shift might be the right thing for the chronicle. Many exciting stories could result, if players and Storyteller are interested in exploring the possibilities.

In fact, the beliefs presented here could serve as the basis for an entirely new chronicle. What if the Lodge of Arkadia's beliefs were dominant in a region, and the Forsaken and Pure were in a distinct minority? What of a medieval-era chronicle set in northern Europe, with the pack all scions of one of the Mots? If the Storyteller is interested in tweaking the base assumptions of **Werewolf: The Forsaken** to promote a new way of looking at the werewolves of the World of Darkness, and the players are intrigued by the possibility, there's no reason not to try something different. Whether as a short affair planned to last only a few stories or as an ongoing game with no end in sight, a variant chronicle has quite a bit to offer.

THE DARK HEART

Werewolves are a scattered, segmented race. The People make allowances for meeting by occasional gatherings on tribal, lodge and regional matters of importance, but, generally, a pack is on its own on a night-by-night basis. That relative isolation is important to the setting, and is a powerful complement to the themes of dark secrets and forbidden knowledge. The darkness revealed in this book frequently emerges within a pack's hunting ground, and that makes the horror of the situation a great deal more personal than a threat that could have popped up anywhere. The dangers that the Storyteller will create with this book as a guide can be easily customized or used wholesale as a pack-specific threat geared toward tantalizing the players' tastes. In short, there is something in **Blasphemies** for every group, from advice on a Bale Hound infiltrator who seems unusually skilled at piercing the pack's weak points to an alternate version of the Father Wolf creation myth that stirs the players' imaginations.

The idea of mystery in horror is a staple of the genre. The fear of the unknown, the tension of discovery, the thrill of uncovering a dark secret that has lain hidden for so long — all of it is very appropriate in games of **Werewolf**, and doubly so regarding the material within this book. These are the terrible truths that few werewolves ever learn, and this is your chance to run with them.

Dealing with these heretical ideas is a key part of the story, too. The concepts herein represent challenges that cannot easily be overcome by simple combat — at least not from the start. Investigation is implied where a lot of this material is concerned, and slow reveals will be more likely to work well than climactic declarations. Certainly, in most games of **Werewolf**, there is a level of tension that threatens bloodshed in the future, and, again, that's perfectly in-theme with the content of **Blasphemies**. These are terrible truths to learn, and it's reasonable that they would trigger a character's Rage.

As always with World of Darkness sourcebooks, the material presented here is designed to be taken apart and reassembled, combined with as many or as few other chronicle options as seems suitable. Everything here is as ironclad or as mutable as the Storyteller requires for his or her chronicle, and the variation from game to game will likely be pronounced. One chronicle could feature the Bale Hounds as the hidden “ninth tribe,” while another features the *Asah Gadar* existing as a small lodge or scattered cults with little in common but a synchronous goal.

REVELATION

Naturally, there's no point to a secret without eventual revelation. A story nobody ever tells isn't a story; a rumor that dies before spreading isn't a rumor. The moment of revelation — when a character first hears a tale that contradicts the myth of Father Wolf, the discovery of a Bale Hound's true loyalties, the uncovering of a mortal cult — is a key moment in the sort of stories **Blasphemies** posits. That doesn't mean that revelation should be the only dramatic moment in such a story, though. The initial investigation is a perfect time of rising tension, with the characters' rising suspicions counterbalanced (at least behind the scenes) by their prey's increasing fear of discovery. Once a revelation is made, a new conflict should certainly begin. Are the players confronted with temptation that will trigger a conflict of faith? If they've discovered something foul that clearly needs to be put down, how will they manage to do so? Will their actions endanger the Oath, and therefore their spiritual health? The moment of revelation is a climax of the story, but doesn't necessarily have to be the only one, and certainly the rest of the story shouldn't feel anticlimactic.

One revelation after another can also make players jaded. The contents of this book are best used judiciously, interwoven with the more forthright and familiar aspects of werewolf existence. When properly paced, the material presented here can carry a troupe for years upon years of Storytelling.

CHAPTER BREAKDOWN

Chapter One: Heresies — The opening chapter deals with the potential for reinterpretation (or outright abandonment) of the legend of Father Wolf. What if werewolves were mistaken or somehow deceived as to their true origins? What if their nature really was brought about by a lycanthropic curse? So much of history is fact mixed with fable, and the potential for time to have swallowed the truths of an ancient past are not so unbelievable. This chapter presents these heretical ideas, and explains ways in which to insert them into your chronicle. You may even find one that you feel should be true.

• **Chapter Two: Brotherhoods** — Humans can be easily influenced if the manipulations take the right form. Chapter Two deals with the establishment and maintenance of cults and how they fit into the **Werewolf: The Forsaken** setting specifically. On a broader scale, the information provided also explains the many ways that humans interact with the supernatural creatures in the game, ranging from cults of worship to groups that are aware of the hidden world and seek only to appease the alien beings encountered. The Ridden, spirit Hosts and even the Uratha themselves have been known to create cults, and this chapter provides ideas how to fit such a group into your game.

Chapter Three: Hidden Lodges — Chapter Three presents a variety of factions within Uratha society, some antagonistic in nature, others designed to be open to player characters to join if they pass the entrance trials. Lodges are paths to power and paths to understanding, but lodges can also be used as a mechanic to represent a variety of social constructions. Some of these groups are among the most secretive and exclusive lodges in the setting — others may be surprisingly open and powerful on their home ground. A few are related, as well; the Brotherhood of Crossed Swords and the Lodge of Quetzal oppose one another, while the concept of the “mot” introduces a new take on the lodge construct.

• **Chapter Four: The Bale Hounds** — Among the gravest threats to any hunting ground is the presence of a Bale Hound within the domain. In the final chapter, **Blasphemies** reveals the inner workings of these insidious traitors, peeling back the mysteries and detailing just how the *Asah Gadar* serve the Maeljin Incarna, how the Bale Hounds seek to work their influence through a pack's territory and the secrets that must never be shared with the Forsaken. Whether used as solitary rogue agents or as sprawling brotherhoods of vice and violence, the Bale Hounds are the epitome of the enemy within.

There are answers to every question — a pack just needs to know which shadows in which to look, and to be careful about disturbing anything down there.

The door has just been unlocked. See for yourself.



CHAPTER I

HERESIES

Listen not to the lies of those who call themselves the People. What they call "the First Tongue" is the tongue of the devil world, the language of the Shadow. The First Tongue is given to us to understand it for we are all Ridden by demons, and yet we have forgotten the path of our salvation.

We are humans above all. The skin of the wolf was a curse levied on the first of us in Rome, on those men cruel enough to torment Christians for sport. By the will of God, their skins became as their hearts, and they were revealed for the wild animals they were. And the sins of the father were visited upon the child.

But even then, we were not entirely forsaken. Yes, the demons of Shadow revile us and attempt to seduce us, for they know that we can yet achieve grace — and they are jealous. Many of us have been saved through the years. The stories are myriad. A wolf guarded the path of St. Anthony, and took him to the dwelling of St. Paul. A wolf guarded the head of St. Edmund so that it could be properly buried. St. Francis took away the Rage in the heart of the wolf of Gubbio, and he was at peace.

But now we have forgotten. Our own fathers and grandfathers tell us tales of a wolf-god and a pagan moon goddess, but do not understand that the temptations of the Shadow's power lead us farther from salvation. We still bear the curse of the 30 pieces of silver, just as those others do who have betrayed our Lord.

Do not walk astray. Look within you, and see the beauty of a soul that may yet achieve grace. Reject those who tell you that the Wolf is the Father, and that no power can take away the Rage. The truth waits for those who are willing to seek it.

BEWARE OF FALSE PROPHETS, WHICH COME TO YOU IN SHEEP'S CLOTHING,
BUT INWARDLY THEY ARE RAVENING WOLVES.

— MATTHEW 7:15

The Tale of Pangaea begins with the assertion that “everything we are and everything we were began in Pangaea.” It’s hard to know how true that saying is. Even the oldest spirits, those who claim to be old enough to have been extant in Pangaea, might not fully remember the whole story — if they’re telling to truth at all. The Forsaken may take on faith that the legend is truth — or at least, as close to the whole truth as any tale can come — or they might ask questions, wondering if somewhere out there is a story that tells things differently. One that might hint at an unspoken truth.

This chapter is about providing your chronicle with such stories. Here you will find some guidelines and discussion of the options you have with fundamental building blocks of **Werewolf: The Forsaken**, the creation myth itself. We will look at sources of possible inspiration, some practical advice about incorporating heresies into a chronicle and the ramifications of these changes. Within this context, we are using the word *heresy* as a shorthand for “alternate werewolf creation myth.” In your game, these myths, or ones of your own devising, may lead to heretical groups of werewolves within Uratha society. You may choose simply to replace the Pangaea myth altogether with a new one — in that case, the myth isn’t really a heresy any more.

HERESY IS FUN

Players shouldn’t be encouraged to believe that the Pangaea story is historical fact “just because it’s in the book.” The same is true for their characters; although their peers may claim that the legend is, in all likelihood, the best accounting of the People’s origin, it’s up to each character to decide how much he or she believes or disbelieves, or even whether the character cares at all.

So, what do players learn from the myth? The most common assumption is that the Forsaken, while certainly not without fault, essentially made the correct choice when they decided to kill Father Wolf. While the Pure see themselves as the true inheritors of Father Wolf’s legacy, in truth, they are cowards who have turned their backs on their duties and now blame all the world’s ills on the Forsaken’s crime. In doing so, the Pure have reduced all the complexities of their situation down to one simple solution — kill the Forsaken and everything will be fine — echoing fascism’s use of racial scapegoats.

Now, this does not mean that **Werewolf: The Forsaken**’s default style of play is filled with moral absolutes.

Several layers of gray are already implicit in this simplistic interpretation of the Uratha’s worldview. For example, the Pure’s monomaniacal cause might have its roots in a very real grievance, the Forsaken’s self-sacrifice can be called into question and so on. But the Legend of Pangaea supports each side’s views. Incorporating heresies into your game gives you new ways to broaden the game. What if both sides are wrong? What if the tale of Pangaea is false? That can be a thunderclap in your game — suddenly everything gets called into question.

What if the Uratha’s world is not built on a mono myth, but upon two or more competing legends, ones regarded by most Forsaken (and possibly the Pure) as heresies? That throws a whole new wrinkle into the argument and calls all kinds of assumptions about Uratha society into question. Instead of the basic dualism of the Pure versus Forsaken, there can exist within your chronicle a panoply of competing religions and cultures for the Uratha — perhaps even provide the impetus for having the elders from the Pure and Forsaken cooperate against a heretical group of Uratha.

The basic decision about the inclusion of heresies in a Storyteller’s campaign is whether the players want to play in a setting where the fundamental assumptions about the Uratha, and what they do, are called into question. Do the players want a chronicle in which the creation story becomes something more than history, such as an article of faith — a faith that will be tested?

LAYING THE HERETICAL GROUNDWORK

Storytellers who want to use heresies need to create room in their chronicles for the heresies’ existence. Not every encounter with another supernatural should support the Legend of Pangaea in the player’s minds. Incorporating heresies into the campaign will have a lot more weight if the standard (and implied) history is reflected or referenced by everything the characters interact with, from the lowliest Gaffling to the most powerful Lune. In other words, leave room for doubt in the players’ minds. Whether through encounters with quirky Storyteller characters, finding “heretical fetishes” or hearing spirits scornfully refuting the Pangaea tale, add bits here and there that make the players suspect that all that they’ve heard and been taught over the years just may not be the whole truth.

Don’t assume that spirits have any knowledge of Uratha culture or history. It’s important not to have spirits talking about Father Wolf, at least if they aren’t part of the story, like the Firstborn. Why should spirits care enough to

learn? This is especially true given that Father Wolf was a predator that also kept the spirits in line; he's not particularly loved (or missed) among most spirits, save his kin.

Most spirits do not need to know about the Forsaken's legendary spiritual patricide to dislike them. There are enough reasons to hate the Uratha without quoting the Legend of Pangaea. Most spirits distrust the Uratha's rather freakish makeup as creatures of half-flesh and half-ephemera. Some spirits, seeking to become one of the Claimed, are eaten up with envy and fear of what would happen to them if the hypocritical flesh-spirit Uratha discover them.

Even the less prejudicial spirits dislike the fact that most Uratha (especially the Forsaken) think it's their job to tell spirits what to do. They hated Father Wolf for pushing them around, and now they hate his murderous children for doing the same thing. Uratha also bind and summon spirits, typically against their will. Again, mostly the Forsaken tend to deny spirits the ability to experience the pleasures of reality — even the Pure likely control this in their territory, at least for those spirits who can't deal with the Pure from a position of strength. Finally, Uratha take loci away from spirits. Werewolves come off to most spirits as half-breed bullies, even to those spirits that don't know about the werewolves' crimes. What's to like?

Have authority figures in the chronicle introduce heresies. Powerful and knowledgeable spirits that know the *Legend of Pangaea* are just as likely to have heard of other myths. Having some spirits in authority within your chronicle lets the characters in on the existence of heresies; this makes them more believable. That authority figure could be a more experienced Uratha, a respected enemy, a totem spirit or even some other supernatural being. Use someone whose words the pack is likely to trust — even if the packmembers don't want to.

Having the characters catch an authority, such as a pack leader or a fellow lodge member, trying to suppress the knowledge of a particular heresy can push a lot of buttons with packmembers. One, the mere act of suppression lends credence to the heresy: "If it's not true, then why hide?" Second, suppression emphasizes the secretive existence of heresies in general. And, of course, finding out the secret gives the impetus to the player characters. It's their choice whether to trust their colleague or doubt him, to assist him or to try to learn more behind his back. The story focuses on their reaction to this revelation.

Show them that the Legend of Pangaea serves other purposes. All myths explain things, but myths also model behavior to their adherents. Revealing this sows a seed of doubt in the players' minds. Perhaps the legend is a story cooked up by — or at least taken advantage of by the Pure and Forsaken ancestors to establish their hegemony over the Uratha — to further the agenda of the leaders of those societies. Perhaps the legend is a falsehood put forth by clever and alien intellects of the Shadow to keep werewolf society weak and divided, to prevent the truth from getting out, an opiate for the Uratha tribes. Maybe the story of Pangaea is

just a story to cover up a gaping hole in the Uratha psyche, a white lie to make the cubs' dreams a bit more bearable. Ghost Wolves are a great conduit for these ideas in most chronicles.

CREATING YOUR OWN MYTHS

Inspiration for a creation myth can come from popular movies, myth or even historical tales of werewolves. Of course, you do not have to base anything on myth at all; perhaps all you need is your imagination. Maybe there is an element of the Pangaea myth that you'd like to exaggerate as an impetus for a heretical group of Uratha.



MYTH, LANGUAGE AND THE FIRST TONGUE

The First Tongue itself becomes an issue if you try to construct a myth using elements themes and especially *names* from some mythologies since the distinctive sounds of the First Tongue will likely clash with other languages "Yen Lo Wang the Uratha" or "Cuchulainn the Suthar Anzuth" creates a strong ethnic dissonance for example. They just sound funny. Of course, a lot of the ethnic flavor you might be trying to capture is found in the names and their sounds. So you have choices to make.

Now in the history of the World of Darkness at least **Werewolf's** view of it the First Tongue came well *first* — before human languages. It has its closest relative in the Sumerian language though certainly there are differences. Still, you could change the First Tongue in your chronicle to reflect the ethnic feel you are going for but that's a huge task. (One you are likely to repeat with each new **Werewolf** supplement you choose to integrate into your chronicle.) You could instead come up with names that are some form of compromise between the two — rationalizing that later human languages echoed the First Tongue. Look at the similarities between "garou" and "Gauru" as an example. Yet another option is to use First Tongue *sounding* names and trust to the themes and elements of your myth to carry its ethnic weight. Finally you could try dropping both ethnic and First Tongue names entirely and use the name's English translation or the deed name of the mythic figure, if it has one. Using one of the examples above "Cuchulainn" translates as "the Hound of Culain" and was known as "the Hound of Ulster" his deed name.



MYTHIC WOLVES

One place to start looking for inspiration for your origin story is the foundations of werewolf myth — the traits that cultures of the world have come to associate with wolves. Wolves once ranged throughout Europe, Asia,

Japan and all of North America, except southwest California. They lived in lands as divergent as arctic tundra, plains, prairies, deserts, mountains and forests. Just about everywhere humans have lived, so, too, have wolves. Their strong physical presence and their direct competition with hunter-gatherer and shepherding cultures ensured that wolves entered into many societies' lore and myth.

In the common folklore of Europe and the West, the wolf's characterization is mostly negative. Wolves are seen as perhaps devilishly clever, but most often as ravenous, gluttonous beasts. Wolves themselves profited little from this depiction, being thought of as creatures best killed for preying upon domestic animals and even humans. Of late, a progression of popular environmental films and stories has mollified this image somewhat, but too late for most of the wolf populations, especially in Europe and places like Japan.

The wolf had a much better reputation in most Native American cultures, who respected the wolf's abilities as a hunter and its dedication to its family. The wolf appears prominently in Native American legends — especially in the Central Woodlands, Great Basin and certain Southwestern and Northwestern tribes. Wolf clans, lodges, and societies are living parts of these cultures — spending some time learning about these traditions is a great way to increase your own appreciation of them as well as draw upon a wealth of inspiration for your stories.

For example, the Wolf Society of the Quileute and Makah Indians of the Northwest owes its founding to a great hero named Changer, who killed the Wolf Chief and danced in his skin to gain the power to heal. The corollaries between this story and the conditions and powers of the Uratha are profound and obvious. Shapeshifting and anthropomorphism in general are popular motifs of Amerindian myths and legends. Many animals such as wolves “naturally” change into humans over time, keeping many of their connections and powers of their animal brethren.

The Greeks gave us some of the earliest written stories of a man being turned into a wolf, such as the story of Lykaon from Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. Wolves appear often in Greek myths, including the origin of one of their greatest gods, Apollo. His pregnant mother was turned into a wolf to protect her from Hera's wrath. So he and his sister Artemis were born to a female wolf — and wolves became one of Apollo's holy animals. He was both the wolves' protector, and the protector of shepherds' flocks from wolf predation.

Romans regarded wolves as symbols of valor, honor and power. The mythic founders of Rome, Romulus and Remus, were suckled by a she-wolf. The wolfskin was a mark of honor, worn by the standard bearers of some Imperial legions. Lupercali, one of Rome's great fertility holidays, was celebrated by male youths dressed in wolf-skin. In fact, the werewolf myth survived in southern Italy into modern times — there was a common folk saying, “A woman born on the Christmas Night will be a witch; a man born on Christmas Night will be either a warlock or

a werewolf.” It was thought of as just punishment for having the gall to be born the same day as the deity.

The Norse regarded wolves with the same kind of awe, but that regard was mixed with fear of chaos and destruction. Freke and Gere were wolf pets of Odin — guardians of his throne, in some stories. Thus, they were the inspiration for warriors, but the greatest wolf, Fenrir, was also a ravenous monster chained beneath the earth — destined to kill and destroy at the end of time, Ragnarok. The motif of a human that could take the form of a wolf is found all over Norse and Teutonic myths. Sometimes this shapechanging is voluntary, such as the berserks; other times, shapeshifting is a curse delivered by a sorcerer.

In Egyptian myth, there are several canine-headed deities one may study for ideas. The famous jackal-headed Anubis is also joined by another deity, Upuaut, who is often described as wolf-headed. Both of these deities are associated with guarding or guiding the dead, and with war. Upuaut is also known as something of a pathfinder, under his appellation as the “Opener of Ways.” But this sobriquet also connotes him being in the vanguard of the mythic host of battle, “opening” the front lines of the enemy. Perhaps this may inspire creation myths that may feature Bone Shadows and/or the Irraka?

As with the rest of the world, within Asia there are a lot of stories of magical animals that can take on human form, and sometimes even take human mates. But direct correlations between wolf or werewolf myth become more tenuous. There are some intriguing myths in Chinese and Japanese myth, and within the huge array of equally rich societies, there are undoubtedly more.

The incredibly cool and influential *Journey to the West* — the story of the Monkey King written by Wu Cheng-en in the 16th century (based on older tales) — contains references to ravening wolf-spirits (among other animals) banished from Heaven and turning to prey on humans in their exile. It's pretty easy to see how one might base a larger Uratha myth around that alone.

In Japan, wolves had much more competition for territory and were eliminated much earlier than in many other parts of the world. Still, there are some interesting stories and mythic attributions that could inspire Storytellers who want to incorporate these into a Japanese Uratha creation myth. In the mountainous areas of Hokkaido, the wolf had the reputation as a guardian of the roads — there are even stories of wolves helping lost or disabled travelers find their way to shelter or civilization. There are also several stories of wolves warning of natural disasters — howling before earthquakes or storms. In general, wolves were regarded as beneficial or even benign creatures. They kept wild boar populations in check, and some farming villages gifted food to local packs upon the birth of cubs as a sign of respect — many villagers believed that “good” wolves might return the favor by leaving deer for villagers with newborns. There's an certain temptation to extend “wolf” to cover foxes when dealing with the



myth lore of the East; the hundreds of Japanese *kitsune* tales (and similar treatments in Chinese myth) would give a Storyteller a wealth of fodder in an Eastern setting. But neither the solitary trickster/seductress archetype nor the wolf's pack culture is really subsumed by the larger mythic picture of the Forsaken; it's very clearly tied to the fox, and not very lupine. Should they exist in the World of Darkness, these fox-spirits deserve attention as separate supernatural beings, unrelated to the Forsaken or their duties.

HISTORY

Interested Storytellers can also look at historical accounts of werewolves. While not as famous as witch trials, there were several periods of werewolf trials in medieval and Renaissance Europe, Ireland and England. France, Germany and Italy were scenes of the most extravagant and salacious events. The belief that lycanthropy was incurable and transmitted like a disease keyed into human fears and memories of the plague. The idea that one could be damned to Hell by a wolf bite was especially terrifying during these times and was probably one of the reasons that werewolves were considered to be the most feared of supernatural monsters.

Respected scholars of the age debated the nature and forms of the werewolves' abilities, to the educated Renaissance mind, which saw the physical shape of humans as being proof of mastery over the beasts and a concrete example of humankind's connection to God. The idea of a human

being turned into a beast, body and soul (even without the inevitable violence and bloodshed) was enough to trouble Renaissance scholars greatly. The transformation from human to beast was a mockery of God's will, and hinted at the debasing powers of the Devil. As an interesting twist on werewolves' power, many of the leading "experts" during these times regarded the physical transformation from human to wolf-monster impossible. The only font of such power to bend the laws of Nature was God, not some devilish spirit that infected werewolves. Most of the scholars considered a werewolf's beast form to be an infernal illusion — possibly an interesting twist on Lunacy.

One of the most infamous cases was the legend surrounding the beast of Gévaudan, which the film *The Brotherhood of the Wolf* is loosely based upon. The years 1764–67 marked what became known as the "time of death" in that lonely stretch of hills and valleys along the Auvergne plateau in France. Supposedly, hundreds died before two blessed silver bullets brought the beast down. The gun used was enshrined in a local museum, though it's important to note that most contemporaries didn't attribute the victory to the metal of the bullets, but to their holiness.

WEREWOLVES AROUND THE WORLD

Since werewolves exist in the World of Darkness, assuming that many of the tales of werewolves that have filtered into history books of our world might be true

in the World of Darkness is natural. These tales make great fodder for stories in addition to explaining why it's important for werewolves to keep hidden. The 20th-century resurgence of silver in werewolf stories is one of the greatest blows the Uratha have taken in some time.

Of course, these tales aren't universal. There aren't as many stories such as the Beast of Gévaudan or the Northumberland Werewolf outside Europe and the United States — take India and Japan, for instance. In the end, the cultural dominance of the West insured that many of the same “truths” about werewolves, along with the false assumptions, have traveled from West to East, along with our books and films. Some “truths” have even been incorporated into their popular culture. Just as an example, there have been several Bollywood werewolf movies that have come out since the '70s starting with *Janni Dushman*.

But in the same vein, Asian myths hint at a different sort of partial knowledge. While the Japanese wolf was eliminated in the 19th century, India had and still has viable wolf populations. Both cultures have many examples of shapechanging animals, demons, magical beasts, and so on. Parallels to the spirit world are easily found. But, neither has a direct parallel to the wolf-man. Wolves have a much smaller “footprint” within the mythic lore of the East than in the West.

But spirits don't. In the context of **Werewolf: The Forsaken**, Western myth is usually just as lacking as Eastern; Eastern misses out on elements like the pre-dominance of wolves, Western misses out on animism. Each general group of cultures around the world sees one side of the Uratha, like blind men and an elephant — or rather, they *remember* one side. The Lunacy causes people to forget everything but the “most likely” (or satisfying) explanation and that might be a different explanation in different cultures.

It you decide to come up with a creation myth concerning Uratha of the East, you may want to tackle this question in other ways. Here are some alternate ways to address the issue.

They got lucky. Of course, one could assume that in the tens of thousands of years that humans and Uratha tangled in the East, the Uratha just got lucky. Not out of the bounds of possibility — “real” history is full of bizarre occurrences, such as the fact that the incredibly advanced civilizations of Mesoamerica never developed the wheel for use in transportation. But such vagaries of fate miss some interesting opportunities for stories — and, in the Storytelling reality of the World of Darkness, such coincidences seem a bit out of place.

There are no werewolves. Such an assumption may seem crazy, but, again, it may also lead to some interesting stories. What if a large section of the world has no Uratha? Were werewolves eliminated? If so, by what? What would the Shadow look like in these areas? Maybe something else performs the Uratha's duties there.

Such areas might be ripe for colonization — a chronicle that wants to concentrate on themes of mystery and discovery would find such areas ideal. Imagine founding a territory that you believe has not been managed since the time of Father Wolf, only to discover signs that some ancient catastrophe befell the Uratha in this land. This route will take a good deal more planning, of course; not only did the werewolves have to be wiped out long before they could leave the same kind of imprint on local human myth, but something had to keep the werewolves out.

The Uratha of the East have much more control.

For some reason, the Uratha of the East took the tenets of the Oath much more seriously than their Western kin. What was different? Perhaps the Oath was reshaped in the East. Did Eastern werewolves have a much more effective means policing the fallout? Perhaps both are true. Perhaps the stark stratification of society, such as with the caste system in India, made keeping the herd ignorant easier, or at least more effective. Or perhaps Uratha (and/or secretive human agencies) of the East had some means of keeping werewolf tales from entering into Eastern folklore. Perhaps they await discovery, entombed in terracotta wolves beneath some farmer's field. Naturally, this approach is dangerous because it can all too easily play into terrible stereotypes — “Asians are more honorable” or “All Easterners think all Westerners are barbarians.” Be very careful about assuming that werewolves tied to a given ethnic group are somehow more “in the right” than their counterparts; it's not a particularly insightful look at how the world works.

Problem of the West. There may have been a specific incident in the West that allowed so much information (mistaken or no) to leak into our folklore. The silence of the East isn't a phenomenon at all, but the norm. By foolishness or design, someone triggered the events that inspired the common werewolf myths such as the reported werewolf plagues of the Middle Ages and Renaissance that come down to us in history. Eventually these tales “contaminated” the East via Western mass media. This scenario implies less cultural superiority on either behalf and more of a matter of someone screwing up and eventually everyone paying the price.

LITERATURE

Werewolf: The Forsaken lists a number of contemporary sources of inspiration for the game. If you care to look back a bit further, you can find some older stories from which you might gather some ideas. One place to start might be *The Silmarillion* by J.R.R. Tolkien. This epic creation myth features Carcharoth, the greatest wolf that ever walked Middle Earth and the werewolf servants of the villains Morgoth and Sauron. The mythic wolves of Tolkien's world are uncompromisingly evil, created by the fallen Dark Lords to serve as instruments of terror.

At least two medieval werewolf stories are interesting because they both involve good old-fashioned sex and betrayal. The werewolves in *The Lay of the Were-Wolf* by

Marie de France and the Arthurian legend of *Goralagon* are monstrous, but the characters are also the victims of duplicity and infidelity. Marie de France's story turns around the old theme of the skinwalker. Instead of a wolf's skin being the magical means of transformation, the clothes of a human allow the werewolf to return to human form.

BUILDING THE MYTH

After finding your inspiration, it's time to start making some decisions and thinking about how to structure the myth and what might be some of the ramifications of those changes.

KEY ELEMENTS OF URATHA MYTH AND LEGEND

There are certain aspects that need to be part of any Uratha myth, without fundamentally changing the way the game functions. This is not to say you can't slay some of these "sacred cows," but doing so will probably involve some reworking of game mechanics or lead to glaring inconsistencies that will have to be addressed. It's good to know how you're going to cook the cow before you start sharpening your knife.

Any alternate creation myth you create for your game needs to explain certain elements of the Uratha's nature if you want your players to take the myth seriously. If the creation myth obviously contradicts phenomena (and to be honest, the game mechanics) that the players see day to day, it will be discounted. For example, if the myth of Pangaea is wrong, then what about the Oath? What of the Uratha's purpose? How did they come to be? Why do they exist? Where do they fit? Even subtle differences can be profound.

In the simplest possible terms, think this way: every myth tries to explain something, and these are the things that need explaining. The most important and difficult parts are story related. In a roleplaying game, we have the added wrinkle of the game mechanics that enforce the "reality" of the world. Change the reality of the game too much, and you might end up with "fifth wheel" mechanics.

Most of these issues fall into seven areas:

- **Spiritual Nature:** Why do Uratha have spiritual powers (Essence, Gifts, etc.)? How did they learn the First Tongue? Does your myth explain their strained relations with spirits? For example, a creation myth that uses the conceit of lycanthropy as a disease will need to address the link between werewolves and the spirit world. Did the disease originally come out of the Shadow? Were the first people to catch lycanthropy fully human?

What of the Gauntlet and the Border Marches? Has the Gauntlet always separated the worlds or did something like the Border Marches once exist? If so, what caused this change?

- **Rage/Harmony:** Why do Uratha have loose control in their war form, and at other times? What about Lunacy? Why do Uratha strive to live in balance? Does

the myth explain *Zi'ir* or the consequences of not living in Harmony by following the Litany?

Harmony and its systems reinforce specific notions of werewolf nature, and provide solid temptations that make for good roleplaying. For example, werewolves have much to gain from killing their rivals or from eating human flesh, but Harmony brings in the question, but is it worth it? Myths should explore the fundamental nature of werewolves as Harmony defines it; if that nature winds up being changed itself, such a twist may call for the Harmony rules and assumptions to be revisited.

- **Both Wolf and Man:** What is the Uratha connection to wolves and humans? Why wolves and no other animals? What about werewolves' connection to the Wolf-Blooded?

Werewolves' ties to nature, via Father Wolf in the standard myth, are reflected in more than merely the bestial forms of Uratha. The ties to nature come to the fore in their territoriality, their obsession with pecking orders and so on. Their sexual prohibitions create interesting dynamics and ensure that they cannot stray too far from their progenitors in the physical world — again, a tie-in with Harmony.

- **The Moon:** Why do Uratha have auspices? What is the basis of the werewolves' relationship with Luna and her servants, the Lunes? The inclusion of the supernatural forces associated with the moon explain auspices, the ranking (renown) system and, once again, ties back into Harmony and its mechanics.

- **Silver:** Why does silver injure werewolves so badly? This is usually tied to the previous question, as silver is commonly associated with the moon. However, the moon and silver doesn't have to be connected. A Christian-themed werewolf myth, for instance, may tie the curse to the 30 pieces of silver that purchased Judas' betrayal of Christ.

- **Uratha Society:** Does your creation myth include the hunt for the Firstborn and the formation of the tribes? How will your myth differ? What of lodges?

Of course, your creation story could well end before the formation of the tribes and rather neatly segue into that part of the standard history. Without Father Wolf, or something like him, you will need to explain just who or what the tribal totems are and where they come from. A simple way around this is to simply not call them the "Firstborn." Given the nature of the Shadow, rationalizing the existence of giant wolf-spirits is pretty reasonable anyway.

- **Antagonists:** There is an old saying that one is defined by one's enemies. Changing the creation myth may also affect the backgrounds and motivations of the Forsaken's greatest foes.

Bale Hounds and the Ridden are unlikely to be affected unless you do away with the spirit world entirely; they're versatile enough to be potential antagonists even

for mages, vampires or ordinary humans. The Hosts are generally more intimately tied to Father Wolf. The original myth explains that fear of his fangs is what drove the Hosts' progenitors into fragmenting themselves in the first place, and, therefore, why they grow in power when they subsume one another. If your myth does not include Father Wolf, you will want to come up with another reason for the Hosts' condition. If the Uratha's mission to police the spirit world did not change in your myth, it is quite possible that early werewolves, not Father Wolf, drove the *shartha's* progenitors to splinter their spirit-selves, for example.

While you do not need to include the *shartha* and Bale Hounds in your creation myth, you need to address one foe, the Pure. If you replace the creation myth, you must either eliminate them or explain their motivations within the new myth. If you choose to run a game with multiple creation myths, the rather monomaniacal Pure would likely not bother making an exception for heretics and would be just as likely to attack them as the Tribes of the Moon. In the Pure's worldview, they are the only Uratha that have reason to exist. To go back to the Christian-themed creation myth as an example, if werewolves are seen as cursed for trespassing against the will of Christ, then the Pure may take a similar form to the Spanish Inquisition, seeking salvation by turning on "heretics."

Although a new creation myth may cause you, as the Storyteller, to alter or even drop some of the standard foes of the Uratha, alternative creation myths may also inspire you to develop new foes.

MYTHIC TEMPLATE

It's impossible to come up with recipe-like directions for writing a werewolf creation myth, but there are some patterns you might want to follow. Start off by talking about the progenitors, the creators of the werewolves. Where do the first werewolves come from? What is creation like at this point, and what's the setting? What

are they doing, what's their function, their place in the universe?

Next, there's often some kind of fall from grace or some kind of catastrophic conflict occurs — the resolution of which informs some aspect of the werewolves condition, perhaps giving them their *raison d'être*, their purpose or mission. This can easily be tied to the first question. The idea of werewolves who were humans (or wolves) who lived in grace before the fall neatly addresses the popular conception of werewolves as cursed.

Finally, you probably want to address some of the aspects of the Uratha's history and culture. Where do the

Pure fit in? How are the tribes formed (if different from the standard history)? You might also want to lead this up to the present-day societies, especially if your myth deviates greatly from the Tale of Pangaea.

Lastly, you may want to hint at some coming calamity, or some as-yet-unfulfilled aspect of the myth. Perhaps there is a looming struggle with the forces that caused the Fall, or there may be some messianic figure that is prophesied to return to right some wrong or guide the Uratha of your myth to some future glory. Though not at all necessary, a touch of prophecy can intrigue players into watching for signs in every shadow.

COMPLETIST

MYTHMAKING



Don't feel overly compelled to tie everything up in a nice pretty bow. Myths are not neat; they are usually puzzles with a few pieces missing. (And, to be quite honest, they are rarely politically correct.) You do not have to address every single issue covered by the Myth of Pangaea or answer every question raised in this chapter. In short, creation myths are stories, not formulae. They deal in context and theme, not numbers, not fact.

For example, you don't have to create a version of Pangaea. Maybe your werewolves came from under the sea or fell out of the heavens. You don't have to explain

the struggle between the Pure and the Forsaken either. Having some explanation might strengthen a convert's belief to give such an important struggle within the game a context, but is not necessary. It's quite possible there are areas of the world that do not feature such a struggle, or at least have very different ones.

ANTI-MYTHIC STRAINS

You may want to do away with the idea of a creation myth entirely, by either embracing mystery or going with an origin that is not in any way dependant upon a larger context for your werewolves. Doing so may take a bit of extra work, but the pieces of **Werewolf: The Forsaken** can be taken apart and reassembled into something new.

LYCANTHROPY

There's nothing stopping a Storyteller and players from changing the game drastically. In many cases, substantial change may be just the thing to do. For example, many of the systems and myths of **Werewolf** are clearly there to facilitate multi-session chronicles. Perhaps that's not what a group is after. Playing a "classic" werewolf plot-line, where the condition is a disease, where the spiritual elements of the setting have no real bearing, is just as valid as any other game — either as a change of pace, or for a weekend or con game.

What if you want to put the characters in the classic role as the prey or as werewolves struggling to hold onto their humanity in face of an implacable evil? If this is the case, then there's still plenty to plunder from **Werewolf: The Forsaken**, such as the general shapeshifting rules, regeneration, and Lunacy. Of course, many of these rules will have to be amended — classic werewolves can only shapeshift under the full moon, for example. Death Rage is the standard, not the exception, to a transformed werewolf's behavior. At the very least, you might institute the mental and social penalties of Rage for all a werewolf's forms, not just Gauru.

In most of these stories, the disease tends to be very fast acting and incurable — though humans seem to gain the benefits of the werewolf's metabolism immediately. Whenever a character suffers lethal damage from an Uratha's teeth or claws, he must immediately make a Stamina+ Resolve roll or become infected. Once infected, the person immediately gains the regenerative abilities of a werewolf, and perhaps the ability to shapeshift into Dalu form at night.

The disease's progression is marked by pain and terrific mood swings as the character's psyche is torn down and rebuilt. The disease has physical symptoms much like a terrible case of the flu, but is actually a spiritual condition, requiring a Stamina+ Resolve roll every hour to resist. (The Storyteller may need to change the infection period from hours to minutes or days.) If the character fails, her Morality is reduced by one and she takes point of bashing damage due to pain (the victim actually regenerates the damage). Each point of Morality lost causes a degeneration roll of three dice — the character suffers derangements normally.

When Morality reaches zero, the character becomes a werewolf and will shapeshift when under the next full moon. Optionally, the Storyteller who is interested in allowing "playable" Uratha might have the character's Morality rebound to the previous level, minus one, perhaps losing any derangement gained after that initial loss.

Then let Morality — not Harmony — take its course. The result is an unavoidable slide into degeneration and mania. It's not particularly conducive to an ongoing chronicle, but it may make the perfect Halloween one-shot.

AGNOSTIC URATHA

One of the inevitabilities of multiple creation myths is that some Uratha simply won't know what to believe. For some, this will be a temporary state — a transition between beliefs — while others may become convinced that the conflicting stories mean that there may never be an answer to the question, where do we come from?

Strangely, the question of, what am I?, may be easier to answer. In time, the drive of Primal Urge and the inevitabilities of Harmony become the common-sense wisdom of these Uratha. Morality can exist without a religious/mythic context. The Uratha may not ever know the details of their creation, or care to, but they will most likely accept the dictates of a werewolf's existence. Trying to maintain Harmony is the best road to happiness, since denying either your flesh or spirit only leads to madness. In this context, the tenets of the Oath are common sense.



SEEDS OF CREATION

Here are a few ideas to spark the creation of your own heresies

- **A Devil's Bargain:** Taking a bit from Slavic myth the Uratha might be the descendants of humans who made a deal with some dark force for the ability to avenge themselves upon their enemies by turning into wolves. There are several tales of persons who used the forms of wolves to get away with murder or killed the herds of their adversaries.

- **Skinwalkers:** Norse, Slavic and Navajo myth have many tales of humans who learned the art of shapeshifting via wearing magical wolfskins and belts. These humans are the true forefathers of the werewolves. The skins they wore may have come from hunting wolf spirits or the wolf Ridden beyond the Border Marches.

- **We Are Claimed:** By default Claimed are unable to pass on their half spirit nature through sexual reproduction; this option presumes differently. Werewolves are the result of generations of wolf Ridden. Perhaps a pack of spirit wolves ignored the laws of Father Wolf and took human form. He may have spared them to aid him in his work, only to have them later betray him (or recognize him as a greater evil). This option

also opens the door to new sorts of antagonists — werewolves might not have been the only Claimed bloodlines to span generations

• **We Are Magath:** This is a means of explaining why there are no human spirits and why the Uratha have both characteristics of human and wolf. In ancient times, humankind ruled both the worlds of shadow and flesh, much to the other spirits' dismay. Eventually, one of the most powerful wolf spirits decided that this imbalance had to be corrected, and the spirit, or perhaps its pack, ate all the human spiritual reflections. The spirit and its children became magath, the first werewolves — in the process permanently robbing humanity of something it would always miss.

• **Children's Revenge:** Uratha are the product of wolves that were fed human children, either as part of a religious ceremony or because these were infants left to die — over centuries, the spirits of the children grew inside the wolves until they became both human and wolf. Inspiration for this kind of story can be found in the film *Cat People*, the practice of killing unwanted children in ancient Sparta, and in Australian myth. Some aboriginal tribes tell the story of Mamu, a dingo spirit who eats and absorbs the spirits of children who stray at night.

CREATION MYTHS

There are Uratha who have never heard the Tale of Pangaea or have rejected the standard myth for “the truth.” Many doubt the accuracy of the myth or wonder at its true purpose — to justify the claims of Pure and the Tribes, to control Uratha behavior and squelch the

questions that gnaw at the young and dispossessed. Here are some of the stories that most Uratha do not want you to hear.

Several of these creation myths have been incorporated into the lodges from Chapter Three as full-blown lodges, but these myths all contain a brief description of the heretics they might inspire and the possible ramifications of using them in your game.

CHILDREN OF THE GREAT WOLVES

This story is true.



Creation ran amok and both worlds suffered under the glut of life — giving birth to disease and famine. The lands between the world of spirit and flesh were overwhelmed with chaos as creatures of one world sought solace in the other. Grandmother Luna, whose eyes pierced both worlds had enough, and she created pairs of great predator-spirits to multiply and restore balance to the world.

The first and mightiest were the Great Wolves. Into Father Wolf, she poured her might and rage — too much, it seems. Father Wolf was a great monster chained to the Border Marches between worlds, but his silver chains were long, and he could still stray into each world. Luna gave him the task of keeping the creatures of both worlds from dominating the other. He was a vengeful beast, and his fangs were red most of the time.

Only Mother Wolf's love could keep his anger in check. Mother Wolf was his wife and bore other powerful spirit wolves to him. She raised the cubs and taught them the magic of Grandmother Luna. Mother Wolf loathed to kill unless necessary, and, more often than not, managed to coax human and spirit back to their own worlds — though she used fang and claw if they resisted.

One day, she found two human children left in a village on the green sides of the First Mountain. They were the sole survivors of a people Father Wolf decimated for worshiping the Spirit Queen of Spiders. Rather than slay the children, Mother

Wolf hid them from Father Wolf and suckled them. On her milk, they grew strong. It contained the essence of the Great Wolves' power, and changed them. Over time, the human children took the form of wolf pups, and she gave them to a pack of wolves to raise, banning her adopted children from mating with or killing their wolf-brothers and -sisters.

Furthermore, she warned them that her milk also made them brother and sister — neither could they mate with or kill their own kind. When they were old enough, she drove them from the world of wolves and sent the two to prevent future massacres by Father Wolf by policing their own kind. These first werewolves were taught to conceal themselves, both from human eyes and from the nose of Father Wolf, though the children longed to be accepted by their spiritual father.

Eventually, Mother and Father grew old, and, one day in her troubled sleep, Mother Wolf let slip the existence of her human children. Father Wolf grew enraged, and murdered his wife as she slept. In his fury, he pulled so heavily on his chains that the Border Marches themselves were uprooted, nearly collapsing both worlds. He ravaged the world of humans in his efforts to kill the human children of Mother Wolf.

The first werewolves were fast and strong, and they led the Great Wolf on a mighty chase as he dragged Luna's silver chain behind him. Fifteen werewolves ran in front of the Great Wolf as they ran round and round the First Mountain. During each circle, he ate one Uratha, but during each cycle, his chain grew shorter and shorter. Finally, only one wolf of each auspice was left, and, as his chain pulled taut, they fell upon him and killed him. Enraged by the murder of their mother, they did more than kill Father Wolf — they ate Father Wolf's heart, breaking the ban that Mother Wolf had laid upon them.

In this great sin, they also consumed Father Wolf's rage, and they, in turn, ran wild over the world ravaging and killing, until finally Luna took pity on them (and their prey) and offered the Oath of the Moon to them. To remember their great sin against Father Wolf, Luna granted silver the right to punish all the Uratha — penitent or not. Silver would bind them as well as their spiritual father, in bands of fear.

Much to the spirits' dismay, the Uratha took up the duties of their spiritual mother and father. The spirits have never forgiven the wolves for the depredations, their oath-breaking or for being the children of the two Great Wolves that dominated the spirits.

RAMIFICATIONS

This myth would seem to soften and humanize the Uratha. It adds emphasis to the role of humans in the world, as the werewolves themselves were once humans changed by the power of Mother Wolf's nurturing milk and Father Wolf's blood. But, as a twist, this myth makes the Uratha's preying upon other humans all the more horrific. The werewolves aren't just sentimental for the hu-

mans who gave them birth — at the core of their religion, feeding on human flesh is clearly cannibalism.

Mother Wolf's clear moral superiority over Father Wolf may lead to a heretical group of Uratha in which leadership is often matrilineal. The symbols of milk and blood, and the First Mountain, may also weigh heavily in Uratha societies that know this version of their creation to be true, perhaps inspiring new Gift lists.

Most of the elements of the default Uratha society are preserved. The status and function of the Firstborn, auspices and tribes remain intact. Terms such as Forsaken and Pangaea do not appear, but nothing contradicts their meaning (or even prohibits their mention).

The standing of the Pure changes as this tale weakens their self-proclaimed higher moral position. The werewolves who know the truth of this myth probably consider the Pure to be Uratha who went insane after the eating Father Wolf's heart, but never accepted Luna's grace. In their insanity, they now blame others for a crime all werewolves committed (and maybe made up some crazy myth that left out their true mother).

The spirit and *shartha* enemies of the Uratha exist as well. Azlu take center stage as the most worthy opponents of the Uratha in this myth, for worship of the Spinner-Hag provoked Father Wolf's wrath.

CURSE OF THE WEREWOLF

Hear the truth if you dare. Ours is not a pretty tale, but one of hubris and redemption, murder and love, balance and loss.

It begins in the blessed Land of Arkadia during the burnished twilight of the Golden Age. The bright promise of the age was fading. It was once a time when human, god and spirit challenged each other, when it was possible to raise oneself to godhood through will and deed — but the golden humans of that age far too often squandered their power and fulfilled their lusts rather than achieve true greatness. A pall had slowly settled over the world. The entire world but the small kingdom of Arkadia seemed to have fallen under the sway of dark powers from the Shadow.

Long had the humans of Arkadia worshipped their god, the lord of howling storms, who was also called Son of the She-Wolf, greatest of the First Born. He demanded sacrifice and required that the wolves and humans live in peace. Once every five years, the priests would perform a bloody ritual transforming a youth into a dire wolf, making him the titular Wolf-King of Arkadia. This wolf would rule over the packs of the land — protecting the herds and humans from their fangs and controlling the pack's numbers.

In return, wolves were the equals of humans in Arkadia. Both human and wolf had a King; each lived under one set of laws. A wolf could not be killed without a life-debt being paid to the wolf's pack and without the murderer paying for a sumptuous funeral for the wolf. The wolves' goddess, the Moon herself, was also honored by humans, and, by the light of day, they tended her rocky cairns in the mountains. At



night, the wolves would dance for their King and sing songs to their Mother there.

At the end of his reign over the wolves, a Wolf-King was transformed back into human, though some of the wolf's essence always remained. These wolf-blooded became the elders of Arkadia.

From their ranks, a human king was chosen, and, by this, the wolves also had a place in the leadership of the humans.

For ages, things were peaceful on the isle and its borders were well-defended. The hoplites of Arkadia marched with the image of the Wolf-King on their shields and sometimes with him at their sides — leading a force of wolves to break the will of the enemy.

Even under the growing threat of the Shadow, they remained resolute. Their armies could not be defeated as the Arkadians' greatest warrior led them, King Lykaon. He had call to be proud, and his victories were as numerous as his sons. But his sleep became troubled. There he began listening to the whisperings of ancient enemies of the Arkadians brought forth by the Shadow. These creatures poisoned his heart with dreams of power over his god, and divinity for himself. These evil spirits taught him how he could gain power by eating the flesh of man and wolf. They taught him the secret tongue of the Firstborn and how to use it.

With this knowledge, Lykaon formed a bold plan. First, he turned his sons to his will, and they feasted on the flesh of their brothers who dissented. Through this feast, they gained the power to change shape at will; yes, our ancestors were kinslayers and cannibals. Next, he planned to turn as many of the elder wolf-blooded as possible into his followers — killing all who dared oppose him. When his followers were ready and his enemies dead, he would make war upon the Son of the She-Wolf and bathe in his blood. Lykaon believed that by eating the flesh of the god, he could ascend. Together, these werewolves could rule the world.

But as was the Son of the She-Wolf's wont from time to time, he took the guise of one of the wolf-blooded and attended a meeting of the elders to listen to their counsel. There, he watched as Lykaon dished out a stew of wolf and human meat, fresh off the bone. One by one, with his slavering sons at his arm, Lykaon tempted the other elders to sin. None who did not want to feed the stewpot refused his offer save the last, the god himself.

When Lykaon and the others fell upon him for refusing, he cast off his robes and rose up in Thunder, smiting the house of Lykaon with a thunderbolt, killing the mad king and his sons. Those elders who survived were cursed to turn into ravening beasts under the light of the wolves' goddess and prey upon human and beast alike. The children of the wolf-blooded were doomed as well to carry their ancestors' taint, which would awake with the bite of any wolf — setting off a cycle of murder and cannibalism until the werewolf could be put down. The wolf-blooded now had to hide; no longer were they respected, but always reviled by human kind.

With that parting curse, our father left us. Some say he died of the wounds he suffered under Lykaon's

claws. Others whisper that our father drew off beyond the Shadow in disgust. But his protection was over, and the isle and the world fell into darkness. The Golden Age was at an end — now came the tyranny of the Shadow.

For centuries, the People suffered under the curse of the werewolf and their human families suffered under both the whims of the Shadow and the claws of what hubris dealt us. Until Lady Moon, mother of the wolves, took it into her heart to save us. Some say she fell in love with one of us who was doomed by a wolf's bite, others whisper that the depredations of the Shadow drew her to forgive us. She offered us a challenge. If the mightiest of us could hunt down the five of the Firstborn, she would offer us a way out of our cycle of madness.

Our ancestors struggled long under this quest, but finally they saw success. The Oath of the Moon was sworn, and the Uratha came to be. Lady Moon sent her servants to help guide us, and we wrote new laws to help us never again descend into madness. We honor our mother and father in the Oath and hope to set right our ancestors' sins by protecting this world from the same Shadow that corrupted our people and shielding humankind from what they ought not know.

But, as you can see, young one, the Shadow still has the upper hand. They have spread lies about our kind, convincing lies. Now only a few of us know the true story of how we came to be.

RAMIFICATIONS

Whereas the Tale of Pangaea is set mostly in the spirit world or the Border Marches, the action of this myth takes place in the world of the flesh. This might appeal to groups who want to focus the game in on the here and now rather than animism — but the elements of animistic horror are still there. In the same way, wolves, not necessarily wolf-spirits, are an integral part of this tale. The heretics who follow this myth might be more tightly bound to wolves, and this may reflect on the Uratha's society.

While not specifically mentioning the *shartha*, this myth does not preclude their existence. This myth certainly elevates the darker elements of the spirit world into the spotlight. Yet blame also rests firmly on the fallible nature of humankind as well — greed, hubris and lust for power were the humans' failings. Perhaps those who wish to replay the stories and themes surrounding flawed, but great, heroes who are willing to pay any price for apotheosis might wish to use this heresy.

One of the major differences is that Luna, though a blood relation, is not one of the key progenitors of the Uratha. She is a spiritual “kindly aunt” and adoptive mother. In the end, though, she is still responsible for the salvation of the Uratha.

Madness, both in terms of rage and folly, is the key element of this myth. To these Uratha, the descent into Death Rage is a confirmation of their mythic Fall — and would perhaps be even more feared than to the Forsaken of the Pangaea myth. Harmony, the balance of human

and wolf, on the other hand, celebrates the Golden Age of their ancestors, their Eden in Arkadia.

The general conceit of **Werewolf: The Forsaken** is that human myth is but an imperfect refraction of the true story. This myth's overtly Greek themes and names may pose a problem for some Storytellers who want to stay away from ethnic or cultural ties. In this case, you may want to use these heretics and their myths as a lodge.

Of course, one could also change the names. “Son of the She-Wolf” was one of Zeus' titles (as Zeus Lykaos), but whether you want to use Zeus or other gods is up to you. Uratha who believe in this myth see “Father Wolf” as just another name for their god. Lady Moon could easily be interpreted as Artemis, Selene, Diana or any other lunar goddess as well as the Uratha's idea of Luna. The strong cultural ties might point to other cults or heresies found around Greece and the Mediterranean.

Obviously, the immense influence of Greek myth and culture in the West, not to mention the spread of Greek families over the globe, means that this group may just as likely be found in Athens, Georgia, as in Greece. While these Greek names sound pretty close to the First Tongue, by merely changing the names one could excise most of its cultural baggage and make the words sound closer to the First Tongue by using use “Akkath” for the city-state of Arkadia and “Sarhan” for Lykaon.

The Lodge of Arkadia in Chapter Three details one group of heretics that hold to this creation myth.

THE BOOK OF THE WOLF

Come, sit, have a drink. Now you will hear how we came to be. We were born of dark deeds. It is time to grow up, child. It's time to face the horror of our birth and, yet, its greatness. We are the sons of gods from a time when magic filled the world. It was a time of great heroes, when the gods often took form of human, beast or tree; when the gates to the Otherworld were found just around a bend in the path, or in clouds of amber morning mist or the twist of a falling leaf.

Gwidir, whose name means “forest,” contained all that was beautiful and magical about the woodlands. He was lord of the sky seen between the cradling branches of the oak. Gwidir was beauty found in the veil of fog over a rushing stream. He was the power of the yew and sound of rain on moss. He was druid and warrior, man and godling, poet and magician, friend and blood relation to the dread faerie host. Human and yet more than human, Gwidir contained multitudes in a time when such divisions were meaningless. You can still hear his name and memory echoed in human myth as Gwydion, Hiisi, Cernunnos or Veles. He was the lord of the beasts of the wood, and Gwidir especially loved his sister's children, the wolves.

His sister was the moon-goddess, the Silver Wheel, whom we call Luna. His liege was a king who mastered magic, war, and learning whom we call King Mahth, but Gwidir has come down through the tales of human clothed in many names. As with all in those days, the mightier the spirit, the greater the

bans placed upon it. Mahth's ban was that he loved peacetime and was a wise ruler, but he was fated for war and paid a heavy price for tranquility. On pain of death, his feet had to be cradled in the lap of a maiden when not fighting or marching to war. This duty was performed by the most beautiful maiden in his kingdom, Sinnis.

Gwidir's brother, Faeth, had a terrible ban as well, to want what he could not have. He fell in love with the king's foot maiden. Eventually Faeth's sighs and secret confidences became too much for Gwidir, who finally contrived a plan to allow Faeth a means to plight his love for Sinnis. Gwidir started a war between his uncle and King Thydeth. When the forces of Mahath set out to deal with Thydeth, Gwidir and his brother were left to defend the king's hall. Unbeknownst to him, Faeth's lusts were too dark. When Sinnis refused him, he raped the poor maid.

When the great king found out what had happened from Sinnis, Mahath punished the two brothers by turning one into a wolf and the other into a she-wolf. For three years, they were compelled to switch sexes and breed each year — three children were produced. These were the first of us, the werewolves.

At the end of that time, King Mahath returned Gwidir and Faeth to their rightful forms. Faeth cursed the king and the children of his pain, then fled into the Otherworld. Gwidir, wiser for his punishment, took wolf form once again and went into the wood and found his children and brought them back to his lord's keep. There, King Mahath turned them into humans and attempted to raise the children in his court, but they were wild creatures. They were beings of man, god and wolf; they seemed infected with Faeth's dark passions and had Gwidir's magical shapeshifting abilities. Unbalanced and unfettered, the wolf children caused havoc in Spirit of Magic's court and even their parent Gwidir could not control them. They were not happy among human or wolf — and their dealings with either often left blood in their wake.

Luna, goddess of the moon and mother to all wolves, took pity on her brothers' children and took them to the Otherworld, where she showed them the wheel of stars and the gateways to the Otherworld. There, in Luna's hall, the first of us honed our arts of shapeshifting from our adopted mother. We spoke the magical language of our kindred spirits. From the greatest wolf-spirits, we learned to hunt, and the Moon laid bans upon us that contained our blood's Rage. When we were ready, she sent us into the Otherworld to prove ourselves by hunting down her Firstborn.

There, our forebears agreed to take up the duties and oaths laid upon us by the Moon and as were written in the Book of the Wolf. We, the creatures of passion and sin, would hunt for her. We, who had never before known Harmony, would enforce it. But, as our greatest ban, we would ever wish to cleave to others of their kind, but would never know this passion without dire consequences — in remembrance of the tragic circumstances of our birth. From that time on, none of our kind has been allowed to breed with each other or eat the flesh of either human or wolf.

This time of magic passed, and the Gauntlet arose. This phenomenon drove some of us mad, and we lost many of the tales of our past. Many lay the blame for this on our kind, and many of us have hunted for this truth ever since. But the world had the worst of it, for the Otherworld has darkened, fallen now and forever into Shadow.

RAMIFICATIONS

Like many myths, it's not politically correct. Rape, murder, incest, gender-changing, bestiality, immorality — the inhabitants of these myths, like the creatures of the Shadow, don't play by the rules or mores of polite society.

The Celtic themes in the myth might suggest that lodges of these heretic Uratha might exist within traditionally Celtic lands — or the lands of their descendants. You who wish to heighten this might consider using “clan” instead of “tribe.” An enterprising Storyteller may take up the conceit of the bans, one that already meshes well with the Shadow, and extend them further into rites or Gift lists, and look to the wealth of Celtic lore for more inspiration.

Just as in the Pangaeon myth, these werewolves descend from godlike beings that mix aspects of human, wolf and spirit. In the Pangaeon myth, the Uratha's Fall comes with their murder of Father Wolf. In this tale, they are fallen from birth, creatures of incest and products of violence and a god's curse — monsters from their moment of creation. Thus, this myth gives good reason for the sexual bans they must take up — these would be an open wound in the Uratha's psyche.

The foes of these Uratha are much the same. While the Hosts are not mentioned, their existence could easily be assumed — the early werewolves were likely the beings that caused the fragmentation of their progenitors. The description of the Uratha driven mad by the presence of the Gauntlet is a good fit for the Pure. Perhaps the same is true of the Pure's spiritual patrons. Additionally, what of Faeth? Are he or his servants new foes of these Forsaken?

The Book of the Wolf leaves the rise of Gauntlet a great mystery to the Uratha, one they and a chronicle may take interest in exploring. Other questions, such as the fate of the gods in the tale, might be answered. Does Gwidir still favor them?

CHILDREN OF THE SLEEPING GODDESS

This story is true.

The dawn-time of the world was magical. All was mutable. Spirit and matter naturally flowed in one another during the cycles of youth, maturity and decline. Many of the animals and plants became so wise that they eventually learned to speak and tell tales. This was how the first humans came to be, but they grew away from their ancestor-spirits. Eventually, many forgot what it was like to walk on four legs, or breathe water or fly.

A few did not. The Uratha came from the wolf-people, but we never forgot how to change shape. Our tribe was the strongest and of the three greatest spirits: Gaea, Luna and Helios. We gained the special favor of two, Gaea and Luna. Helios was, and is, too jealous to let his worshippers honor anyone but himself.

Luna gave us the ability to assume new forms between human and wolf, matching her auspices. Gaea extended our abilities to track and hunt, and gave us the basic foundation of our society — pack and territory. Both taught us the ways of the spirit world. The Lunes and elementals guided our path and rewarded our victories. Harsh Luna exacted a ban upon us for her gifts — the touch of her metal, silver, would burn us. Gaea, the earth mother, bid us to keep her world and its Shadow in balance. To do this, Gaea gave us the right to prey upon human and spirit to keep the worlds in balance.

We became powerful shamans who knew how to walk with one foot in both worlds — one in light, the other in Shadow. We were kings of the primordial wood. None could out-fight, out-think or out-magic us. We kept the wolves in check, and we kept the villages of humans small and isolated.

For 1,000 years, there was peace. Eventually, our leaders, drunk on their own power, tried to dominate each other. Our territories became kingdoms. Our kingdoms became nations. We began ruling each other, and both humans and wolves were kept as slaves. Humans were herded like cattle in some of the darkest lands; wolves were pressed into service as our scouts and warriors. We neglected the promises we had made to the goddesses, or worse yet, twisted them into the justifications for our deeds.

But while we waged wars of conquest and slaughter, some of the least of our charges, the humans, escaped from our sight and built mighty cities far away from us. Many of these humans naturally rejected all of the wisdom we taught humankind and sought their own power. Others remembered some of what we taught, and they called to the old gods of Sun, Moon and Earth.

Luna, the ever vengeful, told some of these humans of our weakness, and when our armies finally clashed with them, we were the ones slaughtered. We called out to Luna, and we heard mad laughter. When we called out to mother Gaea, there was only silence. Worse yet, the touch of the silver drove us mad, and we lost control of our war forms. Rage had infected us.

The ever-fickle nature of Luna meant that, after a time, when our leaders had been filled with the silver arrows of humankind or thrown down by us, she forgave the remaining Uratha. We forged new oaths with her and took up our veneration of her. She never removed the stain of Rage from us, though. This is a reminder of our avarice.

Gaea never again answered our prayers, and the spirit courts that venerated her turned against us — especially the Natural and Elemental Courts. Without Gaea's favor, we no longer breed true, and we discovered, to our horror, that we could no longer breed with other Uratha or our wolf families. Some fear that one day she will wake up and punish us. The wisest of us decided that we must take up our duties to Gaea in hopes that she will one day forgive us, or at least to forestall or ameliorate her impending revenge.

RAMIFICATIONS

The spiritual nature of the Uratha is very different in this myth. The myth claims that the half-flesh, half-spirit nature is nothing unnatural or shameful; werewolves are animal-spirits that ascended or evolved into humans. This history removes one of the chief reasons that spirits dislike the Uratha, but their eventual betrayal of Luna and Gaea and their “duty” to police the spirit world are taken as reasons that most spirits at best distrust the Uratha. Envy may also drive the spirits' hatred of the Uratha.

This idea that a human is a descendant of animals could be developed further to create new abilities and, possibly, new antagonists for the Uratha. Perhaps Gifts or rites could be developed to read the animal ancestry of other humans and then use that information. Spirits might be capable of devolving humans or may still have ties or influence over their human descendants. Some among the Uratha or humans may seek a step beyond what they are now.

The prominent place of Gaea in this myth may lead these Uratha to be much more concerned with Mother Earth than the werewolves of the Pangaea myth. While these Uratha certainly see humankind as creatures born of nature, these Uratha may also take umbrage at humankind's excesses and seek to combat the human despoiling of the natural world. While missing in name from the story, Father Wolf and the Firstborn could easily be re-interpreted as ancestor-spirits for the Uratha. Father Wolf may not be a separate spirit, but just the essence of wolfishness, the primal wolf.

Uratha society will not have changed much in this myth, and, in fact, it may offer a new explanation as to why no Uratha nation has arisen, since that impetus led to their Fall. The Pure, on the other hand, are those Uratha who wish to rebuild the werewolf kingdoms of old. These Uratha might find their way into a chronicle as a heretical lodge, perhaps finding sympathy with the Hunters in Darkness or Storm Lords.



CHAPTER II

BROTHERHOODS

Preacher stood before the congregation, swaying slightly. His wide smile didn't so much as twitch. "Children," he said in that high, tittering voice. "So happy, my children. To have you here. I am happy. The Lords Underneath Us are happy, too. They are sated."

Nervous smiles spattered the faces of the congregation. There wasn't any sound from under the floorboards, not even under the pulpit. It was good when there wasn't any sound. The Lords were happy.

Preacher swayed again, his blank eyes roving across his audience. "Yes, it is well." He cocked his head. "Is it not well, Brother Harold?"

Harold started at the mention of his name, and looked up guiltily.

"What is it, Brother?" Preacher's voice sharpened just a bit. "Are you fearful, Brother?"

The heavy man stood, twisting his cap in his hands. "I'm sorry, Preacher. It's just..." He gulped. "Preacher, you remember how you told me to look out in the woods and make sure nothing was wrong? Well, I saw some big ol' dogs last night, just before bed. And I thought they were Meryl's, gotten loose, but this morning I remembered that Meryl's dogs have been gone these last few months." He flinched. "I mean, I'd had a couple of beers..."

"No." The word came sharp. "No." Preacher's eyes widened, and he licked his lips quickly. "No. Not the wolves. Not again."

He staggered to the edge of the pulpit and began to claw at the floorboards.

"WAKE UP!" he shrieked, as the congregation began to babble and shiver with panic. "WAKE UP! THE WOLVES! THE WOLVES ARE COMING!"

One of the floorboards came loose in his filthy hand, and the horrible chattering began.

AND THE NUDE SLAVES, HEAVY WITH PERFUMES,
WHO REFRESHED MY FOREHEAD WITH PALM-LEAVES,
THEIR ONLY CARE WAS TO FATHOM
THE DOLOROUS SECRET THAT MADE ME LANGUISH.
— CHARLES BAUDELAIRE, "PREVIOUS EXISTENCE"

In the deepening shadows of this world, strange faiths cross from the next world to this one. These heresies purport beliefs that go against the sanctity of nature, the strictures of biology and the very purity of the human soul. In the dank sub-basement of a condemned hospital, a blood-soaked fraternity of husbands and sons pay homage to a creature that is female, but not human. In crumbling churches and abandoned factories, desperate souls summon spirits from the Shadow to grant them favor — or is it the spirits that summon the humans? In Hollywood, clandestine sects of anxious actors pray to unnamed beings for just *one more* audition, while inbred survivalists build a ramshackle compound in the forests in the hopes of trapping and skinning whatever wolf-men pass by.

These cults can be anywhere, populated by anyone. From the green lawns of suburbia to the icy mountain passes of Tibet, dark faiths grow most unexpectedly. These profane heresies are far from harmless. They tear at the boundary between worlds, giving power to godless creatures and awful spirits. The Shadow bleeds, and the Uratha are the only ones who can help to heal the wound.

DARK DEVOTION

This chapter is all about faith. Faith is supposed to be a good thing. Sometimes, it is. Having faith in oneself, in a loving and benevolent god or in the rest of humanity all count as positive, if occasionally naïve in this troubled age. Faith can give a human strength, or can be born out of weakness.

The groups presented in this chapter have faith that comes out of weakness. These are not the cults and brotherhoods of principled individuals; few of these groups are decent, though they may certainly be devout. The people who belong to these sects are generally damaged goods. They offer worship because they are selfish. They gather together in a conspiracy because they are desperate to belong. Frailty drives them, though they may not know it. Their souls are chewed and hollow in spots, and filling those holes with vice and darkness is easier than filling them with virtue and light.

Of course, these cults don't necessarily see things that way. These followers and leaders are not villains, twisting mustaches and binding damsels before onrushing trains. The poor souls who cleave to these groups think that they're somehow justified. Yes, they may occasionally recognize the darkness for what it is, but, ultimately, they're able to excuse all of that, or otherwise

bury it beneath a hill of good intentions. Most genuinely believe that they are following a just and righteous cause. Alternately, they may instead subscribe to some selfish "survival-of-the-fittest" attitude, considering themselves warranted in pursuing their goals at whatever cost. They justify their choices, ensuring that they don't see themselves as villains. They do not think themselves evil. They think that they're *right*.

WHY CARE?

Why do the Uratha care about any of this? Most cults are harmless — if not to the world then at least to the goals and ideas of the Forsaken. That's true to a point, but the groups discussed in this chapter trust in heresies that are damaging to this world *and* the Shadow Realm. Such awfulness tears apart the membrane between worlds — or in some cases, strengthens it needlessly.

These cults and sects also give power to the Uratha's enemies, allowing spirits to flourish and swell with power. These brotherhoods put hope in the hands of the wretched Rat and Spider Hosts. With these groups, the Ridden are made kings, and some werewolves are allowed to break the Oaths and live as lords over the human herds.

The People have definite reason to care. If groups such as these are allowed to exist unfettered, the already tenuous balance will shift, and the whole house of cards could come tumbling down.

BREEDS OF BELIEF

Dark faith is a hydra; it has many, many heads. Slicing one head off only causes more to sprout from the poisonous belief that spills out. Below are a few of the types of sect that Forsaken may encounter as foes. Many of these may seem like nothing to worry about — after all, the Uratha cannot be concerned with every bit of strangeness and corruption — but digging deeper reveals that a grotesque spiritual resonance bleeds from the actions of these groups. The Forsaken may not see an immediate need to be concerned, but they'll find one soon enough.

CULT OF WORSHIP

Far and away the most common “cult” is one of worship. Individuals gather to place faith in something that is believed to be both supernatural and all-powerful. The worship cult may be something small and rare, like a group of highway truckers who gather under a particular highway overpass once a month to pray to some “God of the Highway.” Alternately, the cult may be huge, with sects and sub-sects in various stages of belief across the world. Legend tells of a number of mortal politicians — everything from state senators to European Parliament members — that venerate a whole pantheon of fallen angels. These angels, or demons as they may be, allegedly boost the status of the faithful and punish the unbelievers. The supplicants are said to doff their suits and judicial robes and don the red ritual robes of their faith. This cult is purportedly global.

Do the Forsaken need to be concerned about these groups? Maybe. The primary question a pack must ask itself is, “is this real?” The People are privy to genuine spiritual concerns. Entities exist in and beyond the Shadow that want to do harm to this world and the people in it. The reality, however, is that people believe in things that don’t actually exist. Just because a handful of so-called priests decide to venerate some god or entity doesn’t necessarily mean that the target of their worship really exists. If a cult of worship isn’t lending belief and power to a real spirit or creature and isn’t mucking around too terribly in a pack’s territory, does the cult matter? Not much.

The problem occurs when a group is investing energy in venerating a very real supernatural being. This being likely doesn’t tell the truth about itself; it may be a spirit, vampire or even another werewolf. This being likely positions itself as some kind of omnipotent creature deserving of adulation. (Some entities may be honest about what they are. If an entity can prove its power, such as being may not need to attempt such deception.) If this is found to be the case, a pack should certainly worry. Many entities can subsist on faith and the power granted to them by mortal believers. As the entity’s powers grow, a pack’s territory suffers as the balance between the Shadow and the physical world diminishes.

Some groups do not start out worshipping a real entity, but do so over time. Many of the enemies of the Forsaken are capable of recognizing an opportunity, and, should they find a cult willing to devote effort toward revering something, they may step in. If a group of embittered teenage outcasts gather at the church on the hill every midnight and ask favors of the “Devil,” an enterprising spirit may find a way to manifest as the Devil. If the being can convince these foolish adolescents of such a lie (perhaps by offering them small favors and tricking them with Numina), the being may garner favor from them. Soon, the spirit may find one of them willing to be its host. If the Forsaken do not curtail this horror before it

begins, it may soon spin out of control. Inaction can lead to terrible, even irreversible, damage.

CULT OF CONSPIRACY

Humans are perhaps most foolish and dangerous in groups, and a cult of conspiracy illustrates this principle. A conspiracy is an agreement among people to commit acts that are wrongful or subversive. A cabal of conspirators wants to control something that is nominally outside its control. Many such “control issues” are based upon mortal — meaning, mundane — concerns. People may want to humiliate a corporate whistleblower, bribe or blackmail a city official, even assassinate a major political figure. While these issues may not *seem* mundane, they can be to a pack of local Forsaken. Unless the target of the conspiracy is an ally of the pack, they’ll not get involved enough to make a difference. The world turns and conspiracies happen. If the conspiracy doesn’t damage the pack’s territory or punch holes in the Gauntlet, then the mortal authorities can handle the mortal concern.

Some conspiracies, however, involve humans banding together to *control the supernatural*. This is akin to juggling fire: possible for a time, but such action cannot be sustained without damage. And yet, humans try anyway, and, for a time, they might succeed. Humans are generally ignorant of the supernatural, but occasionally a few are made aware of the things that live in the periphery. After all, humankind has its myths and legends, and is willing to accept on faith that certain variables exist. When some proof of these variables comes sliding across a mortal’s desk or ends up accidentally in one of his photographs, he can try to ignore it — or he can try to *control* it.

Of course, he rarely knows *what* it is he’s trying to control, but that rarely stops the conspiracy from trundling forward. A vampire shows up blurry on all forms of photographic media — so what happens when a group of security guards see one on the closed circuit television screen? They don’t know it’s a vampire, and they might assume it’s some sort of technical error, but they might deduce it’s something weird. Will they follow it? Learn more about it? From there, perhaps they bribe it, blackmail it or trick the creature into revealing itself to others. The same goes for anybody who sees a Forsaken shift forms. Not all humans suffer from weak Willpower, and may very well remember the scene in near-entirety. Certainly some can recall the legends about silver’s properties — what happens when this mortal bands together with some old high-school buddies and attempts to hunt and capture his prey? (The answer is, they’ll probably end up dead. But “probably” doesn’t mean “definitely,” and that margin of error can cost a werewolf her life.)

Consider too, the possibility that one supernatural may attempt to stir a conspiracy against another in an attempt to distract or diminish him. A Ridden who is hounded by a diligent pack knows he’s no match for those claws. The *duguthim* may try to conjure a conspiracy of hu-

mans, acting as one of them and showing them evidence of the existence of werewolves. The Ridden may suggest that they arm themselves with silver. While the mob of humans goes out to hunt, capture or control this strange beast, the Ridden escapes.

The Forsaken believe that humanity is not meant to know the supernatural. Humankind loves to destroy and dissect that which it does not understand, all in an effort to control it. A single human is only worrisome when she shares her believe with others, and makes them believers. From this, a cabal can be born, and the first reaction of a pack is likely to clip the conspiracy's wings before it can get off the ground. Although, some packs know the value in directing a conspiracy away from themselves and toward their foes. It's a dangerous game, but it's not completely without merit.

CULT OF PERSONALITY

When a group of humans blindly follows the charismatic authority of a individual (generally still living) instead of a god or goddess, a cult of personality is born. These cults are not supernatural, at least not on the surface. A cult of personality can involve the worship of anyone from a celebrity to a politician; the individual at the center of the craze is often positioned as a hero, savior or liberator. He may place himself upon the pedestal, or others may put him there without his consent.

Some such cults are harmless. People might obsessively follow a musician, swooning and fainting every time her face is shown. Fitness junkies might buy every DVD, snack bar and work-out device sold by a popular health guru. While such slavish devotion is strange, it happens. Other personality cults are clearly less innocent. Adolf Hitler enjoyed the attentions of a massive personality cult, some suggest, in Nazi Germany — and, worse still, he is still the center of such a cult today. Alternately, consider the Reverend Jim Jones, whose ardent supporters followed him to the jungles of the Third World and then killed themselves in his name.

Forsaken don't always recognize the immediate threat that these groups represent. Some packs let humans be humans, and if that means obsessing over one of their own, so be it. Unfortunately, such cults can have a damning effect on the local area, both physical and spiritual. A suicide cult whose members all murder each other isn't just a bad situation. Such an event might create a mob of angry specters, or summon passels of pain- and murder-spirits to the scene (who might then Urge weak-willed mortals). But even those personality cults whose goals seem ordinary should be worrisome. Not only do such groups tend to spawn or attract a number of conceptual-spirits (such as spirits of obsession, greed or lust), but those groups are also easy to control. Normally, a group of humans must be affected individually — but, if a group follows a single leader, only the *leader* must be affected to steer the group. A powerful spirit could Urge the leader, a vampire could

mind-rape her or a Pure could threaten her. Controlling the personality means controlling the cult.

CULT OF APPEASEMENT

A fine line separates a cult of worship from a cult of appeasement. It's all a matter of intention. A cult devoting energy and effort toward a supernatural being because of love, favor or morals is likely a cult of worship. A cult turning to such an entity out of fear is a cult of appeasement. Worship involves genuine devotion. Appeasement involves attempting to satisfy the entity in the hopes of avoiding pain or punishment.

Mortals, thankfully, generally run ignorant of the real supernatural. In rare instances, however, humans fall afoul of such beings — and those creatures can either destroy the human, or make demands of her. This isn't worship. The poor souls are not committed to serving the creature because of authentic adulation. They serve out of fear. They don't want to get eaten, have their family killed or see their minds and bodies twisted into something unrecognizable. Humans seek to appease the monsters to stave off suffering.

Consider a vampire's herd of blood-slaves. They are addicted to the fiend's blood, and so they get something out of the deal — but many of them kowtow to their undead masters out of unending fear. The mortal kin of the Pure (or even Forsaken) may do the same, providing for the wretched packs just to keep their body parts from getting bitten off in fits of anger. From time to time, groups of humans run afoul of the Hosts, or even the alien idigam. These creatures are brutes and parasites, and rarely engage in any kind of symbiosis with mortals. The mortals are given a choice to satisfy the urges of these beings — or suffer at their hands.

This *can* turn into a kind of worship. Fear is a powerful motivator, and is an element of power that some might admire. Such fearful mortals may grow to love the monsters in a way that a hostage may come to care for her captors. From time to time, the Bale Hounds dominate whole families of humans, submitting the victims to a number of trials and punishments. The Bale Hounds eat the hearts of the weak and invite brutal spirits to torture children. Such relationships start off adversarial, with the humans clearly identifying the shapeshifting monsters as nothing more than bullies and sociopaths. But over time, the power of the Bale Hounds and the clarity of the Wound affect some of the family members, who soon grow to love the monsters. While this love is admittedly twisted, the family members begin appeasing the mad werewolves at any cost, even helping them in their ghastly acts.

GANG

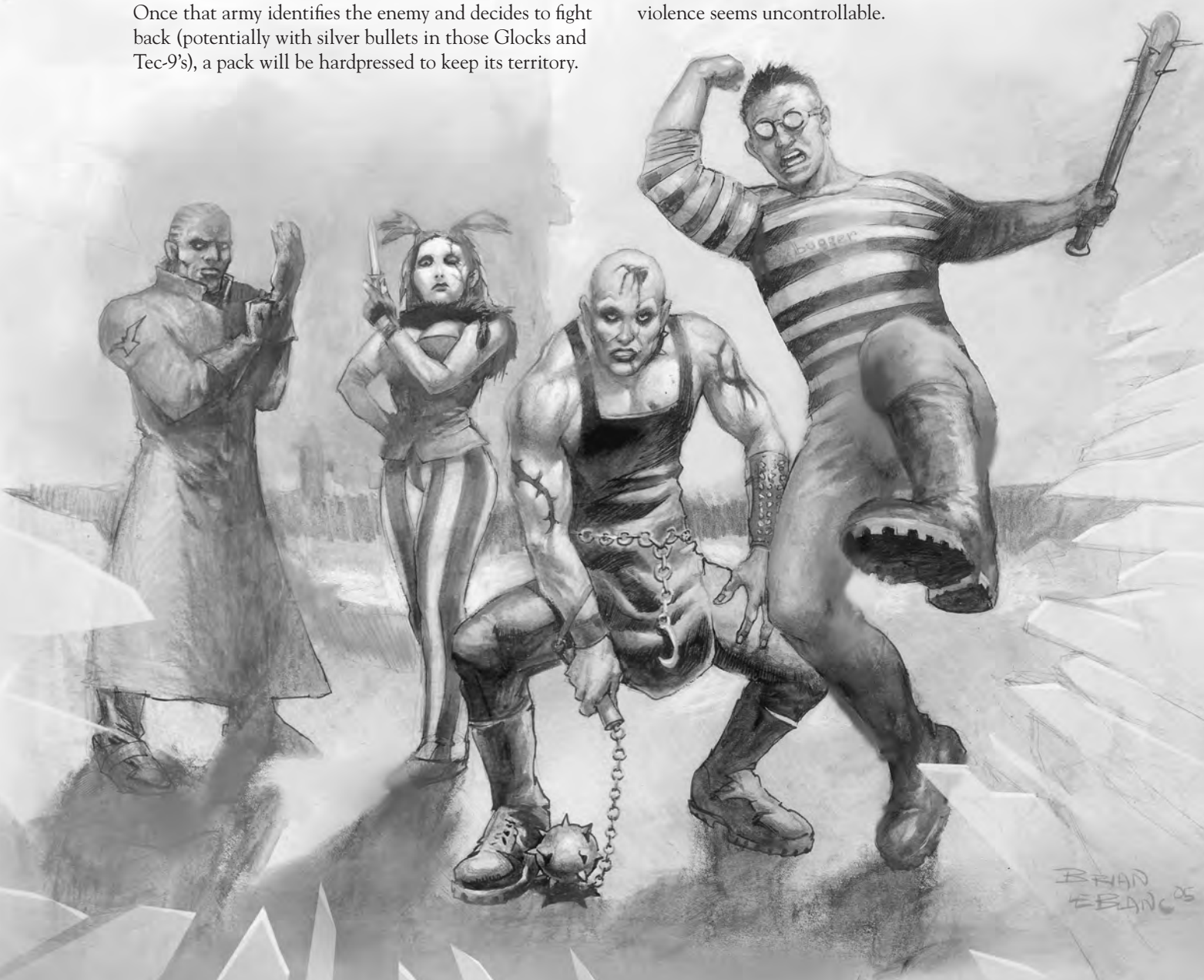
A gang may not seem like a cult at first, until one examines the minutiae and finds the Devil in the details. Gangs wear certain clothes and colors to identify themselves, and also use unique slang language and hand-signs

to communicate. Once onboard, it's also next to impossible to leave a gang. It's blood in, blood out. Kill someone to get in, die to get out. Gangs are generally ethnically-based, which could mean a mob of white supremacists or a tight-knit "family" of Mexican *vatos*. The most dangerous gangs are also criminal enterprises. Whether that means acting as "coyotes" and bringing in illegal immigrants, or pushing heroin or other drugs, gang members have rap sheets. No rap sheet? No gang membership.

The Forsaken should worry about gangs regardless of supernatural influence. Gangs and werewolves want the same thing — *territory*. This means the two groups are competing for similar resources. A criminal gang is likely to take a territory and destroy it spiritually and physically. Murder, addiction and prostitution all come in and add up to the area's decay across all worlds. The spirits attracted to such degradation are often overly cruel and hostile, as easily addicted to ruin as those humans who dwell in such squalor. Packs of urban Uratha must constantly push back the gangs without revealing themselves. The Forsaken can usually roll over a gang with little issue — but the Forsaken must be cautious. A gang is like a small army. Once that army identifies the enemy and decides to fight back (potentially with silver bullets in those Glocks and Tec-9's), a pack will be hardpressed to keep its territory.

Gangs needn't be urban, either. A gang of survivalist neo-Nazis may have a compound out in the woods and set up a perimeter of booby-traps (pits, jaw traps, snares) to catch anybody who comes sniffing around.

Worse is when a gang has supernatural connections. Spirits find gangs particularly vulnerable to influence — gang members and leaders are angry, oppressed, full of piss and fire, and the tight bonds mean a prevailing mood can spread quickly. Many spirits can coax such vitriol and take eventual control — at which point a Ridden suddenly has an built-in army of urban minions to fulfill the Ridden's demented needs. While many Ridden want to stay away from werewolves, an Urged or Claimed may have just enough power to take on the pack. Even if the Ridden keeps the gang out of a pack's way, the Ridden still degrades the members spiritually and emotionally. The community suffers as the fiend drags the gang down into further depravities. Some gangs are known to have more than one Ridden in them, as well, which is a recipe for certain disaster. Many cities have become infested with gangs, which spread like plagues. The Forsaken have long-suspected spirit influence in such areas where gang violence seems uncontrollable.



Gangs needn't be entirely adversarial, though. More than one pack has found wolf-blooded allies counted among the gangs. Not only do wolf-blooded allies give the pack a territorial advance of sheer numbers, but also allow them to keep control of the gang, perhaps even directing its energies toward occasional community outreach or battling legitimate oppression from local police or opposing gangs.

CONFRATERNITY

A confraternity is a secular group devoted to some principle, profession or past time. Such groups are also usually harmless. Whether an on-campus sorority, a local Moose lodge or a networking group for a bunch of computer programmers, these confraternities are generally worry-free congregations. Men and women have long gathered for common social purpose, and they aren't even noticeable above the din of spirit screams and threatening howls. The Uratha have little reason to fret. At least, usually.

One chief characteristic of many of these groups is history. Some falsely claim a distinguished pedigree, but many have been around for a long time — a women's sewing circle may have history back to the Revolutionary War. A group of Freemasons can cite origins that go back to either the Knights Templar or the stonemasons of ancient Egypt (depending on whom you ask).

History itself isn't a problem, but what potentially comes *with* such history can be. Some of the ancient brotherhoods provide false fronts meant to conceal their true purposes. This modern deception may hide many deviant traditions that have been in practice for centuries. A local men's society started back during the Civil War may offer pancake breakfasts and clean up highway litter. And, on every third Friday, they gather upon the old battlefields and let the war-torn specters live in their bodies for a time. A children's scout troop might sacrifice local pets to appease the entities that possess their parents. A college fraternity's hazing rituals may expose a gore-soaked Skull & Bones-style society, in which grotesque devotion is the doorway to the true halls of mortal power. With history may come primeval priesthoods and ancient relationships with undying creatures.

The Forsaken have much to worry about when it comes to one of these deviant societies, largely because they are so good at hiding what they do. They have been obscuring their repugnant customs for so long that such obfuscation becomes harder and harder to see past. These are not groups that have only recently learned how to commune with spirits — such secular gatherings are well-versed in the ways of hiding behind innocuous behavior. A pack may find itself up against a terrible imbalance between worlds, with a proliferation of strange spirits, Ridden or Hosts. The pack won't know why, and tracking the chaos to its source is sure to be a labyrinthine effort.

Some of these societies are said to exist among the wolf-blooded. Again, few Forsaken see the harm, at least

initially. Those werewolf kin who are aware of their abnormal heritages often come together to provide solidarity (and shoulders to cry upon). But in such gatherings, anger and resentment may swell if left unchecked. A rare few wolf-blooded groups have turned away from such innocent gathering and have instead turned against the Forsaken in secret. These wolf-blooded offer themselves to spirits and betray the pack's location. Some go out themselves and hunt the Uratha from the shadows, weakening the ranks until the time comes when the Pure may obliterate their diminished numbers. This doesn't happen often, of course; the wolf-blooded know that betraying their blood is unwise. But they are also not immune to weakness, or even hatred, and when they come together in such gatherings, there's no telling what dark dreams will stir them to action.

SELF-IMPROVEMENT

Improvement is a good thing. Getting thin, quitting smoking, managing anger: all are positive steps. Enriching one's own life is a good thing, but performed improperly, self-improvement can have negative consequences.

Most self-improvement groups do what they claim. They are legitimate organizations designed to help people conquer fear, beat addictions or learn new things. Some are non-profit self-help groups; others are money-hungry businesses whose primary goal is to fill the company coffers. It works, because people are desperate enough to pay whatever price is necessary to make themselves better.

Those two things — desperation and cost — are a terrible one-two punch. When individuals are willing to pay exorbitant costs to "fix" themselves, they become vulnerable to outside influence. Hopefully, that outside influence might just be someone looking to exploit them for their money. A worst case scenario is that someone wants to exploit them for their *souls*.

Consider a morbidly obese woman, well over 400 pounds. She has trouble walking up a flight of steps, she is at risk for heart disease and other maladies and she surely looks nothing like the ladies on the covers of *Cosmopolitan*. Already, the woman may be willing to have her guts sliced open and her stomach stapled to the size of a coin purse — an admittedly dangerous procedure, but one that will probably work. Ah, but what if there were a simpler way? What if a group offered this woman a *quick and easy* route to dropping 10 sizes — one that didn't require exercise, diet or surgery? The possibilities for how this could be done are endless. Perhaps the woman is coaxed into performing some kind of ritualized meditation — at which point a spirit is allowed to possess her flesh from the Shadow. Or maybe while her eyes are closed, a fat-bellied spider comes dancing up behind her, ready to fill her body with shard-bearing arachnids (far lighter than body fat!). Perhaps she must tithe her blood and meat to some hungry creature, whose snipping teeth and scissor-claws will excise her adipose tissue — as long as she comes back

once a month. Desperation pushes lost souls to the brink, whereupon they may gather together and commit any number of sins against themselves or others.

FAMILY

Never underestimate the ties that bind. Family is a tricky thing; you can run from it, but you can't ever leave it. One's heritage, however dark and unpleasant, is scratched into every skin cell, hair follicle and blood cell in the body.

Most of the families in the World of Darkness are screwed up in *normal* ways: domestic abuse, passive-aggressive relationships, co-dependencies, treacherous affairs. Bad things such as cancer, heart disease and mental illness get passed down through the blood. Some awful stuff, like aggression, weakness or fear, is learned, too. But all of that pales in comparison to what some families pass down, both through nature *and* nurture.

These very real brotherhoods believe in some genuinely strange things. Some clans, like Forsaken packs, take on totem spirits — and, over time, these spirits and the families grow twisted together like the branches of a diseased tree. Others simply give their faith to beings that dwell outside this physical reality and in the deep Shadow of the spirit kingdoms. Such primeval spirits thrive on this belief, and swell to enormous power outside the sight of most Forsaken. One family is said to actually be a bloodline of Ridden — a father and mother long ago were both claimed by strange Urge-spirits of need and desire. Their children were not born as normal humans, but instead as empty vessels that were immediately possessed by hungry spirits. That was four generations ago, and the family is said to have grown by leaps and bounds since then, with only a few falling prey to Forsaken because the werewolves simply don't expect such horror to have a family tree.

Family is pervasive. When combined with cultic dependency that is learned from a very early age, family can create a potent force that can scrape the Shadow raw. With kin, one cannot “unbelong” to a family. Plus, families don't need to recruit, they simply breed. Darkness can persist for generations.



BLEEDING TOGETHER

Cults and other such groups are not so easily categorized in the above groups. Many of these groups are actually a combination of the above ideas, especially considering that the members of such a disturbed organization may devote themselves for entirely different reasons from one another.

For instance, a sect based upon giving a spirit power and flesh in return for prophecies about stock tips and interest rates might involve a combination of conspiracy (some try to control the spirit), worship (others glorify the spirit), and fear (a few stay in the cult because they are generally afraid for their lives or the lives of their families). The above categories can be applied liberally to any antagonist group. Feel free to paint with a broad brush and use as many of the ideas in this chapter as you find suitable in-game.

SPIRITS

Spirits care little for humans. They are not kind or selfless. Spirits are alien entities, dwelling on the other side of the reality fence. They are driven by a set of invisible rules and urges. The foremost urge is that of hunger, for spirits constantly seek the suste-

nance of Essence and power. They gorge on it, hoping to grow beyond a pale mote, yearning to fulfill whatever task informs their very beings.

However, just because spirits don't care for humanity doesn't mean they don't find humans useful. Humans are a fundamental part of the world. An individual has the power through his actions to drastically alter the spiritual landscape of an area. Whether the man is a mass murderer or a visionary architect, his legacy may leave an indelible mark on the Shadow, which in turn can bring about Essence.

Spirits recognize this. Because of the raw potential of humans, they cannot be ignored. And so, some spirits cross the Gauntlet to establish a relationship with humanity. (It's worth noting that the spirits that cross the Gauntlet are the ones who find displeasure with the languor of living in the Shadow. When a werewolf meets a spirit in the physical world, the werewolf should assume it more harmful than spirits contented to stay in the *Hisil*.) Relationships between humans and spirit run the gamut. Many spirits forge bonds with humans who do not even know the spirit exists; the entity stays in the background, shepherding its followers toward a single goal. Alternately, a spirit may reveal itself, hoping to stir inspiration or fear by dint of its presence. Some spirits are parasites, feeding off the weakness of people, whereas others are intelligent enough to know that a symbiotic relationship, while more effort, reaps a greater reward.

From the actions and revelations of these entities, cults and followings are born. Humans gather in the handfuls or the hundreds to worship these ephemeral beings, zealously protecting their own interests as well as the concerns of the spirit. A spirit cult can be anything: a group of naturalists, artists, businessmen, even rapists and killers. The potential is wide open. It is also terrifying.

THE LAWS OF DEVOTION

When spirits accept a relationship with mortals, the rules change. Spirits gain from this relationship (even if the humans sometimes don't), and find that their powers may shift or even increase. Below are discussions of what happens when a spirit amasses a mortal following — even if the mortals doing the spirit's bidding believe they're serving some other cause or deity.

ESSENCE AND FAITH

Having a following can be beneficial for a spirit, garnering it Essence. A cult who serves the spirit (knowingly or not) has faith in the spirit itself or some reflection of that spirit. The angry searing servants of a Helion may not actively venerate a sun-spirit, but their propensity to stand in the desert and damage their eyes by staring into the sun for hours helps the Helion amass Essence. The worship is unknown and passive, but still pays off for the spirit. Others are more active in their worship. Adherents of some road cult who worship the spirit of Asphalt Highway may

literally stop to pray to it, subsequently spreading the guts and blood of roadkill across the macadam to show their devotion. A cult's faith does matter, because from it, the spirit can reclaim lost Essence.

Faith and belief in the spirit *are* responsible for that Essence gain, but indirectly. Ultimately, humans do not directly gift spirits with Essence — mortals are creatures without that primeval soul-touched energy, and they have no reflection in the *Hisil*. How exactly does this work? Many ways are possible:

- Belief and action in the spirit's name may create a small locus. If such faith is true and the humans are willing to perform acts of great horror, madness or even love, the belief can result in a place of power. The high resonance of emotion invested is responsible. From there, a spirit can regain Essence. If the cult can continue to work around this area and perform those tasks that support the spirit and locus, the resonance will grow in power and the locus will be stronger. Prayers devoted to the spirit and the locus *do* help to give emotional vigor to the area, even if that vigor doesn't translate directly as raw Essence. In this way, Essence is cultivated, like fruit from a tree.

- If the cult does as the spirit demands, the cult members often end up creating more of the thing that the spirit reflects. An ancient oak-spirit may ask for more of its brothers to be planted. A murder-spirit may demand that its children go out and kill in its name. A snake-spirit may play a diabolical role and ask that good church-goers test themselves with real snakes. In the end, the spirit finds itself in proximity to that which the spirit reflects, which grants Essence. Moreover, such an act may inadvertently summon *other* similar types of spirit — a murder draws more murder-spirits, which the progenitor spirit can then consume for power.

- Sacrifice works. A spirit may ask that its followers burn plants, destroy objects or kill animals for it. Provided the thing sacrificed had a reflection in the Shadow, the spirit can feed off the thing's destruction, consuming it much as the spirit would another spirit. It can only get a single Essence from such an action, and must succeed on a Power + Finesse roll to do so. Humans can be sacrificed, as well, but that sacrifice doesn't grant the spirit direct Essence. What human sacrifice can do is conjure or summon any number of negative spirits, all of which can serve as quick food for the commanding entity.

This is what gives spirit cults more depth than others. The cultists *can* simply worship a spirit, but the spirit in question gets nothing if the humans are only singing the entity's praises and offering it unfocused prayer and ritual. Spirits demand action from their devotees; spirits feed from the results of *behavior*, not songs and poems, not bowing and scraping. Some spirits don't even communicate directly with the mortals — such spirits work from afar, orchestrating mortals to come together to unknowingly do the spirits' bidding, fostering the spirits' Essence gains. Faith grants a spirit Essence, but only indirectly.

FOLLOWERS

A spirit's mortal following also contributes to the spirit's actions. Mechanically, mortal followers allow for a spirit to take die bonuses to rolls it makes (specifically Influence or Numina rolls). These die bonuses can be the result of sheer number (a small following of five or 10 cultists may allow the spirit to take a +1 to rolls, whereas a huge following of 100 or more may result in a +3 modifier). Alternately, if the adherents throw themselves headlong into a task that suits the needs of the spirit, the spirit may also take bonuses. Some manner of sacrifice should be required. The sacrifice may equate to Willpower points, Wound levels or even a Morality loss. When this happens, assume that a spirit may take a +1 to +3 bonus on rolls (depending on the severity of the sacrifice) for the following 24-hour period.

Keep in mind that the die bonuses may only apply to instances when the spirit conforms to its expected role in the cult. If the cultists venerate the image of a phoenix, but the fire-spirit instead uses Materialize and looks like a burning chariot, the bonus dice may not apply because the mortals' belief is not driven toward that singular image. (In this way, a spirit is not necessarily trapped by the worship given to it, but can be limited by it.) Similarly, these bonuses may not apply if a Forsaken pack or some other characters help to dissuade the cultists from their belief. If faith is shaken, the bonuses may no longer carry through to the spirit. The channels of veneration can be blocked.

TOOLS OF ATTRACTION

Spirits do not have an intelligence equal to humans. That's not to suggest that spirits aren't as smart as people, only that spirits think differently. They don't understand the depth of human need, though they may understand a fraction of it (conceptual-spirits in particular are closer to comprehending humanity). A spirit attempting to inspire a following of humans to action and worship will not have an easy time doing so, if only because the spirit is not necessarily intuitive. A spirit must in turn use all the tools available to it in winning over (or outright enslaving) the minds and bodies of a mortal cult.

Influence is one of these tools. Spirits have the ability to channel energy into certain parts of existence. Lesser spirits can affect their spheres of Influence lightly, fanning the flames of what already exists. Powerful spirits can create vast examples of Influence. A spirit that can influence practically *any* emotion can inspire wonderful and terrible things in humanity. A spirit can twist a human's emotions toward love, hatred, fear, pain or euphoria. Some spirits do so simply to get a specific reaction — if a fear-spirit causes fear, the spirit gains Essence. Some entities are content to do this now and again, but others construct carefully orchestrated followings out of this Influence-driven inspiration. A spirit that continues to mold or create the same emotions in the same people (say, fear in a room of cancer survivors or among a handful of abused children who play

together) may find that those people stick together. They become easier to manipulate. The spirit can come to them again and again — its presence invisible or made known — and feed off of the same pulsing emotions. It's a little like cultivating a garden. It takes time and effort, but if done right, the harvest can provide a bounty of food for some time.

A spirit needn't use its Influence only to shape or form emotions, however. If a spirit has providence over a physical portion of the world, that can work, too. A spirit that carefully manipulates or creates sickness in a group of people may find that the entity can continue to revisit them, reinforcing the disease again and again, well beyond the point where it should've healed. Over time, and with the right whispers in the right ears, the spirit may find that it has a cult of AIDS patients or even lepers who act almost as avatars of the diseases they carry. If the fear-spirit from the earlier example has the ability to summon or spawn snakes, it may be able to inspire fear abstractly by sending a venomous snake among the humans. If the spirit does this among a church full of snake-handlers, and the congregation believes it has been visited by the Devil, the spirit can feed off that resultant terror. (Plus, people tend to be scared of snakes regardless of any diabolical associations.) The entity can do this again and again; the resultant sect does not worship the *spirit* directly, but a following built around the spirit's actions and Influences still remains.

An entity's Numina are also of particular use. Aside from the Claim, Living Fetter and Possession Numina (all of which are covered later in this chapter), other weapons in its arsenal help to garner a human herd.

Gauntlet Breach is a critical ability, for without it (or the Reaching Numen) a spirit cannot easily affect mortals of the world around them. Harrow is another useful Numen. A spirit can overwhelm a human with a wave of one single emotion (usually negative, though spirits can similarly engulf a subject in ecstatic joy, love, even self-confidence). If the spirit wins a Harrow contest with an exceptional success, or manages to work this power successfully on one human five times (on separate occasions), the victim becomes almost irrevocably changed. The human may take a derangement (mild, or a mild one is made severe), or may instead have a hard time changing his emotional state from the Harrow attack, thus sticking him in a near-constant state whatever emotion was invoked. If a spirit can do this to several subjects, they may become a pack of mortals bent toward serving their emotional state, while themselves attempting to force that emotion upon others. The spirit wins, even if its presence remains hidden. Also useful is Fetter, which allows a spirit to use abilities without having to Reach.

If the spirit doesn't wish to remain hidden, Materialize can be of great use. If the being has a particularly high Power + Finesse pool, the spirit can physically stay in the world possibly longer than it could linger in Twilight while



non-corporeal. Moreover, materialized spirits are often clearly supernatural. One might appear as a fog bank with faces in the mists, while another might show as a little man made of fire. Spirits might look close enough to beings in which humans still believe, such as ghosts, faeries, even angels. Even those spirits that appear in more mundane forms can impress mortals. A dog-spirit appears as a dog, but has a distinct gleam of intelligence in its eye. A dog-spirit can do things other dogs cannot, such as invoke Influences or Numina. The dog-spirit can warn humans of death and danger, can attack intelligently, can understand and follow intricate commands. Such simple actions may cause one human to bring others to see this “wonder dog.” If the dog sufficiently impresses them, who’s to say that they won’t begin to feel strangely attached to it? Especially when the dog-spirit uses its Influences to stir up subservient and protective emotions.

While all Numina and Influences cost Essence, wise spirits know that spending Essence is necessary to gain it.

(Note that Influences and Numina can be found in **Werewolf: The Forsaken**, pp. 274–278.)

NEW NUMINA

Some spirits have powers that may further aid them in bringing mortals to serve them, or at least to serve their reflected interests and ideals. These Numina are less common than others, and are unlikely to be found among lower-level spirits (Gafflings in particular).

- **Fictive Form:** With this power, a spirit materializes across the Gauntlet, much as in the Materialize Numen. Except in this case, the spirit does not manifest as its normal physical reflection. The entity instead appears as whatever religious, mythical or iconic being in which human witnesses most strongly believe. This manifested vision is different to every witness. A strong Catholic might see an angel or a beatific icon of the Virgin Mary. A reader of fantasy literature or student of mythology might see Zeus, a griffin or a coyote man. A computer programmer might see a glowing bauble of blue computer code;

a schizophrenic might see the President of the United States, the Devil or even himself. Whatever the image, it does not invoke fear, only awe. To activate this Numen for a spirit, spend three Essence and roll its Power + Finesse. The number of successes indicate how many minutes the spirit can remain in the material world as this image before reverting to ephemera. However, if the spirit was already corporeal due to the Materialize Numen, the spirit only has to spend one Essence and succeed on the roll to activate Fictive Form. Fictive Form still ends with the spirit becoming ephemeral. It cannot remain in the physical world and may not reattempt entry until the next scene.

- **Ghost-Eater:** The spirit with this Numen is able to steal Essence from or consume ghosts as if they were spirits. The spirit spends one Essence to activate this Numen and attune its “digestion”; the effects last for the rest of the scene. Naturally, the spirit must still be able to affect the ghost in other ways; this usually requires the spirit to be in the physical world and in Twilight.

- **Sense Character:** A spirit can use this Numen to get a sense of a target’s character. Spend one Essence point and roll Power + Finesse versus the target’s Resolve + Composure. If the spirit is successful, it can identify the subject’s Virtue and Vice. On an exceptional success, a spirit can also identify any derangements the target possesses (if any), as well as its Morality (or Harmony) score.

- **Sense Influence:** With this Numen, a spirit can sense the presence of whatever the spirit’s Influences are attuned to, without requiring use of Material Vision or any other Numina. A fire-spirit might be able to detect gasoline and dry tinder, a snake-spirit can “smell out” nearby serpents. Spend one Essence and roll Power + Finesse + Influence (i.e., the dots in whatever Influence the spirit seeks). Success indicates that the spirit can sense the physical presence of any related items, provided they exist within a 50-yard radius. An exceptional success doubles that radius to 100 yards.

- **Whisper Chorus:** This Numen allows a spirit to whisper a message in the ears of nearby humans. All humans with a radius equal to the spirit’s Power in yards can receive this whispered word or phrase. To activate the Numen, the spirit spends one point of Essence and rolls Power + Finesse. Success indicates that the spirit can speak a sentence (comprising no more than 10 words). An exceptional success allows for the spirit to speak unhindered for a full minute. Any humans who wander out of the radius can still hear the whisper. Any humans who wander *into* the radius cannot hear it at all. This Numen cannot be used across the Gauntlet without the use of other Numina that allow it to do so.

BEYOND ESSENCE

Spirits want Essence. They force cults into existence or accept an incidental following largely because they are

hungry for spiritual power. However, Essence is not the *only* reason a spirit may accept or demand a mortal herd.

First, spirits have enemies. Such an enemy might be another spirit, or a whole *descant* of spirits. A fire-spirit may loathe the powerful forest-spirit that continues to ward off and disincorporate the fire-spirit’s fiery brethren. The forest can do little to stave off *human* intervention, however. The fire-spirit could, with effort, compel a number of humans to set a forest fire. Perhaps they do so accidentally, nudged by the spirit. Perhaps these humans are a cult of pyromaniacs who gladly oblige the infernal demands of their “lord.” In this case, the spirit wins on two fronts. The spirit’s enemy, the forest, has its physical world body damaged, giving the fire-spirit a key advantage. Second, the fire-spirit can claim Essence from the creation of fire.

Spirits also have other enemies. The Forsaken, for one, are always standing in the way of spirits’ actions, especially when they cross the Gauntlet. Other humans can be a problem, as well. The forest-spirit in the above example knows that humans can cause the spirit great harm. Loggers may come to cut its children down, campers come and fill it with artificial spirits and polluted Essence and firebugs might try to burn up the whole place. If the forest-spirit is wise, it may have its *own* mortal followers who live within the entity’s physical domain. These feral humans, nearly more animal than man, may come out of nowhere to protect the forest’s interests, killing any humans who dare to step foot within the forest’s borders.

In these cases, a spirit isn’t so much trying to get Essence as protect itself from other spirits, werewolves or humans. A properly-directed human cult provides a spirit master with both offensive and defensive capabilities.

Followers can do all manner of things. They can help to inadvertently build a locus, they can unknowingly work to change the resonance of an area or they can even contribute to the diminishment of the Gauntlet’s power in an area.

One exception happens rarely, but happens nevertheless. Once in a while, a spirit becomes fascinated, even obsessed, with a group of humans. The spirit adores them, even loves them in a bizarre, demented fashion. Other spirits consider this madness, but, occasionally, a spirit simply accepts that a group of humans aren’t the spirit’s puppets, but its children. Usually, this grows out of some shared connection. A city-spirit may come to love those who clean its streets. A spirit of murder may love those who create blood-smeared art in the entity’s name. The spirit of an old 1968 Mustang might love the group of teenagers who drive its physical counterpart to school every day, laughing and smoking and listening to music. The followings born from such relationships are often different. They’re no less manipulative — the humans are at least partially in thrall to the commanding spirit. The humans, however, are more likely to see equal advantage.

Such a relationship becomes symbiotic, not parasitic like most spirit cult associations.

IDENTITY AND HUNGER

When creating a spirit cult for use in your game, it's important to remember that spirits are defined by two things. First, a spirit is defined by its persona. Whatever its task is, that is what the spirit is. A spirit is the raw reflection of its nature. Second, a spirit is defined by what it eats. All Essence is, in some way, tainted with a particular resonance. Consuming Essence with a resonance different than that of the spirit can change the spirit in small or large ways.

With those things in mind, tailoring a spirit's following to the spirit itself is important. A normal dog-spirit will not lord over a cult of berserk killers, at least not initially. Dogs are pack animals, and generally loyal. Therefore, the dog-spirit's following is likely symbiotic and somewhat mutual. The dog might see itself as alpha, but that doesn't mean the dog won't take care of its pack provided the pack takes care of the dog. Now, consider what happens when the dog-spirit consumes the Essence left behind from the scene of an impassioned murder. The dog may become tainted with bloodthirsty Essence. The dog-spirit's cult may change, or the spirit may seek new followers. *These* followers will be the berserk killers, because that is what the dog-spirit has become, a creature of rabid bloodlust. The dog-spirit will still, however, keep a pack mentality in mind, but its relationship will be based more on brutal dominance than unswerving loyalty. Specific types of spirits will have particular followings:

Elementals don't like people. Generally, elementals think themselves to be old and powerful. Humanity is nothing more than a dirty infant, and an elemental's following will reflect that. An elemental's mortal followers will not be egoists or fiercely independent, because the elemental won't tolerate such petulance from children. An elemental will have worshippers who are zealously devoted to its descant, obsessively blowing things up in gouts of flame or building strange obelisks out of cement and limestone. If the humans perish, so be it. An elemental knows that, unlike itself, humans are impermanent.

- Conceptual-spirits are the most like humans, if only because the very creation of conceptual-spirits stems from human cultural contexts. Cults focused on conceptual-spirits are likely to be wild affairs, slavishly devoted to the emotions or ideas of the lording spirit. Humans can understand such cults. The group might spread happiness, insurrection, hate, hope, pain or anything. Humans understand these things, because they *are* these things. Conceptuals tend to cleave to mortals more than other spirits for these reasons, and, appropriately enough, also tend to be more successful with these relationships.

- Artificial-spirits are similarly close to humans in origin (without humans, artificial-spirits do not exist), but that doesn't mean they think in similar concepts or emo-

tions. Artificial-spirits are more alien than natural-spirits, thinking in terms of binary code or industrial processes. The brotherhoods born of an artificial-spirit can be quite incomprehensible. The humans of such groups work together in alarmingly efficient fashion, but not always toward an obvious or comfortable purpose. They may steal cars (one of each type), build Towers of Babel out of junk and scrap, broadcast strange numbers and messages out of pirate radio stations or spam the Internet with indecipherable files. Such groups eventually lose their Morality over time as they think more and more like machines.

The type of spirit and what it consumes is what helps to define the spirit's cult. If the spirit has an incompatible following, the spirit gains little from the relationship. The closer the two are, the more the spirit (and, in theory, the cult) grows in power.

TOTEMS

It is possible — though extraordinarily rare — for a group of humans to take on a totem spirit in more than just a symbolic sense. This is both different from and similar to how a pack of Forsaken connects with its totem. For one, the humans do not hunt down and choose a totem spirit; the spirit chooses them. Usually, a spirit chooses those mortals who already unconsciously work toward the spirit's own desires. For instance, a spirit of steel will seek out those who work in the mills, men whose hands have been scarred by contact with hot metal. The steel-spirit will not offer itself to a group of Alaskan park rangers, for the spirit has no connection to them, and they would not be able to offer the spirit anything in return.

However, while most spirits offer little to their human clergy, a spirit that acts as totem grants its humans benefits similar to those the totem might offer a pack of Uratha. Mortals cannot purchase the Totem Merit (unless the Storyteller allows an exception), so assume that each human devoted to the cult offers two points apiece to be spent on the totem bonuses (see pp. 190–191, **Werewolf: The Forsaken**). In this way, spirits can offer anything to the humans that they offer to a pack, including Gifts. Moreover, a spirit's ban must be followed by the humans that the spirit has chosen.

Forging this bond is unnatural, unlike that between a pack of Forsaken and a potential totem. Spirits and humans were not meant to connect in this way, and doing so costs both sides dearly. The spirit must spend *half* its Essence (round up) to immediately forge this connection. The totem also spends (loses) a point of its Power Attribute in the process. The spirit weakens itself now for what it hopes will be long-term gain.

The humans suffer both at the beginning and throughout. Any human choosing to connect with a spirit in this way must offer a full Willpower dot to seal the bond. Moreover, the relationship with the spirit takes a toll on a human's body. Over time, she begins to look less and less human, taking on vague physical qualities

associated with the spirit totem. The humans following a spirit of white birch may grow pale branches from various orifices. Those humans lorded over by a dragonfly totem may start to show patches of iridescent skin or multi-faceted eyes. Few Forsaken realize that humans can take on a totem spirit, and often believe that mortals affected in this way are either Hosts or *Hithimu*.

A totem spirit can communicate with its children at any time, whispering in their ears. Curiously, this bond makes certain that the spirit can't Claim any of its children. What the spirit can do, however, is use the Living Fetter and Possession Numina on the *entire group* instead of just one human (see p. 278, **Werewolf: The Forsaken**). The human in the group with the highest Resolve + Composure provides resistance for the entire group, but does so at a -2 penalty. The effects of the Living Fetter Numina are not permanent and do not create a single-minded Urged cult — at least, not for long. The group is compelled as one, but the effects only last for one hour per success on the spirit's activation roll.

This bond between humans and spirit is so aberrant that the bond cannot last. For every month that a human serves under a totem spirit, she loses a single Attribute point. This point can come from anywhere (Physical, Mental, Social). Those mired in devotion to such totem entities often degrade totally over time, ending up as disheveled mutated husks, babbling and aimlessly wandering forests, riverbanks or city streets.

BENEVOLENT BROTHERHOODS

Do the Forsaken need to worry about all spirit cults? Some cults formed around spirits are actually benevolent. The Uratha may dismiss these sects as being below their interest; after all, if it doesn't disrupt the synchronicity of the two worlds, then it shan't concern them. A group following a tree-spirit may be driven to plant trees. Spirits promoting virtue among its mortal adherents aren't disturbing anything, right? A city-spirit that only wishes to see its reflection be clean, safe and strong — well, there's nothing wrong with that, the Forsaken often believe.

They're half right. If the group is helping to strengthen the spiritual fundament, that's fine. In a way, a Forsaken pack itself is a kind of benevolent spirit cult — the pack may not *worship* its totem, but certainly has maintained a kind of symbiosis with the being, much like some mortal followings achieve.

The problem is that spirits do not intuitively understand balance. They do not check themselves or the Shadow for equilibrium. Ultimately, most spirits are selfish. Even when performing seemingly benevolent acts, they do so with unstoppable zeal. Take, for example, the tree-spirit that asks that its children plant trees. This request sounds fine, until one realizes that these Johnny Appleseeds are more or less mindlessly serving their spirit. They aren't just planting a few trees where needed. The humans are planting trees *everywhere*. They're also destroying any-

thing that stands in their way — if that means entering a campground and hurting or even killing the campers, so be it. If it means attacking a logging operation, oh well. The spirit doesn't care. And if the mortals are far enough in the thrall of the spirit or submerged in total madness, they probably don't care either.

That's where the Forsaken come in. Their self-assigned role is to care about this imbalance. Their own Harmony is a microcosm of equilibrium. They must keep it, *and* the world's own harmony, in check. Spirits serving constructive ideas are not an immediate concern, but the point is that they can become one. If allowed to operate unchecked, even a "good" spirit will go beyond the boundaries of benevolence and begin destroying the tenuous equilibrium the Uratha struggle so hard to keep.

OTHERWORLDLY OFFERINGS

Spirits feed on the Essence spawned from their cultists and sycophants. That is their end of the bargain. What is it that the following gets in return?

IF WISHES WERE TREES

Everybody wants something. It's a cardinal rule, an inescapable truth. We need food, water and shelter, and we can find those easily enough. But the things each person wants are often untouchable: lofty goals that remain as a light at the end of a very long, dark tunnel. People want jobs, money, love, knowledge. They want darker things, too, like to feel another man's pulse weaken and fail beneath bare hands or to bring bloody revenge upon those who have wronged them. Spirits do not entirely understand people. But spirits can sometimes smell the desperation and hunger, sensing the wants marking a human soul like a cancerous shadow. (Spirits can use the Sense Influence or Sense Character Numina to help sniff out this information.) Spirits strong enough can make wants real enough for those willing to pay. Or, at the very least, the spirits can dangle the carrot for as long as it takes to get a taste of sweet Essence.

The ultimate goal is to find a number of like-minded individuals who all want the same thing. A spirit can be as stealthy as it wants in offering a diabolical deal, remaining an invisible presence, allowing the mortals to draw their own conclusions. Alternately, the spirit can reveal itself, directly shepherding the mortals toward their desires in return for the spirit's chiminage.

Consider a family who has recently lost a loved one. Desperation leads them to want to communicate with the departed, but so far they have only found con-artists and suburban fakirs. A sorrow-spirit, already feeding from their Essence a little at a time, believes it is necessary to cultivate a lasting relationship with this family, but needs to do so carefully. The spirit has options on how to do this. It could potentially track down the very real ghost of the deceased family member (if such a restless wraith exists). With the Ghost-Eater Numen (p. XX), the spirit could then consume the ghost in Twilight, much as the sorrow-

spirit could any other spirit. From there, the spirit gains pieces of the ghost's Essence. The spirit could go to the family and materialize or communicate from beyond the Gauntlet — effectively masquerading as the beloved dead.

Alternately, perhaps the spirit doesn't care to muck about with ghosts (who can be more incomprehensible and troublesome than *living* humans). Instead, the spirit simply pretends. Perhaps it "borrows" one of the family members (using the Possession Numen) for a time and speaks through him as if he were the deceased. Of course, this isn't a spirit of joy, so the entity must be careful at what emotions it nurtures. To taste sorrow instead of joy, the spirit can then have the "ghost" express dismay at the family members or perhaps explain how he is suffering and how death is terrible. The family, horrified, feels deep sadness at this — and the spirit slakes its hunger.

This may very well create a kind of "cult." It's by no means a standard cult of worship, but the family becomes more insular. They board up their home and spend much of their time talking to the supposed dead. They thrive on sadness, wasting away in emotional suffering, hoping for a glimpse of light through the fog. Maybe the spirit gives them that glimpse from time to time, just to keep them on the hook. Or maybe the spirit lets them winnow away to nothing, until they starve to death or slit their own wrists. At which point the spirit has officially harvested its crop, and can move on to something else as a stronger spirit, fat with Essence.

For another example, take a troupe of out-of-work actors. Living in Hollywood, these poor souls have taken to menial jobs and can barely pay rent or buy food. They're ravenous for that first break, willing to do anything to get it. A hunger-spirit can, with work, give them what they want. Perhaps the spirit uses an Influence over their emotions (tweaking their confidence, for instance) just before a critical audition. Or maybe the spirit massages the emotions of the casting director, breathing life into the director's desire for the actor's body (and consequently hiring her because of this sudden salacious urge). It could be that the spirit uses the Possession Numen to get into the casting director's body, and *forces* him to hire one or all of the actors onto a major production. One way or another, the spirit makes it happen.

Of course, before or after this occurs, the spirit will demand something in return. In this case, the spirit isn't getting something directly from the relationship. The sorrow-spirit in the above example was able to feed instantly from what the spirit granted the family. Here, the spirit's actions don't generate Essence. The spirit must demand action from the troupe, perhaps manifesting to them or otherwise whispering in their ears. The spirit tells them that — for now — it will be happy if they eat a little raw meat. Go to the store, pick up some raw steaks and consume them. The actors do so, because *steak tartare* with Kobe beef is all the rage, that's no problem. Over time, though, the spirit will demand that they consume other

things, worse things. Roadkill, perhaps. Or pieces of a corpse from the morgue. The spirit thrives on their growing physical hungers. They do what the spirit demands, or the spirit punishes them. It gets them fired, blacklisted from the production or causes them to stumble over and forget lines. The spirit teaches harsh lessons until everybody falls in line. The troupe soon bows to the will of the hunger-spirit, and they gather once a month to stone a vagrant with a brick, bring him into an abandoned warehouse and eat his flesh. Small price to pay for fame, right?



TAINTED LOVE

Essence is tricky for spirits. They consume it and it changes them. Imperceptibly at first, but over time if the Essence is touched with any kind of "contamination" different from the spirit's own nature the spirit will begin to transform.

Spirits at the direct center of a cult of humans *may*, over time, begin to suffer a taint from dealing with humanity so frequently. Much as a Ridden may develop physical features common to the spirit possessing him (a man taken over by a snake spirit might develop a forked tongue for instance) a spirit in such close proximity to humanity might develop similar transformations. Except here the spirit begins to assume the physical traits of the human body. A fox spirit's paws may grow human thumbs. A glass spirit may go from looking like a hovering windowpane and actually develop a humanoid form made of gleaming glass — possibly with a pair of very human looking eyes set in the smooth crystal. Some spirits already have such appearances. A murder spirit often looks the part of various archetypal killers. But many spirits don't reflect humanity so well and such a change might disturb them — or empower them.



TASTE OF DARKNESS

The human soul is stained with varying degrees of shadow. Everyone feels negativity. During the course of a day, a normal human thinks many horrible thoughts. He may contemplate killing his boss, hitting his wife, stealing someone's French fries or driving off a bridge. He doesn't do them. He merely thinks them, accepting that such bleak imagining serves to blow off a little stress. He takes solace that he would never, ever embrace such awfulness. Most normal people don't *want* to think these horrible thoughts. They certainly don't want to do them, at least not consciously. For the most part, they go through their lives, thinking such thoughts but never enacting them.

Spirits can change that. They can't make humans do anything, short of taking control of their bodies. Out-

side of such possession, spirits can't force humans onto dark paths, but the spirits *can* nudge mortals. A human's emotional state might be seen as having a kind of volume knob. A spirit can, at times, turn that knob higher, thus elevating the mortal's feelings and urges. Such a rise is only temporary, but, in that time, the affected individual may suddenly consider doing the awful things he believed were impossible before. During an argument, he might hit his wife. He might not kill his boss, but maybe he slashes the man's tires or steals something from his desk. Every time the individual gives into these grim urges, he runs the risk of Morality loss. With each unfortunate indiscretion, that volume knob stays at the higher level to which the spirit nudged it. Enough wrongdoing, and that volume knob hits its highest mark and then breaks off.

Spirits can do this to individuals, but spirits can manipulate groups as well. Consider a group of city cops. They feel oppressed. They know they're not paid enough, and that their lives are in danger just crossing the street. Each of them has a little kernel of bad feeling inside, a nugget of blame for everyone around. Racist feelings, maybe, or maybe the cops see the rich as the cause for hate. Once in a while, these cops think or even talk about what they could really do to "clean up the town." They know they're just blowing off steam. They take comfort that they're good cops doing the right thing in a hard job.

An anger-spirit can change all that. With its Influences, it can increase the bad feelings inside those cops. It throws fuel on the fire, and, suddenly, the cops *don't* back down, they *aren't* just blowing off steam. They get it in their heads that they can really "do something." So, they go out, and they crack some heads. They go outside the law. The officers still take comfort that they're the good guys — the law is clearly broken. The feelings might die down, but their souls are marked. They either have to atone for what they did, or they'll revisit it. And the anger-spirit will be there to push them further. In this way, it has cultivated a following. They don't follow the spirit directly, but they abstractly serve anger, and, indirectly, they serve the spirit. They might even bring *other* cops into the conspiracy.

An appropriate spirit can do that with most of the negative emotions — lust, pain, greed, murder. If it finds the right people with the wrong thoughts, it can ease them toward the darkness.

Fear is another big motivator. A group of school kids who get pushed around may make an ideal target for a spirit. The kids don't *want* to hurt the bullies, not really. But the spirit can suggest it. The spirit can even come to them, manifested, and offer them the confidence and strength to take their fear back. On the other end of the spectrum, perhaps a fear-spirit shows itself to the bullies instead. And it shows them how to maximize the suffering of those poor, pushed-around kids. As the kids are beaten up, called name, and sent home bleeding, the fear-spirit

feeds on their fear. That Essence trapped in leaking blood and dripping sweat is honey to the spirit.

HAND THAT FEEDS

On rare occasions, a mortal following actually controls the spirit. Normally, it's the other way around; spirits are canny creatures, capable of all manner of tricks and traps. While humankind isn't universally stupid, individuals are woefully unprepared to deal with spirits due to simple ignorance. Some situations could arise in which the mortals take control of a spirit, however.

- The humans are occult savvy. Those with Occult scores of 4 or higher may be attuned to some of the stranger mysteries of the World of Darkness. While a character's high Occult score doesn't confer true comprehension or good judgment, the high score does imply that he may have access to a number of ritual books or magical ideas, some of which could help him to literally enslave a spirit. Binding a spirit in this way is dangerous (to him and the spirit), but not impossible. Mages in particular have access to such spirit magic.

- The humans control a locus. If the humans maintain a locus as their domain, existing unopposed, a spirit may offer itself for a time to serve *them* instead of asking for servitude. This is rare, because most times a spirit can take the unclaimed Essence without "consulting" nearby mortals. But if those mortals work diligently to change the mood (and thus, the resonance) of a locus, a spirit may work for them in an effort to keep it the same. An attic in an old manor house may be a locus of sorrow and secrets. If the family residing there opts to remodel the attic into a girl's bedroom, pink and pleasant, a sorrow-spirit may come to the family indirectly or overtly in the hopes of giving them something to keep the attic unchanged.

- The spirit is of a subservient brood. Spirits reflect their choir, and some choirs are more inclined toward obeisance than others. A dog-spirit, for instance, is likelier to follow a number of commanding, strong mortals than a fiercely independent horse-spirit. Many artificial-spirits are this way, as well. These spirits rely on the attention of humans, and often gain Essence just by providing the appropriate function to its followers. A toy-spirit is happy if it is part of the favored toy among a group of children. In this way, the toy-spirit serves them instead of demanding worship. When the children decide that the toy is no longer their favorite, the spirit may work very hard indeed to continue to evoke its "fun" potential. (Though, the situation can certainly turn dark here, as well. If the spirit feels coldly rebuked, it may turn the tables on those children and attempt to bring them back with guile or force.)

MANY CELESTIAL FACES

Cults formed around spirits are strange things. Some are done purposefully as the spirit orchestrates the following, tugging the puppet strings until it gets the Essence it feels it deserves. Others cults are not formed deliberately.

Spirit actions, if witnessed in any way by local mortals, can certainly leave a resonant effect. It's not Lunacy, and that's perhaps what makes the effect all the more dangerous. At least with Lunacy, a human can forget what she saw, or bury it beneath a truckload of mental and emotional justification. If she sees a spirit, she is afforded no such psychological or supernatural protection. What she sees is what she sees, and she may be forever changed.

Below are some of the possibilities of how spirits may look to witnesses, as well as how a sect may form around such an entity. This isn't *how* so much as *what* and *why*.



THE INTENTION OF SPIRITS

Some spirits are intelligent enough to fool a human using his own beliefs against him. A spirit may feign the role of an angel, devil, or alien, knowing full well the guise assumed. Some spirits, however, don't have the abstract intelligence capable of drawing those connections.

No hard and fast rule exists on how to determine which spirits are capable of such a ruse. A reasonable rule of thumb is to suggest that Gafflings are beings too embryonic to have any kind of capacity for this level of performance. Another guideline is to consider exactly what the spirit reflects, and how often it has been around humanity. A tree spirit dwelling on the fringes of existence will not have the presence of mind — or the information at all — to pretend to be anything but a spirit or god of nature. A tree spirit will not act like an angel. On the other hand, many spirits have had considerable proximity to the mortal world. A tree in Central Park is likely to have a far greater understanding of the wants and needs of humans. (Such an understanding will certainly be imperfect, however, as it's filtered through the spirit's own bizarre intelligence.) Artificial-spirits and conceptual-spirits similarly are close to humans — these spirits practically require propinquity to humanity. Finally, the magath are often capable of this, but only in fits and starts. Their minds and bodies are strange agglomerations of all the choirs, and with each piece comes a different level of comprehension and intellect.



ANGELS

Pop mythology in modern Western civilization allows for the existence of angels. In a curious conundrum, statistics suggest that more people believe in angels than in God. Because of this, spirits can manifest as angels.

Some conceptual-spirits already have angelic forms. Humankind has infused some of its ideas (such as love,

protection, hope and joy) with an angelic resonance. Just as murder-spirits might reflect the modern image of a serial killer or horror movie slasher, a spirit of hope might appear as a winged being with a beatific aura and bathed in a coruscating halo. That said, the modern idea of angels is not the only one that informs human thought. The angels of the Bible do not always appear human. Sometimes they appear as flame, or as wind. Other times, they manifest in bodies with animal parts, or are nothing more than spinning wheels rotating in the skies (which resonates with current alien mythologies, but more on that in a moment).

How does this segue into a cult following? Conceptual-spirits are often short-lived. They are born in the instant the concept is achieved and may die as soon as that concept is forgotten. Like all spirits, conceptual-spirits are selfish and do not wish to fade away so quickly. By manifesting (potentially with the Materialize Numen, though others such as Fetter or Possession can do the trick) and convincing humans that such spirits are divine emissaries, conceptual-spirits may retain their existences long enough to grow into something more permanent. By then, the spirit already has a following, and can sway the thoughts and actions of the "true believers." The spirit can create more instances of its reflected concept, thus fostering greater Essence. This also happens accidentally. A magath who manifests to fight some Forsaken or to enact its will upon the physical world may find itself before human witnesses. The fruits of such exposure may not grow until later, whereupon the spirit may discover that those very witnesses believe they saw a very real angel (as in one of the strange-bodied beings from the Bible) and now collect to tell stories of the creature and have committed to serving its celestial will. The magath may discover this, and may appear again to direct its flock. Alternately, the spirit may never learn of the effects its presence had upon the world. The cult may gather and act outside of the spirit's direction. (The actions of undirected humans may be far worse than those serving beneath a spirit.)

What does an "angelic" spirit demand of its charges? It depends on the spirit. A seemingly benevolent spirit may seek to bring joy to its adherents in the hopes of gaining the resultant Essence. Such a benevolent idea doesn't always have benevolent consequences, though. One group of junkies worships the "Heroin Angel," a joy-spirit that feeds from the numb delight caused by the narcotic high. An "angel of protection" spirit may demand that its cult protect the neighborhood in which they live. The spirit seems benevolent, but doesn't care if such protection goes beyond human law and punishes transgressors with torture and death. The spirit doesn't even comprehend mortal morality, understanding only Essence.

Angels aren't always creatures of beneficence, either. Angels can be beings of fire and wrath, of violent judgment and gale-force winds. Spirits acting as these angels can easily mass followers. A wrath-spirit could present itself as a furious angel of vengeance to a group of abused

housewives, rape or murder victims or any oppressed people. A fire elemental could be a holy angel of cleansing to the right group, whether that means a cult of zealous Christians or a passel of pyromaniacs. Angels have a weight behind them, a divine authority that grants their words greater meaning to those listening. What angels demand, angels get.

What follows is one example of a potential "angel cult" built around a spirit's activity.

Soldiers of the War Zone Angel

In the shock-and-awe siege of Baghdad, the night sky lit up with tracer rounds and bomb blasts. Buildings exploded. Vehicles burned. Fire-spirits came to collect the resonant Essence, feasting upon the searing coals left in the immediate wake of sudden destruction. Miles from the city, a lone spirit reveling in the banquet manifested itself with the Materialize Numen. Soldiers on both sides of the battle saw the entity, a fiery creature with ashen wings, playing amidst the wreckage. Some Allied soldiers saw an angel, a literal seraphim from the Bible. Some Iraqis saw an angel of the Qu'ran, perhaps Israfil etching judgment across the sky. Believers were stirred by the spirit, and soon found themselves all standing together and watching this creature move. It did not take long for the spirit to notice it had a captive — and perhaps willing — audience. The spirit gave them direction before plunging back through the Gauntlet and into the Shadow. The spirit told them that the End of Days had come, and it was time to set fires in the spirit's name. The soldiers from both sides agreed, and set to the task of bringing fire to the world. They combined their armaments and turned upon their

allies. They went to the oil fields and set them ablaze. The soldiers are still out there, even now, devoted to the angel that sometimes appears to them, and whispers for them to *burn it all down*.

STRANGE COMMUNICATION

To convey demands, entreaties of love and adoration, or even threats, a spirit must be able to talk to people. Spirits only speak the First Tongue, however. So, how do they communicate with humans?

Once Materialized, a spirit can make a Power Finesse roll to attempt to convey simple commands of just a few words (though an exceptional success would allow for lengthy articulations). Spirits that do this enough (at least once a day for seven days) can soon communicate without the need for a roll. Alternately, a spirit that possesses or "rides" a human will speak in the language of the victim (though not always perfectly). Finally, spirits can also possess the Numina found in the **World of Darkness Rulebook** on pp. —. These items are listed as powers for ghosts, but can easily apply to spirits. Numina such as Ghost Sign, Ghost Speech, Clairvoyance, and Compulsion can all allow communication (whether direct or abstract) between a spirit and its human followers. (Also see p. of this book for the Whisper Chorus Numen.)

Of course, some spirits don't *need* to speak. They can use their Influences to nudge



their worshippers and sycophants in whatever direction is necessary. Actions are louder than words — after all. The option remains, however, that a human *can* learn parts of the First Tongue. He can purchase it as the Language Merit, but before doing so, he must succeed on an extended Intelligence — Empathy roll. Ten successes are required, and each roll is equal to an hour's worth of time spent in the company of the spirit. Humans learning the First Tongue should be incredibly rare.



ALIENS

Aliens are as much a fixture in pop mythology as angels. The impassive masks of almond-eyed aliens can be found on T-shirts and bumper stickers. “Encounters” with alien beings is a whole media industry (books, TV shows, magazines, movies). Any strange light in the sky is interpreted as a visitation of extraterrestrial intent. Some — though certainly not all — of these encounters and visitations are not aliens or other creatures, but are actually spirits at work.

Aliens (or, at least, humankind's beliefs about them) and spirits share similar traits. Both seemingly come out of nowhere. Physically, while spirits don't really assume the form of a model “gray” alien (unless using the Fictive Form Numen, see above), they certainly appear equally out-of-this-world. Many elementals, Lunes and conceptual-spirits may appear as ribbons of light, or as bioluminescent humanoids. Spirits might even act according to humankind's ideas about aliens. The spirits might observe and study humankind, potentially to learn more about humans in the hopes of manipulating them for Essence. A glowing being peering out from behind a thicket of trees will give any mortal witness the impression that she is being watched, possibly by something extraterrestrial. Some more powerful spirits, using their Numina, might even “abduct” humans. The spirit might mentally compel the mortal and play with his memory, or the spirit might hijack the body outright. If the mortal is returned, he may have strange markings, have a false memory about what transpired and become obsessed with the creature that took him.

Humans accidentally mistake spirits for aliens; spirits do not pretend to *be* of extraterrestrial origin. Accidentally or not, spirits can take full advantage of humankind's obsession with alien encounters. A spirit masquerading as an entity from another world can manipulate a number of witnesses into acting in the spirit's favor. A Lune may ask that its followers go out and worship Mother Luna, indicating that the Moon is the place from whence they came. A fear-spirit may feed off the dread that comes from “abductees” whenever the spirit materializes. The bizarre magath may thrive off all the junk an alien cult collects — reams of newspaper clippings, alien “artifacts” found in the desert, samples of dirt and water from where the crea-

ture supposedly landed. Some groups might even aspire to be abducted, essentially allowing a spirit to act as Nanu-tari, kidnapping the body for the spirit's alien needs.

Below is an example of a cult formed around a supposed alien. Such cults can be found in many parts of the Western world.

Children of Ascension

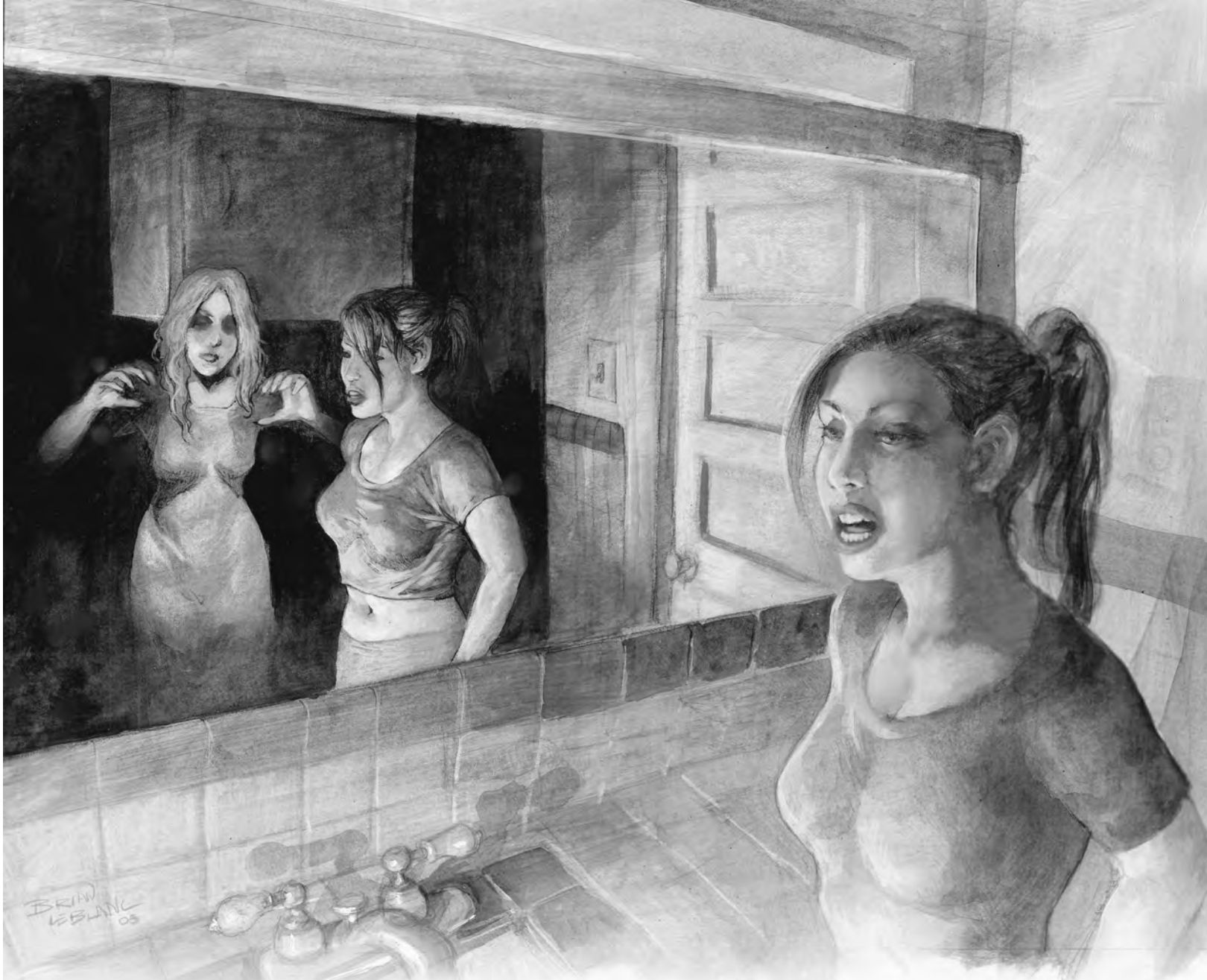
The Children of Ascension have seen an alien, or so they think. (In reality, it was a lone junkyard, scrap-parts magath, materialized in this world in an effort to weaken the Gauntlet.) These individuals believe the “alien” is trapped here, and that they not only can help it get home, but will go with it beyond the stars. And so, they build. They have carved out a niche in a big junkyard, whereupon the lunatics now gather night and day, building a supposed spacecraft for the being. The magath watches as they piece together an impossible vehicle out of both artificial and natural parts: car radiators, tangles of briar, the gutted husk of a Cessna airplane, climbing ivy and more. Of late, the group has taken to wearing patchwork robes to show their solidarity and worship of their alien friend. They haven't become a danger to anybody but themselves — yet — but, as they grow more insular and insane, witnesses who stumble upon their aberrant creation may end up as *part* of that creation — bones, skin and all.

GHOSTS

Everybody knows a ghost story or two. The restless dead are a part of the cultural consciousness. A family moving into an old house may very well consider that the place is possibly haunted. A man working a graveyard shift in a mostly empty warehouse might think of a ghost when he hears the same noise night after night. “Ghost” seems to be a default answer for the inexplicable and invisible.

Hence, when a spirit acts and its presence is felt, witnesses may assume that they are dealing with a ghost. They may very well believe that the being is a *human* spirit instead of one of the animistic entities dwelling in Twilight. This makes sense, as a spirit's Numina may call wind, lower the temperature in an area, rattle objects or even cause a wave of negative emotions to overwhelm someone. Moreover, spirits can use the same Numina as ghosts (see the **World of Darkness Rulebook**, pp. 210–212). Any location-spirit is likely to possess any of these; mortals will assume they are witnessing a haunting or some kind of poltergeist activity. Spirits don't need to actively present themselves as ghosts (though spirits certainly can and do): those humans present will make the assumptions necessary.

A cult formed around a ghost is likely one meant to appease the restless wraith. Some families come together in this way, hoping to send “Uncle Hiram” off to some greater reward — or, at the least, to try to keep him happy while he's tooling around the house. It doesn't matter that he's a really a window-spirit that rattles the panes and steams up the glass. Provided the family cleans the win-



dows daily and maybe even puts in *new* windows, the spirit is happy, and so is the family for “helping” the departed uncle.

One example of a spirit cult based around a supposed “ghost” is below.

The Hell House of John Remington

The Remington family knows that their mansion is home to the departed soul of their paterfamilias, the late John Remington. Every part of the mansion is alive with his soul, for it was a place he built painstakingly by hand. Doors open of their own volition, windows rattle, cups fall from shelves. The whole extended family — cousins and all — know that the ghost of their patron dwells on in the walls and floorboards of his beloved home. They’re wrong, of course. The spirit is a powerful house-spirit, but they think it’s his restless specter. To serve the whims of John Remington, they continue to obsessively add on more rooms, stairways, even whole floors. The house is in a constant state of new construction, and, from it, the spirit

grows stronger. By now, the place is a labyrinth. Those who come near it find themselves compelled to wander inside, and there they get lost amid the nearly 200 rooms. Some perish. Others join in the construction.

URBAN LEGENDS

Bloody Mary. The man with the hook for a hand. Mothman, Bigfoot, Satanic cults, killer hitchhikers. All of these make for good urban myths, tales repeated from friend to friend. Every one is supposedly true, and many are horrific. Skeptics point out the absurdity of such stories, but such strange tales had to come from *somewhere*.

Spirits are occasionally the inadvertent progenitors of such grim legends. In some cases, the spirits themselves cause the tale to spring up. Legends persist about venomous snakes found in the colored ball bits at local fast food restaurant playgrounds. Maybe a fear-spirit used its Influences to create a squirming knot of rattlesnakes in the playground and then fed from the resultant terror. Chanting “Bloody Mary!” five times in front of a mirror might

really summon the mirror's spirit, for such entities are often possessed of extreme vanity. Those who don't forward along a chain e-mail might not realize that the mail is the cursed home of a vengeful wrath-spirit; ignoring the mail could bring the subject terrible harm.

Worse than spirits causing urban legends are the spirit *cults* who provide the origins. A cult of teenagers might really believe they're sacrificing cats or dogs for Satan, when, in reality, they're doing so to praise a torture-spirit. The thralls of a murder-spirit might put razor blades or pins in the treats given out at Halloween, or they might instead seed an area (coin return slots, gas pump handles, drink machines) with disease-infected needles. The poor soul sitting in a tub of ice with his kidneys removed might have been the victim of a spirit sect seeking to appease a malevolent knife-spirit. Urban legends new and old may spring from the awful actions of spirit cults.

See below for an example of a cult that birthed an urban legend. (If you're looking for great urban legends to use as the basis of a spirit cult, check out www.snopes.com.)

The Chauffeurs

Urban legend says that the limousine of Archduke Ferdinand is cursed. Ferdinand was assassinated in the vehicle (a *Graft und Stift* touring limo) with his wife, an event that is credited with causing World War I. This event tainted the vehicle with evil, supposedly. It has since been associated with countless horrific accidents; stories say the car has mowed people down, driven drivers into trees, crushed pets and children beneath its cursed tires. It now sits in a Viennese museum, away from harm. Except, that's the one part that *isn't* true. The curse is real, but the car that rests in the museum is a fake. For a time, the real car was on display, but the curators saw how visitors to the museum suffered everything from gushing nosebleeds to terrible heart attacks. And so the museum officials quietly removed the car from the museum, replacing the car with a replica; now they try to appease the spirit with whatever pain they can bring it. They drive around and select targets who deserve great pain: criminals, madmen, sexual predators. The officials feed the car these sacrifices once a month in the hopes of keeping the car calm. And it does. The enraged car-spirit of the limousine, bloody and deranged, gladly accepts such gifts. And the spirit has begun working on the minds of the curators, who have not only become obsessed with the car, but have begun to enjoy all the killing.

OTHER SPIRIT CULTS

Just as there are so many different types of spirits, there are similarly countless possibilities for spirit cults, as well. Below are a few more examples of spirit cults in the World of Darkness.

The Damnation Clubs

Those who belong to a Damnation Club know that they are truly exclusive. These high-society clubs pep-

per the world, allowing the rich and eccentric to combat ennui by engaging in every vice imaginable. Few realize the reality of such membership. These clubs (which are literal, out-of-the-way establishments hidden from view and buried in cities or suburbs) are actually groups tended to by servants of the Maeljin Incarna. Some clubs are widespread pits of sin, whereas others are devoted to specific "deadly sins." A Damnation Club devoted to gluttony (or its presiding spirit, Belphegor) might be a vomitorium. Men could go there to gorge and grow fat, vomiting on bibs and laughing madly. A club hidden in London's Temple district might be devoted to Pseulak, Minister of Deception. Within the Club's cherry wood walls and through the haze of pipe smoke, the members of the Club could orchestrate some of the greatest deceptions in business and media. In a Club of Sloth, men and women can barely pry themselves from the hashish smoke filling the room. In one of Violence, the wealthiest men might revel in the fights they orchestrate, pitting abducted men against one another or against animals, or even *machines*. Each of these Clubs is a literal Wound in the Shadow, the club's spiritual form appearing as a suppurating canker in the ephemeral landscape. Bale Hounds are said to be sometimes summoned to these places for reasons unknown.

The Tomb and Coin Society

Every college and university sports rumors of a "secret society," some hidden fraternity comprised of the campus elite. The Tomb and Coin Society is one of these clandestine confraternities, except with a slight twist. The members of this group (sometimes called "Dead Boys," even though women are accepted into the order) are elite and wealthy, but do not begin that way. Those invited into the ranks of this elusive and privileged group are generally poor or troubled students who came to be at the prestigious university only through hard work and scholarships. Nepotism means little; the group purports to be a meritocracy all the way. Those invited in are then granted great opportunity and wealth from those other members who have long since graduated and now hold seats of power. The rituals of the group are often death-related: students are locked in tombs, coins are taped to their eyes and they are shrouded and made to sleep in graveyards. The key ritual of the group, however, is called *Le Triomphe de la Mort*, or the Triumph of Death. When a student becomes a senior, the student is made to exhume a body from a local graveyard and cradle the corpse for an entire night. During this ritual, the student is shown the *true* patron of the group: a hungry death-spirit calling itself Gain Through Loss. The spirit becomes almost a totem to the students through the rest of their lives, Materializing, offering power, giving direction. Many of the Society's members enter into industries that hold the potential to cause massive death: tobacco, firearms, defense contracting, biochemical production, etc.

The Preserve

Up near the mountains, far off the road and into the woods, sits a wildlife preserve dedicated to the safety and rehabilitation of raptor birds. The men and women who work and live at this preserve are willing partners to the spirit of an osprey. For years now, the humans have kept a balance with the spirit, and the relationship has been a good one. But recently, something changed. One of the preserve veterinarians caught his wife cheating on him, and he murdered both of them with a fire axe. Then the veterinarian overdosed on animal tranquilizers. The murder, unrelated to the spirit or the Shadow, has nevertheless left its mark. The osprey-spirit has itself grown dark, its normally white feathers growing red and wet. The birds of the preserve have begun to fly away to nearby towns and attack people. The birds have scratched the eyes of children, bitten off fingers of adults and killed countless pets. The workers at the preserve know something is wrong, but they are afraid and do not know what to do. For now, they keep the secret, afraid for themselves and for their once-sane spirit guardian.



CULTIC PREDATION

Sects based around spirits are worrisome all on their own. The Uratha strive constantly to maintain balance between the worlds and most spirit cults damage that balance sometimes irreversibly.

Worse however is when two cults enter the same territory. Spirits of varying choirs have no problem going to war. Most spirits know that going to war is never permanent. Their own bodies disincorporate and they return another day. Humans are not so lucky but spirits rarely care. When spirits send their followers to battle one another (either covertly or out in the open) the fragile equilibrium that the Forsaken aim to keep is often completely shattered. A careless storm elemental may want to keep its children and its storm clouds over a town permanently. A highway spirit whose children obsessively protect it and patrol it may cut right through that town. The war that wages as a result of this territorial pissing match will only serve to disrupt the local pack's greatest efforts.

Does the pack pick a side in the hopes of simply routing one group and achieving some semblance of stability? Does the pack battle both or neither? Can a young pack even survive such chaos?



THE SPIRIT-RIDDEN

Cults born of the Ridden are all too common. And why wouldn't they be? The Urged have desire to push

them forward and together, bound by common desires. The Claimed are horrifying and sublime, appearing as supernaturally-altered humans with unfathomable powers. Humans follow desire and power. And so, they follow the Ridden.

But what does the Ridden get out of it? For one, Ridden need Essence just as spirits do. It fuels their powers, heals their wounds, allows them greater speed when stepping sideways. A Ridden's cult is likely geared in some way toward fostering Essence for the Ridden to consume and use.

Also, a *Hithimu* knows its existence is precarious. Yes, one *Hithimu* is ostensibly more powerful than most mortals. Not only does a Ridden control a mortal, but its powers give it a frightening edge. But the spirit also realizes that the wolves will come, sniffing for it, ready to snap jaws upon the host's neck and send the spirit screaming back to the Shadow. One Ridden is rarely a match for a pack of Forsaken. Some hide. Others run. But a few try to protect themselves. A mortal herd may keep them safe — or at least act as a temporary human shield.

THE URGED

The *hithisu* are subtle by necessity. They do not have the power to command legions of humans or force changes of spirit and flesh upon them. The Urged work under the radar, nudging their willful human steeds this way and that. They do not speak directly; they instead provide feeling, direction and desire. Sometimes, these itches and impulses go against the mount's nature, and when they do, the mount always has the chance to suppress the thought, dismissing it as nothing more than an odd inclination. But the riding spirit has time on its side. This spirit can wear down those moral boundaries upon which the mount relies. The spirit will try again and again, until one of the desires ends up planted in the fertile field of the human's mind. Over time, the desire grows, and the mount accepts it as being what he wanted all along, and worse, what he *deserves*.

In a way, the process of being Urged is a microcosmic representation of what a cult actually is. It involves a central figure (cult leader or spirit) that shepherds his charges (the followers or the mount) toward actions and goals that perhaps go against their presumed natures. Both spirit and cult leader find the greatest advantage when their own urgings are in line with their followers' hidden desires and selfish thoughts. Cults are subtle. They cannot force followers to heel, abusing them until they do what the leader desires. Overt manipulations will lead her followers to rebuke her or even get her arrested. The same way is true with the *hithisu*. The Urged host will buck against sudden and excessive manipulations. He'll either ignore such thoughts, or he will examine them as being abnormal and maybe check himself into a mental health clinic or even drown himself in booze.

For this reason, the Urged are dangerous when mixed with a cult environment. Whether the Ridden is part of

a cult or is its leader, the spirit understands the nature of patience and discretion. Just as the spirit eases itself into the host's soul, the spirit can ease the host into a group environment and work from there. The question is, why would the spirit do this and what can it gain?

SHEER AND THE SHEPHERD

Generally speaking, a cult featuring a Spirit-Urged Ridden rarely begins as an actual cult. Cults can, of course. A spirit riding a particularly oddball mount may push her to join any number of strange groups, including UFO ascension groups, drug-addicted mountain communes or cadres of supposedly "real" vampires. Most of the time, however, the possessed would balk at such obvious sects, and the spirit will find it difficult pushing the mount in such an uncharacteristic direction. (In System terms, if the spirit can Urge the host toward something he might've considered already, the spirit doesn't have to make a roll to push him. If the spirit spawns an inclination that goes against the host's normal disposition, the spirit will have to make the roll, as noted on p. 282 of **Werewolf: The Forsaken**, and risks failure.)

A spirit instinctively finds a natural fit for its host, and hopefully one that is advantageous for the spirit, as well. The spirit may push the human toward any number of mundane groups: Alcoholics Anonymous, cancer survivor meetings, computer classes, a gardener's group, even get-rich-quick pyramid schemes like Amway. Ultimately, this should be an organic fit. A spirit of technology wouldn't anchor itself in the soul of a Luddite ecologist; such a spirit would Urge someone whose desires and interests are at least in the same neighborhood as the spirit's choir. Similarly, the riding technology-spirit wouldn't then push its host to join the gardening group, because neither the spirit nor its host has anything to gain from such a time-waster.

If the spirit finds an appropriate match, the advantage to the spirit is the same as it would be for a spirit outside a body: Essence. A sorrow-spirit Urges its host to go to grief management classes because his wife died a few months back. Once there, the spirit can feed off the grief just by being in proximity to it. Even better, *other* spirits of sadness will come to this beacon of grieving, and the riding spirit can feed from them. If the spirit finds that the class is doing what it's supposed to be doing (managing grief), the spirit can use its Influences or urge the host to keep the mood dark and pendulous. As the spirit works its angle, the group never grows out of its misery — only sinking deeper into it.

When an Urged enters a seemingly mundane group, it doesn't stay mundane forever. The spirit, through its mount and natural abilities, can change the group slowly. After two or three months, the aforementioned grief management group has become a suicide cult, though the group doesn't see themselves as such. Several members kill themselves, and the group doesn't get angry at this or break apart. No, the attendees all *understand*, they practi-

cally exalt those "brave souls" who were willing to step off this mortal coil. As more join the group, they find the sadness pleasingly inescapable.

Ideally, the spirit can urge its mount to become the group's leader. One day, she wakes up and simply believes that she needs to take control of the flock, and she does so. Six months later, the grief management meeting is now a full-blown cult. The members go to funerals and memorial services to actively *recruit*, bringing people into the fold to embrace their sadness — and yes, to maybe even embrace death itself and end their meaningless lives.

BODY JUMPING

The Living Fetter Numen lasts only as long as the spirit chooses. The spirit can simply choose to "dismount" the mortal. It gives up the body though it may attempt to Urge that individual again later.

This is both advantageous and problematic. Dismounting causes a problem for a spirit because prematurely fleeing the human Fetter means the spirit loses any of the investment made toward eventually Claiming the subject. Not all spirits have that goal in mind, however (especially if they don't possess the required Claim Numen). Body jumping allows a spirit to maximize its potential among a number of Urged. The spirit can take its entire cult and go from body to body, pushing them all toward a similar goal. An oak spirit may push a group of environmentalists to plant trees or kill loggers. A computer spirit (or a spirit of desperation) living on the Internet may hop in and out of chatroom participants, impelling them to spend more and more time online with their "friends" until they are obsessive Netheads who never sleep. The goal, of course, is for the spirit to gain Essence. Coercing a group to fulfill its desires is far better than Urging a lonely individual. More people equals more power.

WILLING MOUNTS

Animism is the belief that all things are alive, have souls and are sentient. This is the reality of the Forsaken, as most things *do* have spirits, and these spirits are capable of abstract thought and alien intelligence. Of course, human beings generally don't believe this, regardless of the truth. Such ideas are seen as primitive, and the concept of all things having a soul is a rare one among the bulk of humankind.

Still, animism is not a dead belief. Many indigenous peoples, from the Aborigines of Australia to the natives of North America, still believe that animism is reality. The amalgamated religion of *voudoun* (or voodoo) also believes

this to a degree. The shamans — priests of these animist traditions — are the ones who talk to the spirits, negotiate with them and even allow them into their bodies. Voodoo has its *houngans*, the Indians have their medicine men. Other non-animist religions believe in spirits, too. Judeo-Christian and Islamic traditions have angels and demons. Hinduism and Buddhism both acknowledge a hidden world of beings, as well.

Sometimes, adherents of these religions aspire to be willing mounts for the spirits. In voodoo, few practitioners are truly initiated into the mysteries of spirit possession. Those who are (called *bosal*) choose to maintain the bonds between the spirit world and the human world. They allow the spirits, sometimes called *loa*, to “ride” them for a time so that the *bosal* may know the wishes of the invisible beings. Whatever the spirits desire, the *bosal* enact. This might mean planting trees, finding a home for snakes, leaving out butter or other foods, even cutting themselves or others to offer blood to the *loa*.

Voodoo isn't the only religion in which the practitioners might invite invisible entities into their bodies. Adherents of various religions within many cultures open themselves to spirits. Native Americans enter sweat lodges to facilitate communications between the two worlds. Some of the Hindu *bhaktas* (“loving devotees”) of Kali starve themselves to invite evil spirits into their bodies, where their goddess will destroy and consume them. In Brazil, religions both primeval and modern embrace shamanist ideas, and attempt to become one with spirits and saints by eating the hallucinogenic ayahuasca, or “vine of the dead.” Such tradition even exists in Christianity. Some fundamentalists (i.e., “snake-handlers”) believe that they allow God Himself into their bodies. Once possessed, the zealots thrash around, speak in tongues and tempt the Devil (who is represented by venomous serpents).

Are these people at an advantage because they are more knowledgeable about what they're doing? Not really.

Most of them are ignorant of what is really happening. They assume that the spirits are benevolent and trustworthy. These people also generally assume that the spirits plan to leave, yet spirits rarely leave if they don't have to. Why ruin a good thing? The only advantage is that the individuals have *some* idea that they are not entirely themselves. They can more easily differentiate between their own desires and the cravings of the spirits within.

If a practitioner is willing to be a mount for an invading spirit, the spirit doesn't need to make any roll to accomplish this. It is automatic. The mount gains a small advantage in this scenario, however. When attempting to resist the strange urges of his spirit rider, the mount gains +2 to his Resolve + Composure roll (see p. 282 of

Werewolf: The Forsaken for more information on “Urging”).

HERDS OF THE URGED

Below are two cults based around the Spirit-Urged. These groups can be used as examples to build your own, or can be used as is.

La Fiesta della Victoria

The gangs lording over the Brazilian *favelas* (slums) were terrible masters. They ruled the decrepit neighborhoods with cruelty and murder. One man, a local shopkeeper, decided it was time to defy them. He gathered others to him, and they fought back against the gangs and won their neighborhoods back block by bloody block. In reality, the shopkeeper was Urged by a spirit of protection. The shopkeeper's own gang, calling itself the *La Fiesta della Victoria* (or “Feast of Victory”) soon embraced the primitive religions of the rainforest. The gang began to follow the ways of the old Jívaro Indians, who believe in conquering their enemies so completely that they could never rise up again to defeat the Jívaro. Following Jívaro practices, the gang decapitates their foes and shrinks their heads. La Fiesta has changed over the years from a small neighborhood protectorate into a massive gang. They invite the spirits (*arutam*, or guardian-spirits) into themselves so that they may obliterate their enemies and keep their territory. They are themselves



quite brutal, though fiercely loyal to friends and family. Now a gang unto themselves, the men and women of La Fiesta can be found all over South, Central and North America. A small number of the gang's members are *hithimu*; while technically comprising a minor percentage of the gang's total population, it matters little, because the Ridden are in control.

Shining Angels Support Network

The Shining Angels are an inner-city support group for those who are HIV-positive. It is a good organization, providing education and comfort with no cost to the sufferers. One branch, however, has changed due to the presence of a single Spirit-Urged individual. This individual, an ex-addict named Rutherford, contracted the HIV virus from a dirty needle nearly 10 years ago. For the last five years, he has been Urged by a spirit of suffering. The riding entity has been feeding off Rutherford's pain and physical degradation all this time. The spirit will not let him die; it uses its growing Influences to cause him pain, but to keep him healthy enough to survive. Six months ago, the spirit pushed him to join a branch of the Shining Angels. He did so, and now the spirit sups on the anguish of the attending afflicted. The spirit uses its power to worsen the condition for all present. The entity also keeps them from dying, much as it does with Rutherford. It Urges its mount to not only go out and spread the disease himself, but to encourage others to do so. The spirit couches the encouragement in comforting language, portraying it *not* as spreading the disease, but instead as going out and finding "small comfort" in sexual pleasure. (Unprotected, of course.)

THE CLAIMED

Subtlety is lost when it comes to the *duguthim*. Subtlety works for a while, as the spirit remains beneath the skin. Soon, though, the union between spirit and human grows more complete. The spirit's own nature seeps out, molding and twisting the flesh of the human mount until it is forever changed. Weeks or months after the process starts, the *thing* is no longer spirit or human. It is an amalgamation of both, a completely unique entity. It likely is too frightening or strange to behold.

This blatant supernatural change is both a detriment and an advantage when massing a following. The disadvantage is that most Ridden cannot easily walk unnoticed among humanity. To do so, many must cover or disguise themselves, or dwell in the fringes among the homeless or insane. On the other hand, such an overt supernatural mien grants a Spirit-Claimed a measure of freedom. He doesn't necessarily need to hide. He has power. Why not use it? Why not walk among the weak-willed masses? Too much, and the Ridden will be hunted. But if he can show himself to the right people — to those desperate to follow — then such a revelation can earn him greater power and protection than he had originally imagined.

GODS AND MONSTERS

A Spirit-Claimed cannot expect to amass a slavish following through its presence alone. Such a thing isn't *impossible*, because witnessing a fully-changed *duguthim* can be a sublime experience. One might be willing to fall in line behind a Claimed due to its sheer physical aberrance, but, most times, the entity must provide some impetus for mortals to follow the Spirit-Claimed. Humans, like spirits, are ultimately selfish. Humans do not do things mindlessly (even though many spirits assume this to be true). The Ridden has to offer something. But what?

First, the Ridden can offer reward. A Ridden is not without power, and can use this power to help its mortal adherents. Everybody wants something; if the Ridden can meet their desires, both sides are granted an advantage. If a homeless family desires wealth, then perhaps a Claimed can offer it (especially if the Claimed's spirit was once of greed or money). Maybe the Ridden will watch over her herd, protecting them from danger. Perhaps the Ridden helps a group of people exact their revenge upon abusers, or perhaps helps the abusers terrify and torture their prey. With a *duguthim*'s Numina, Influences, and altered body, the Claimed can perform varying "miracles." It might be able to bring water to the thirsty, heal the sick, bring fire down upon foes, divine hidden futures, even strike a target dead with a strike of lightning.

Of course, a Claimed does not have to offer *real* reward. The Claimed's reward can be a deception, with the monster offering nothing more than hollow promises. A Ridden who masquerades as a demon or an angel can offer mortals a contract that they or their loved ones will have eternal rest away from the fires of Hell — provided, of course, that they follow the creature's every whim. The Ridden can claim that it is responsible for the sun shining, for the air humans breathe, for gifts of technology and science. These things don't need to be true. The Ridden merely needs to demonstrate a bit of its power in what essentially amounts to a parlor trick. Perhaps it uses the Call Water Numina, and lets the liquid fall from its open hands. Or maybe the Ridden uses its enhanced Strength to lift something impossible such as a car or a fallen log. These tricks, combined with the entity's bizarre body, might be enough to convince mortal witnesses that they are in the presence of divinity.

Flies come easier to honey, but vinegar works, too. Punishment and pain are powerful motivators. Fear can spur a cult to serve the Ridden. An awful Claimed might threaten mortals with bodily harm. Worse, the Claimed might compensate failed servitude with pain for loved ones, levying punishment against those the Claimed's cultists care most about.

Finally, the Claimed may simply offer an outlet to its followers. A lusty Spirit-Claimed might give its people the consent to slake their perverse thirsts upon unwilling humans. Or maybe the Claimed offers them an outlet

for their frustrations: eating, purging, killing, drinking, whatever it takes. Sometimes, human beings are only looking for permission to do the things that their minds censor. The *duguthim* can open the door to all manner of repressed urges.

The nature of the spirit helps to determine exactly what it offers its potential worshippers. A fox-spirit is unlikely to demand servitude, meeting disobedience with an iron fist. No, more likely the fox will trick the mortals into following it, because foxes tend to be cunning, not cruel. Perhaps it lies to them about its identity, or offers them eventual rewards that it cannot truly provide. Alternately, if the spirit was once a knife-spirit, it may only understand how to accomplish things through cutting or slicing. Perhaps this translates to acerbic words and razor-sharp invective — or maybe it means that the Claimed chops and filets those who refuse its service and sacrament.

Remember, too, that the Ridden are a fusion between spirit *and* human. The human side offers its own desires and ways of doing things, as well. If the human was a bruiser, the Ridden might threaten followers with boot and fist. If she was once a mother and housewife, she might protect her new “children” with smothering maternal instincts.

OTHER SIDE OF DESIRE

The relationship between the Claimed and its cult is not a one-way street. Followers are not purely for show. Their belief does not necessarily empower the *duguthim* in any supernatural way. So, what does a Spirit-Claimed get out of this bond?

The obvious answer is that, like spirits, the Ridden desire Essence. They seek to promote situations that will feed them. A Ridden who is half cockroach-spirit may cultivate a disgusting cadre of gluttons and slobs who worship him in the tunnels beneath the city. They come, gorging themselves and leaving out food for roaches and other bugs. They let the insects crawl upon their corpulent bodies, seeking to commune with their “brethren.” The Ridden feasts off the Essence caused by this, and can also consume the cockroach-spirits that gather on the other side of the Gauntlet.

Because of the Ridden’s human side, a Ridden is more than just the base needs and wants of a normal, selfish spirit. In this way, the Claimed are infinitely more complex than spirits, because the Claimed can have conflicting urges and fears in the same way that all humans do. The Ridden can want anything that any human might want. The Ridden could desire love, knowledge, castigation or money. The Ridden might revel in the sensations of the flesh, finding unimagined pleasure in food, drugs, sex or adrenaline. Of course, the Ridden has the spirit’s alien intelligence to help it pursue these new cravings, and there’s no telling how far the creature will go to realize its desires. The cult is there to help the creature feed its hungers. If the Ridden falls in love with a girl it sees on

the street, it may ask its zealots to track her, capture her and keep her like a bug trapped in a bell jar. The cult may bring the Ridden pounds of raw meat, live sacrifices, bags of money stolen from a nearby ATM or hundreds of books to help the creature feed on knowledge. The creature’s goals are now formed of both spirit urges and human wants.

The Ridden might also want protection. The world is dangerous for them. Their obvious physical peculiarities make them a target not just of mortal authorities, but of the Forsaken, as well. A cult of followers — especially those who are in some way martially trained — can help keep a Ridden hidden and alive. The Claimed have no compunctions about using silver against the Forsaken. A Ridden may arm its followers with as much silver as they can manage. Anything to keep the Ridden safe.



LUNACY AND THE RIDDEN

Seeing a Ridden in its aberrant form does not trigger Lunacy in witnesses though a Storyteller may ask for a Resolve Composure roll to avoid an uncontrolled fear reaction

However being a cultist serving an obvious Ridden *does* help a mortal resist the effects of the Lunacy in the future If the cultist witnesses a werewolf in any of the fear inspiring hybrid forms (Dalu Urshul Gauru) the cultist gains an additional $\frac{1}{2}$ to his Willpower when determining the effects of Lunacy. Being in close proximity to the Ridden confers greater preparation when seeing the unmasked horror of the Uratha



TEMPLES OF THE CLAIMED

Safety is paramount to the Ridden. They know that time changes them, that it shifts their bones and molds their flesh. To stay alive, to avoid mobs with torches and Forsaken with tooth and claw, the *duguthim* seek to create their own refuges. A cult can help mightily in this endeavor.

These refuges cross the Gauntlet and exist in both the Shadow and the physical world. Like the Uratha, the Claimed seek to mold all aspects of an area to suit them. Unlike the Uratha, however, the Claimed care little for balance or sanity. In fact, their sanctums are rarely sane or sensible, and can often do damage to the balance for which the Forsaken strive.

The sanctum of a Spirit-Claimed is often frightening. They tend to build sanctums away from prying eyes, constructed with the aid of their followers in isolation. In the cities, the Claimed might take over abandoned buildings such as hospitals, asylums or factories. They might go

beneath the city in its access passages, subways or labyrinthine sewer tunnels. Outside the cities, the Claimed might overtake ghost towns or settle within destitute suburbs. The Claimed might build temples deep in the forests, jungles or deserts. They may even build sanctums atop mountains or out upon the oceans (in old boats, upon derelict oil rigs, even on distant islands). The Claimed might make compounds or other fortifications away from society, like Jonestown. In an isolated place, the Claimed's cult can exist as its own little realm, with the Claimed as its king.

The refuges of the *duguthim* change over time. The Gauntlet weakens. Loci are often formed, and sometimes become Wounds, shoals or Glades. The Claimed grows in power as its authority is protected and unfettered. As its power grows, so do its Influences. Whatever the Claimed desires, it can create: an empire of serpents, a kingdom of flies, a society of machines or murder. If the Forsaken cannot find these cults and stop them, they can cause irreparable injury to the Shadow.

HAND IN HAND

Can the Claimed work together? Can a cult be formed of only other Ridden? Absolutely. If the spirit's nature and the human personality are in line with such cooperation, a cult is not only possible, it's advantageous. A Claimed formed of a wolf-spirit and an Army lieutenant is likely to recognize that strength comes with numbers and that interdependence is better than "lone-wolfing" it. Alternately, a *duguthim* who was once a Wall Street banker and a spirit of greed is out for himself alone. For him, cooperation means competition.

If the Claimed are capable of mutual aid, seeing an entire cult formed of the Spirit-Claimed is not inconceivable. Often, the spirits forming such alliances are generally of the same choir, or at least possessed of enough tainted Essence to give them similar demeanors and goals. A brood of *duguthim* can pool together their resources and abilities. Such a grouping not only helps ensure survival, but can take the fight to the Claimed's enemies instead of running and hiding. Moreover, the Claimed can form mutually beneficial refuges, places where the Shadow and the physical world become one (much as they themselves are amalgamations of the corporeal and the ephemeral). Powerful loci can be formed from the efforts of these broods.

Some Claimed recruit or kidnap mortals with the sole purpose of forcing them to become *duguthim*. They seek humans ideal to house their spirit allies on the other side of the Gauntlet. ("Ideal" is a concept relative to individual spirits. A murder-spirit might seek an aggressive psychotic, whereas a cat-spirit might seek a curious submissive.) They ritually prepare the humans in whatever way feels most appropriate. This might mean torturing them into compliance or allowing them access to untold pleasures. The goal is to reduce the mortal's threshold of resistance. If the mortal can be made pliable in some way (by breaking his body or his mind), he will more easily become Claimed.

Ultimately, this means bringing about situations that cause penalties to the mortal's resisting Resolve + Composure roll. If the human is wounded, drunk or otherwise debilitated, he won't be able to mount a full resistance against the spirit's Claim Numen (see p. 276, **Werewolf: The Forsaken**).

Some cultists do not require such preparations, however. They see their powerful master and seek to become powerful like him. They willingly invite the spirit to merge with them, becoming a creature of two worlds. In situations like this, the spirits do not need to roll when evoking the Claim Numen. It is assumed that 50 successes are automatically gained within the 12 hours after the spirit attempts the Claiming.

CULTS OF THE CLAIMED

What follows are a couple of examples of groups formed from or around the Spirit-Claimed.

Worms in the Apple

New York City is a big, stumbling canyon of steel and stone. The city's reflection in the Shadow Realm is an exaggerated version of this — it is the utmost City with a capital 'c,' the representative likeness of the Metropolis in the Shadow. Seven Ridden have banded together to "protect" this Platonic ideal of all cities. These *duguthim* are, quite literally, possessed of various incarnations of the Big Apple. One Claimed has reddish skin of brick, another shows eyes of glass and polished chrome. The se Claimed hardly look human, but they don't care much about that. These creatures have come together to mount a defense against that which ails the city. They defend New York City with unmitigated zeal. If a politician approves plans to hurt the city, they murder him. If someone litters in Central Park, they cut off his hand. Anybody can be a target: corrupt police officers, criminals, derelicts, even construction workers tearing down buildings. The Forsaken have mounted attacks against this group, and have succeeded in destroying many of them. Problem is, as soon as one goes down, the remaining Worms go and "make" another, finding a target appropriate for an incarnated city-spirit. Plus, these Ridden see the Forsaken as just another bad influence, wrecking things and disrupting the "natural balance" of the city. As much as the Uratha target these Ridden, the Uratha themselves are targets in return.

The People's Protectorate

Sister Theresa Kale is Spirit-Claimed. She is not only Theresa Kale, one-time political activist, but she is also Hunted Runner in High Brush, the spirit of a whitetail deer. She is a charismatic individual, friendly and funny, yet also powerful and persuasive. Her two personalities understood persecution — the deer knows predators, and the human knows political oppression. As one, they both want to find a refuge of safety, sanctity and sanity in this tumultuous world, and, thus, the riding spirit has allowed its mount a surprising amount of autonomy so that she



can cooperate. And so, Theresa established the People's Protectorate. It is a compound hidden away deep in the forest, away from any city. There, nearly a hundred people dwell, living partially from the spoils of the forest, as well as on the donations of a few wealthy members. The experience has been mostly positive. For them, it's close to utopia, at least as Kale sees it. But land developers have recently come sniffing around. And the FBI has been monitoring the group for more than a year. Theresa senses oppression. She knows what it is like to be *hunted* as prey. She is preparing to fight back. Lately, she has begun to gather weapons. With the help of her people, she has also built a large wall around the compound. They are ready for battle. They see her now — antlers growing hard and twisted from her brow, large doe-eyes darting suspiciously — and they recognize a potent, otherworldly leader. Most of them would die for her. Those who wouldn't will learn to, over time.

SPIRIT-THIEVES

The Nanutari are the most desperate of the Ridden. The Spirit-Thieves do not joy-ride bodies. Stealing a body

in this way is not for pleasure, but is done out of ugly necessity. The spirit suffers: it loses access to its innate abilities, it becomes trapped in the fumbling manikin that is the human body and it cannot get back across the Gauntlet and into the shadow. A Spirit-Thief takes a body because that is the only choice the spirit has when faced with dire opposition. Once the Spirit-Thief pilfers a body, the spirit can hide in the physical world at the cost of its own clumsy imprisonment. The spirit can relinquish the body, but doing so reveals itself, and the spirit loses the protection so desperately sought in the first place.

For this reason, the Nanutari do not make for good cultists or cult leaders. They are too hobbled, confused and deranged most of the time to consider the intricate molding necessary to build a mortal following. Moreover, being a Spirit-Thief is a temporary condition. Essence dwindles and cannot be replenished. The human form breaks down, suffering from disease and injury. The Spirit-Thieves don't have time to build any kind of following.

That's not to say building a following doesn't happen, however. From time to time, a particularly powerful or charismatic spirit manages to find a way to usher in a sect of humans to protect itself.

CLUTTONS OF ESSENCE

A Spirit Thief requires tremendous amounts of Essence to stay in a body for any significant period of time and so the cult of a Nanutari will be forced to work furiously to keep up with the Spirit Thief's needs. These cults act quickly and greedily because if they don't they cannot survive.

LORDS OF THE DUNGHEAR

It doesn't take long for a Spirit-Thief to begin spiraling downward — the spirit cares little for such necessities such as taking showers, going to the bathroom, changing clothes. Social mores go out the window. In short time, the Spirit-Thief begins to appear as a vagrant. The sickening odor and filthy clothes do not attract most people; such disgusting hygiene repels them. Hence, only the most degraded, debased or insane human beings would dare follow a Nanutari.

People do follow a Spirit-Thief, though. A shambling Spirit-Thief tends to act with the alien direction and matter-of-fact confidence that many spirits possess. A Spirit-Thief has little time for confusion or anxiety. The Nanutari has a job to do in the physical world (hide, kill, set up traps for enemies), and does so without hesitation. Unlike the Claimed, the Nanutari do not have a human side mitigating the spirit's desires. Therefore, Spirit-Thieves may demonstrate a kind of weird charisma. Normal people

would consider such behavior abhorrent, but those humans already at the bottom of the barrel may be drawn in by the entity's bizarre gravity. Seeing a grossly unkempt Spirit-Thief silently "leading" a passel of people who look just like him isn't entirely unusual. These people might be homeless, deranged or addicted. The Spirit-Thief may invent some story to keep them entranced, but, as often as not, the followers make up their *own* tales about the being. He might be an alien from another world, a cruelly rebuffed modern messiah or some mad social revolutionary.

USEFULNESS

Often, the followers of a Spirit-Thief are not there to get it Essence. They are not there to perform tasks in line with the spirit's nature. Much like the Nanutari itself, the followers are there to provide physical, practical actions in this world. If the Spirit-Thief needs protection, then they are the creature's human shields. If the Spirit-Thief needs someone or something killed, then they swarm like starving locusts to get the job done. Most likely, the entity simply wants to hide. Its disheveled sycophants will help the Nanutari get the job done, giving him a safe place to hide among them.

Most times, their usefulness is temporary. The Spirit-Thief cares little for them, and will only go so far to protect them. Generally, the cults formed around Nanutari are quite expendable; reality proves this time and time again. Some cult followers model themselves after their "leader," eschewing food and other essential needs. Others go into battle with Forsaken and other monsters. The end result is the same. The followers perish, from either exhaustion, exposure or just getting cut to ribbons by the claws of a stampeding Urshul.

That's not to say the Spirit-Thief doesn't need Essence; the Nanutari just can't *use* it when riding a stolen body. Body-jumper Nanutari can feed off Essence only when the spirit relinquishes an exhausted vessel. The spirit feeds, and then may jump anew into another body.

DISCIPLES OF THE NANUTARI

Below are two groups that can be used as examples of cults formed around a Spirit-Thief.

The Meat Man and His Meat Children

The Meat Man has been around the city now for a little under a year. In reality, the Meat Man is a hunger-spirit possessing the body of a middle-aged cab driver, but the identity of the driver is now lost beneath piles of dirty rags and blankets. And meat. Lots of raw meat. The Meat Man, unlike most other Nanutari, chooses to feed himself. He finds butcher shops and eats whatever he finds in the dumpsters — old meat, intestinal casings, odd organs. He found others doing the same: homeless men and women, plus animals such as rats and stray dogs. The Meat Man began to cover himself in the meat he found, and he lies there while both animal and man eat the uncooked food off him, like a human buffet table. He also brings meat to others, allowing all to partake of his gifts. This has gone

on for a while, and the spirit has only deepened the cult's longevity by jumping from body to body, though he still returns to his "meat children" to feed them.

Brentwood School Irregulars

The Brentwood School is an upscale private school located upstate. The school runs from kindergarten to 9th grade. At the front of the school, by the front gates, is a marble statue of the archer, Diana. This statue has a spirit — not a ghost or the spirit of the mythical goddess, but a delicate marble-spirit, possessed of a mischievous and sometimes cruel demeanor. This marble-spirit enjoys thieving the bodies of the students from time to time, and playing around in the physical realm, using their tender flesh to do so. When in control, the spirit plays havoc with them — skipping classes, getting into fights, making them wet their pants. Then the spirit flees, back to the Shadow Realm, where the marble-spirit can watch the resultant chaos. Those children who have been "taken" in this way *do* have a faintly lingering memory about the possession, however. The one thing they remember, always? The statue. In the last few years, more students (now a dozen or more) gather at the statue together as a kind of "survivors' group," trying to puzzle out what has happened to them. They know some kind of monster is involved. Is it the Devil? Some kind of alien abduction? They don't know. But they have resolved to fight back against whatever keeps messing with them. (Meanwhile, the spirit enjoys the Essence that gathers.)

THE HOSTS

The *shartha* are monsters before they are anything. Their instincts drive them inexorably forward. Yes, over time, many Hosts gain a kind of intelligence (which does not imply they think like humans, only that their level of thought is on par with mortals). This intelligence, however, always comes second to instinct. To trump instinct over conscious thought requires a degree of effort that most *shartha* simply aren't willing to expend.

For this reason, few Hosts ever gain any kind of a following. Many spirits desire adoration from the physical world. Adoration gives them power, grants them control of flesh and blood and mind. Humans, for many spirits, are toys and tools. To the Hosts, though, humans are potentially many things: an unpleasant side effect of the physical realm, a delicious meal or a walking costume that must be emptied of its troublesome innards. The Spider and Rat Hosts care little for mortal adherents. Worship does not fuel them; prayer provides them with no power. Prey needn't venerate the predator, it only needs to be eaten.

Still, from time to time, a Host will develop a herd that goes beyond its role as prey. These humans might exalt the predator out of genuine reverence. This worship may grow out of cultural context or come instead from witnessing a being that seems proof of something greater than humans. Alternately, a following may spawn from fear instead of adoration. The Hosts are horrid to

behold, abhorrent amalgamations of vermin and human, and mortals wisely fear such monsters. Fear may lead to appeasement — a poor human might do anything at all to keep these monsters from eating *her*.

Most Hosts, when confronted with this, choose instinct over intelligence. They dispatch the stupid humans, or ignore them until the time comes when the Hosts need new skin-suits. Not all *shartha* react this way, though. Some are capable and willing to make the effort to suppress instinct and use intellect to make a decision. Mortal followers provide for an opportunity of grim symbiosis. The Host has to do little — perhaps it must display its monstrous glory to its desperate supplicants or may only need to promise the relative safety of the fearful. With these “gifts” in line, a Host’s followers are likely to fall over backwards in trying to appease the creature.

Appeasement likely involves bringing the Host food. The *shartha* are hungry creatures. The Azlu eat other spiders, and eventually pets and humans. The Beshilu eat damn near anything — refuse, feces, other vermin and yes, humans. Mortals brought as food also may serve as the hollow fleshy shell that the Host may use to cloak itself (and what a glorious transformation that must be, to see a human be consumed and then “reborn” again with the Host’s intelligence). When the followers begin bringing humans, the cult takes on a truly dangerous bent. At first, they may be able to justify what ultimately amounts to ritual murder. The victims brought to the *shartha* might be local criminals — child molesters, rapists, drug dealers or other lowlifes. As time goes on, however, the criminal herd starts to dwindle, and lesser offenders must be brought before the insatiable monsters. At the bottom of the pool are shoplifters, drug addicts, the poor and homeless. And what happens when *this* source is spent? Some groups must either sacrifice the innocent, or turn inward and punish those who do not show the proper reverence.

Human followers may perform a number of other tasks, as well. Mortals can walk among other mortals without causing much of a stir, and so they can act as the eyes and ears of the Spider and Rat Hosts. Humans may scout out locations for new nests and webs, or they might try to hunt down areas of loci or spiritual weirdness (though humans do not have an innate sense of detecting such anomalies). Worst of all is when the Host directs humans to hunt the Forsaken. This does happen, though, for the Forsaken are terrible enemies to behold. No Host expects its mortal followers to defeat a pack of Uratha (though sometimes, the herd gets in a lucky shot with a silver bullet and takes one Forsaken down). No, instead, the humans serve as a distraction, tying up a pack’s efforts and resources elsewhere, while the Host grows in power. Or, the humans act as bait, luring the pack to the creature’s lair, where the Host has hidden advantage.

If the humans perish, so be it. Few Hosts ever commit to a human following in an emotional way, though this

has happened. Ultimately, to the *shartha*, mortals are non-essential — useful for a time, but always temporary.

DOMINATING THE NESTS AND WEBS

Once in a while, a strong-willed soul tries to control a Host, which inevitably ends in painful failure. A stubborn human may think himself smarter than a bunch of rats and spiders, but these are no mere rodents or arachnids. These creatures have an alien intellect that is unpredictable — attempting to control the Hosts means predicting what they want or need, a truly Sisyphean task. Worse, a Host isn’t necessarily one creature. A Host is many little minds making up a whole being, and trying to understand this manifold consciousness is like trying to comprehend reality through a fly’s eye.

That’s not to say a Host being controlled by a human doesn’t happen. In rare instances, the Hosts have been swayed and controlled by humans. While most of the time the monsters merely allow it to *look* as though they were being controlled (an illusion that often ends terribly), some are genuinely bound to service by strong-willed humans. The predominant means of control is magic. Exceptional occultists and sorcerers can summon these creatures and bind them to service for a time (though trying to pull the puppet-strings of a Host’s mind is an invitation to madness). For those without magic, the easiest target point to dominate a Host is through its family. The Hosts (the Beshilu in particular) have an odd reliance upon family. Rats gather in communal nests, and, from time to time, the Azlu collect in monstrous webs. These creatures might unconsciously elect an alpha, much as a Forsaken pack. If a human (or Forsaken) can weaken and capture this alpha, she may be able to loosely sway the Hosts into doing her bidding. They will not self-destruct; but such a demented hostage situation might allow the human to direct the monsters away from her — and toward her enemies.

AZLU

Spiders are reviled in many cultures, particularly in the World of Darkness. Many ignore the arachnids’ general beneficence (they eat insects, some of which may spread disease) in favor of considering them creepy and sinister. To most, spiders are little bloodsucking monsters with delicate legs that can be easily imagined dancing across bared flesh. The desiccated husks of insect corpses — grotesque bug mummies that turn a person’s stomach — are often in the spiders’ webs. Other, bigger spiders exist, too. Arachnids that can eat frogs, even birds. We fear spiders, regardless of their usefulness.

Perhaps this fear stems from a racial memory hidden in the minds of humankind, subconsciously recalling those clicking chelicerae, drooling venom and blood. The Azlu are certainly worthy of such nightmare, but it wasn’t always this way. The legends of various cultures speak of spiders clever and kind, divine and powerful. Spiders were not always so detested. Perhaps this ancient worship

of spiders can carry over to modern nights, and may help explain why, from time to time, a Spider Host finds itself with a mortal following instead of just dinner.

THE SPIDER GODS

In some myths, spiders exist not as fearsome pests but as divine arbiters of wisdom and cosmic aid. This outlook isn't relegated to one area of the world, either. Such a belief can be found amidst many of the world's ancient cultures. In the United States, the Navaho and Pueblo tribes speak of Spider Woman, a supernatural entity that walks among them from time to time to teach them things. She brings them knowledge of how to weave and how to hunt, and she helps them to recognize death with its many warnings. West Africans have Anansi, a trickster-spirit that often takes the form of a spider. Anansi is said to have had a hand in the creation of the cosmos, and, like all tricksters, is a little bit friend and a little bit foe. He positions himself as the king of all humans, lording over them and parceling out tidbits of wisdom, until eventually the humans catch wind of his deceptions and beat him to death. The Micronesian Areop-Neop is a grand spider god that weaves together the world, and the Greek Arachne was a girl who offended the gods and was turned into a spider for such an insult. In all of these myths, the spiders serve as arbiters of knowledge, presenters of wisdom and object lessons to those willing to listen.

The Azlu are not these spider gods. The Spider Hosts care little for wisdom, and don't have any overriding desire to help the fumbling humans. Still, those old myths provide clues as to why humans might still attempt to worship these monsters. Witnessing such a being might draw upon old cultural associations. A mortal who beholds an Azlu may look to the legends for an answer as to just what this creature truly is. The human may give it a name (Anansi, Spider Woman, Arachne or a unique mythical designation) and bring others to worship the Azlu. While this will be predominantly true only in the culture in which such a myth springs, the Azlu may transcend that culture, as such legends have been syncretized into a number of cultures. For example, Anansi was brought over to America with the slaves — except here, in the South, she's called "Miss Nancy." Southerners of any race might view an Azlu and believe it to be an incarnation of this old folktale, a spirit given flesh in a revelatory moment.

Most of the time, the Azlu doesn't care what name it gets — if the Azlu accepts the worship instead of consuming the fools, the Host doesn't care how they see the creature. That said, with intellect comes ego, and some Azlu are almost glad to have the worship granted to them. In fact, a few rare Spider Hosts have actually been fooled into thinking they *are* the entities the humans claim the Hosts are. They accept that they must be Miss Nancy or Arachne or whatever name is given. It's even possible that they begin to adopt some of the habits ascribed to these old gods and legends, thus entering into more of a truly symbiotic relationship with their mortal followers. Such a

relationship is truly atypical, but can happen. And when it does, the humans tend to be all the more zealous. Mourn the unfortunate pack that runs afoul of a human herd ardently protecting their "god."

ARACHNOPHILIA

When trying to understand how a cult around an Azlu is born, there are other factors worth considering outside the cultural. The first and most direct way is out of fear. Witnessing such a creature — a plump half-arachnid body, big as a deer, four pairs of very human eyes staring intently — will likely spawn an immediate reaction to run away and never return. Sometimes, running away isn't an option. If the spider is in your house or building, what can you do? Call the exterminator? What happens when the exterminator shows up and leaves again, either finding nothing — or he returns from the cellar a changed man, his mouth full of pointed tubules, little spiders peeking out from his nostrils and ear-holes? Destroying the spider remains an option (though not an easy one), as does fleeing. Some humans, however, lapse into a kind of madness when seeing one of these beasts in their horrid glory — and will do anything to stay safe and satisfy the creature's ugly thirsts. Yes, most of the time the Spider Host will just eat the genuflecting human. Though, if the *shartha* isn't hungry, who knows? It just might enjoy the attention for a time. Like a game.

Also, consider what happens when the Spider Host guts the body and takes the skin of a loved one. A man whose wife is hollowed out to become a home to shard-spiders is faced with some very disturbing possibilities, none of which are good. He may want to destroy the abomination, deciding that his wife is gone. But what if she isn't? Is there a possibility that her soul could be returned? Can he bring himself to destroy the flesh that is so dearly familiar? In such ways, cults can be born. This is no worship, but the man may try to appease the thing for a time while he tries to figure out how to get his wife back. He may even bring others into it. Alternately, his mind may shatter at the ungodly reality of what has happened, and he may bow down to worship his wife — or whatever broken deity dwells within her empty bones.

SECTS OF THE SPIDERS

Cults who work to worship or appease the Azlu are few and far between. Either these followers never see the light of day (and end up getting bound in a web with their guts sucked out) or they don't last longer than the Host's temporary curiosity. Still, some cults manage to survive for more than a few nights. Below are a handful of these arachnid cults.

Daughters of Miss Nancy

In America, the Old South still exists, as do the gentry who have long ruled from sprawling plantations and manor houses. Those old-money socialites don't want to rock the boat; anything that damages their lovely habits of attending debutante balls, political dinners and veranda

pageants will not be tolerated. Of course, the old tactics of separating the wheat from the chaff won't be tolerated, either. A number of women, mothers and daughters, have banded together over the last decade or so to call upon the favors of their patroness, Miss Nancy. Miss Nancy lives in one of the manor's vast attics. Of course, Miss Nancy isn't really Miss Nancy — she's a voracious Spider Host, but the Azlu no longer recognizes that. The *shartha* has bought into the lie, and believes itself to be the folkloric deity. The Azlu enjoys a good life with many victims who do not "belong" to the world the women come from. Sometimes that means the poor or ugly, sometimes that means liberals or people of other races. On rare occasions, that means werewolves.

The Broken Ones

In the boiler room and ductwork of an old veteran's hospital, a Spider Host grew into a foul merger of human and arachnid and went searching for a Host body. The Azlu's choices, however, were limited — amputees, cancer patients, stab victims. The spider knew that such a broken body would not suit. In the Host's search, the Azlu revealed itself to a man whose legs had been blown off in war — and the man, both fearful and awed, promised to help the spider find a fresh, clean, all-put-together body. A doctor was the first choice, though over time the skin could no longer be used, and the spider returned to he who helped it, except now, *more* were willing to help: broken men and women who had grown to hate those with all their limbs, no diseases, no disruptions of the flesh. And these broken humans pledged themselves to the Host, promising strong and powerful bodies. They hunt for the spider when it is hungry or in need of a costume. But now the government wants to close down the hospital. The Broken Ones and their Azlu accomplice will have something to say about that.

The Town of Graybranch

Graybranch isn't the nicest place to live, but it isn't the worst, either. Crime is low, employment is steady. But there seems something oppressive about the town. The trees — many dead — hang low over single-floor homes. The roads are laid out in a dull grid of gray asphalt. Visitors won't see a lot of animals, either — an anemic squirrel here, an edgy murder of crows there. Kids want to leave Graybranch as soon as they're able, and yet they're forced to wonder why all their forebears (even those most desperate to flee) have stuck around. The truth is, at age 18, the children learn the reality. They are told of the 13 spiders living beneath town that have a web nearly a mile long in the sewers and tunnels. Parents explain that nobody talks of the spiders, and nobody leaves town, either. Leaving town means getting caught — and fed to the hungry Hosts. No, the parents say, no worries, everything a young adult could want is in town — jobs, friends, potential mates. There is no leaving. And outsiders are not to be trusted.

BESHILU

City-dwellers have two maxims when discussing rats to describe their ubiquitous presence: "You're never more than six feet from a rat" and "One rat for every person." While these calculations (if they could be called such) are imprecise, they do point to a general truth about the urban landscape — it is choked with rats. Rats live as an invisible but pervasive presence in most cities. Many rats carry disease, and most of them eat the same filth upon which cockroaches feast. Of course, rats aren't just in the cities, either. Rural farm communities and suburban wastelands are both home to this plague of pests. "Pests," however, is a dismissive term. Yes, most of them are just vermin, unpleasant if mostly harmless. The Forsaken, however, know just how dangerous these monstrous populations can be, because within them dwell the awful Rat Hosts, whose own ranks swell within the throngs of vermin.

As if that weren't enough of a problem, sometimes these Rat *shartha* are abetted by mortal followers — cultists and sycophants whose disturbed minds place a grotesque rat-creature at the center of fearful worship. Humans developing relationships with a Rat Host that goes beyond pure revulsion is strange, but does happen. These cults only worsen the plague that Forsaken work to stop.

OF RATS AND HUMANS

Spiders are alien, unknowable predators with venom and web. Rats, on the other hand, are mammals — and, by proxy, seemingly easier to understand. They have somewhat expressive eyes, eat food humans discard and are biologically comprehensible. This is why rats are sometimes kept as pets, or as test subjects in laboratories. However, most people do become concerned when they see a rat — rats are a sign of sickness and decay, and humanity knows that. But humanity is also not so quick to judge a rat as instantly disgusting or destructive. For this reason, many rats are allowed to live more openly and unhindered than other pests. Rats, it is believed, want the same things we all do — food, shelter and a family.

Of course, the Beshilu want far more, and far worse. The Rat Hosts are consumed by fear and panic, and chew at the walls between worlds and weaken that barrier wherever possible. Ah, but humans don't know that (at least not at first). When the human comes upon a small number of rats dancing around, joined by tied-together tails, the rats seem more a bizarre curiosity than an abhorrent occasion. The rats' strange cleverness, used to dismantle traps or carefully open boxes and bags for food, appears to be an expression of nature's intellect, not an alien intelligence. Because of these reasons, humans are more likely to build up an interest in the Rat Hosts than the Azlu. Once a human begins to show interest in these curious creatures, however, the Rat Hosts may reveal their true forms — mangy rats as big as rottweilers, perverse hybrids of rodent and human or staggering golems made of



hundreds of vermin. Few men find sanity in the face of such grotesquerie, and most find themselves ending up as food or as the dissembled material for a future nest (as some Beshilu complement their homes with tents made of bone and stretched skin).

However, therein lies another difference between the Azlu and the Rat Hosts. The Rat *shartha* are not so quick to dismiss humanity. Perhaps a mammalian connection or maybe the ingrained fear found in all Beshilu force them to accept a wider array of defensive possibilities. Whatever the case, the Rat Hosts are more accepting of human interaction than their arachnid cousins. If mortals wish to be in awe of the Rat Hosts or bring them food or bodies, so be it. Some Rat Hosts are surprisingly proactive in this respect, offering gifts or tokens to humans in an effort to form a kind of unspoken alliance. Moreover, since some Beshilu are capable of hollowing out a human body and walking around in its gutted shell, they can sometimes communicate more easily with people. Such rat-possessed bodies always seem on edge, and many flee at the sight of people. Some, on the other hand, are braver and more resolute. These “rat shamans,” as they’re sometimes called, may come to humans to broker a deal for territory and safekeeping. Other Beshilu prefer not to broker a deal at all, and

instead enslave weak-willed humans by the powers of disease and madness.

OPEN WOUNDS

One of the awful byproducts of a Beshilu infestation is the damage done to the surrounding Shadow — it grows sick, like the tissue of a cancerous lung. Everything that comes from this part of the Shadow is similarly sick, and this decay attracts all manner of terrible spirits in addition to the *shartha* already present. One of the potential hazards of a weak Gauntlet is a bad resonance. From a bad resonance might come terrible atrocities, and from that may grow a Wound.

A Wound weakens the bodies and minds of those poor humans within it. They might become sick, saddled with persistent (though rarely fatal) diseases such as pneumonia, tuberculosis, skin cancer, syphilis. Such mortals may also suffer diseases of the mind, falling into pits of despair or obsessive behavior. One effect of this is that the mortals within the Wound become more — *pliable* — as their physical and mental defenses crumble. Normally, few mortals would ever consider giving themselves to a nest of tail-twined rats or a single rat-human hybrid. But, under the pervasive weight of a Wound's influence, humans find their will sapped, their resolve weakened. Madness crawls in through the cracks, much as rats crawl into the walls. Fools find themselves depraved and sickened, bowing and scraping before the hungry Rat Hosts.

Forsaken dealing with such a damaged following may find themselves torn on how precisely to end the reign of the Rat Hosts. Fighting such frail cultists comes with advantages and disadvantages. On the plus side, these broken mortals have been made weak; they do not necessarily intend or even understand what they do. If they can be removed from the situation, or the Wound can be sealed up and healed, they may come back to health and sanity. However, many don't get the chance for such redemption. Cultists of this sort fight with a lunatic verve, a rabid devotion to the Rat Lords of the Wound. These mortals bite and tear, scream and gibber. They cough up sickness and are willing to sacrifice themselves in combat with those who oppose their masters. The People have a terrible time *not* destroying these mad sycophants — extricating them and saving them often takes more time and effort than saving them is perhaps worth.

RAT CULTS

No two Beshilu cults are the same; few common traits can be found among those mad or fearful enough to worship a clot of squirming rats. Still, such strange followings exist. Below are a few examples of these followings that unwary Forsaken may find in dark corners and cubbyholes.

The Diggers

Rats thrive in those dark spaces beneath the cities. Every city has a network of abandoned subway tunnels,

sewer passages or access routes, and in these abandoned mazes, rats breed without hesitation. Similarly dwelling in these dark places are the castoffs from human society who crawl into the shadows for a place to hide. In these places one might find madmen and addicts, vagrants and killers. These wayward souls are without purpose — that is, until the rats find them. Beneath the city, the Rat Hosts have given these shattered souls meaning and direction. The Beshilu have given these mortals a task that will grant them revenge on all those who dwell in the light, those elitist monsters who cast them down into the darkness. The Rat Hosts ask for these humans to dig. To dig new tunnels, to wear away at the physical fundament with sharpened pipe picks and callused hands. In return, the Rats give them warmth and food, and occasionally bring one of the surface-dwellers down into the darkness for their followers' amusement (or hunger). All the while, the physical *and* spiritual structure crumbles, and the Gauntlet crumbles.

Friends of Hazel

The parents of 11-year-old Hazel would not let her have a dog or cat. Fish, on the other hand, never seemed to please the little girl — they were too goggle-eyed and dumb to be interesting. Her parents met her halfway and bought her a little black rat, which Hazel named Harry. Neither Hazel nor her parents had any way of knowing that Harry was a shard-bearing *shartha*. When she let him out to play on the living room carpet, he fled the home to find other rats with which he could merge. He found others, and brought them back to Hazel at night. She found them, fed them and loved them, for she was happy to see that Harry had made friends. Their numbers swell, and Hazel invites her own *human* friends over for occasional sleepovers so they can see and talk to her magical rat pals. The rats enjoy the attention and food. One of Hazel's friends — an asthmatic boy, clearly weak — is a likely target to be gutted and filled with Harry and his nestmates.

Court of the Rat Queen

The Rat Queen is different from other Rat Hosts. She is older, more powerful. Her body is a cringe-worthy pastiche of rat flesh and humanity — milky breasts jut from a mangy chest, jagged incisors sit behind painted lips and a fat, pink tail descends from the skin above a pair of pale buttocks. She knows many secrets and can get many things for those willing to pay the price. The Queen is a feral succubus, a hideous *shartha* matriarch with an insatiable sexual lust and cannibal hungers. Those who follow her are many; her adherents protect her from the shadows of gamy alleyways and open tunnels. Mortals are sickeningly caught in her thrall, but so are some Pure wolves and Forsaken, driven mad by her powers. They bring her those things she desires in return for gifts and secrets of power. All she asks in return is love and devotion. Oh, and occasionally the sweetbreads of human children.

OTHER HOSTS

While the Azlu and Beshilu are potentially not the only Hosts present in this dark world these *shartha* are the most populous. Other Hosts exist on the fringes of perception and these shard bearing monsters often have cabals of human devotees to protect them and give them power.

One man — calling himself “Stinger” — is said to be swollen with living bees, a human hive whose followers help him build honeycombs of dried skin that help him to “pollinate” the two worlds. Stories have also told of neighborhood Cat Hosts, feral strays that colonize abandoned houses and hunt spirits and Ridden (and even Forsaken) with the help of hypnotized locals. It’s even said that there have been “Ghost Hosts,” human shells who have been Claimed or gutted by legions of dead specters whose only goal in this world is to destroy others and make more of their demised selves. The Forsaken do not expect such aberrations to exist, instead focusing on the known enemies. Such short sightedness proves deadly in the end.

WEREWOLVES

The Forsaken are often surprised when they find a werewolf at the center of a mortal cult or brotherhood. They shouldn’t be. Werewolves both Pure and Forsaken are powerful entities, each one displaying seemingly divine power. Even the human herd can sense the power radiating from them, like waves of heat coming off a sun-baked highway. In those rare times when a human witness can parse what he has seen, he will be left with an indelible impression. That impression may or not be right, but it is nevertheless likely to be powerful. Was that creature a monster? A god? The witness will tell others what he’s seen, though most won’t believe him. But what if they do? What if they gather with him to find out more? To hunt down this god (or gods, if he had seen a whole pack at work) and uncover the truth, to pay homage to it? Or worse, to find and steal the creature’s seemingly limitless power?

Cults built around one or many werewolves are often accidental. Though, from time to time, a Pure or Forsaken will step away and reveal herself to the herd and demand obeisance.

TRIBES OF THE MOON

A Uratha is not often the vortex of worship or appeasement. The Oath makes it clear: *The Herd Must Not Know*. Such a decree is not without reason. A single human is like a single ant, small and unworthy of concern.

Ah, but when ants gather, they can be a dangerous force. A carpet of army ants can poison and overwhelm almost any prey, just by sheer force of numbers. Humanity is much the same. Alone, humans are weak; together, they can overcome. For this reason, Uratha are very devoted to that part of the Oath. This means being careful not to accidentally reveal oneself, as well as not stepping out of line and *purposefully* showing the truth to the foolish herd.

Some Forsaken cannot always control what the human cattle see. Rage is terrible this way, forcing a Forsaken’s monstrous form into the open regardless of what the Oath says. Other Uratha cannot resist the siren’s call of power. These hungry wolves step out of line with the Oath and with their own Harmony and reveal themselves to humans for one reason or another. Either — an accidental following or a purposed one — is dangerous to all Forsaken.

TRUE LUNACY

The madness of Mother Moon is a double-edged sword. On one hand, her madness provides a kind of defense, muddling a mortal’s perceptions so that a Forsaken may remain occulted. On the other hand, Mother Moon’s madness does not simply force a human to sleep and forget what she has seen. It drives the human crazy, pushing her over the edge into true fight or flight territory. A mortal doesn’t experience mere panic. She is infected with atavistic memories from long ago. She is overwhelmed with instinctive nightmares of running as prey from ancient predators. This feeling is huge, a crushing weight, an awesome fear, and it will not easily (if ever) be dismissed.

Most mortals who experience Lunacy are left to fill in the holes with logic and rational explanations. A madman, a feral dog, a terrorist attack, whatever. A rare few patch those holes with grim fantasy, or even half-remembered reality. These humans are the ones who may eventually come to cause problems — or grow to fear and love — the Forsaken.

WHERE THERE’S A WILL...

A mortal’s Willpower score likely determines how much open he is toward cultic behavior regarding the Forsaken. Humans with high Willpower are particularly vulnerable because they have the greatest shot of recognizing their memories as truth — or at least some supernatural interpretation of it. Humans with Willpower — have a chance at remembering what occurs including a Uratha’s true nature and form. Seeing the werewolf on some form of photographic media works might do the trick — while most humans (Willpower or below) are likely to immediately dismiss the image, those with extremely high will (Willpower or) might accept that blurry image for what it is. Such individuals may then lock themselves in their homes for the next few years, afraid to go outside, or they

might marshal themselves to hunt these hidden creatures. Others, however, may remember the blinding awe they felt when in the beast's presence, and they may try to find it to offer themselves to it, fulfilling the true nature of prey. Remember, too, that it is the Storyteller's fiat to make a witness' effective Willpower higher than the norm to give him a greater resistance to the Lunacy. Werewolf hunters aren't the only ones with high Willpower.

Do not discount those with extremely low Willpower, however. Those with Willpower — are broken people. Some kind of suffering or distress has made them damaged goods. Their psyches are like moth-eaten cloth, ragged and diminished. In these weak spaces, madness grows. These humans are unlikely to remember anything about a Forsaken, or even the scene at all. But their dreams and nightmares are rarely so kind. Over time, the scene may come back to them when sleeping, on medication or illegal drugs, or even at times of high stress. These flashbacks are never correct. They never show the Uratha in its true form. But they might show something else — an angel, a demon, a god, a ghost. These poor, damaged people may then go on a fool's errand to track down the entity and discern the truth. They, too, may form the basis of a werewolf cult, and they can be all the more dangerous than those with iron will.



ACCIDENTS HAPPEN

The Uratha are, at times, forced to reveal themselves to the herd, regardless of what the Oath demands. Rage is one way this happens. Other ways are sheer necessity or simply not realizing humans are present. Regardless why, sometimes a Forsaken assumes a form that triggers the Lunacy in witnesses, and the herd is spooked. This usually works out fine for the werewolf. It doesn't always work out so well for the bystanders. The obvious problem (or solution) is that the werewolf may kill the witnesses. It's one easy way to clean up such a breach of the Oath. But cleaning up is not always so straightforward.

Lunacy does tricky things to the mind. Witnesses may be left to commune with one another, and their distorted memories of the occasion may lead them to some unusual beliefs. They first gather together only for support, but, over time, such a gathering may grow into something stranger and darker. Groups of witnesses may believe that they have been abducted by aliens or have seen some kind of Fortean cryptozoological being. The mortals may believe they have been the rare witnesses to an actual deity enacting its bloodthirsty will upon the world. They may even be left with the mistaken impression that they somehow caused it or are otherwise "special," because if nobody else can remember anything, and they can

remember something (no matter how small), then doesn't that indicate some kind of unique power?

The result is that their motives for gathering change. Most such groups self-destruct. Nobody can agree on what they saw, some trickle away from the crowd, others kill themselves. Those who don't diminish only grow stronger. The seed, once sprouted, can grow into any number of things. The witnesses may come to hunt what they saw — possibly to destroy it, understand it, expose it or worship it. Alternately, they may never seek out the werewolf, confident that such a god (or alien or angel) will reappear when the time is right. In the meantime, the group prays to the god or offers sacrifices (plant, animal or human) to it. The depth of irrationality left in the wake of a Forsaken's actions can be bottomless. One group of survivors is said to worship a bloodstain. Purportedly, a werewolf's blood was spilled on the concrete floor of a warehouse during a fight — and while the warehouse has long closed, some of the workers believe that the blood spilled is somehow unholy and of great power. They draw invented glyphs around it and taste the dark concrete. They cut themselves and pour their own blood upon the stain to offer their service. These workers have never remembered the werewolf, and they haven't tracked the beast down. But their cult is dangerous nonetheless.

GRIM PURPOSE

Revelation is not always accidental. From time to time, a Forsaken recognizes the power of Lunacy — it can break an individual or stir a mob to action — and chooses to capitalize upon it. The Uratha (alone or with his pack) deliberately reveals himself to the herd. Sometimes, using Lunacy backfires. The mortals may break down, gibbering and wailing, trying to crawl for whatever window or bolt-hole will grant them blessed escape. Others rise up en masse to attack the Uratha (most of whom are easily swatted away, but this still counts as failure). Using Lunacy doesn't always backfire, though. The herd is pliable and easily controlled. The resultant fear and wonder from Lunacy can tie the mortal's mind to the image and actions of the Forsaken very quickly, soldering that connection high-permanently. From such events, followings are born.

But why? What does a werewolf stand to gain from such revelation? In the grand scheme, not a lot. Revelation doesn't help a werewolf police the line between worlds any easier. What such a revelation does offer, however, is power. The Forsaken are necessarily kept in the periphery of civilization. Even when dwelling in the city, a certain something swirls and hovers around them, keeping them distant from the world. An undetectable musk, an aura of fury or a predatory gleam in the eye — these all keep the Forsaken from fully participating in the human world. Most don't need or care to — that is not their job. They have a society and a task, and they will stick to it.

Not all Forsaken are so pleased at being held at arm's length by the rest of civilization. The human side demands human things, Harmony be damned. Some

Forsaken, against the judgment or example of their peers, want money, love, authority and responsibility. But they cannot have these things normally. Oh, they try, but such prolonged exposure to that world rarely has positive ramifications. Love ends in jealousy, problems at a job end in fury. Money is fine in and of itself, but the normal pursuit of money is a path fraught with thorns of Rage. And so, the standard routes to temporal power are blocked off. Rare Forsaken find other means.

A following is one of these means. Whether the humans do the Forsaken's bidding out of fear, adoration or a likely combination of the two doesn't matter. What matters is that the Uratha gets what he wants. His own personal herd brings him money, or hunts for him. The women may offer their bodies for pleasure or children; the men may offer their backs as human mules. The herd knows not to anger its patron.

Not all Uratha do this out of such self-serving whims. Many Forsaken genuinely want to be a part of the human world again, and so they reveal themselves to friends or family members in an effort to reconnect. This rarely ends well. Not only does the revelation break the Oath and subject the Uratha to punishment by the People, but revealing themselves also brings these humans too close to a dangerous world. Loved ones in this way often end up as casualties more often than not. Stranger still is when such loved ones cease to love the human side of the revealed werewolf, and instead obsess over the supernatural side. The Lunacy affects these close friends and family just as it does any other mortal, and, thus, can leave permanent scars scratched into their minds and souls. The madness that comes as consequence may change these humans, forever warping them away from the people that the werewolf cared about in the first place. They may worship him through fear instead of truly loving him. Or worse, they may secretly smelt silver bullets and knives for the eventual day when they will betray him and take his heart.

BROTHERHOOD OF BROKEN SOULS

The *Zi'ir* those mad Forsaken who have lost all Harmony between their two halves are not easy to tame. They're deranged and enraged, overwhelmed by a tangle of conflicting instincts. Throughout history, however, some have tamed these broken souls for various purposes.

The most recent example of this is a wolf-blooded family whose brother — a Hunter in Darkness — disappeared for a period of years. During this time, the Forsaken developed a taste for human flesh and often found himself wandering the Shadow Realm with little memory of how he even got there. As his Harmony dwindled, he continued to find himself in strange places, sometimes surrounded by half-eaten bodies. One night, he found himself in his brother's cellar,

his niece squirming and screaming in his grip, her hands already bitten off. The family found him, but did not call for the other Forsaken to deal with this problem. This beast was family, they said, and so they decided to keep him. They shackled him with a silver collar and manacles, each with jagged nails pointing inward toward the monster's flesh. They try to "rehabilitate" him, reading him poetry and talking to him. But they also appease him with human flesh. They bring vagrants and hitchhikers for him to eat.

Occasionally, a theory arises positing that *La Bête Du Gévaudan* (The Beast of Gévaudan) was actually *Zi'ir*. While other theories exist, this one is certainly thought out and may be true. North of Mount Lozière, a monstrous wolf (which some said had very human eyes) murdered scores of locals — the majority of whom were women and children, as men were rarely touched. History has since decided that the killings may have been the work of two serial killers working in tandem to make the murders look like the work of some wolfish beast. The theory suggests that two men were responsible for the killings — but they did not perform the murders. They were somehow in control (some believe magically) of a *Zi'ir* Forsaken, and let the monster smell clothes and taste the blood and hair of potential victims. The killers let their brainwashed fiend loose to do the grisly work while they sat back and enjoyed the resultant chaos. Some have suggested that these two killers were not isolated and have since had families, who may also be controlling other Forsaken (broken or not) to commit gruesome deeds. Others suggest that the whole thing is merely a cautionary tale of lost Harmony.

WORSHIPPING THE WOLF

What follows are a few sample sects that come together based upon a Forsaken's actions — whether intended or not.

The Bitten

This group began with a single survivor of a werewolf attack upon a shopping mall. The werewolf — whether Forsaken or Pure, nobody knows — was clearly in a Death Rage, destroying everything until, eventually, the beast fled through a skylight. This survivor was bitten across his torso, but managed to survive. His mind remembers what happened well enough, and he knows the superstition. A werewolf's bite passes along the cursed disease, and now he knows that he has it. This man believes himself to be a very real lycanthrope (and he casually dismisses the fact that he takes hormones to cause excessive hair and muscle growth), and he has convinced others into believing this hysteria. He went to other survivors of the mall attack that day and *bit* them. Some felt him mad, but others be-

lieved the lie. He now leads a “pack” of his own composed of a handful of brutal madmen who think themselves as more animal than men. These feral suburban savages have attacked many already, killing several and consuming flesh out of “unnatural hunger.” Those whom these madmen feel are worthy they keep alive to “join” the pack. They have already attracted the attention of spirits, who may soon attempt to possess one or many of them.

The Durkwood Logging Company

Douglas Hoarfrost, a Storm Lord Irraka, left his pack and now stands alone. He knows he deserves power, but power among wolves and spirits is useless. Having grown up poor and hungry, the power he seeks is quite material, and so he has broken the Oath to get it. He walked among the workers of the Durkwood Logging Company in Washington state, and revealed himself to an isolated number of them. He hobbled those who tried to escape by biting off their feet and clipping their hamstrings with his teeth. Those who stayed and wept and bowed were rewarded — and were then told to bring others. The logging operations have since dwindled, and Douglas now commands a number of humans (mostly men) to do his bidding. They keep his stomach, ego and madness well fed. His Harmony dwindles day by day as his pack prepares to come in and destroy the horror he has wrought. But they underestimate the ardor of his followers, who will protect him with tooth, nail — and silver-tipped axes.

Cahill's Crazies

Hardclaw Cahill did not mean for this to happen. With his pack, he tracked the Ridden to the State Asylum — he found the spirit hiding among the inmates at dinner time. He didn't expect the *duguthim* to come at him, spitting acid from its puckered mouth. He didn't expect the Death Rage to well within him so quickly, either. He tore

the thing apart as well as a number of inmates before his pack could pull him free and out of there. In the ensuing chaos, and unbeknownst to him at the time, many of the inmates were allowed to escape the asylum. Now, Cahill and his pack find these madmen wherever they go — throwing themselves at his feet, weeping and defecating, biting at their own flesh and gibbering. He does not wish to kill them, but he had to destroy some of them. But more always show up. And often at the worst times. The regret from that evening was apparently not enough, for now he has a cult of lunatics

that watch him from the shadows, ready to remind him of that dinnertime massacre.

THE PURE TRIBES

The Pure are not at odds with their desires. Many see the world as a failure, as a decaying carcass devoid of true life. This is the future, and it is the result of the loss of Pangaea. Still, they accept that this future isn't permanent, that the course of history can be reversed and Pangaea can once again be achieved. In this return to the predator's paradise, humans will once again know that they are herd animals grown fat

for food or strong for work. The spirits of the Shadow will no longer be hidden, diminished things, but will once again rule this place alongside the guiltless descendents of Father Wolf. The strong will once again rule, and the weak shall suffer and serve.

The Tribes of the Pure are willing to achieve these goals at any cost. If that means lording over humans and risking their mutiny, so be it, they will be put in the ground with the rest of the inferior beings. The Pure aren't stupid; they won't walk openly among the herd. Wolves are best when they work from the darkness, after all. But, unlike their treacherous cousins, the Pure aren't always



afraid to reveal themselves when necessary. Occasionally, they are glad to have followings, servants and priests who revere them for what they are. This is as it should be, when the prey offers itself to the predator.

TERRITORY OF THE SOUL

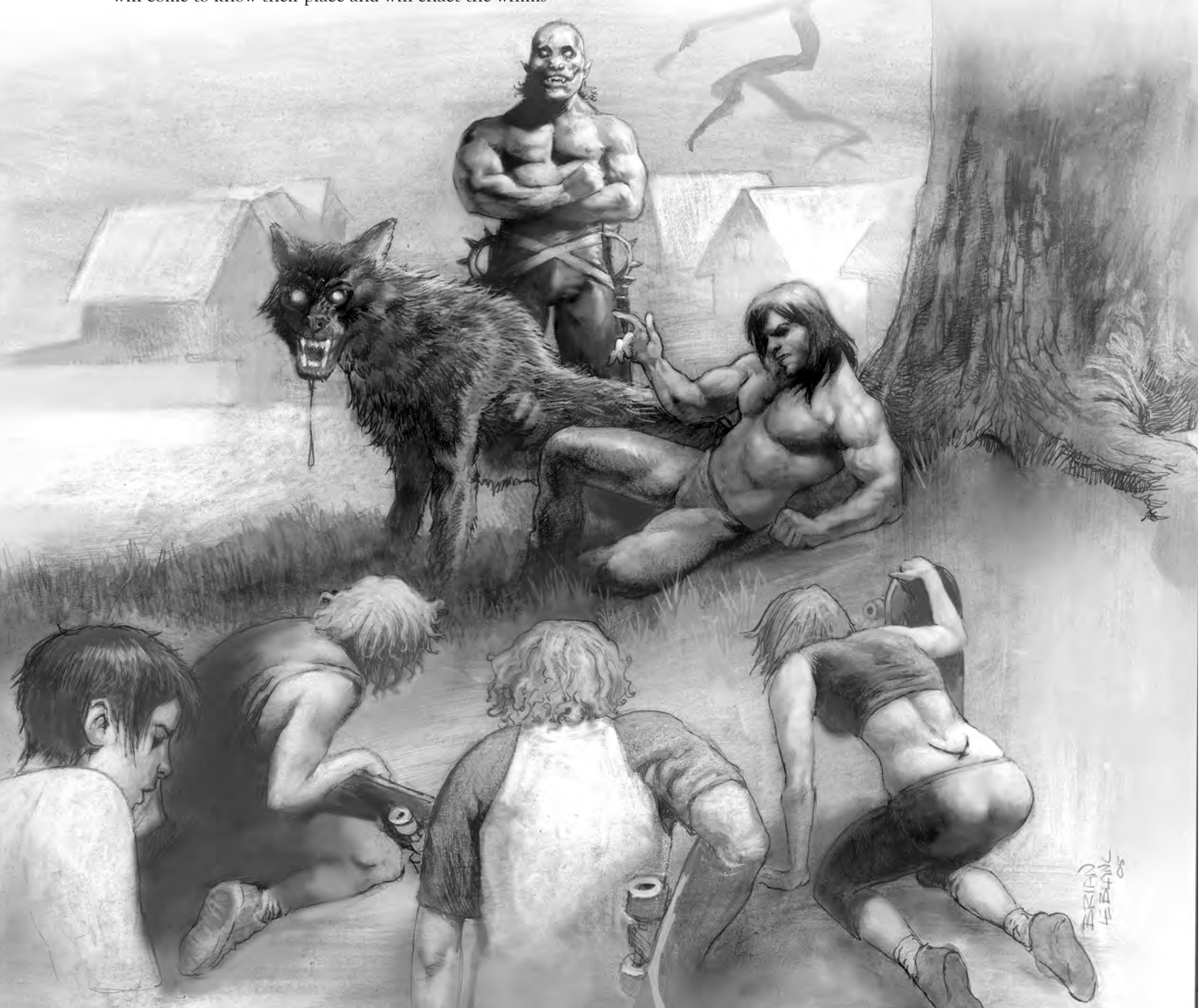
The Pure hold humanity in contempt. Mortals rarely understand their place — it would be as if a drove of pigs rioted on the way to the slaughterhouse and rebuked the farmer. So, whenever possible, the Pure are happy to *re-mind* humans of their place. When Pure hold a territory, it isn't merely a parcel of land or Shadow. No, those humans dwelling in the territory are fair game as well; the fools may not realize that they now belong to the pack, but they will come to understand soon enough.

On rare occasions, the Pure take slaves. If a pack of Pure claims a small, rural burg as territory, then the people in that town may serve. Not all of them — such a task would be difficult. But a few key townsfolk here and there will come to know their place and will enact the whims

of the werewolves. These townspeople protect the pack's secrets, get them supplies and food and kneel and pray to the Shadow. If the pack asserts dominance over a city block, fine. Perhaps they'll go to members of the police force and force them to bend knee. If the police are generally ineffectual, perhaps a contingent of homeless might make a nice (and expendable) cult.

This isn't always an easy task, as humans are rarely willing to admit subservience so quickly. But those Pure who go this route hold little concern. They can levy harm against the mortals or their loved ones, and can also offer them rewards of power and authority. The Pure are happy to dole out such gifts to the loyal. Letting a few of the sheep rule over the flock is harmless; they are only lords of the shithheap, nothing more. The Forsaken are afraid of humanity, but the Pure refuse to kowtow to an unruly herd.

Generally, the Fire-Touched and Ivory Claws are more likely to amass a following. The Fire-Touched, in particu-



lar, are persuasive. They enjoy the use of honeyed words and threatening invective (often in the same breath). The Ivory Claws are more dismissive of the impure “animals,” but can still understand what makes humans work on a fundamental level. The Predator Kings, on the other hand, rarely attempt to convince humans of anything. These Pure will shackle humans, hobble them or murder them. If the humans won’t serve, they will suffer and perish. The Predator Kings care little either way.

LEGACY OF MADNESS

Many Pure don’t always care if humans serve directly. If the mortals bow their heads in deference to the Shadow, then the goal is still served. On rare occasions, this is something that the Pure accomplish — when traveling, they establish small pockets of humanity to serve the Shadow and stand in the way of any Forsaken.

Ultimately, this ends up that the Pure make certain that the humans worship spirits — or, even better, become Urged or Claimed by them. The werewolves like to find those fools who would make valuable vessels for the lords of the Shadow. This might mean people with some small power (a sheriff, reporter, county commissioner) or lunatics so broken that they are constant dangers to the world around them. Some humans must be made weak first, and the Pure are happy to take on that job. Killing loved ones, torturing them from afar, getting them hooked on illegal or prescription drugs — anything to “hollow” them out spiritually and to allow an appropriate spirit to take some control. Others (such as the lunatics) are already broken enough, and require no further spiritual damage.

In the Pure’s wake, they might leave behind these clusters of spirit worshippers. These werewolves have little time to organize these humans or to allow them to grow. If they can’t coordinate and they self-destruct, so be it. If they find their strength and their numbers swell, even better. Either way, these groups stand in the way of any Forsaken who come down the pike. If the ranks of the traitors thin, then the job is done.

THE IMPURE THINGS

Below is a example of a sect formed by the Pure werewolves. Such cults are ultimately more populous than those made in veneration of the Forsaken, though Pure cults should still be used sparingly.

The 3rd Street Doktors

The Doktors are a gang of white supremacists — young, pale punks with shaved heads and a world of misguided anger. They thought they were hardcore, but they were shoplifters and vandals, not masters of the hate crime. That is, until the Natural Blood pack moved into town and claimed it as their domain. This pack of Pure, consisting of both Fire-Touched and Ivory Claw members, took the Doktors under their wing and formed them in fire. The Pure scarred the Doktors, branded them, filed their teeth to crooked points. The pack put weapons in their hands and fanned the flames of hate in their minds.

The Doktors now know who they serve; they only needed a strong leader to refine their hatred. These wretched, scarred thugs are now a force to be reckoned with in town, bringing violence against those who oppose them (as well as inviting a flood of negative spirits). The Doktors also know that in the next town dwell others like their new masters, but opposite and evil. These other beasts are gutter filth, non-white and deceitful. One day, with the help of the Natural Bloods, the Doktors will teach those perfidious bastards a lesson in pipe-hitting pain.

The Herd

This is how it should be, according to the Predator King pack that controls this group of humans. They have taken those unwise humans who come bumbling through the forests — camping, exploring, meditating — and they have forced them to serve. Coercion was not necessary. Only pain was required. If they try to run, they are caught and one leg is bitten and clawed so it may not be used to run again. If they still try, they are killed quite slowly and in front of the others. The humans (now numbering over a dozen) who belong as slaves to this pack move like a herd of sheep. The pack herds them like hounds and wolves, moving them to where they need them to be. Those humans who are willing to stand out among their beaten brothers and help the wolves of their own free will are given better food and less abuse. If a human dies, he is left behind or fed to the rest. The humans grow mindless and feral, as it should be. They are animals, and they will be made to *act* as animals.

THE WOLF-BLOODED

They are not Forsaken, but their blood always has that potential. Few truly show that potential, but it matters little. The wolf-blooded have a cursed lineage. Strange things happen to them. They witness odd little synchronicities and suffer ill-fated coincidences. Many have werewolves in their lives and do not know it. Others are well-aware of the pervasive presence of these uncontrollable beasts.

Some wolf-blooded are family to the werewolves. These wolf-blooded offer solace to the Uratha, granting them a port in the storm. Some wolf-blooded offer food and shelter, others offer a sounding wall and a bit of love or comfort. But not all family is so kind — or so sane. The wolf-blooded have a great deal of reason to be cautious of, or even hate, their werewolf cousins. Other wolf-blooded are not hateful, and go the other way and obsess over those Forsaken they know. Either can be problematic or even deadly for the werewolves in question.

BETRAYAL

Not all wolf-blooded know of their heritage. (In fact, most don’t.) The family may have known of it once upon a time, but such knowledge may have been lost or purposely hidden. It is ultimately best that such ignorance remains. Wolf-blooded who suddenly learn of their lineage do not generally take the news well. For a person to learn that strange Uncle Jonas has a monster living beneath his

human-seeming flesh is a disturbing discovery. To further learn that his mad blood isn't alone and is shared by all who call him family is even worse, because it intimates that the monster could be hiding in anybody. Trust becomes difficult, and such a miserable secret feels like the worst betrayal possible.

Lone wolf-blooded who feel this way often go on to hunt their werewolf kin. That alone is bad enough. But the wolf-blooded are rarely alone. They have family members who may feel similarly betrayed by such an insane discovery, and, from there, a very real brotherhood may form. Consider what happens when a werewolf loses control for a single moment and accidentally hurts his kin, perhaps breaking his mother's arm or sending a child down a flight of steps. Resentment, hatred and even jealousy spur these relatives forward, culminating in a desire for revenge. A band of brothers may abandon their lives in the hopes of putting their so-called cousins in the ground. Some wolf-blooded even take this to a deeper, darker level: realizing that the blood coursing through all of them is similarly tainted, they may take arms against their family, even those who are not Forsaken. These wolf-blooded may take this grim crusade against all other wolf-blooded that they find, deciding that it is best to kill the brood mares before hunting the brood. Many such groups self-destruct — sometimes on purpose.

OBSESSION

The Forsaken are a dominant, awe-inspiring presence. Any wolf-blooded who know anything of her heritage recognizes this — how can she not? The People are frightening and powerful, armed with incomprehensible wisdom and blood-spilling fury. In many wolf-blooded families, the known Forsaken are like planets — everything lesser is caught in their gravity and orbits around them regardless of their desires. The wolf-blooded can easily be taken in by the mystery and madness of their Forsaken cousins. This can work for and against the werewolves.

The advantage is that such wolf-blooded work fanatically to appease the pack. Women offer themselves in the hopes that their wombs will be seeded with the fetus of a Forsaken warrior. Men and women both offer to throw themselves into battle against the pack's enemies. These wolf-blooded sacrifice much in the names of the Uratha. They drain bank accounts, suffer terrible fatigue and pay with their lives and livelihoods. Most Forsaken are admittedly disturbed by such passionate ardor — the wolf-blooded are not slaves, after all. And yet, is it wise to turn down any help they can get? Even if it seems — overeager?

Many Forsaken grow to see the dark side of such service, however. Fanaticism can spin wildly out of control if untended. One pack learned this the hard way when several family members banded together to “clean up” the pack's messes — an act that involved *murdering* those (including police officers) who might have stood in the pack's way. Another pack saw several wolf-blooded from various families rush into a pitched battle with a pack of Pure. While help is

always appreciated, the pack was distracted while splitting the task of combating the enemy and protecting their allies. Most of the wolf-blooded perished, and those who did not die were taken by the Pure. The pack was left with two members dead and licking its wounds. Wolf-blooded who throw themselves at the Forsaken, worshipping them with mindless sycophancy, can be just as dangerous as a brotherhood who wishes the Forsaken harm.

Consider too that such fiery zeal can turn quickly to cold resentment. If the wolf-blooded feel that they have sacrificed much but have been given little, they may turn a dangerous corner. Scorned family members can just as easily band together to destroy a pack as help them.

TWISTED UPRISING

The wolf blooded (those who know who they are) don't always have the correct information. They may know of the Forsaken but they may not see one in a few generations or more. Some times the Forsaken come and go. Other times they die before they can return to their families.

Over time the truth about the werewolves (what little was already known) may become distorted. New wolf bloods are born and raised and given this warped knowledge — and like a decades long game of *Whisper Down the Lane* that changes. By the end the wolf kin are likely to have some very distorted perceptions of their Uratha cousins. The wolf blooded may believe that the Forsaken are great heroes who will come to deliver their family members from a dying world or that they are instead brutal monsters who left their families all alone. In re told tales the Uratha may become pious angels or cannibalistic child killers. The wolf blooded may even go so far as to believe that the werewolves must surely all be dead and that the wolf kin are the only hope of restoring some kind of balance and order to this broken land. The misconceptions that can grow over this gulf of ignorance are as tounding. Are the Forsaken government experiments gone horribly awry? Do werewolf genetics have awful side effects, leading the wolf-blooded into murderous instincts and deviant behavior because it's “inevitable?” Are werewolves the product of some curse levied against the family by God? Do the wolf blooded think that they are *all* Forsaken and so hunt in packs and tear animals apart with bare hands and teeth all to sate their “feral instincts?”

Feel free to play with these misconceptions. A pack of Forsaken may return to a family of wolf kin they heard about long ago, and find that in the subsequent generations their beliefs have changed — and now the family is unified in their lunatic delusions.

CONTROL

The wolf-blooded are closer than normal mortals to the supernatural. While the wolf-blooded may not have a name for what they experience, the world of the Forsaken and the Shadow affect these wolf kin with some regularity. They can roughly sense the clandestine workings of spirits, read the subtle body language of those wolves at the zoo and possibly even *smell* nearby Forsaken. Those wolf-blooded who do not experience a First Change or learn the entire truth about their lineage are likely to feel crazy, confused and out of control. Their likeliest response is to reclaim control whenever possible.

Some wolf-blooded go down this path, trying to enforce their own control upon the strange things they see and feel. Sometimes, this is harmless. A wolf-blooded who becomes an urban shaman, throwing bones and trying to read her future in oil-slick puddles, isn't really hurting anyone. Empowerment and control aren't necessarily bad things, but they *can* be.

Wolf-blooded banding together to try to control and coerce spirits often ends poorly. First, because the wolf-blooded don't know what they're dealing with. They may think that they're communing with angels or demons, aliens or ghosts. The wolf-blooded receive no handbook that identifies the spirit choirs — the Forsaken are not required to share the reality behind the mad animism of the Shadow. Second, when the wolf-blooded attempt to understand or deal with spirits, these wolf kin open themselves needlessly to spirit influence. Spirits winnow away a wolf-blood's will, planting tiny suggestions that grow into abstract and obscene impulses. Worse is that the spirits are not fools, and are generally aware of who or what the wolf-blooded are (even if the Uratha kin don't know themselves). Many spirits have a great distaste for all things Forsaken, and can lead the wolf-blooded down a dark path — a path that often ends in a blood-soaked showdown between werewolves and their mortal kindred. Spirits are not always so hostile, but they are selfish entities, bent on doing things according to some incomprehensible mindset. The wolf-blooded suffer in a spirit's grip, regardless of the being's intentions.

Wolf-blooded conspiring to control the Forsaken is more rare, dangerous and difficult. Wolf-blooded attempt to do so for a number of reasons. Perhaps the wolf-bloods want only to understand the full reality of behind the Forsaken. The werewolves are not always keen to share the whole story, and a wolf-blooded family might feel they deserve it. Alternately, the Uratha are clearly arbiters of great power. Even if the wolf-blooded don't see such primeval abilities in action, they can *sense* the power radiating from their monstrous cousins like heat from a radiator. The wolf-blooded may want that power. Werewolf kin often live hard lives — they are rarely wealthy, often living as social outcasts or isolated families. Power would do them good, and if the Forsaken aren't using it in the wolf-blooded's favor, some develop the idea that they must

take the power for themselves. Most learn the hard way that the gifts and rites of the Forsaken are not available to the wolf-blooded. Whispered rumors suggest that some wolf-blooded *have* found a way to truly thief the powers of the Uratha, if only for a time.

Of course, does it matter? If the wolf-blooded *do* manage to invoke some control over the Forsaken (and don't get rendered into gory bits in the process), the wolf-blooded already have the powers of the werewolves at their disposal. Getting control is never easy, and doesn't often last, as eventually a werewolf's fury will end the conspiracy prematurely. Still, some wolf-blooded manage prolonged control. Blackmail and bribery are two sides of the same coin — the Forsaken are individuals with needs, despite their pack relations. Some want love, others want reward. The Forsaken have friends, loved ones, hidden secrets, beloved fetishes. The wolf-blooded have a unique vantage point in that the Forsaken will occasionally share information with them, but dismiss them as dangerous. The wolf-blooded can, theoretically, either try to give a werewolf what he wants — or keep it from him, for a price. Many Forsaken refuse or harm those who attempt bribery or blackmail. Some Forsaken, though, give in. This control often leads to a very conflicted Uratha, one who may accidentally betray her own pack.

THE FAMILIES

Inevitably, a wolf-blooded "cult" is nothing more than a wolf-blooded family coming together for a purpose good or ill. They needn't be from the same family, but, in a manner of speaking, they all share common heritage. What follows are a couple of examples of wolf-blooded families who may be a help or a danger to their Forsaken brethren.

The Village of Founthill

Founthill isn't a big town. It sits far enough from the city, barely counts as a suburb. The mills have mostly closed, so have the mines. All the local Forsaken know of Founthill, because it's something of a "safe place" for them. Almost the entire population of the town — which hasn't broken 150 in 10 years — are wolf-blooded, who have banded together for solidarity and to protect their poor werewolf cousins. It works, for the most part. The townsfolk are a little obsessive about the Forsaken, of course, but the wolf-blooded do their level best to protect the werewolves. Even if it means putting an FBI agent in the ground or blackmailing a local sheriff by threatening his family. Even if it means stealing from lost vacationers or chaining up the Census man in one of their cellars for a few months until they figure out what to do with him. The Forsaken know it's a little strange there — even the spirits act odd — but Founthill does offer a place of relative peace in a world of violence.

The Rosewood Clan

The Rosewood family knows it shares blood with monsters. They know the reality of this, because they've

seen it up close and personal. Nearly 20 years back, one of their Forsaken kin came crawling in out of the dark, wounded from the Brethren War. The beast wanted solace, and the Rosewoods granted it. But something set the wolfman off — what it was has been lost to history and death, because the family who took him in perished bloodily. The rest of the Rosewood clan then came together and decided to do something about these menacing abusers for the last time. For two decades now, the Rosewoods have been hunting the werewolves they call relations, with middling success. Silver helps, but the Rosewoods decided they have a better way — they'll take the power from the monsters. During the last 10 years, when they kill a Forsaken, the family members cut out the beast's heart and eat it. They then skin the werewolf and share its fur among the clan. This, they claim, gives them power. To see them fight and take wounds that would kill normal humans, there might just be truth to that idea. From time to time, one of their own experiences the First Change — and is summarily destroyed, his heart eaten and pelt taken. The family stands strong.

SAMPLE BRETHREN

CHURCH OF THE ASPHALT ANGELS

The parishioners of this “church” believe the following story: Just shy of a decade ago, God came to the Mojave Desert. He came bearing gifts for the penitent, and punishment for the sinners. God, however, underestimated the nature of sin, and how deeply it had stained the world. Creatures of vile indulgence — humans who could become beasts by laying down with beasts — rose up and slaughtered God, leaving His corpse to blister and rot in the eye of the sun. All that are left now are God's angels, creatures of light and vengeance. The members of the Church ride up and down the highway of the Mojave, hunting those callous fiends capable of killing God.

REALITY CHECK

God did not come to the desert and die, but the Forsaken did band together and destroy a powerful spirit along the decommissioned stretch of Route 66. This spirit was idigam, a loathsome alien entity that was driven by wrath and that hunted both the local packs of Uratha as well as Route 66's spirit patroness, The Mother Road.

The idigam, called Uzuthil, had warped the Shadow and its denizens along much of Route 66. When the idigam was destroyed, the remnants of its spirit army were left behind. These confused and angry spirits are beings of blood and light, and seek to undo the Forsaken's efforts at every turn. And so, they go to those humans desperate and angry enough, recruiting them to serve as soldiers in this growing army.

REVEREND BILLY CARR

Billy Carr was the first chosen by these spirits. Once upon a time, he was a drifter with little purpose. He had a

heart full of anger, though, from a world that had spurned him. He was abused as a child, and taken advantage of time and time again. He was a hard worker, so he thought, and a good and honest man. But it did not matter, because the world continued to chew him up. His very soul was eaten through by worms of rage.

The servants of the dead idigam found in him a perfect vessel. They could bring harm against the Shadow, but going against the Forsaken directly was difficult. They needed people like Billy. He was angry and willing, and merely needed a target upon which he could unleash his wrath. When the spirits came to him, they looked like a choir of vicious angels. Billy did not know whether he was being punished again by the cosmos or was being rewarded. The spirits assured him that, if he would serve them, he most certainly be rewarded. Billy offered them his fealty, becoming Spirit-Urged by one of these so-called angels.

FINDING RELIGION

Most of the story about God (Uzuthil) and his angels (the idigam's spirit army) was concocted in Billy's head. The spirit riding him was able to give him flashes of the tale, but he translated it through the lens of his own worldview. He was raised a good Christian boy, and it wasn't hard to take the tale he was told and turn it into some kind of tale of a botched Apocalypse. In this way, Billy Carr became a self-proclaimed Reverend (he even went so far as to get his ministerial license) and founded the Church of the Asphalt Angels.

From that point on, Billy has recruited countless others across California, Arizona and New Mexico. He and the “angels” have found others like himself: angry, destitute, but possessed of a love and fear of all things holy. This so-called Church of downtrodden, outraged sons of bitches rides together in a motorcade of bikes, hogs and muscle cars. Their group numbers in the dozens now, in some cases comprising whole families of folk. Many have become Urged, as well. They hunt the Forsaken and their Satanic kind with silver-loaded pistols and the righteousness of God the Father. Many are marked with tattoos of Biblical passages and brands or scars of crosses and stars.

Worse, Reverend Billy has gone from being Urged to Claimed. He is now fully possessed by one of the Asphalt Angels, and he not only knows it, but gladly accepts it. He is aware that his decisions are not fully his own, and, to him, such surrender is truly liberating.

REVEREND BILLY CARR

Mental Attributes: Intelligence Wits Resolve

Physical Attributes: Strength Dexterity Stamina

Social Attributes: Presence Manipulation Composure

Mental Skills: Crafts Investigation Medicine Occult

Physical Skills: Athletics Brawl Drive (Motorcycles)
Firearms (Rifles) 3, Larceny 2, Stealth 1, Survival 1, Weaponry



Social Skills: Empathy Expression Intimidation
Persuasion (Cause Doubt) Socialize Streetwise
Subterfuge

Merits: Direction Sense 1, Fast Reflexes 2, Inspiring 4,
Stunt Driver

Willpower:

Morality:

Essence:

Virtue: Faith

Vice: Wrath

Health:

Initiative:

Defense:

Speed:

Numina: Claim Command Fire Harrow Sense Weakness
Terrify

Billy didn't used to talk much, but since he has been possessed by the glorious angels of the Lord, he's become a regular Chatty Kathy. He talks on at length about the grace and glory of Heaven, and how wonderful it is to be a servant of such holy justice. But for all his smooth talking and proselytizing, he cannot hide the fire in his eyes. Hatred burns there. Anger for what has happened to this world. He wants to take the enemies of humans and God

in his hands and choke the life out of them, squeezing so hard their *heads* pop off in a gout of sweet blood. Billy has a way of tapping into that anger in other people, too. He can draw it out, like an infection, and bring it to the surface for all to see. He's a natural-born leader, riding up on his chrome chopper, a pair of snakeskin boots at the ends of his long legs, a priest's collar below his handsome face. His mission, his Church and his constituents all see the power within him. That power is only partly provided by the spirit.

STORY HOOK: THE SIN IS IN THE BLOOD

The Church of the Asphalt Angels ride up and down the pieces of highway that comprise old Route They haven't yet taken on the Forsaken directly and are currently enacting a kind of guerilla war against the Uratha and their allies. Anyone who claims to be an ally or acquaintance of those God killing monsters deserves to be burned alive and that's exactly what the Church members do. They set up crosses tie people to them with leather straps and burn them up with wood and gasoline.

Lately the followers have taken to hunting down local wolf bloods. How the Church is locating them is as yet a mystery but some suspect that the spirits of Uzuthil are guiding the Church members somehow. Either way they're cutting a swath of blood and fire across the three states and a number of wolf bloods have been killed or kidnapped. The Forsaken are left to mobilize quickly trying to get to the wolf kin before they are taken or butchered. Can the Forsaken save their families? Or will they instead set up the wolf bloods as bait hoping to catch Reverend Billy and his God fearing monsters unawares?

THE WRENCHWOOD BUILDING

The Wrenchwood Building has rats in its walls. This is no surprise to the tenants; they're told about the rats before they even sign a lease. What comes as an inevitable surprise is just how many rats live there — and what those rats really *are*. This low-cost apartment building is a monstrous nest of Rat Hosts, but one that deviates from the norm. Generally, the Beshilu swarm in an area as parasites, feeding off of the resources (including humans) until there's nothing left. The Wrenchwood is different. Here, the Hosts have formed a rather peculiar alliance with the humans who live and work in the building. The Hosts here aren't parasitic — they are symbiotic. Not every tenant knows the truth, but there live a few on each floor

who are in on the conspiracy. The rest will learn, perish or become the wriggling flesh suits of the humanoid Beshilu.

RENT IS CHEAP

The Wrenchwood Building has been in the city for just over 50 years. Once a nice building with state-of-the-art plumbing and a solid foundation, the Wrenchwood has been on a slow crawl toward complete disrepair over the years. Pipes leak, the elevator is broken, the walls are rotting from the inside and the wiring is so frayed its any wonder more people don't electrocute themselves when cooking dinner or taking a bath. The halls are claustrophobic and dimly lit, and the apartments themselves are broken-down, boxy affairs haunted by the commingling scents of mold and rot.

The building itself sits in one of the city's predominantly immigrant neighborhoods. The surrounding area certainly isn't poor, but it's a depressed blue-collar region caught on the slippery slope toward eventual destitution. On the outside, Wrenchwood looks like just another brick apartment building — seven floors of shoddy work and predictable decay.

HUMAN TENANTS

The relatively cheap rent of the apartments allows for a rather diverse population of occupants. The building is home to grad students, starving artists, construction workers, corner store clerks, migrant laborers and a number of retirees (many of whom have lived in the building for decades). This heterogeneous mixture is reflected the Wrenchwood's racial and ethnic diversity, as well — the building sits in the crux between a number of immigrant neighborhoods, and as such attracts people from all walks-of-life: Polish butchers, Chinese laborers, Armenian cab drivers, Hispanic mechanics.

The Wrenchwood's superintendent is Veloz Aukstakojis, a middle-aged Lithuanian man who lives with his wife and three children. He's been the building manager for 11 years, and he is not only aware of the Wrenchwood's population of Rat Hosts, but is the liaison between the Beshilu and many of the tenants.

RAT RESIDENTS

The Rat *shartha* moved into the Wrenchwood about 20 years ago. As usual, the Beshilu were small both in number and in physical size — just a handful of black rats creeping into the building, tumbling through pipes and gnawing at the physical *and* spiritual foundation of the building. These few rats went unnoticed by any local Uratha, and the tenants paid the Hosts little attention. Over time, these minor shards found others, and the rat nest grew quickly as they consumed one another. It didn't take long for them to get bigger — and smarter.

Now the rats are a poorly concealed plague within the building. Residents see the rats all the time: coming up through toilets, running two-by-two down empty hallways, peering over an old TV set. If the residents don't

see the *shartha*, the tenants hear the creatures, scratching, chattering, running around on little (and sometimes not so little) feet.

VERMIN SYMBIOSIS

Those living in the building have made a pact with the Beshilu, whether the residents know it or not. This symbiosis is made from both fear and reward. The fear comes in because those residents who know of the Rat Hosts are well aware of what happens to those who betray the building and its rats. Those people disappear, but sometimes *come back*. Except, when they return, they're different. Bristly gray hairs jut from twitching noses. Their teeth and gums are rotten, and they walk with a stooped hunch. More grotesque is the way their skin *undulates*, as if something were crawling beneath their epidermis.

The reward comes in because what the rats take, the residents get. These rats have little interest in trinkets and human presents. Whenever the rats leave the Wrenchwood to claim another area and hollow out more unwitting humans, rewards are left behind. Jewelry, money, credit cards, clothes. The rats bring these as "gifts" to the residents of the Wrenchwood. Veloz distributes the spoils. Some residents know where the items came from, realizing that such items are the spoils of the rats' conquests. Other residents remain unaware, and are told that such items were left in the lost and found box, or were discovered outside their door and would they like to keep them?

Residents who resist are, of course, made scarce. They are pulled through floorboards, dragged into the various cubbyholes and tunnels hidden in the building. Occupants are also encouraged to continue signing lease after lease. Leaving is not really an option, for the Wrenchwood is one big, not-so-happy family.

BREAKDOWN

The presence of the Rat *shartha* has had a terrible effect on the Shadow of the Wrenchwood. First, the whole building is one big Wound. The spirit realm here is sickly — suppurating cankers cover walls, bloodthirsty fly-spirits buzz incessantly, infected blood clots pop and sputter from broken pipes. This Wound is powerful enough that local Forsaken who have tried to get in and deal with it have gone missing, purportedly destroyed or disassembled by the Rat Hosts or other awful spirits that dwell there.

The Beshilu have also brought disease to the Wrenchwood. The sicknesses that plague the residents are not fatal or extreme in any way. But everybody gets sick with something — the flu, allergies, eczema, herpes, pink eye.

Finally, the Gauntlet has been chewed to pieces here, like a moth-eaten coat. The rats have attempted to keep the Gauntlet somewhat stable, as the Wrenchwood is more a nest than a target (and one shouldn't shit where one eats). But their existence has worn it thin regardless, and it's having a bad effect on the place and its residents. The building is home to a number of small loci (rating •

and ••), and also, a number of occupants are turning up Urged or Claimed.

The Wrenchwood Building is a spiritual disaster zone, and the local Forsaken don't know what to do about it.

STORY HOOK: STAGING GROUND

Local Uratha have noticed a sudden proliferation of Rat Hosts all over the city. Every time a pack turns around, a new shard bearer rat seems to be skittering away, hiding in sewers or crawling in the ductwork of local office buildings. The Gauntlet is weakening in some areas, and strange instances of the bubonic plague are popping up across town. Every time the werewolves squash one small infestation, another pack reports of a similar infestation across town. The Uratha have not seen this many Rat Hosts spring up so sudden in a very long time. What's happening?

The Wrenchwood is serving as a staging ground for the Rat Hosts. They breed there quietly, doing as minimal damage to the outside of the building as possible. Uratha have gone generally unaware of the Wrenchwood's verminized corruption, and that's exactly how the *shartha* want it. Because from there, they can send out little shard bearer rats — cadres of three or four vermin at a time — down through the sewers and across rooftops and into other buildings. The Wrenchwood is the local Rat Host HQ. It's the origin point for a terrible invasion. Can Uratha find it in time? What happens when they find that not just the rats, but the building's human inhabitants are against the Forsaken?

VELOZ AUKSTAKOJIS

Mental Attributes: Intelligence Wits Resolve

Physical Attributes: Strength Dexterity Stamina

Social Attributes: Presence Manipulation Composure

Mental Skills: Computer Crafts (Home Repair) Investigation Occult

Physical Skills: Brawl Drive Larceny Stealth Weaponry (Baseball Bat)

Social Skills: Empathy Intimidation Persuasion Socialize Streetwise Subterfuge (Misdirection)

Merits: Allies (Residents) Danger Sense Natural Immunity Strong Back

Willpower:

Morality:

Virtue: Charity

Vice: Greed

Health:

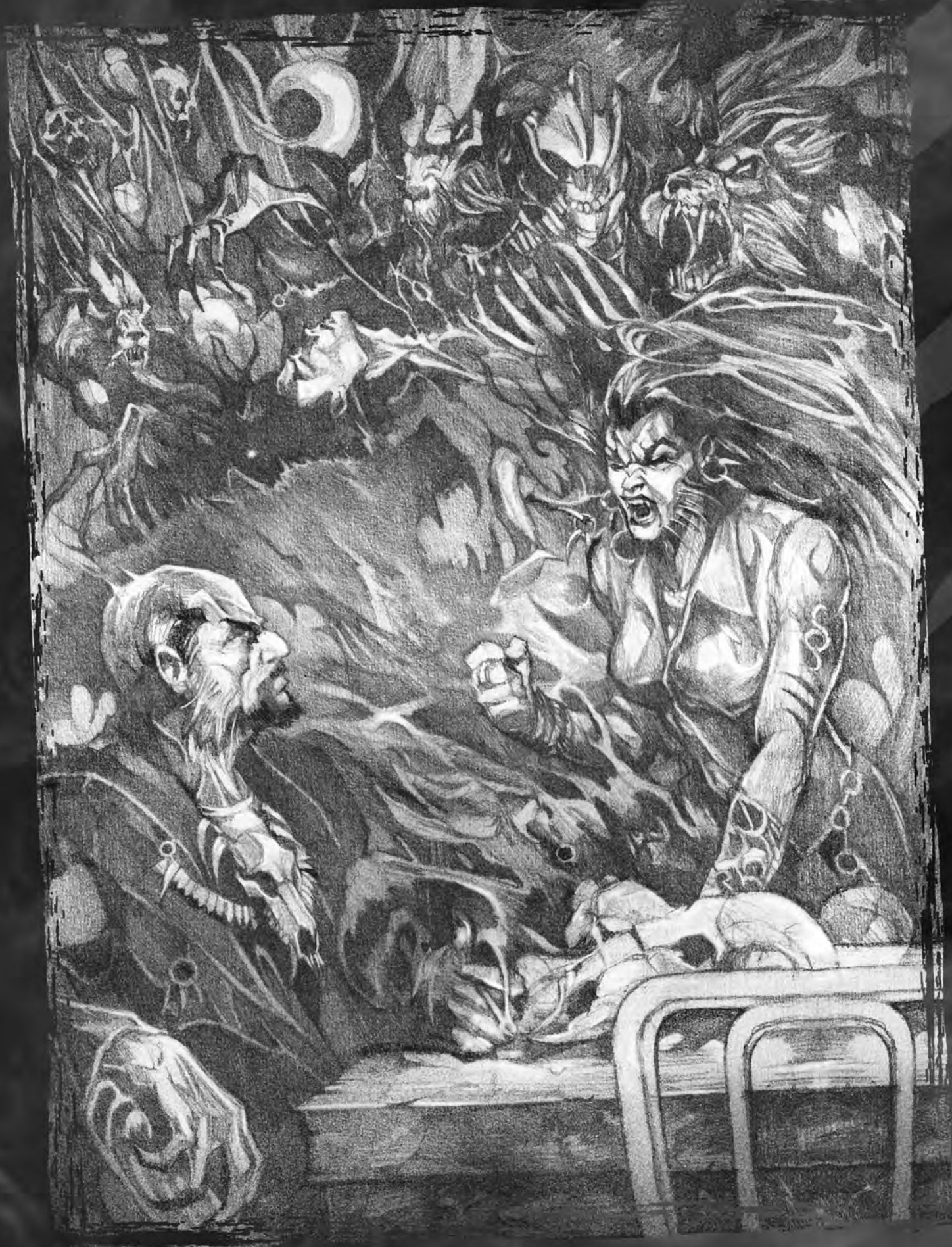
Initiative:

Defense:

Speed:

Veloz smiles a lot, laughs plenty and often rests his hands on his rather prodigious potbelly. But this jovial appearance belies a protective darkness within the man. He loves his family more than anything. If that means lying to his tenants, so be it. If that means making bargains with the rat people living in his walls, then that is how it must be. They keep his family safe and relatively free of disease (a few head colds and rashes are better than what many of the occupants find themselves with), and they also bring him various trinkets from — well, he doesn't like to think where the credit cards and baubles come from. He only knows that he and his family like them, and he will keep this going for as long as he can allow. No matter who gets hurt.





CHAPTER III

HIDDEN LODGES

"Why haven't I heard of them before? What they spoke was sacrifice, wasn't it? Why did you just let them walk out of here, Frank?"

If there had been a third observer, that observer would have seen the older man's eyes harden even through the haze of cigarette smoke as he gazed at the young, brown-haired girl yelling at him across the old Formica table. The cabin was old, though Frank was older. He and his brother built it with a copy of the Foxfire books back in the '70s. Frank had been an Uratha for 10 years then, and his hair was graying at the temples even then. Now Jacob had been dead five years now. He had built this table and these chairs — all from wood here on the property.

Looking at what 30-odd years had wrought to this cabin made him feel old, but hearing the yammering of this — this wet-eared babe, this cub made the age hang even harder around his neck. He realized he had tuned her out. Better listen again.

"...she doesn't believe in Father Wolf? How can that be? Not even the Puhr are that dumb."

He stubbed out the cigarette in the ashtray in veiled nonchalance. He waited two beats, to be sure she was done, then spoke. "If you're finished showin' off how young and ignorant you are, why don't you shut up and sit down and learn something."

The command dipped an octave lower than the rest of the sentence. Once out in the air, it seemed to hook the young woman's britches and heel them into the worn pine chair far sooner than she would have allowed. Red-faced, trying to beat back the embarrassing heat in her cheeks, she sat and listened.

Frank's face didn't change, but he smelled her indignation, much thicker to him than the smoke, and allowed an inward smile. "The Tale of Pangaea is the most commonest, and I think the truest legend of the People, but it ain't the only one, Dr. Carhardt."

She hated when he called her that.

"And before you ask, because you young ones always do, no spirit is going to ever tell you THE TRUTH. Well, if they claimed to, I hope you ain't that big a fool. Did you think you had escaped 'faith' along with the rest of your human baggage? You didn't."

Frank stood up and stretched the kinks out of his spine and went over to the screen door. "You'd be wise to learn their ways. Well — as much as they will tell you, when they come back to perform the Augury Rite for us. There's some wisdom there. In the end, you will have to look to your blood, your gut and your faith to sort out the rest."



LODGE OF ARKADIA

WRIT IN BLOOD

They would have you believe that we are poor, misunderstood wolves, that we did nothing wrong, that we are birthed of a goddess and a great spirit. They are wrong. We are the accursed descendants of humans, from a time when legends walked more openly on the earth, but born of sin. It is time to face that.

Our ancestors lived in the First Land, which they named Arkadia, in harmony with the land and our wolf-brothers. Our gods gave us the power to turn into wolves so that we might learn from them and them from us. In our ancestor's hubris, he thought to use this power to make himself a god. In his desire to rise above the gods, he sank to the depths of human depravity. He and his sons became murderers and cannibals, until our god threw us down and cursed our bloodline. For centuries, our folk wandered the globe, and we were the foundation of werewolves of common folklore. To bring out the beast in us needed only the bite of a wolf and the light of the moon.

Some say the wolves were the ones who took pity on us. Their cries to Diana, Lady Moon, swayed her heart. She came to us and challenged us to find the Firstborn. She told us that we had proved ourselves to be the worst that human and beast could offer. If we could complete this task, she would give our lives meaning, order and balance again. We succeeded, and she gave us the Oath, but, more than that, she gave us purpose, we were to restore Harmony between our world and hers, the land of the spirits. She took part of our madness away and replaced it with a bit of her own.

Arkadians are very interested in the wolf side of their heritage, and, therefore, are far more likely to recruit from the same Uratha who are drawn to the Hunters in Darkness. Balance, duality and honesty are the Arkadians' key

virtues. Admitting their human failings and striving to subdue these urges is important for the Arkadians.

They also feel it is their right to correct the errors of others, especially the "sin" of hubris — overweening, overreaching pride. Proudful Uratha often draw the Arkadians' ire as they see this weakness as the foundation of Lykaon's madness. Interestingly, many of Arkadians are guilty of this trait as well.

Arkadians are one of the most introspective and yet gregarious groups of Uratha. The Arkadians' focus on less aggressive topics has led some more martially-oriented tribes and lodges to think that the Arkadians are a bit soft, for werewolves, that is. They are not.

Far from it. The Arkadians set about learning what made a wolf capable of taking down a moose or bear. They focus on pack tactics and prefer the maneuverability and speed of their four-footed forms. Arkadians tend to fight defensively, using their

skill to wear down an opponent, using most of their pack in Urhan form to worry a foe while taking turns in Urhan, Urshul or Gauru to deliver devastating attacks. A pack of seasoned Arkadians can well be an equal match for any group of Predator Kings.

Ideally, Arkadians wish to live in areas where they have access to both facets of their being, human and wolf, and this initially drove them all over the globe. This is no longer possible for all of them, and they must make compromises. Still, they enjoy pilgrimages into the wild, and pilgrimages are still an important part of their initiations.

The creation myth of this lodge can be found on p. 21.

PATRON SPIRIT

Their patron is Ursar, the last of the Wolf-Kings, a wolf-spirit that claims to have once ruled over the wolf packs of fair Arkadia. Ursar appears to be a very healthy,



gray wolf with deep emerald eyes. Around his neck is a garland of olive leaves. His bearing is regal, and his command of the First Tongue is flawless.

Unlike the patron spirits of many other lodges, Ursar frequently delivers his messages in person, though he sometimes sends lesser wolf-spirits. He expects his lodge members to maintain high Harmony and is not above disciplining those who slip from his grace, often humiliating them in front of packmates.

JOINING THE LODGE

Only those who can accept the myths and traditions of the Arkadians are offered membership in the lodge.

Initiation in the lodge seems deceptively simple. You must prove yourself to be both human and wolf, in the same way that the legendary forefathers of the Arkadians had to prove themselves. The test of the wolf involves a month-long survival test in wolf form. While the applicant is allowed to shapeshift periodically to retain Harmony, he may not use his other forms to hunt, defend himself (except versus other supernaturals) or find shelter. From time to time, the applicant's proctor will visit the applicant both to check on his progress and to quiz his understanding of the natural world.

The test of the human is a test of wisdom and knowledge. When the applicant commits to understanding some new field of study, he must prove himself to have a solid working knowledge of that field — normally chosen from some field of Academics that the proctor has mastered.

Prerequisites: Honor •, Purity •, Academics • (plus one Academic Specialty), Animal Ken ••, Survival ••

Benefits: The Lodge of Arkadia focuses their training on the Skills of Academics, Animal Ken, Empathy and Survival. The experience costs of raising or purchasing these Skills become new dots x2 instead of new dots x3.

All lodge members are expected to train to hunt and fight in wolf form. While engaged in melee combat in Urhan form, Arkadians gain +1 to their bite attacks and Defense.





LODGE OF ARKADIA STORY HOOKS

• **Search for the Mentor:** In the pack's constant struggle against the Pure packmembers hear rumors of a group of Uratha famed for their fighting skill. The pack's hunt leads them on an epic journey to learn from these potential masters. A courageous and clever Storyteller might look into the trials of Odysseus or the tasks of Herakles for inspiration for some of these adventures. When the pack finds a small pack of Arkadians living deep in the wilderness, the characters may get the teaching they've sought after if the Arkadians are impressed with their skill. But are the characters willing to accept the Arkadians' philosophy as well?

• **The Proud Shall Be Brought Low:** Arkadians are very conscious of their heritage and beliefs, so much so that they have been known to attempt to shame Uratha especially more traditional Forsaken who have lost perspective, according to the Arkadian ethos. Imagine the impact on a setting with several well-developed packs if a member of the Arkadians sets himself the task of teaching one of the more arrogant members of the packs the price of hubris. And, is he correct in his judgments?

• **The Kylix of Lykaon:** The Kylix of Lykaon is a fetish of legendary power and meaning to the Arkadians. They claim it was the dish used by their doomed king to serve the human stew to their god, Son of the She-Wolf. The fetish is believed to have two great powers. Should a mundane human eat from it the human will go through the Change on the very next night. Uratha who eat from the dish are infused with great strength and force for a night and a day, but are assaulted with visions of Lykaon's crimes. The visions are so realistic that they have driven many a werewolf mad (and certainly call for a degeneration check). The Kylix was lost by the Arkadians several centuries ago, but now a group of supernaturals in the players' city has ended up with something that seems very similar. Will the pack attempt to claim this fetish for their own, or will they need it in order to wrangle a favor from the heretic lodge?

Social Attributes: Presence 3, Manipulation 2 (1/2/0/2), Composure 3

Mental Skills: Academics (History) 2, Crafts (Woodcarving) 2, Investigation 1, Occult 1, Science 1

Physical Skills: Athletics 4, Brawl (Bite) 4, Stealth (Camouflage) 2, Survival 3

Social Skills: Animal Ken 3, Empathy (Motives) 1, Expression 1, Intimidation 1, Socialize 1

Merits: Brawling Dodge, Fleet of Foot 2, Resources 2, Totem 2

Primal Urge: 1

Willpower: 6

Harmony:

Essence Max/Per Turn: 10/1

Virtue: Temperance

Vice: Pride

Health: 7 (9/11/10/7)

Initiative: 6 (6/7/8/8)

Defense: 2 (2/2/2/3) (with Urhan bonus from lodge)

Speed: 13 (14/17/20/18)

Renown: Purity 2, Honor 1

Gifts: (1) Speak With Beasts, Call Water; (2) Manipulate Earth

Rituals: 2; **Rites:** (1) Rite of Dedication, Banish Spirit; (2) Cleansed Blood

Nick is an adrenaline junkie. Extreme sports were his bread-and-butter before the Change. Controlling this desire takes all of his will, and he does give into it at times. In his life as an Uratha, giving in takes the form of pushing the boundaries of the Oath of the Moon, primarily the tenet of secrecy. He is prone to sleeping and traveling a little too often in Urhan form. (If you are using Flaws, giving him this as an addiction would be appropriate.) Just as most Arkadians, he often fights in Urhan form.

Nick has an impressively fit physique, even for an Uratha. He has blond hair and blue eyes, and normally a smirk on his face, as if he has just gotten away with something. He was once quite the ladies' man, but his new responsibilities as one of the People has tempered this somewhat.

He spent part his initiation in Yellowstone and then traveled with his sponsor to the Italian Alps, where Nick began his martial training. Since that time, he has been wandering, looking for a territory and a pack.

His problem is that he does not handle situations well in which he is not the focal point. Like so many of the gods and heroes of Greek myth, his sin is hubris — overweening pride. This trait does not come out at first, and he has often impressed packmembers initially, only to later be asked to leave — several times these confrontations have been bloody. He is not irredeemable, but he has yet to meet the pack or werewolf who can set him straight. If he can beat this flaw, he will be a truly great Uratha.

NICK ANDREAS

Auspice: Elodoth

Tribe: Hunters in Darkness

Mental Attributes: Intelligence 2, Wits 2, Resolve 3

Physical Attributes: Strength 3 (4/6/5/4), Dexterity 3 (3/4/5/5), Stamina 2 (3/4/4/3)

LODGE OF MANIA

WOLF OF THE DARK WOOD

There was a time of madness when the worlds were rent in two and Uratha fell upon Uratha. Many sought the succor of powerful patrons — the Pure and Forsaken sought the care of the First Ones. Others heard the call of the Maeljin, but there were other voices calling as well. He who sings to us is the Beast, the antithesis of that which is reasoned, civil and orderly. All those who forget his power, or think themselves above his passions, are doomed to be devoured.

The first of our cult was a woman named Acacia who was following the maenads, seeking to be consumed by the divine madness of the wine-god Dionysus. There, under the shadows of the cedars, she heard the howl of our patron, and the Change came upon her. He called her into the wilds, dark and deep, to teach her not to fear that loss of reason, that surge of lust and power that we must all submit to or else grow truly mad. In his unreasoning grasp, she found fulfillment and inspiration. He unsheathed her like a warrior draws a blade, and she ran red.

When Acacia finally strode out of the wood, she bore three gifts. One was the urugu, a wolf skull of silvered fangs, to be used in the cult's initiation. The second was the fetish Thyrsus, the emblem of our patron. The third was the ritual of the maenads — our sacred blood rite that allows us to augur the future.

It is said that with the Thyrsus, Acacia had the power to control those in the blessed states of Lunacy and Kuruth. Few since our lodge-mother's time have been worthy enough to learn the art of the Thyrsus' creation, yet our leaders still bear staves in its likeness to honor her purity.

Even their patron's name is nonsensical. Assinnu-Ur simply means "The wolf who leads our cult" in the First Tongue. Mystery and irrationality seem to be the foundation of the cult. The Lodge of Mania certainly seems to share many similarities with the cults of mad prophets

and wild women that fill the history and mythology of the Greeks and Romans.

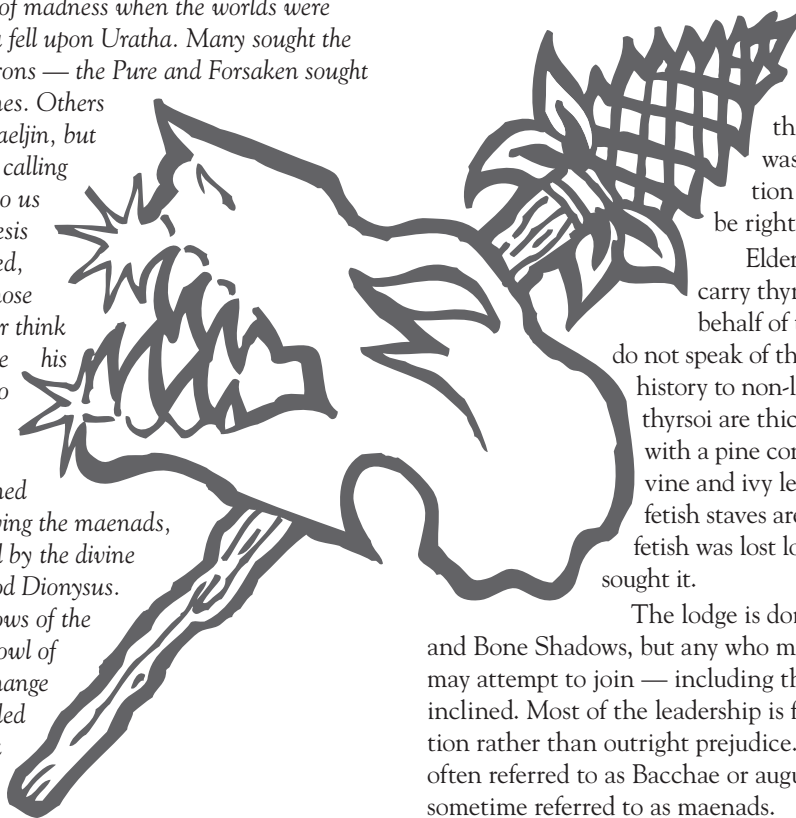
Lodge members may have taken on some of their trappings, but they claim that their lord was probably the inspiration of the myth. They may be right.

Elder lodge members often carry thyrsos when speaking on behalf of the lodge, though they do not speak of the fetish's significance or history to non-lodge members. These thyrsos are thick rods or staves topped with a pine cone and wrapped with vine and ivy leaves. Once used, these fetish staves are burned. The original fetish was lost long ago, and all have sought it.

The lodge is dominated by Cahalith and Bone Shadows, but any who meet the requirements may attempt to join — including the Pure, were they so inclined. Most of the leadership is female, though by tradition rather than outright prejudice. Lodge members are often referred to as Bacchae or augurs, while females are sometime referred to as maenads.

This lodge has a troubled reputation as undeniably, and unrepentantly, insane. And the reputation is largely true. For some, this madness manifests as an odd behavioral quirk, but other members are more heavily affected. While all lodges are, by nature, are secretive, the attitudes of members of the Lodge of Mania cross fully into paranoia when in their ceremonies. Those who dare spy on the lodge's secret rites are hunted mercilessly. This, coupled with the lodge members' often bizarre behavior and paranoia, leads to rumors of cannibalism, Uratha mating and worse.

Despite the suspicion levied against this lodge, these augurs are able to use their burden of primal insanity for prophecy and insight into the natural world. Lodge members are blessed with a feral charisma, and though few are alphas of individual packs, dismissing their counsel or raising their ire is unwise. If a pack refuses to act on lodge members' auguries, the pack will find it very difficult to gain the aid of the Lodge of Mania in the future. Acacia herself is said to sometimes awaken from her slumber to give a tribe a warning — the lodge claims she foretold the





coming of the idigam and spread her warning to 13 packs around the globe. Seven listened and survived.

The rituals and meetings of the Lodge of Mania are dark and degenerate affairs, where the tenets of the Oath are strained, and sometimes broken. These rituals are said to often involve orgiastic rites with willing (at least at first) human and wolf-blooded participants. At the climax of the ceremony, the human participants are exposed to the full force of Lunacy to keep the members of the lodge protected. Strangely, those humans whose sanity fully cracks under the strain are closely monitored by lodge members, protected as holy vessels, called sibyls, for their patron. The sibyls' ramblings and motions are regarded as portentous, and many augurs record the ramblings in texts for further study.

What many fail to understand about this cult is that they do not desire madness as an end. Rather, they see it as a tool and a necessary part of the People's legacy and power. Most Bacchae find other Forsaken hypocritical about the insanity that is the Uratha's birthright — particularly given their openness to the blessings of mad Mother Luna.

Some believe that the Bacchae may be an offshoot of the Lodge of Prophecy, though members of that lodge deny the claim. Some claim that the lodge was started by a Bone Shadow Cahalith, and her spirit guides them still. Others who suspect the lodge's ruthless secrecy wonder if the lodge is but a training ground for the Bale Hounds, or perhaps the Fire-Touched. Many believe that both are welcome within the Wolf of the Dark Wood's mad brood.

PATRON SPIRIT

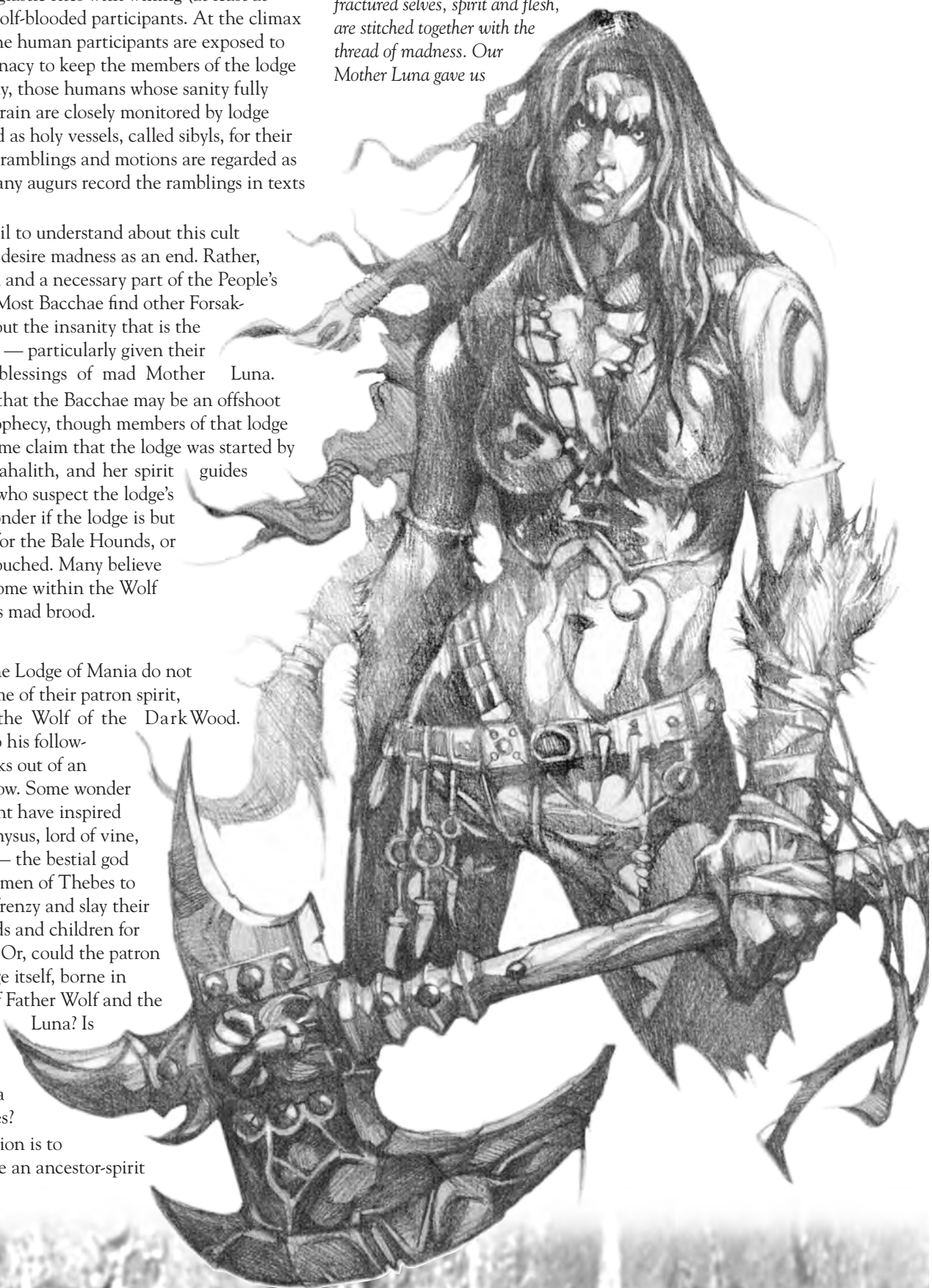
Members of the Lodge of Mania do not reveal the true name of their patron spirit, referring to it as the Wolf of the Dark Wood. When he speaks to his followers, he always speaks out of an impenetrable shadow. Some wonder if their patron might have inspired the legends of Dionysus, lord of vine, fecundity and art — the bestial god who caused the women of Thebes to rise up in ecstatic frenzy and slay their neighbors, husbands and children for not honoring him. Or, could the patron be the spirit of Rage itself, borne in the death throes of Father Wolf and the curse of Mother Luna? Is the patron something darker that predates them all, a mystery of mysteries?

One other option is to have their leader be an ancestor-spirit

embodying the legend of Lykaon (found on p. 21). Lykaon was driven mad by the curse; maybe this twisted apotheosis was his final fate.

JOINING THE LODGE

To be truly sane, we must embrace our insanity. Our fractured selves, spirit and flesh, are stitched together with the thread of madness. Our Mother Luna gave us



the curse of madness, and our stepfather, the Wolf of the Dark Wood, taught us to revel in it. Hear his song in the night, follow where others fear to tread. Are we not madness incarnate? Does not our truest shape, our ideal form, both Gift us with inchoate power and inspire blessed insanity in our prey?

Why fear this holy Gift?

Our madness gives us insight where others fear to look. We stare into the rent guts of our broken world, and we see truth. We are the waking augurs, Bacchae, inspired madmen, maenad, crazed animal all in one. Bow before the mad moon goddess. Hear the sanity-rending song of our lord echo in the twilight wood. Let the scales fall from your eyes.

Those who wish to join the lodge are screened by the Bacchae first. Applicants must prove that they have endured (or still endure) some madness. The applicant's honesty in what might be a troubling revelation to others is the key to her acceptance. An applicant must speak openly of the madness' effects, positive and negative, in her life.

The initiations of the Lodge of Mania are terrifying ceremonies in which the applicant goes through a ritual death and rebirth, via a self-inflicted journey through *Kuruth*. The neophyte is bound, hooded and gagged and taken to a ceremonial space used and guarded by lodge members — normally a forest clearing or some underground location. There she must restate her intentions to join the lodge.

After this, the ritemaster of the lodge presents the applicant with the urugu, a wolf's skull whose teeth have been clad in silver. The applicant places her left hand in mouth of the wolf skull and, with her right, clamps it down on her own hand — as her howls fill the night. Eventually, the pain drives the applicant into Death Rage.

At this moment, the Wolf of the Dark Wood judges the applicant. If this powerful spirit accepts her, it reaches out to the Uratha and causes the applicant to flee as if the Uratha were grievously wounded (see **Werewolf: The Forsaken**, p. 174). The other lodge members shapeshift and begin chasing the applicant. The longer the hunt lasts, the more the lodge's patron is said to favor his new child.

If the patron does not accept the applicant, the Uratha behaves normally — a reaction that provokes an attack by the lodge members. Failed applicants who survive the ordeal are not allowed to retry, and are warned, on pain of final retribution, not to speak of the lodge.

Prerequisites: Cunning ••, Glory ••. The applicant must have gained a derangement due to Harmony loss at some point.

Benefits: The Wolf of the Dark Wood gifts his followers with special insight into the universal id, the primordial urges that fill Uratha hearts and loins. This feral charisma gives them +1 to all Animal Ken and Persuasion rolls. Their ceremonies also give Bacchae special insight into the madness of *Kuruth*. By spending a standard action to try talking a packmate in Death Rage down, the werewolf can grant a +2 bonus to the target's Resolve + Composure roll to regain control.

Fetish-crafters within the lodge have become adept at the creation of several fetishes that deal with both fortune and madness. Their most potent benefit is that all lodge members are taught the Rite of the Maenads as soon as they are capable. The lodge member must still possess the requisite three dots in Rituals, though the experience cost is waved.

Drawback: Any Harmony check made to resist acquiring a derangement is made at a -1 penalty.

RITE OF THE MAENADS (•••)

This ritual allows the Uratha to make a prophecy regarding the likely result of a specific course of action. Specific actions that aren't likely to be life-threatening or have long-lasting effects to the chronicle are much easier to augur than events of major importance that could occur far in the future. "Will I prevail in my combat with the magath tomorrow?" is an example of a good augury. "Will I live past 50?" is not.

Performing the Rite: This rite must be performed in a natural setting during the night of the ritualist's auspice moon. A sacrificial animal is required, normally a bird or four-footed mammal. The ritualist poses the question in Dalu form, then shifts to Gauru, eviscerates the sacrifice with its claws, then shifts back to Dalu to read the results in the creature's entrails, the patterns of blood, or even its flavor.

The Lodge of Mania is rumored to practice human sacrifice in accordance with this rite, though normally only during lodge meetings and for especially important auguries.

Dice Pool: Harmony

Action: Extended. (Twenty successes needed, +10 successes for an occurrence far in the future, +10 for major questions, such as of life or death, +10 for general rather than specific questions; each roll represents five minutes.)

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: Dishonoring the Rite of the Maenads threatens the ritualist and all around him. The ritemaster must make a Resolve + Composure roll or immediately fall into Death Rage. Furthermore, the werewolf may not perform the rite until the next night. In addition, the ritemaster may never perform the rite for the same question again.

Failure: No successes are added.

Success: Successes are added. Once the total is accumulated, the rite is successful and the ritualist will speak with an unearthly voice, repeating the question and telling the questioner that the likely result will be "good," "bad" or "both good and bad."

Exceptional Success: Several successes are gained in a short time. If five more successes are gained with the final throw than are needed, an exceptional success is achieved. The augury moves beyond that which is predictive, or likely to that which seems ordained. For the time of the events for which the augury is made, any action that conforms to the "predestined" result gains a +1 modifier. Actions that go against the result gain a -1 modifier.



These modifiers can affect more than one scene until the augury is proven true or false.

Suggested Modifiers

Modifier	Situation
+1	Ritualist is a Cahalith
+1	Ritualist is a Bone Shadow
+1	Ritualist is female
+1	If the question has to do with fertility, such as the sex of a child
+2	If the sacrifice is human

THE GIFT OF MADNESS (TALEN)

This small bone tube is filled with a powder made from blood gathered at an augury and dried upon flower petals. When blown in the face of a victim, she must make a Resolve + Primal Urge roll versus the spirit's Power (5–7 dice) or be affected by a Phobia (wolves) for the scene (see the **World of Darkness Rulebook**, p. 97).

A greater Gaffling fear-spirit is used for the talen's creation.

Durability 1, Size 0, Structure 1

Action: Contested; resistance is reflexive.

LODGE OF MANIA STORY HOOKS

- **Out of the Frying Pan:** While pursuing some other prey outside the bounds of the pack's territory the players' characters stumble upon one of the secret meetings of the Lodge of Mania. Perhaps the characters see some of the disturbing rituals, or recognize some of members. What if the characters hear a prophecy concerning a rival pack's impending attack upon them? The packmembers get away, but what will they do with the information? What can they do with out tipping their hand?

- **Secret Weapon:** A lodge member approaches the pack out of the blue rather rudely warning them against some action he ought not to know about in the first place. If the pack rejects or spurns the advice of the augur, he moves on to a local pack, perhaps a rival of the character's. Suddenly, this rival pack's fortunes change. They uncover a new locus near the character's territory, find a newly changed Uratha right under the characters' noses, etc. What's to be done about the augur? And is he truly the asset he claims to be?

- **Joining the Pure:** Should one of the characters join the Lodge of Mania, she discovers that some of the rumors are true. Namely, she finds that a member of a local Pure Tribe pack is now her lodgemate. What action might she take if drawn into confrontation with the Pure? If the character is Cahalith, she might have a prophetic dream about the lodgemate. Normally such dreams are always shared among the lodge, who better to help one interpret it?

Would such be helping the Pure at her pack's expense? And how long will it be before the Pure takes matters into his own claws?

MERCY ADDAMS

Auspice: Cahalith

Tribe: Ghost Wolf

Mental Attributes: Intelligence 2, Wits 4, Resolve 3

Physical Attributes: Strength 2 (3/5/4/2), Dexterity 4 (4/5/6/6), Stamina 3 (4/5/5/4)

Social Attributes: Presence 4, Manipulation 4, Composure 4

Mental Skills: Academics 1, Crafts (Woodcarving) 2, Investigation 2, Medicine 1, Occult 3

Physical Skills: Athletics (Running) 3, Brawl 4, Drive 2, Stealth (Woods) 3, Survival 4, Weaponry 2

Social Skills: Animal Ken 4, Empathy 3, Intimidation 2, Persuasion (Seduction) 3, Streetwise 2, Subterfuge 2

Merits: Danger Sense 2, Direction Sense 1, Striking Looks 2

Primal Urge: 4

Willpower:

Harmony: 5

Essence Max/Per Turn: 13/2

Virtue: Fortitude

Vice: Lust

Health: 8 (10/12/11/8)

Initiative: (9/10/11/11)

Defense: 4 (4/4/4/4)

Speed: 11 (11/15/18/16)

Renown: Cunning 2, Wisdom 2, Glory 4

Gifts: (1) Loose Tongue, Partial Change, Wolf-Blood's Lure; (2) Anybeast, Father Wolf's Speed; (3) Primal Howl, Silver Jaws; (4) Skin-Stealing

Rituals: 3; **Rites:** (1) Banish Human, Dedication, Spirit Brand; (2) Cleansed Blood; (3) Bind Human, Rite of the Maenads Healing

Mercy was inculcated into the Lodge of Mania five years ago after the destruction of her mother's pack. She wandered the world alone for several years until found by a Bacchae in Crete. There, she survived her initiation rite and has dedicated herself to exposing others to the blessings of the Dark Wood.

Mercy is a maenad, heart and soul. She enjoys moving into an area and shaking up the local packs by using her charms to scout for possible converts. Like many in her lodge, she seeks out those who have suffered as a result of Harmony loss — showing them great sympathy and offering to help them come to terms with any derangements. Those who show promise are offered places in the lodge.

Mercy is a striking woman. She has a small, athletic frame and a shock of lustrous auburn curls. Though in her early 30s, she still exudes an almost girlish charm — combining the air of the “crazy art chick” with a touch of the attraction of the girl next door.

lodge of fevered light

FEVERED ENLIGHTENMENT

Not long after the betrayal of Father Wolf by the kinslayers, our forefathers came upon a land blessed by the Spirit King called Fevered Dream. There, spirits of disease could claim the sick and old, so only the strong survived.

Our people needed sustenance in our hunt for the Forsaken, so we did as we normally did, we took it from them. When they resisted, we killed them.

Fevered Dream's hithimu and his duguthim acolytes fought us, but we were stronger and were ever victorious. Though many of us were burning with sickness, the power of Rabid Wolf was strong in us, and, after many struggles, all but the temple itself lay under our fangs.

It was then that the Spirit King, mounted in fevered glory in the brow of the high priest, swung open the doors and spoke to us of a pact between his church and the mightiest of Rabid Wolf's cubs. In our zeal to avenge the murder of our father, we have often driven away the herd, not realizing that they, too, could be turned to struggle, they could serve the greater purpose. He offered his people to us for this purpose, we offered him our devotion. He and his worshippers brought us the wealth of humans and gave us camouflage for our efforts. We culled Fevered Dream's herds, provided he and his brood with mounts and together we hunted the evil ones, the Forsaken.

This Pure lodge is served by a larger organization, a church that appears to be doing good works among the worst of society's dregs. The church offers the lodge cover and materiel for its hunts against the Forsaken: food, money, facilities and a screen for recruitment both from the underclass of society and the wolf-blooded. Over the decades, families of wolf-blooded have been brought into the cult, though this varies from region to region. The religious ties help keep the wolf-blooded loyal, even if they do not know whom they serve.

The human façade of the organization is called the Church of the Lighthouse. This religious group's purpose is to fuel the group's efforts — both through money and Essence. Each church is relatively small, located in or near the territory of the lodge members. The church runs

modest missionary and outreach programs to keep it in the good graces and yet off the radar of local officials.

At the most basic level, the church appears a bit strange to many mainstream churches, but its desire to minister to the worst of society's dregs

and exist in the most dangerous

inner-city neighborhoods (or operate in the most rural and economically depressed areas) shields the church from much scrutiny.

The message of the church has several themes:

- Distrust of modern society, science and medicine
- Promotion of honesty, personal power and physical purity
- Importance of family

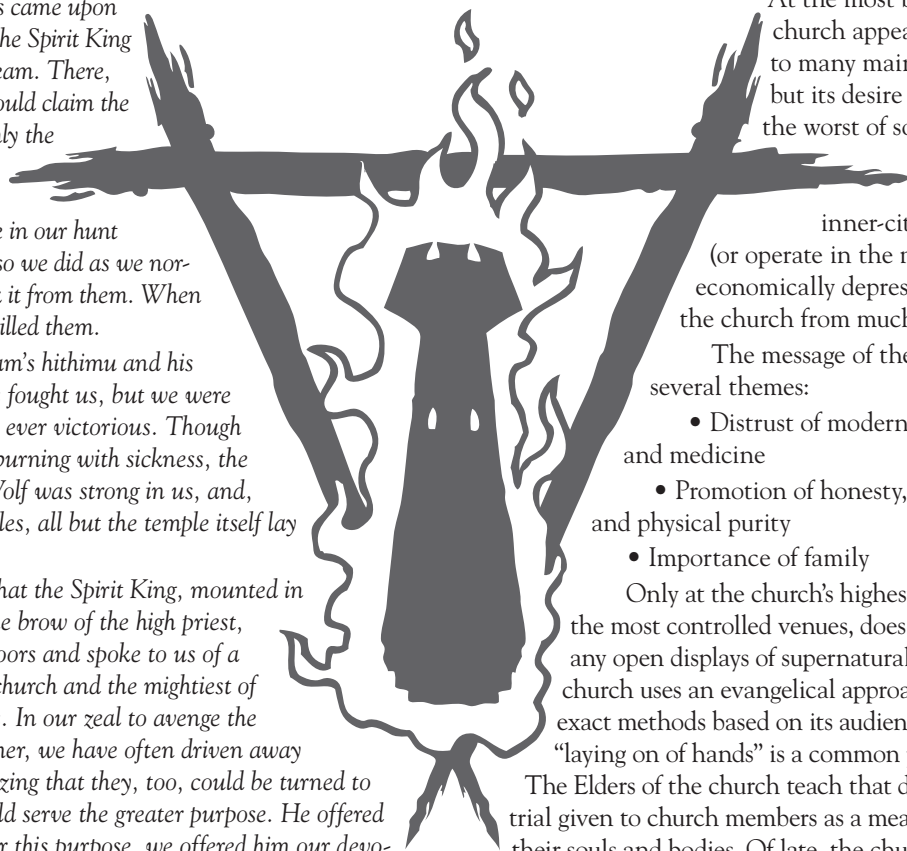
Only at the church's highest levels, and in the most controlled venues, does the church allow any open displays of supernatural powers. The church uses an evangelical approach but varies its exact methods based on its audience, though the "laying on of hands" is a common part of worship.

The Elders of the church teach that disease is a holy trial given to church members as a means of purifying their souls and bodies. Of late, the church has adopted the mantle of alternative medicine in urban areas, while in the rural South, faith healing is more common.

The church uses both Christian and pagan myth to draw in its faithful, having survived for centuries by adapting its teachings to the leanings of the times. In rural areas, the church often adopts a more fundamentalist tone, while in more metropolitan areas this are replaced with more universal, New-Agey themes. Many of the most desperate members do gain from membership, at least at first. Bad habits are kicked, jobs are found and lives improves. Then the church starts calling in its dues, both in financial support and Essence created at worship services. Disease is spread from time to time to cull the weak, feed the spirits that aids the church or kill the nosy.

Each church is run in a cell-like organization with each congregation only knowing of one or two others.

The church has several levels of membership, all with familial titles. In this way, the Church of the Lighthouse



reinforces the themes of the church, especially amongst the once-dispossessed members of the congregation. As members become more inculcated in the workings of the cult, they begin to think of the church as their family.

Siblings: Persons who have taken up the pursuit of the flame of purity, those who have gone through the initiation into the church — normally referred to as Brother or Sister.

Parents: These members are human, and often Spirit-Urged. Some grow to become Elders, but many never do — “fathers” and “mothers” are more useful as fronts for the church’s true activities.

Elders: Trusted persons who act as ministers to the humans. Some are Ridden, either Urged or Claimed. If the resultant *duguthim* become too independent, lodge members step in and cull them.

Cousins: None of the fully human members of the church realize that the “Cousins” are the lodge behind the scenes — all are Fire-Touched Uratha. They see the Elders and Parents as the leaders of the church, and the lodge members play it that way. Still, Cousins sometimes seem short-tempered or dismissive; this behavior is explained to the human members of the church by the fact that the Cousins bear a special burden of responsibility for the security of the church, especially its Elders. Cousins also minister their own version of “tough love” to those who are having problems beating their addictions or meeting their tithe.

Council: The local Cousins and Elders who run the church. Of course, Council meetings happen when the alpha Cousin actually gives his or her orders to the rest.

JOINING THE LODGE

In areas where the Church of the Lighthouse holds sway, all children born into the Pure bloodlines are automatically inculcated into the church, in part to set up their indoctrination into the lodge should they later Change. The Cousins of the church always keep a sharp eye and nose out for persons either in their flock or in the same area who are near the Change. If possible, the Cousins get these people into the church to lay the foundation for their work. Again, the church targets the unemployed and homeless, offering the church’s considerable aid to help them out, in return for their loyalty.

Once in the church, these “special” members are told that they have been chosen by some ancient warrior angel to defend the Lighthouse from those who would snuff out its flame. Lodge Elders use flame- and disease-spirits to induce the Change, so little is left to chance — though a few Uratha escape their initiation. Some of these escapees go on to join the Forsaken or wander as Ghost Wolves, forever marked by Fevered Dream’s Gifts as one of his own.

Those who do not escape are broken by disease, to the point of death and utter surrender. Only then do the lodge members step in and save the Uratha. Some are undeniably lost. Such is the church’s way. Only those strong in the faith and committed to the goals of their patron and totem survive.

Prerequisites: Cunning •, Glory •

Benefits: Members of this lodge gain access to the Fever Gift list.

FEVER GIFTS

These Gifts are the mainstay of the Fire-Touched in this lodge. Hosts of disease-, pain- and parasite-spirits teach these Gifts. These Fire-Touched would like to consider these Gifts as their personal property, but these dark spirits have made no bargain in exclusivity and may well teach to them to others, especially Bale Hounds.

Symptom (•)

Diseases most often start with tell-tale signs, such as a runny nose, sweaty brows, sneezing, blurry vision, minor aches and pains and so on. This Gift creates one of these symptoms in the target. Medical examination doesn’t reveal a reason for the symptom or any other associated sign of infection — no elevated white blood cell count, for example.

Cost: None

Dice Pool: Cunning + Manipulation + Larceny versus Stamina + Primal Urge

Action: Contested; resistance is reflexive.

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The Gift fails completely. The werewolf cannot use any Fever Gifts on the target for the rest of the scene.

Failure: Successes rolled tie, or the subject gets the most. The target displays no symptoms of disease.

Success: The most successes are rolled for the Gift user. This Gift affects a single target. The target exhibits one or two outward symptoms of some disease — the effects may be discomforting, embarrassing or both, but are never life-threatening. The victim suffers a –1 to all die rolls of one specific category of the user’s choice: Physical, Social or Mental. The symptoms last for a number of hours equal to the successes rolled.

Exceptional Success: As success, but three to five symptoms can be inflicted at once. Also, the symptoms are so severe that the target suffers a –2 due to the discomfort.

TOUCH OF FEVER (••)

This Gift wills a potent fever into the hands of the Uratha. Anyone touched while the Gift is active must immediately make rolls to throw off the disease. The People’s regenerative capabilities make them immune to these effects, so the Pure use this Gift most often either as a warning by infecting those humans favored by a Forsaken pack, or as a means of appeasing disease-spirits for their favors.

Cost: 1 Essence

Dice Pool: Wisdom + Survival + Resolve versus Stamina + Primal Urge

Action: Contested; resistance is reflexive.

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The disease-spirits recoil at the werewolf’s fumbling. Social rolls made toward those spirits

suffer a -2 penalty, as do Gift-activation rolls or rite-activation rolls made within 24 hours that involve such spirits.

Failure: Successes rolled tie, or the subject gets the most. The target displays no symptoms of disease.

Success: The victim contracts the disease. The pathogen is akin to a virulent case of the flu, though the disease does not spread beyond the person touched. After one hour, the infected person begins showing symptoms and suffers a -1 to all rolls until she recovers, or passes away (a rarity). Each day, including the first, the target suffers one level of bashing damage. This damage does not naturally heal as normal bashing damage until the disease is beaten (although it can be healed magically). The

target may make an additional Stamina + Resolve roll each day until she accumulates a number of successes equal to the Uratha's initial roll to throw off the disease.

The Uratha's supernatural physiology makes them immune to this Gift. Other creatures that are immune to diseases, such as vampires, are likewise immune.

Exceptional Success: The disease causes lethal damage.

FEVERED VISAGE (•••)

Looking upon an Uratha with the Fevered Visage Gift is pain. The eyes of the Uratha become bloodshot and waves of heat seem to pass in front of his brow. When he fixes his gaze on his victim, the effect is transmitted to the target until he or she either fights off the supernatural fever or endures its consequences.

Cost: 1 Willpower

Dice Pool: Presence + Intimidation + Purity – target's Stamina

Action: Contested; resistance is reflexive.

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The disease- and pain-spirits that empower this Gift attack the Uratha foolish enough to dishonor them. The Uratha suffers a -2 pain modifier to all rolls for the scene.

Failure: The Gift does not function.

Success: The victim feels a fever sweep over his brow and chill in the core of his body. The number of successes rolled acts as a negative modifier for all Skill and Combat rolls for a number of turns equal to the Primal Urge of the Uratha. The range of this attack is equal to the Gift user's Primal Urge x2 yards.

This can only affect a target that can meet the Uratha's gaze. Anything that can conceal the Uratha's face from the intended target may subtract from the Uratha's roll. (See "Concealment," *World of Darkness*, p. 162.) The blind and the unliving are immune to the Gift's effects.

FEVERED SENDING (••••)

This power only works on sleeping victims. It allows the Uratha to enter into and tamper with the dreams of others. Due to the nature of dreams, the rite is actually very quick, though the dream may seem to have lasted much longer to its victim.



The werewolf must be within one yard of the victim to attempt the Gift. During the time the Gift is active, the victim sweats, tosses and turns and lightly moans as if in the grips of a fever. The Uratha invoking the Gift can likewise take no other action.

Cost: 1 Essence and 1 Willpower

Dice Pool: Wits + Empathy + Honor versus Resolve + Primal Urge

Action: Instant and Contested; resistance is reflexive.
Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The victim instantly wakes up, but the Uratha may remain trapped in a dream world that isn't. He must make a Composure roll each round or be trapped in a Fuge state. One success is enough to free the Uratha, though he suffers a -1 to all Wits rolls for the remainder of the scene.

Failure: The Gift does not function.

Success: If the Uratha rolls more successes than his target, he appears within the victim's dreamscape, much like a spirit in Twilight. With no effort, the Uratha may observe the dream and then depart—very useful if the target is a Cahalith. By expending more Essence, the Uratha can affect the dream by subtly changing events or rewriting the experience. The Storyteller must plot out the general events and characters of the dream. The Uratha can change one of the aspects (character, action or setting) per point of Essence spent, up to a number equal to his successes rolled.

Exerting influence risks tipping the victim off to the Uratha's manipulation. The Uratha must make a Disguise roll to hide his involvement (see the **World of Darkness Rulebook**, p. 87). The Uratha's control over the dreamscape gives him +2 to this roll, though some Uratha don't care to hide their mastery of another's dream.

Exceptional Success: No additional effect.

TOXIC WRATH (.....)

The most virulent forms of fever- and poison-spirits manifest in the breath of the Uratha who exhales a web-like cloud of putrescence. Any who contact the cloud must attempt to fight off the toxins therein.

Cost: 1 Essence and 1 Willpower

Dice Pool: Strength + Intimidation + Glory versus Stamina + Primal Urge

Action: Contested; resistance is reflexive.

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The disease-spirits recoil at the werewolf's fumbling. No Gifts from this list may be used for 24 hours.

Failure: A tie results, or the subject gets the most. The target displays no symptoms of disease.

Success: The Uratha breathes out a miasmic cloud with a diameter in yards equal to 2x Primal Urge. Those engulfed in the cloud who do not fight off its effects watch in horror as buboes, necrotic cysts and pox marks erupt on their skin. Each success causes a point of lethal damage.

The cloud lasts for one turn.

Exceptional Success: The disease causes aggravated damage.

LODGE OF FEVERED LIGHT STORY HOOKS

• **The First One Is Free:** The Church of the Lighthouse moves into a blighted neighborhood near the pack's territory. Many troublesome spirits begin to disappear as the church finds new members and slowly cleans up the area. Perhaps some humans associated with the pack begin attending services....

• **Friends in Low Places:** In a chance encounter, two lodge members spot and attack one of the characters. The lodge members return with some evidence of the character's identity, and the packmember finds himself harassed, indirectly, by church members — perhaps pressure placed on a local police department who are cooperating with the church's successful neighborhood watch program. This would work well for a Forsaken pack that has previously tangled with a Pure pack successfully — the use of human pressure would probably really throw the players for a loop.

• **Sins of the Father:** One of the older Forsaken in the area is Marcus Cole's father, now living under a different name. He wants to rescue his son from the Fire-Touched and asks or calls in a favor with a packmember. Of course, Marcus does not want to go. Moreover, his brothers in the lodge are not likely to allow him to go without a fight. In fact, the lodge may use Marcus to lure them all into a killing ground.

COUSIN MARCUS

Tribe: Fire-Touched

Mental Attributes: Intelligence 2, Wits 2, Resolve 2

Physical Attributes: Strength 3 (4/6/5/3), Dexterity 3 (3/4/5/5), Stamina 3 (4/5/5/4)

Social Attributes: Presence 3, Manipulation 2, Composure 2

Mental Skills: Crafts (Construction) 1, Investigation 2, Occult 1

Physical Skills: Athletics Jumping 2, Brawl (Boxing) 4, Fire arms 2, Stealth 1, Survival 1, Weaponry (Chains) 1

Social Skills: Animal Ken 1, Intimidation 2, Streetwise 3, Subterfuge 1

Merits: Allies 2 (Church of the Lighthouse), Boxing 2, Language 1 (Spanish), Resources 2

Primal Urge:

Willpower: 10

Harmony: 6

Essence Max/Per Turn: 11/1

Virtue: Faith

Vice: Wrath

Health: 8 (10/12/11/8)

Initiative: 5 (5/6/7/7)

Defense: 2 (2/2/2/2)

Speed: 11 (12/15/18/16)

Renown: Cunning 2, Glory 1

Gifts: (1) Loose Tongue, Symptom; (2) Touch of Purity

Rituals: 0

Marcus Cole, or Cousin Marcus, as he is known to the faithful, was a drug-mule-turned-addict when Father Ross found him and took him to the Church of the Lighthouse. The church cleaned Marcus up and gave his life meaning. Still, he had trouble controlling his temper — just like his deadbeat dad. Once again, the church guided Marcus through another hell; this time it wasn't detox, but his Change.

They could have let him die, and maybe they should have, but Rabid Wolf marked Marcus as one of his own and the lodge took him in. Marcus had moments of doubt at first, as anyone would learning that the faith that had saved him was a sham.

Eventually though, he has grown to accept the faithful herd's role in the lodge's struggle — especially as the benefits of his new life are so many. He now has an even greater purpose and duty to unleash his righteous wrath on the enemies of Father Wolf and his lodge.

His alpha has also given him another gift, the name of the son-of-a-bitch father that made his life a living hell. No surprise, the old bastard's Forsaken. Marcus has something special in mind for him. The lodge is going to give Marcus the means to do just that.





LODGE OF THE CROSSROADS

MEETING AT THE CROSSROADS

It was New Year's Day, 1931, when our founder, Tom Steele, met the Devil at the crossroads.

Yeah, I see your smile.

Nah, it really was the Devil — that's what you got to understand. Who else are you supposed to meet at the damn crossroads at midnight?

Tom Steele was Changed under a crescent moon, raised under Red Wolf's watchful eye. Tom Steele knew there was no God, no Devil. He thought he knew it all, read it in books of brass given to him by his master and passed down from the Old World to the New. Mr. Steele knew the quaint tales of the Old Countries, the myths of humans. He knew that the gods of man never were, really. They certainly weren't here any more, right?

He knew this land's soul — spirits of metal, spirits of the telegraph, spirits of money and spirits of man's tools. But he forgot about humans' hearts — their dreams. Fear had crept back into the land when the spirits of Consumption, the spirits of More bit into the stock market and sucked it dry.

And much of Mr. Steele's world came crashing down, too; even the monsters got taken. Now he was on his own, a monster at the crossroads. His mastery of man's tools had only blinded him in the end. Now the spirits of Want and of Hunger prowled the land, the spirits of Dust ruled the air. Many machines were quiet, beaten.

Except that never stopped some mortals from believing, from needing, and that was enough. A little fishin' line of Essence stretched out across the gulf of the Shadow — a little bread crumb trail for somethin' to follow and come callin'.

In the New World, even the monsters like Mr. Steele thought the mystery was gone — until something kicked this shit out of their world.

Who did he see? Was it Saint Simon, Legba, Tezcatlipoca, Hermes? Perhaps it was Shiva dancing there in the crossroads, or Coyote? Maybe it was a black blues musician bargaining with the Devil.

But, for the first time in a long, long time, Mr. Steele smiled.

This lodge is steeped in the peculiarities of the American Shadow, the many diverse spiritual elements

that have fed on the melting pot culture of the United States. Lodge members celebrate the fact that American folklore is a stew of European, African and Asian traditions, with its own twists and revelations as to the true nature of the spirit world. American folklore also looks to nourish the spirits that feed on the emotive power of popular folklore — most particularly those that promote a harmonious relationship between this world and the Shadow. Lodge members have a delicate task in the World of Darkness, as the more positive tales of wonder are hard to come by. The Dark is always easier, and they don't shy away from it, if need be.

But the Crossroads wolves are hunters. They also seek to protect this world from the elements of the Shadow that are inevitably drawn to the darkest aspects of American myth lore, such as emblems of national shame and horror. Lodge members keep a wary eye on the haunts of infamous serial killers, or places of suffering such as Andersonville, Wounded Knee, the site of the Ludlow Massacre and the Japanese relocation centers.

The legend of Pangaea takes a secondary role in the lodge's lore. Pangaea is just not as relevant to them — the spirits born during the last few centuries and the shifting flow of vitality in the Shadow is a higher priority. Crossroads werewolves aren't tracking jackalopes, but they might look into local stories that relate to a lynching tree, or investigate Shadow activity around icons of pop culture like Bonaventure Cemetery in Savannah, Area 51, Wounded Knee. They focus on places too popular for most packs to incorporate into a territory, but that may be the site of incursions from the spirit world due to the emotions associated with them.

Many Ithaeur of the lodge also point to the wisdom of shepherding the mythic themes of the area they are in — reinforcing the most useful and positive themes of humankind's cultures or national character — rather than worrying about essentially dead or obscure myths. Since humanity has an overwhelming effect on the Shadow, then the People should be using its passions and personifications to guide their efforts.

The lodge acts as a magnet for iconoclast Uratha and contains many Ghost Wolves as well as members of more

outward leaning, humanist tribes, such as the Iron Masters. The lodge also appeals to the Bone Shadow Ithaeur who wish to study how popular myth and the Shadow interact.

Packs centered on the lodge are often mobile, packs of the highway. Wanderlust and the freedom of the open road are just the kind of American themes that the Crossroads lodge seeks to cultivate.

What lodge members actually find is behind the myth varies. Sometimes they don't find anything really mysterious. Quite often, they get involved in a self-fulfilling prophecy — people's belief in a mystery is enough to stir the Shadow into action even if there is no original cause. For example, the fear experienced by persons convinced that a room is haunted is sometimes enough to cause fear-spirits to congregate and feed. They may grow stronger, feeding on each other, until they manifest as a ghostly apparition, or reach across the Gauntlet to inspire more fear in the "tourists." These kinds of situations can get out of hand, and that's why the Crossroads lodge likes to take a look into these areas.

Sometimes lodge members do run across ghosts, magath and other spiritual beings that an Uratha with a bit of experience might come to expect. The Crossroads werewolves rarely discover something truly mysterious to them, such as unknown supernaturals, spirits that defy classification or areas whose magic seems to come from somewhere other than the spirit world.

FOLKLORE HOOKS

The Lodge of the Crossroads hunts the beings and happenings of Americana, particularly where they've affected human imagination. Lodge members might attempt to nurture spirits that impact the American psyche, promote embodiments of the open road, providence or the Wild West. They stalk conceptual-spirits that have grown fat on the idea of natural icons, from the straight shooter and the Southern gentleman to the fallen Hollywood star and the steadfast GI. Lodge members know that there might be real threats behind the tales of the Jersey Devil, Nain Rouge or Oogopogo, the Skunk Ape, the hodag or even the Mothman. They've rooted out spiritually charged items such as lengths of charred wood from Salem Massachusetts and bullets from Gettysburg. They are even said to have potent fetishes such as the axe that killed Lizzie Borden's parents — or at least lodge members are on the trail of such things.

Although the Lodge of the Crossroads is quintessentially American, it can serve as the model for similar lodges in other regions. Australia might see a Lodge of the Dreamtime that focuses on where the Shadow of aboriginal myth collides with recent history. In fact, there's

no reason there can't be multiple similar lodges of this sort in the United States alone. A lodge focused on Appalachian interests such as haints and the events of Jack tales would be very different from a lodge that chases down the spirit legacy of killers such as John Wayne Gacy and the Son of Sam. Regional folklore and history hold the keys to countless stories involving the Shadow, and lodges designed to chase those stories are great enablers for the troupe.

PATRON SPIRIT

The Lodge of the Crossroads doesn't claim to have a patron spirit — at least, not at first. However, members begin to catch hints of something watching over them as they continue to spend time within the lodge. Nobody knows anything concrete; the spirit hasn't appeared to them, and it doesn't make any demands. But it seems that whatever it was that Tom Steele met at the crossroads way back when is now keeping an eye on the lodge. Some say it's Papa Legba or Coyote, one of the trickster-spirits that walks the whole nation. Others swear it's the Devil himself, taking an interest in all the "old business" that the lodge unearths. Whatever the case, it's true that lodge members tend to — live in interesting times, their luck turning strange just often enough to account for a spirit patron. They would sleep a lot better if they knew for sure who it was. Theoretically.

JOINING THE LODGE

The concept of legend tripping fits well into the themes and attitude of the Crossroads Lodge, so well, in fact, that legend tripping has become the basis for its initiation ceremony. Legend tripping is a new term for an ancient practice, one that has roots as a rite of passage and has become the de facto plotline for a hundred ghost stories and in recent times, teen horror flicks. A legend trip involves a nocturnal visit to some purportedly haunted site, or perhaps the site of an infamous crime or tragic accident or supernatural phenomena. This combination of ancient rite with a pop-culture twist is right up their alley.

Of course, a Crossroads lodge initiation is far more serious than a midnight picnic on Edgar Allen Poe's grave. Applicants have to investigate a site that has a possible tie between some element of local folklore and the Shadow. The applicant must fully investigate the activities on both sides of the Gauntlet and report back to his mentor. Often, the mentor has already secretly investigated the site beforehand. The applicant might attempt to entice any spirits feeding off the Essence produced at the location to manifest. He might observe humans, or even trick them into going to see what happens.

But there's always a twist. The initiation is never a simple matter of gathering information — something always happens. Something unexpected. Most see it as the





Lodge of the Crossroads

influence of the lodge's unseen patron, making certain that a little bit of blood or tears is spilt in the right place. A few sponsors have tried to take advantage of this tendency, inviting new members in and then heading out to watch their investigations to learn the truth. There are — stories about what happens to both would-be mentor and would-be member. Stories bad enough that it's now the rule of the lodge that the sponsor can't observe no matter how curious she is — better to risk one werewolf than to surely doom two.

Prerequisites: Cunning ••, Investigation •, Occult ••

Benefits: Members of the Crossroads lodge gain a Contact (•) in the “weird” or “freak” subculture of crypto-zoologists, legend trippers, conspiracy theorists and folklore occultists. Lodge members' exposure to these groups and their methods of investigation also allows them to purchase Skills at a reduced experience cost — Investigation, Occult and Stealth become new dots x2 instead of new dots x3.

LODGE OF THE CROSSROADS

FETISH

HERITAGE TOOTH (TALEN)

These minor talens are created from relics of folklore, both good and ill. Called “teeth” for the general purpose they serve, they take the form of some sort of ammunition, usually bullets or arrows. They are always relics of some sort invested with local meaning. A Heritage Tooth might be an arrow whittled down from the fire-hardened wood of an old Salem stake, a bullet cast from the fender of a car that carried a woman in white or even a lead sling stone cast around the tooth of a serial killer. A Heritage Fang adds +3 to the attack roll when used against any supernatural creature born and changed (such as Embraced, if a vampire) in the Americas.

Action: Reflexive

HERITAGE FANG (•••••)

A Heritage Fang is a permanent weapon, one that was fashioned from a piece of American folklore. Only the most senior lodge members bear these immensely valuable relics; Tom Steele is rumored to have carried the hammer of John Henry, and rumor has it that another of the lodge currently holds a crossbow strung with strings from the Devil's own fiddle. When activated, a Heritage Fang grants a +1 bonus against any American-born (and American-Changed) supernatural enemy. In addition, such fetish weapons use the “9 again” rule regardless of opponent. Some are said to have additional powers, but bear curses along with them — John Henry's hammer was said to flood the bearer's strength, but at the cost of his stamina.

Action: Reflexive



• **Unhallowed Ground:** In the pack's efforts to pacify their territory they run across a place

of mystery so potentially dangerous that it may be better off “sanitized.” The problem is that the Lodge of the Crossroads has marked it as under their protection. The rivals might make it nearly impossible to clean up the area not by directly opposing the pack, but by using Contacts and the press to play up the site's “true” history. The pack may attempt to come to some sort of compromise with the lodge, or the characters may find that compromise wouldn't make things any better and move into open conflict.

• **Voices From the Past:** The pack encounters a roving Ithaeur of the lodge, one who's particularly gifted at acting as a medium for the dead. She's made a practice of encouraging ghosts to manifest before her or even temporarily speak through her mouth recording the fragments of their emotions and memories. She asks the pack for permission to work her necromancy in their territory, perhaps in an attempt to discover the origin event of a local shoal or Wound. The problem happens when she's possessed by the wrong entity — a potent serial killer's shade or a murder-spirit that's grown fat and healthy. Will the pack be able to quell the entity without harming their visitor? Will they even try?

• **Urban Legends:** People are starting to turn up dead in ways right out of superstition. A young couple was murdered in their car, killed by a sharp instrument that tore them like a hook. A child was found dead by a broken bathroom mirror, the word “Mary” written in blood nearby. Is it some sort of spirit attempting to harvest the growing resonance of fear, and, if so, where is the spirit getting all these ideas? Are the Bale Hounds at work? The Lodge of the Crossroads might be able to help with the investigation — that is, if they're not themselves at fault for some reason



FRANK TATE

Auspice: Ithaeur

Tribe: Bone Shadow

Mental Attributes: Intelligence 2, Wits 3, Resolve 2

Physical Attributes: Strength 1 (2/5/4/6), Dexterity 3 (3/4/5/3), Stamina 2 (3/4/4/3)

Social Attributes: Presence 2, Manipulation 3 (2/3/0/3), Composure 3

Mental Skills: Academics (Literature) 2, Crafts (Carpenter) 1, Computer 1, Investigation 2, Occult 2 (Cultural Beliefs)

Physical Skills: Brawl 2, Stealth (Moving in Moonlight) 1, Survival 1

Social Skills: Animal Ken 2, Empathy 2, Expression (Drums, Painting) 3, Persuasion 2, Socialize 2, Streetwise 1

Merits: Languages (French) 2, Languages (Spanish) 1, Contacts (Freak Culture) 1, Encyclopedic Knowledge 4, Barfly 1

Primal Urge: 1
Willpower: 5
Harmony:
Essence Max/Per Turn: 10/1
Virtue: Hope
Vice: Envy
Health: 7 (9/11/10/7)
Initiative: 6 (6/7/8/8)
Defense: 3 (all forms)
Speed: 9 (10/13/16/14)
Renown: Cunning 2, Wisdom 2
Gifts: (1) Death Sight, Two-World Eyes (2) Read Spirit
Rituals: 2; **Rites:** Banish Human, Rite of Dedication, Banish Spirit

Frank Tate Changed later in life, and took to the road shortly thereafter. He's been everything from a stringer reporter to carpenter to bum — he's even spent a season in a fire-tower. Throughout all, he's been a prolific writer and reader. But Frank has a secret — there's another side to him in addition to Frank and the wolf. This personage calls himself Joshua, and he's a monster that makes the were-wolf inside Frank look rather tame.

Joshua has been around ever since Frank left home on his wanderings when he was 17. That's the day his Uncle Travis found out Frank was gay. Maybe Travis and a few of his cronies thought they could beat it out of Frank, or maybe they just lost control, but something snapped. They left him tied up in the middle of the road, naked. Frank has a recurring dream of someone walking down that road, something dark coming for him — that's his only recollection of the events. Frank does not remember even having an argument with his uncle that day. In

Frank's mind, the strain of "outing" himself to his family became too much to bear, so he packed his bags and left.

It's unknown why Frank did not Change that night, but, instead, Joshua was born, the personification of the highway killer out of urban myth. Over the next week, Frank hunted down the men who had hurt him. Maybe Joshua actually Changed that night, which might explain how he could slip away from Frank's bed, and leave so little evidence at the scene of the crime.

Joshua has appeared from time to time during the past few years to satisfy his lusts or pay back some unkindness with murder, but it's always along a lonesome road, where no one but Joshua can hear the screams. Afterwards, Frank's wanderlust kicks in, and he moves on to new hunting grounds.

NOTE: Joshua has slightly different stats from Frank. Add two dots to Stealth, Streetwise and Subterfuge, and subtract two dots from: Academics, Expression and Empathy. Joshua's Manipulation goes down by two, and Resolve and Composure increase by one each. Joshua makes a point to never touch Abraham. Of course, it might be possible that the book knows about Frank's alter-ego and either approves, or is just not concerned.

Frank likes to say he personifies the "bone" in Bone Shadow. He is rail thin, and very tall, giving him an almost Lincolnesque appearance. Rather than stoop or dress to conceal this, Frank often wears vertical striped clothes and tall hats. His hair style and clothes change with the season, and he cultivates the image of a hip artist. He never goes anywhere without a satchel (dedicated) full of books, pen and paper.





BROTHERHOOD OF THE CROSSED SWORDS

WOLVES LOOSED IN THE NEW WORLD

We came following the conquistadors in the 15th century. While it would be pleasant to divorce ourselves from the motives and conduct of these men, it would not be honest. They came for “God, glory and gold” — dispossessed mercenaries whose success against the Moors and the wars in Italy made them too dangerous to keep at home. We, too, needed land, as the ancient lines of Uratha in Europe meant that the best territories were taken long ago. The “nobles” of human and wolf were glad to see us go and unconcerned about what we did.

Upon landing, many of us spread out, eager to see the lay of the land — none had heard of the People of this land. We saw somewhat familiar glyphs and markings, but nothing prepared us, or the Spaniards, for the Aztecs. Our legends tell us that the Pure were allied with the bloodthirsty human cultures that dominated this land.

Some accuse us of the genocide that followed when human fell upon human. This is not true. Yes, we fought the Pure; yes, we united our Forsaken brothers that we found — we fought them with everything we had at our disposal. It was not a pretty war. The crimes of the conquistadors do not wash clean the horrors that dwelt here.

In the end, all that mattered was order; the greater evil was dead and the lands were opened back up for the management of the Forsaken. Before justice, before hope, we had to step in and stop the bloodshed, break the cycle between the actions of humans and the impetus it gave the Shadow to darken both worlds further still. No one tribe could bear that burden, so they made a new pact, the Brotherhood of the Crossed Swords. Not the flimsy rood of the crusaders; we took as our symbol the parried stroke — we were willing to step in and stop the slaughter. Our forefathers were willing to pay that price, to do what had to be done. Those who crossed swords with us would be destroyed.

That is your legacy. Can you continue the work?

The Lodge of Crossed Swords is one of the most influential and largest lodges in Central and South America, and their simple message of order through power still resonates with its members. Though times are changing, the archetype of the *padrón*, the powerful strongman patriarch who dispenses favors and maintains order, is still viable. Similar to most Uratha, when push comes to shove, they default to strong-arm tactics and other forms of intimidation in social situations. Unlike many Uratha, the members of the Brotherhood take steps to use this to their advantage — working through contacts, allies and retainers for most of their day-to-day needs, cultivating an aura of mystery and fear for their one-on-one meetings.

The lodge’s main concern is holding onto power so that they can effect change. That means influence and money. The Brotherhood is very much an “ends justify the means” society. They were once a military power; now they have shifted to politics, the drug trade and business. Some have grown dependant upon corruption and kickbacks that stereotype the countries of Central and South America. That has not stopped them from seeking to expand their reach back into the Old World or into the United States and Canada.

Due to these excesses, there are Forsaken who oppose the Brotherhood, calling them dinosaurs, but the Forsaken know the Pure have been making a comeback in a big way, along with some of the terrifying spirits and creatures that were their allies. Some point to the deaths of many clear-cut farmers in Brazil as evidence that the dread jaguar folk have come out of hiding. Many believed that the Pure of old had rituals to command these creatures. If this is the case, the Brotherhood is probably the best weapon against the resurgence. After all, didn’t the Brotherhood defeat the Pure once before?

Lodge meetings are always formal affairs, where manners and decorum are stressed. Most lodge members affect a very civilized attitude. But it’s a veneer of noble civilization that covers a true wolf.



PATRON SPIRITS

The Brotherhood pays homage to five ancestor-spirits: the Hammathi, the five fathers. Three were slain in battle with the Pure, one was sacrificed to the Pure's dark patron and one was slain by the jaguar folk. The spirits that manifest in their forms still wear their wounds with pride.

JOINING THE LODGE

Asking to join the lodge is considered crass — and a pretty good measure that the individual isn't suited to the Brotherhood. You have to have temporal power to be of interest to the Brotherhood; most are alphas, but they also appeal to the powers behind the throne. The Brotherhood likes to have a smattering of all of the tribes, but most members are Storm Lords or Iron Masters these days. Very, very few Ghost Wolves are ever invited in since the lodge prizes connections and alliances — iconoclasts and persons on the fringe of human or Uratha society are of little concern to them.

The Brotherhood is not above grooming persons who might become candidates for initiation.

Prerequisites: Glory ••, Politics ••, Resources ••, Presence or Composure •••, Contacts (Criminal or Governmental) •••

Benefits: The Lodge's network of connections on both sides of the law gives the character an extra dot of Resources (but cannot raise the Merit above five dots). In addition, members may purchase new Contacts and Allies in their sphere of influence at a reduced rate, new dots x1 instead of new dots x2.

BROTHERHOOD OF THE CROSSED SWORDS STORY HOOKS

- **The Initiation:** One of the players' characters, or one of the pack's tenuous allies, receives an invitation to join the Brotherhood. The invitation is delivered with the utmost respect, noting that the Brotherhood would be of great benefit to the initiate even as she would be of use in expanding the lodge's influence. What isn't mentioned is that this initiation also brings the enmity of the Lodge of Quetzal, who may mark the character as a potential enemy even if she declines.

- **The Smoking Mirror:** An ancient document surfaces relating a harrowing tale involving a sorcerer of some kind (an Ithaeur or perhaps a mage) who bound one of the Pure's totems into a strange device. The artifact seems to bear resemblance to the mythic Smoking Mirror of Tezcatlipoca (a device for divining the future and revealing the secrets of a human's soul) and the totem is described as a spirit of Death and Tyranny. Due to the artifact's nature, burying the device in the heart of a jungle surrounded by life and far far away from human hands was considered most appropriate. The tale continues with an account of a harrowing travel south — perhaps even into

South America and the burial of the fetish. The question is this, with millions of acres of rainforest already gone and thousands of acres of rain forest disappearing daily, how long will the device remain hidden? Has it already been discovered?

- **I Just Want to Help:** A blighted inner-city neighborhood, especially one with a Latino presence may be a constant source of trouble for the players' pack. What if one day they receive a correspondence from Bernard Cordeval, asking for a meeting? He has moved into the area and is seeking allies — he will help clean up the neighborhood if the characters agree to help him in the future, or at least stay out of his way. You can decide how this plays out; Cordeval was just being "polite" by asking — he does not think he needs permission, but he does see what he plans to do as "good," at least in the end. It could be messy as he allies himself with a gang and pushes out the others. In the end, things may have improved, but not entirely. The process of transition is likely bloody, and, in the end, there will be fewer killings, less crime, but the gangs will still be there, and Cordeval will be in the shadows, running things.

BERNARD CORDEVAL

Auspice: Elodoth

Tribe: Storm Lord

Mental Attributes: Intelligence 3, Wits 2, Resolve 3

Physical Attributes: Strength 2 (3/5/4/3), Dexterity 2 (2/3/4/4), Stamina 3 (4/3/3/4)

Social Attributes: Presence 4, Manipulation 2 (1/2/0/2), Composure 2

Mental Skills: Academics 2, Computer 1, Investigation 2, Politics (Scandals) 2

Physical Skills: Brawl 1, Larceny 1, Stealth 1, Survival 1

Social Skills: Empathy 1, Expression 1, Intimidation (Veiled Threats) 2, Persuasion 2, Socialize 2, Streetwise (Rumors) 2, Subterfuge (Lying) 3

Merits: Language (English) 2, Resources 3, Contacts (Gangs, Drug Trade, Business) 3, Retainer 2, Totem 3, Allies (Gangs) 2

Primal Urge:

Willpower: 5

Harmony: 5

Essence Max/Per Turn: 11/1

Virtue: Fortitude

Vice: Greed

Health: 8 (10/12/11/8)

Initiative: 9 (9/10/11/11)

Defense: 2 (2/2/2/2)

Speed: 9 (10/13/16/14)

Renown: Honor Glory

Gifts: (1) Know Name, Sense Malice; (2) Snarl of Command, Warning Growl

Rituals: 1; **Rites:** Rite of the Spirit Brand





Bernard can trace his Uratha lineage back to the earliest days of the Brotherhood, though he did not know that his “Uncle” Martín was his real father. Bernard hated the man growing up and always suspected that he was no good — despite the lavish gifts his uncle consistently gave out. In fact, Bernard was planning on a law career to take care of hoods like his uncle when the Change happened. At first, Bernard was bitter — taken aback that the natural charm he had grown up with seemed diminished. Eventually, he learned how to use it, and that’s when the Brotherhood, in the form of Uncle Martín, came calling. It’s taken a while, but now the family reunion is complete.

Cordeval has plans. He is rather forward-thinking for his lodge and was given the responsibility of taking the mission of the lodge to new territory. He has no plans to let his brothers down.

Bernard is not physically imposing, but he does have rather fine features, dark brown skin, black hair and eyes. His eyes, in fact, are his most striking asset. He has a withering stare and deep voice that belies his frame.

TRIBE OF THE JAGUARS

Legends of shamans who could take the form of jaguars or humanoid jaguar monsters are as ancient or older than werewolf tales of Europe and the Mediterranean. Olmec art is full of their strange representations, and their civilization goes back at least to 1400 BC. To let such an interesting bit of horror go to waste in a **Werewolf** game seems a shame but the Storyteller must decide how to incorporate this legend into his or her chronicle. Here are several options:

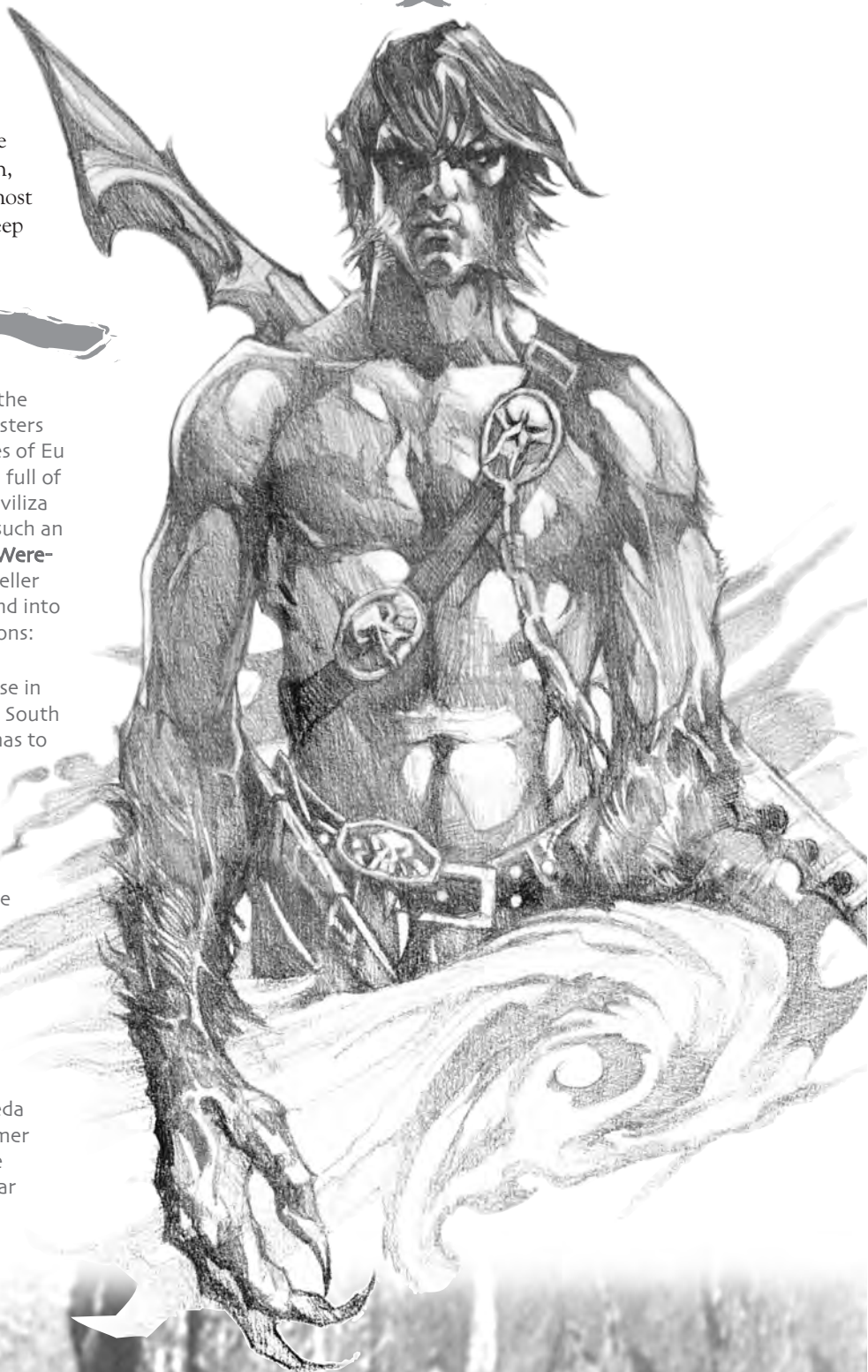
Pure Myth: The shapeshifting jaguar tales may be nothing more than an exercise in imagination of the peoples of Central and South America. Not every legend of our world has to have a “true” dark reflection in the World of Darkness....

Monsters: Another supernatural race may be the truth behind the legends. If this idea appeals to you, the Balam-Colop, found on p. 95, might fit the bill for your chronicle. These creatures are a cursed bloodline of jaguar warped by unknown forces into something entirely strange — and eminently dangerous.

Other Supernaturals in Disguise: The Anybeast Gift allows werewolves the ability to disguise themselves as other predators. Werewolves in Central and South America would naturally choose the jaguar, the predominant predator of the land. The fear some reputation of the jaguar monsters

of legend would be a welcome disguise as well. Likewise, vampires and mages have many of the same reasons to take on jaguar forms — perhaps they, too, are responsible for the legends.

All of the Above: The most interesting method is to assume that all of these factors have led to the growth of the monstrous jaguars’ legend — some elements are false some based on the actions of other supernaturals and some based upon real monsters, the Balam-Colop.



Lodge of Quetzal

THE TRUTH

You've heard their side, now you want the whole story?

The Brotherhood would have you believe that a handful of Uratha broke the back of the Empire of the Sun and its Shadow. How did they do it? I'll tell you how, but it's not pretty.

While Cortez and his Indian allies sat on the northern banks of Lake Texcoco, praying for supplies that would not arrive for months, the Uratha acted. They saw the power of disease, saw in it action on Hispaniola and knew what was coming. But they needed quicker results, so a few went back to Old Europe and caught 13 of the nastiest sharcha, sealed them in casks and brought them back to the New World. Along with the supplies Cortez had called for came the Uratha. The werewolves spread out toward all the horrors in the largest cities in the Aztec empire. They did not have a chance. Cortez's army had to step over the bodies of the dead killed by the Uratha's disease.

But it did not end there; the diseases swept north and east, and, with the efforts of the Beshilu, the Gauntlet's weakened state meant that that even more spirits of war and disease broke through. The world teetered on disaster. Just to make some men rich and get some blue-blooded Uratha nice property. They broke this land, then used the disaster to justify their brutal tactics.

That's who we are up against. The Brotherhood must fall.

The Lodge of the Quetzal is named after a Bone Shadow. So drab was his coat and appearance that his friends kidded him by giving him the deed name of the most beautiful bird they knew. The lodge's lore claims that, in the 19th century, Quetzal uncovered the diary of a member of the Brotherhood of the Crossed Swords and discovered their culpability.

He made the mistake of thinking that the elders of the famous lodge would like to know what had happened. They had him killed and burned the fragile documents. He had made copies, though, and upon word of his death,

three envelopes were opened and the Lodge of Quetzal was born. Lodge members fight almost solely against the interests of the Brotherhood, and strive to uncover the truth of what happened during the conquest. They are convinced that the Brotherhood is now part of the problem, rather than a solution.

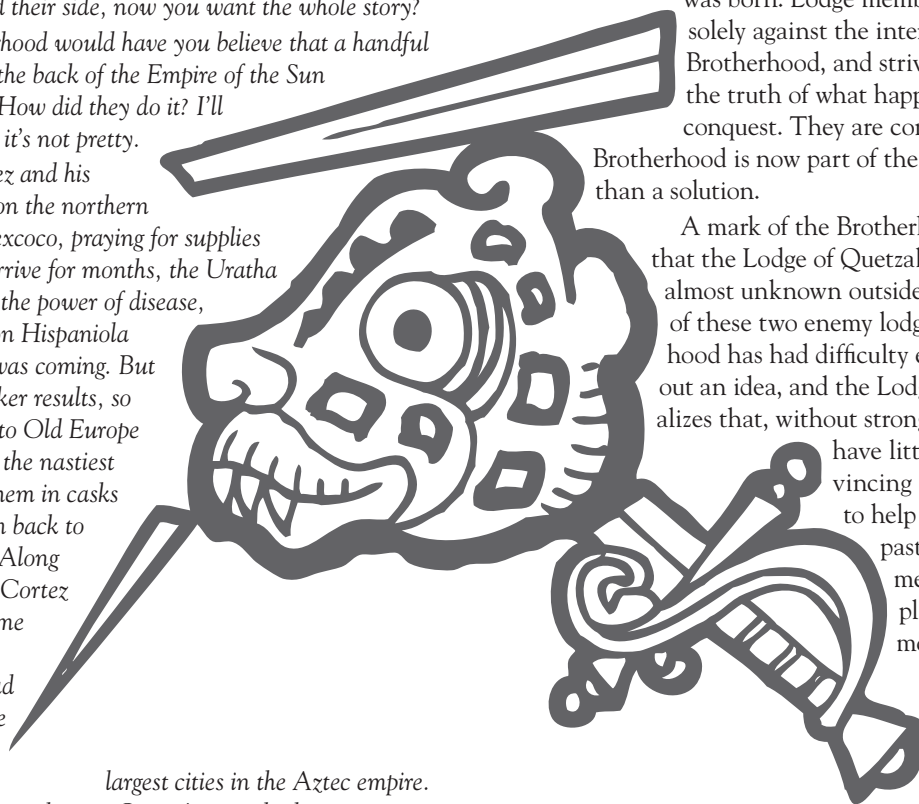
A mark of the Brotherhood's power is that the Lodge of Quetzal's existence is almost unknown outside the membership of these two enemy lodges. The Brotherhood has had difficulty entirely stamping out an idea, and the Lodge of Quetzal realizes that, without strong evidence, they have little chance of convincing any other Uratha to help them. So, for the past century, lodge members have played a cat-and-mouse game.

During the darkest days in the 1950s, the Lodge of Quetzal moved

most of its operations deep in the jungle and adopted the practice of using lodge members' Gifts to move about in leopard form — so much so that mastery of this Gift is now a tradition. Quetzal members use the werejaguar myth to inspire fear in the human agents of the Brotherhood, and often adopt the legend to send a signal to the Brotherhood that their enemies are back. Nowadays, Quetzal members have moved back into the city as well and just as often assume the form of street mutts to disguise their presence.

The Lodge of Quetzal's claws are stained with blood as well. Some of their members, perhaps embittered with their lack of success, have taken to striking at the economic heart of some of the Brotherhood's interests — collateral damage be damned. Again, many of the Brotherhood turned this against the Quetzal, labeling the lodge's actions as the work of terrorists.

Recently, a young member of the lodge named Silve Buendia has had a series of prophetic dreams, and a new theory about the conquest has taken shape. The young members of the lodge are now searching for evidence





Lodge of Quetzal

that may corroborate their ideas. The dreams hint that *something*, some dark power that fed on the local blood-ritual did not go into hiding when the sacrifices ended and the Aztec Empire crumbled. Th being simply switched sides. Perhaps it knew the Aztecs were doomed all along. For centuries, it used the institutionalized slaughter of the priests to tyrannize the people, until a new motivator came along — greed. Now the Brotherhood of Crossed Swords and every other corrupt government official and drug lord are the entity's pawns.

JOINING THE LODGE

The Lodge of Quetzal's initiations are very simple, though challenging in their own right; the lodge has more to do with a resistance movement than a spiritual brotherhood. Potential members must prove they can execute a strike against the interests of the Brotherhood. The applicant must research, plan and execute the strike under the watchful eyes of her mentor. If successful, she is welcomed into the Lodge of Quetzal.

Prerequisites: Anybeast (Mother Luna ••), Stealth ••, Subterfuge ••

Benefits: Lodge members may add the Stealth and Insight Gifts to their affinity lists.

LODGE OF QUETZAL STORY HOOKS

- **Enemy of My Enemy:** The pack may well come into conflict with the Brotherhood of Crossed Swords; after all, the Brotherhood can be insufferable to those they don't see as potential colleagues. As the rivalry heats up, the Lodge of Quetzal takes note of the pack and attempts to woo them as potential allies. However, getting entrenched in the struggle may mean having to spill Uratha blood — and extricating oneself from the mess might require some clever tricks of diplomacy when the Quetzals don't want to take "no" for an answer....

- **Damning Evidence:** The characters come across some evidence that bolsters the claims of the Lodge of Quetzal, which puts the characters in an interesting situation. Do they act and possibly start a war between two factions of their kind? Do they sit on the evidence and become culpable for the Brotherhood's excesses? And what if the characters find exactly the reverse? After all, werewolves wouldn't risk exposure by writing down the sort of things that were supposedly contained in diaries "discovered" by Quetzal. Those diaries may have been possible forgeries meant to start some sort of war for another purpose, and if the pack discovers proof that this is the case....

- **Jaguar Blood:** One of the lodge's Ithaeur needs help developing a ritual that might allow the Lodge of Quetzal to control the Balam-Colop. She comes either to one of the characters

or a character's mentor for aid dealing with the jaguar people. Certainly, if a countermeasure to control these things can be found, it would be a great resource for the pack. But can the Ithaeur be trusted to use it responsibly?

HERNAN BOLIVAR

Auspice: Irakka

Tribe: Blood Talon

Mental Attributes: Intelligence 2, Wits 3, Resolve 3

Physical Attributes: Strength 3 (4/6/5/4), Dexterity 3 (3/4/5/5), Stamina 3 (4/5/5/4)

Social Attributes: Presence 3, Manipulation 2 (1/2/0/2), Composure 2

Mental Skills: Academics 1, Computer 1, Crafts 1, Investigation 2, Occult 1, Politics 1

Physical Skills: Athletics 1, Brawl 2, Drive (Motorcycles) 2, Firearms 1, Stealth (Jungle) 3, Survival (Navigation) 3

Social Skills: Animal Ken 2, Persuasion (Inspiring Troops) 1, Subterfuge 1

Merits: Language (English) 1, Retainer (Balam-Colop) 3, Brawling Dodge 1, Resources 2

Primal Urge: 1

Willpower: 5

Harmony:

Essence Max/Per Turn: 10/1

Virtue: Hope

Vice: Wrath

Health: 8 (10/12/11/8)

Initiative: 5 (5/6/7/7)

Defense: 3 (3/3/3/3)

Speed: 11 (12/15/17/16)

Renown: Cunning 2, Glory 1

Gifts: (1) Feet of Mist, Partial Change; (2) Anybeast, Blending

Rituals: 1; **Rites:** Rite of Dedication

Hernan does not know why he let the thing live. He had heard of the werejaguars, before his Change, but before his indoctrination into the Lodge of Quetzal, he thought they were a myth. Even when his eyes were opened to the supernatural, his mentors told him that the Brotherhood had mostly hunted the beasts to extinction. After the stories about the Balam-Colop were told, he could not begrudge why at the time.

A hunting party led by a member of the Brotherhood had him cornered, his back to the swamp when the monster appeared out of a cloud of mist and fell on the first man, laying open his belly. Hernan did not think, he shifted — in the skin of the jaguar — and they attacked. When his vision cleared, the men were dead and his enemy had fled. The Balam-Colop was grievously wounded, staring at him with those deformed eyes. Something happened, and Hernan found himself cutting out the men's hearts and feeding the beast. Now, whenever he is in the jungle, it seems to

know, and it shadows him. He knows that it is hungry again, and is troubled at how much that concerns him.

In wolf form, he has a gray-brown coat with dark patches that have begun to look like spots. In Hishu, he is powerfully built with a rangy strength, although his short stature and round features give away his native heritage. Hernan is a shadow warrior for the People and his human relatives. He once hoped that there was another way, but now he knows that he is on the only possible path.

BALAM-COLOP

Ramón stood at the edge of the burn. It had taken him three weeks to clear-cut the trees — two more days for the fires to burn down and then he could begin turning the ash back into the earth and planting seed. He did not have long before the rainy season began; the daily storms would wash the precious ash, his best fertilizer, and his seed away if he did not till and sow soon. Ramón had saved for three years to buy his seed, tools and the money to get him down the rutted trail and away from the city. With luck, he could move his family here in a year.

"Ramón..."

The child's cry startled him so much he dropped his machete. He turned around and tried to peer into the forest. The thick smoke from the wet wood made it impossible.

"Ramón..."

It seemed farther away the second time. Who was it? Had his family followed him? It was too soon and too dangerous.

"Alberto? Is that you? Where are you? What are you doing here? Where's your mother?"

"Ramón..."

Now it was closer, much closer. Something moved, no, seemed to fall from a tree not far

away. Ramón hurried into the brush after it, wondering whether someone was hurt...

Background: In ancient Mayan, Balam-Colop is roughly translated as "Tribe of the Jaguar." These monstrous creatures may be the foundation of the jaguar-monsters of Mesoamerican myth and art. Legend has it that they are born as the result of a curse levied upon a line of jaguars that once participated in human sacrifices. (The Aztecs, for one, were known for sometimes feeding the hearts of their victims to captive jaguars.) Certainly, this race's existence legend predates the Aztecs by centuries, perhaps beyond even the Olmec's worship of Tezcatlipoca, the jaguar god of prophecy, evil and Lord of the Smoking Mirror.

Should a pregnant jaguar of this line kill a human, her actions damn her young to an existence as

Balam-Colop. As soon as the young mature,

their supernatural nature takes over and they grow larger, more violent, more intelligent and develop a taste for human meat. When they die, Balam-Colop revert to their jaguar forms.

Balam-Colop have near-human intelligence, and can roughly mimic human cries and sounds in their

humanoid form — they seem to have a talent for picking up names.

They often use this ability to lure their prey within striking distance. They have no real Gift of language or tool use.

They normally live their lives as jaguars deep in the wilderness, periodically preying upon humans. Balam-

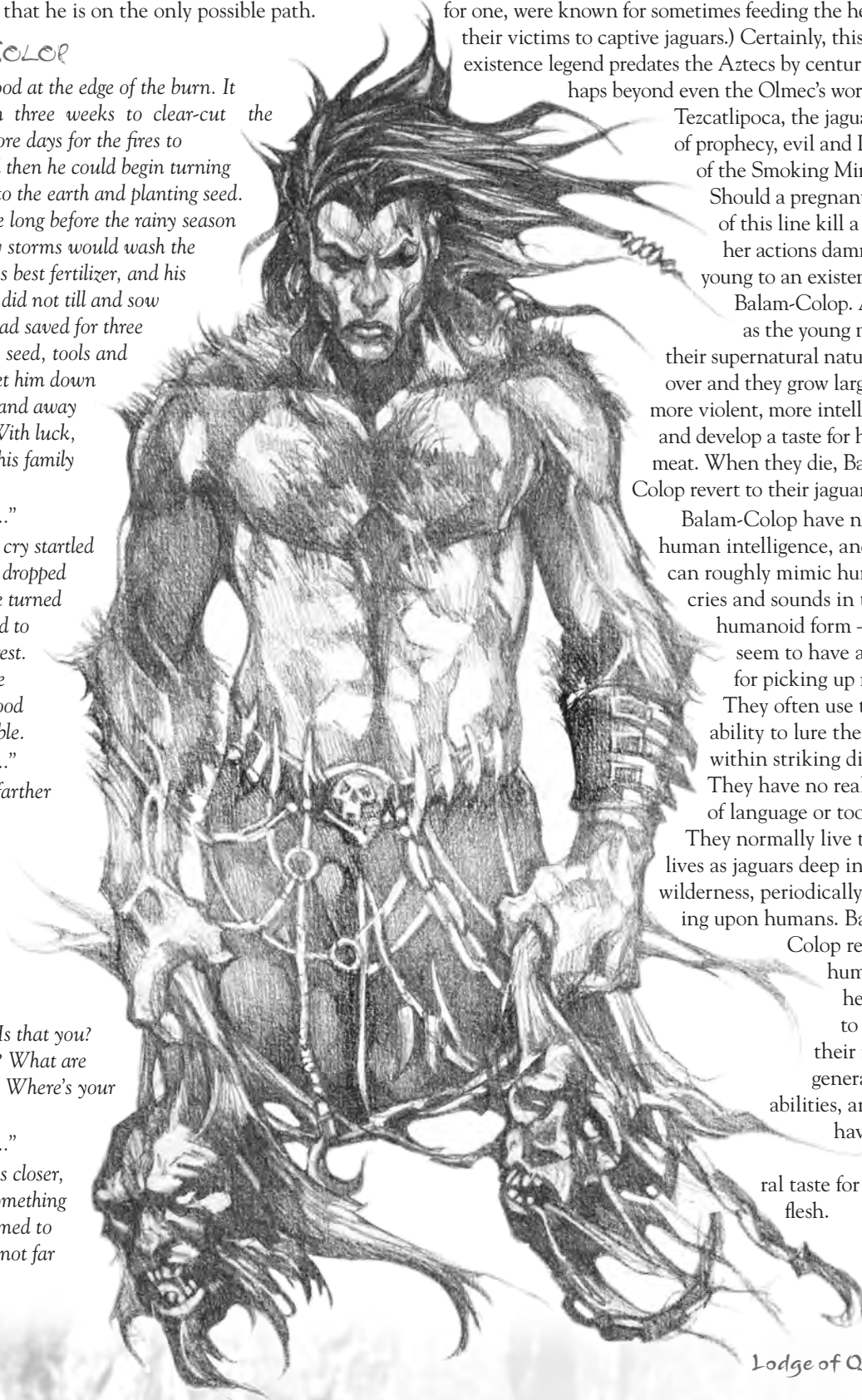
Colop require human

hearts to power

their re-generative

abilities, and they have a

natural taste for human flesh.





Like most jaguars, they are solitary creatures, though paragons of their breed in feline form — ensuring they pass on their tainted bloodline. Their natural tendency toward self-preservation is normally only overridden due to the influence of other supernaturals, or if they find themselves severely injured and need human hearts to heal.

Balam-Colop have a unique ability to sense an ambush and have a preternatural ability to spot Uratha, no matter what their form. Balam-Colop have a unique hatred of werewolves — most of the time Balam-Colop avoid Uratha, but have been known to attack lone Uratha. The opportunity for a werewolf hunt is one of the few times Balam-Colop gather in groups. Perhaps this ability was gifted to them as part of their creation. Maybe they were used to hunt down the Uratha at one time, and now they have further developed this ability as a defense against the Uratha who see the Balam-Colop as an abomination.

For some reason, Balam-Colop cannot abide their own reflections when in their humanoid forms and will go out of their way to avoid mirrors of all kinds. When drinking in a still pond, they almost always shift into their leopard form. It is strange that they can be shaken from murderous glee to tears with a glance at their own form.

Description: In much the same way that werewolves are monstrous humanoid wolves, the Balam-Colop combine a jaguar's claw, fangs and skin. But, like the Olmec effigies, their human proportions are like those of a child. Their heads and eyes are overly large for their frames and their features seem almost chubby — making their appearance all that more disturbing. These proportions do little to hinder their movement as their fat obviously conceals stout muscle. Balam-Colop are incredibly fierce and nimble predators.

Balam-Colop have exceptionally sharp hearing and keen night vision, plus well-developed senses of taste and smell.

Attributes: Intelligence 2, Wits 4, Resolve 3, Strength 6, Dexterity 5, Stamina 5, Presence 3, Manipulation 1, Composure 3

Skills: Athletics (Jumping) 4, Brawl 2, Stealth (Jungles) 4, Survival (Jungle) 3, Animal Ken (Cats) 2

Merits: Danger Sense Unseen Sense (Uratha), Fast Reflexes (••)

Willpower: 5

Morality: N/A

Initiative: 10

Defense: 4

Armor: 2/1 (supernatural hide)

Speed: 16 (species factor 7)

Size:

Weapons/Attacks:

Type	Damage	Dice Pool
Bite	2 (L)	10
Claw	1 (L)	9

Health: 12

Jaguar Form: Balam-Colop can shapeshift into jaguar form as a standard action. In this form a Balam-Colop loses its armor, and two points of Strength, Size and Health. They gain +4 Speed (after the modifiers for losing Strength). Balam-Colop may stay in either form for as long as they wish.

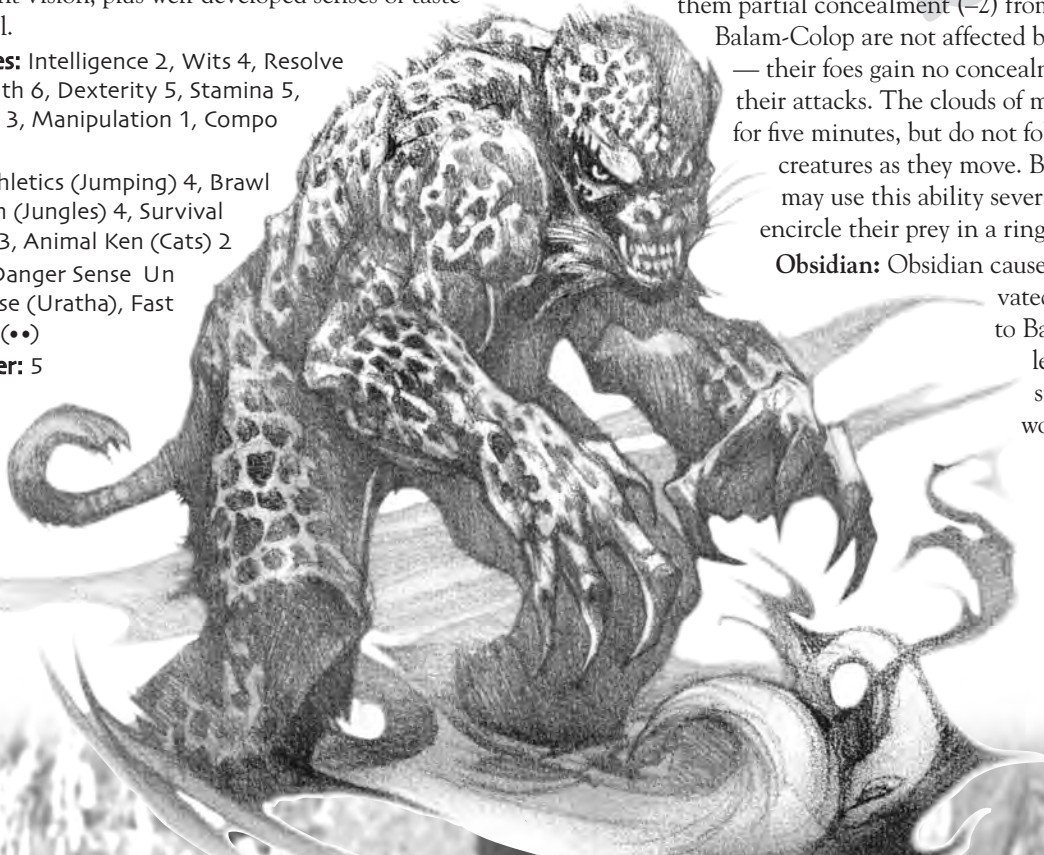
Regeneration: Balam-Colop that have fed on a human heart within the past 24 hours may regenerate one point of damage per turn. Balam-Colop always regenerate bashing damage first, then lethal. Aggravated damage cannot be regenerated in this fashion.

Children of the Smoking Mirror: Tezcatlipoca's obsidian mirror revealed the future and his children have inherited some of its power. They have an innate ability to sense danger (Danger Sense) and supernatural insight into the actions of their foes in combat, reducing their prey's Defense by 2. They also don't suffer from the negative effects of fighting more than one foe at a time — a Balam-Colop's Defense is never lowered for fighting multiple opponents. Balam-Colop instinctively seem to know who will attack and when.

Breath of the Jungle: As an instant action, these creatures can generate dense tendrils of jungle mist that quickly extend about 10 yards in all directions. This gives them partial concealment (–2) from their foes.

Balam-Colop are not affected by this mist — their foes gain no concealment from their attacks. The clouds of mist last for five minutes, but do not follow the creatures as they move. Balam-Colop may use this ability several times to encircle their prey in a ring of mist.

Obsidian: Obsidian causes aggravated damage to Balam-Colop, leaving black, smoking wounds.



THE MOTS

Mots are lodges linked by theme, culture and tradition. First and foremost, they combine a strong warrior ethic, with a passion for artistry and lore, including poetry, historical texts, linguistics and so on. Mots are also characterized in particular by an often dangerous practice of ritual oaths — special rites that cement ties between individuals and sometimes between mots or packs. These alliances shift from time to time, but are never taken lightly and are one reason for the mots' ability to persevere over time and for some of the bloody struggles that have plagued them.

Although in some areas of the world mots may outnumber lodges, mots tend to be focused locally — meaning that an individual mot is normally a good bit smaller than most contemporary lodges. Even mots that venerate the same patron may not really consider themselves the same, unless they have shared oaths of protection. In many cases, a mot and a pack may be the same thing. The ties between lodges within the mots are more intimate and culturally based than political.

While mots have what modern eyes and ears would identify as perhaps a Teutonic flavor, the Uratha who join them don't think that Father Wolf was Wotan's lapdog, or his creation. Some dismissive Uratha point to the mots as an example of how human culture has influenced the Uratha. More likely, though, the two cultures have been entangled from a common ancestor — in the same way that human myth concerning werewolves scored some successes. With tales of berserk warriors who can turn into wolves, it's easy to see that Uratha culture was imperfectly reflected in the symbols and warrior ethos that is characteristic of Anglo-Saxon, Germanic and Norse societies and their myths. Some mot members, especially modern members, have likely dipped however shallowly into human myth, history and fancy in terms of their dress and outward affectations.

Mots are lodges, not tribes, though. Though mots may seem more *involved* than standard lodges, mots do not rise to the importance of tribes or packs in their members' psyches or priorities. When referring to their collective, they usually say, "the mots," or "the volk." Some of the mots, especially in North America, have taken up the modern name "lodge" to add to the confusion.

This association of lodges does not have a single spiritual patron or monomyth; it contains many creation myths, several of which embrace minor deviations from the standard Tale of Pangaea. More often than not though, their myths seem heretical to hard-line "Pan-

gaeists" — regularly including elements and figures that are reflected in the heathen traditions of Old World humanity. Of course, the members of these mots hold that *theirs* is the central wellspring of myth from which all others (including the myths of humans) descend.

Having said that, members are generally tolerant of inconsistencies that exist between the views of other mots. Members are more than willing to try and "fold in" other cosmologies into their own, or embrace the mystery that their differences represent. Likewise, these Uratha are fiercely loyal members of the tribes, in as far as honoring their totems, even though they might hold some very odd beliefs compared to the average tribe member. In short, inconsistencies do not bother them.

COMMON TERMS IN THE MOTS

Blót: A ritual or ceremony that involves careful sacrifice of an animal (a messy or torturous sacrifice is a terrible omen). Also involves sharing food.

Faining: A ritual without the animal sacrifice involved.

Volk: Catch-all name for allied mots, and all Uratha associated with them.

Mot: A lodge; mots refers to all members of all mots.

Thew: A custom or observance.

Vaettir: Spirits, most often, patron spirits.

ELEMENTS OF MOT LEGEND AND LORE

Storytelling, tall tales and bragging are common pastimes of the mots. While familiar figures such as Father Wolf and the Hosts dominate the mots' tales and song, the myths of the mots often include some new elements. Many of these are ancestor-spirits, patrons of some mots — though, in some stories, these spirits rise in stature to those of the Firstborn.

The Great Battle: Some Uratha speculate and the very existence of oaths hints at some joint threat that once caused the mots to bind together.

Lokgrim: Lokgrim, who is also called Masgim-Ur, "the wolf who ambushes." He is a dark figure, though cunning. He is known to both come to the aid and bedevil

both Uratha and their enemies. To mots within the Hunters in Darkness, Lokgrim wrested the promise of patronage from Hikaon.

Oath-bound and Oath-breakers: An element of fatalism sweeps through the tales of the mots. Many tales concern warriors forced to fulfill oaths though doing so means their deaths, heroes forced to choose between breaking oaths and the loss of renown or Uratha who choose to break an oath for personal gain — only to have their actions set off chains of events that lead to greater loss.

The Serpent: Serpent-monsters often appear in the tales of the mots. These are colossal serpents that sometimes have draconic qualities.

The Three Wells: Often described as nestled in the roots of the World Tree. These fetish-artifacts represent the work of dozens of Ithaeur from the first pack, built under Father Wolf and Luna's direction: the well of fate, the well of memory and foresight and, finally, the well of cold, death and water. Activating these fetishes takes great acts of chiminage. The well of fate is supposed to allow an Uratha to correct a misdeed from the past or remove a doom. The second well grants one both wisdom and prophetic powers. The third well is always frozen over. Treatments of its power vary. Some myths claim the third well grants power over the seasons or weather, while other stories claim that it was tainted by Lokgrim and now is a terrible Wound.

The World Tree: This ancient yew is believed to occupy one of the places-that-aren't, the areas of the Shadow that have no earthly reflection. In the oral traditions of the mots, there are tales of Uratha successfully finding their way to the tree. Its branches reach ever skyward, and there is no place where one can stand to see the entirety of the tree. Its mighty bole is still scarred by Father Wolf's claws — but when standing so near it seems as if one is facing a wall of wood thousands of feet in all directions. The tree's branches are thicker and larger than any worldly tree's trunk and are said to lead to hundreds of other mysterious places, ancestor realms and even to other times.

Valkyries: One of the most famous mots is a lodge of female Uratha, who are said to send the best warriors to one of Father Wolf's dens to await a final battle with the idigam.

pro-quo relationship between an Uratha and a spirit. The underlying sentiment of an oath rite is not "Spirits, come and do this magic for me." It's more like "Spirits, enforce this promise for me."

Are these rites found outside of mot culture? That's up to you. They're here because swearing oaths is part of the "feel" of mots.

THE OATHS OF THE MOT

All mots have access to a special set of oath rites. These rituals cement relationships between the members of mots. There are two kinds of oaths, lesser and greater, but the chief difference is the number of Uratha who are bound by an oath. Lesser Oaths are sworn between individuals; Greater Oaths are sworn between packs and their totems. Oaths should not overlap. If one swears a Lesser Oath to a member of another pack and then the packs decide to enact a Greater Oath, the Lesser Oath is dissolved.

The Storyteller arbitrates oaths, but players should be warned that oaths are normally taken quite literally, so creating fine print is a good thing. Oaths are not in place to be "fair." They are a sign of trust, or a balm against misdeeds. They depend upon the often pitiless amorality of the spirit world for enforcement. Thus, users beware! The Cahalith have many tales of unforeseen side effects of oaths. Some of these chains of obligation can set off a sequence of unintended bloodshed and woe among the mots, as blood oath is met with blood oath — or worse yet, a pack wiping themselves out or fostering so much weakness that the many enemies of the Uratha gain an advantage. Of course, these tales are eclipsed by the tales of glory heaped on Uratha who dare and accomplish the impossible to fulfill their oaths.

The spirits that enforce the oaths naturally don't care about contradictions with the Oath of the Moon. If an Uratha swears an oath that puts the Oath of the Moon in jeopardy, the spirits won't interfere. But, should an Uratha attempt to swear an oath that works against a previous oath, the ritual attempting to enact the new oath will fail.

Oaths remain in place until they are discharged or broken. Fulfilling the oath once is enough to dissolve them. Oaths are also a mark of honor, especially among the mots. Fulfilling one at great cost is almost always an affirmation of one's Renown (and an opportune time to spend experience to gain Renown.)

OATH-BREAKING

Once broken, oaths cannot be repaired. Breaking an oath can have serious repercussions both within and without the mots. Oath-breakers are viewed as degenerate, cowardly liars in mot culture — even promises made without the Oath Rite are serious matters to volk. Breaking a ritual oath is always a level 7 sin against Harmony,

OATHS AND RITES

Oaths are an example of how to use the rite and Harmony mechanics to reinforce different werewolf traditions, thereby giving a little ethnic flavor to the mots and showing how they help bind the mot culture together. Some Storytellers (and probably some Uratha) may not like that the fact that oaths do not represent a *direct quid-*

equivalent to breaking a lodge or tribal vow. The action or inaction that caused the oath-breaking may be a greater sin. For example, if an Uratha killed another Uratha that he had taken an Lesser Oath to defend, then it is clearly a level 4 sin against Harmony — the oath can't shield him from the chance of Harmony loss, and he would roll three dice instead of four. In fact, breaking an oath whilst committing a more grievous sin means the Uratha's degeneration roll is made at -1.

Oath-breakers also suffer great social penalties among their own kin. Although they do not lose Renown for breaking an oath (for Lunes care little for these vows, and have no reason to rescind the brands), an oath-breaker will suffer a -3 to all Social rolls made to influence mot members in a positive fashion. A lesser penalty may apply when dealing with werewolves who aren't part of the mots but who care about honorable conduct.

RITE OF THE LESSER OATH (••)

These oaths are also called lesser fainings, blood oaths, oaths of hearth, or oaths of the karls. These vows are normally sworn between good friends who are not of the same pack. But, powerful elders may also require oaths between long-standing enemies to prevent further hostilities and end blood feuds. Lesser Oaths can also be made between totems and the Uratha who venerate them, as additional bans.

Lesser Oaths do not give Uratha magical knowledge of when they may be endangered, and, for the most part (see below), are taken literally. It is assumed that the Uratha will sacrifice pretty much anything to fulfill an oath. For example, two Uratha friends take a blood oath to defend their respective human children. The child of the first Uratha dies in an auto accident two miles away. The second Uratha neither gains a sixth sense that his "oathchild" was in danger nor is his oath broken since he had no power over it. Now, if he were driving a car that was involved in the accident, then he has broken his oath.

Example Oaths (and their Spirit Witnesses):

- Avenge one's death if murdered (raven, death-spirit, Ralunim)
- Loyalty to a tribal or lodge mentor (wolf-spirit, Elunim)
- Loyalty to an alpha (wolf-spirit, Elunim)
- Come to one's aid, assuming that the person's enemy is not someone that the oath-taker has greater obligation too, such as blood kin, or a packmate (dog-spirit, Cahalunim)
- Protect one's human kin (ancestor-spirit, Ithalunim)

Performing the Rite: This ritual cements some agreement between its participants — any can perform the rite. First, the ritemaster calls upon an appropriate spirit to witness the oath (see some examples, above). These spirits do not have to manifest. Each participant brings physical chiminage meaningful to the particular spirit, and the person(s) taking the vow offers two Essence to the spirit,

one point for witnessing the Lesser Oath, one point later to enforce it.

The ritual also requires the sharing of something between the participants. Many mingle their blood by claspng cut hands. Some share some wine or mead from the same cup, while others eat of the same food.

Dice Pool: Harmony

Action: Extended. (Two successes per total Renown of the participants; each roll represents one minute.)

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The rite fails immediately, and the spirit is deeply offended. It leaves, but not without mocking or perhaps lashing out at the offender.

Failure: No successes are gained.

Success: Successes are accumulated. When enough successes are totaled, the participants are bound by the oath and the spirit witness departs.

When fulfilling a Lesser Oath, both in spirit and letter, the avowed Uratha can call upon the power of oath itself and regain one Essence and one Willpower immediately. The Uratha may do this at any time, but only once.

Breaking a Lesser vow is a level 7 sin against Harmony (roll four dice). In addition, a glyph denoting shame is added to the spirit brands covering the werewolf's body, making her dishonor clearly visible to anyone who can see those brands.

Exceptional Success: Numerous successes gained; the oath takes on special significance as a much more powerful spirit takes up the binding of the Lesser Oath. When fulfilling the oath (see above), the oath-taker may call upon the oath's power twice.

RITE OF THE GREATER OATH (••••)

Greater Oaths are also called greater fainings, pack oaths, ring oaths and oaths of the tree.

Greater Oaths are sworn between one group of Uratha and their totem and another group of Uratha and their totem. Ring oaths cannot be sworn between individuals. A Greater Oath requires the involvement and acquiescence of two totems that witness and bind the oaths. Any Uratha who joins such a pack later on assumes the oath as well when the werewolf accept his totem's patronage.

These oaths are often mutual protection agreements or bans, such as a binding agreement to prevent some future territorial clash. Think of these oaths as either binding the members to do something or to not do something. Breaking a Greater vow is a level 7 sin against Harmony (roll four dice). Moreover, doing so is often enough to sever the ties between totem and the Uratha who venerate it. At the very least, the totem will withdraw its favors until all of the offending Uratha perform the Rite of Contrition.

While fulfilling an Oath — both in spirit and letter — the avowed Uratha can call upon the power of oath

itself, regaining one Essence and one Willpower immediately. Moreover, they gain +1 to all die rolls for the scene. This bonus can be gained only once.

Example Greater Oaths:

- Swearing to come to the aid if [named locus] is attacked
- Promising to never enter a sacred site
- Vowing to aid the other group if [named enemy] attacks
- Swearing never to succor [named enemy]

Performing the Rite: This ritual always takes place at a tree, usually under a large tree. The ritual involves the exchange of some special token is crafted by one group for the other, commonly rings, armbands or torcs. The ritualists come together around a fire, sharing drink and food. Finally, the ritemasters of each group call their totems to manifest and then swear the oaths before them, asking the totem's blessing and cooperation as every member sacrifices an Essence to the group's totem.

Dice Pool: Harmony

Action: Extended. (Two successes per total Renown of the participants; each roll represents five minutes.)

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The rite fails immediately, and the ritemaster's totem is offended. It refuses all aid to the group until the ritemaster performs the Rite of Contrition. The ritual cannot be performed again for one month.

Failure: No successes are gained.

Success: Successes are accumulated. When the total is reached, the totems ritually bow to one another and the Greater Oath is cemented. Breaking a Greater Oath holds the same consequences as breaking a Lesser Oath (see above).

Exceptional Success: Numerous successes are gained, and the participants gain a preternatural sense when the oath is in danger of being broken. This may come as a rising of the hackles or a tingling sensation given off by the tokens of the oath.



VALKYRJA MOT

CHOOSERS OF THE SLAIN

Our proud name and legend is tainted by human myth and fancy. They would have you believe our grandmothers were flying about on the backs of grass-eating horses garbed in chrome breastplates and winged helmets. They know nothing of us — most even mistake the fact that the Old Norse for “valkyrie horse” was a play on words for wolf. This much they got right — when the wolves and ravens came to feed among the battle dead, we were not far behind.

The great wolf father, ancestor to us all, did not die. Long before the Forsaken struggled against him for leadership, he journeyed to the base of the World Tree at the heart of the Shadow and found the Well of Prophecy. Only sacrifice could stir its waters, so he dug out his right eye with his own claws so that he could see the future of the Uratha. There, painted in blood, he saw his children's bid for power, their assumption of his role. More importantly, he saw a last battle far in the future, when the fetters that hold back the idigam would be sundered and the fate of the world would depend upon one apocalyptic battle. He knew what he must do. He did not flinch from his painful sacrifice, neither do we.

To us, his chosen daughters, he gave the task of finding the best for him. Thus, we are called *Summis-urdu*, the choosers of the slain. That is our sacred duty, to send the greatest warriors to join his hall. At the death of a mighty warrior, we come to perform the Funeral Rite and speed them to the All-Father, Father Wolf in his den. Of course, we, too, will join our father's pack when the time comes, and, for that reason, we must master the arts of war as well.

Sometimes, only when in great need, our elders may call us to fight together for some cause. For this reason, we often train together, to learn our own special arts of war. Know this: when the Valkyries go to war, we go to victory, or to the hall of the father of us all.

Among the mots, this is one of the most prestigious lodges. Valkyrie is the most common name for them in the New World, though *Valkyrja* and *Wælcyrge* are more common in the Old. Their counsel bears great weight among the mots, and their mere presence on a battlefield

dominated by volk, especially fighting on one chosen side, can cause the other to relent. Even those who don't believe all the lore surrounding the *Summis-urdu* may fall back, fearing the wrath of Father Wolf. For these

reasons, the *Summis-urdu* are slow to form allegiances, slow to choose sides in an argument between Uratha. The *Summis-urdu* do their best never to insinuate themselves in politics, though they know they are fools to ignore it entirely.

Summis-urdu rarely lead packs, for their duties to their lodge often pull them away to seek the slain and fill the halls of their lord. They are most often betas, or battle leaders — their icy demeanor and fearlessness of death make them ideal for this role.

RATON SPIRITS

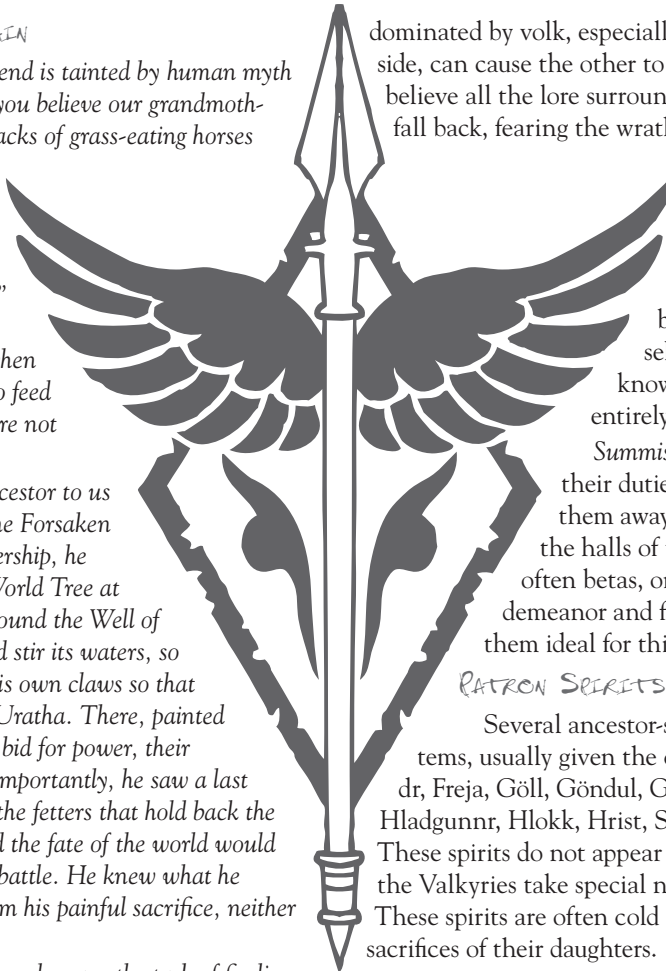
Several ancestor-spirits serve as this group's totems, usually given the customary names of Brynhildr, Freja, Göll, Göndul, Gudr, Gunn, Herfjoturr, Hildir, Hladgunnr, Hlokk, Hrist, Sigrdrifa, Sigrún and Svafa. These spirits do not appear often, but, when they do, the Valkyries take special notice and never refuse them. These spirits are often cold and sometimes demand great sacrifices of their daughters.

The Valkyrie regard the *aurora borealis* as a portent of their ancestor-spirits' approval. But the Valkyrie also often study flocks of ravens regarding the habits of local wolves, if present, looking for signs of their benefactors' approval and desires. Many Valkyrie care for ravens and feed them to keep them nearby.

JOINING THE LODGE

A female Uratha who suitably impresses a Valkyrie in skill of arms, Renown and her keen discernment may be asked to join. It is improper to solicit this mot for membership.

While skill at arms is a given for potential Valkyries, they look for more than Rahu to fill their ranks. Valkyries value all of the auspices, though Rahu, Cahalith and Ithaeur are the most common. The Cahaliths' natural ability for prophecy is well regarded. The Valkyries' dependency on rites and their constant need for new klaives makes Ithaeur a prime choice as well.





The initiate must pass three tests. The first test is one of Renown and is performed in secret. Simply put, a Valkyrie must approve of the applicant and pass the name on to an Elder who likewise approves. The Valkyrie's sponsor writes the applicant's name into the ledger of the Valkyria mot; even if the initiate fails, she becomes a likely candidate for their Funeral Rites.

Then comes the second test, a test of discernment. This test is also secret. The applicant is put into a situation in which she is asked to evaluate the character and skill of two warriors. If she is correct, she passes. To do this, the Valkyrie proctor will often go to some Uratha who has authority over the initiate, perhaps her alpha or a tribal elder, to enlist their cooperation in actually phrasing the question so that the Valkyrie may hear the applicant's answer.

It is only at this point that most applicants learn that they are being tested — which forewarns them of what is coming, the test of combat. Within the next month, the applicant will be called out by a Valkyrie, and the applicant must answer the challenge if she wants to join. The challenger places three ritual objects before the initiate: a knife, a wolf's canine and a drinking horn. Choosing the drinking horn means that the challenge is refused politely. There is no overt shame in this, but the applicant must provide the challenger with a feast to thank her for the honor the Valkyrie has given her. The Valkyrie rarely inquires as to why this invitation was declined. During the feast, the initiate may give a reason for her refusal and seek to be tested again, but most are not offered a second chance to join the *Summis-urdu*.

If she chooses the tooth, her Valkyrie proctor will immediately shapeshift and bite the applicant, and a hunt begins. The candidate gains a one-hour lead, and she must try to remain uncaught and unconquered by the *Summis-urdu* for 24 hours. The initiate cannot use human transportation or tools to evade the Valkyrie. If they meet, they will fight in wolf form. If the applicant shows her neck during the ordeal, she is disqualified. If she is judged to fight valiantly enough or successfully evades her pursuer, she wins.

Choosing the knife means ritual combat. The proctor is testing skill and control and, therefore, often fights defensively. Nevertheless, the fight is always a bloody affair, with archaic weapons — knife, sword, axe or spear provided by Valkyrie, if not owned by the applicant. The initiate must score an impressive wound (causing 3 or more Health levels) against her proctor while remaining on her feet and not shifting into Gauru — thus showing her skill at arms and her restraint.

The initiation is likewise secretive, involving the applicant's adoption by the All-Father, and is always performed under the northern lights in specially prepared circles of stone. The initiation's proceedings are never spoken about, but the initiation has a stunning effect, as it turns the applicant's wolf-coat snow-white.

Prerequisites: Strength or Dexterity •••, Brawl ••, Weaponry •••, Purity ••, Glory ••; petitioner must be female

Benefits: Lodge members are awarded with a minor klaive (spear or sword) upon joining.

The Valkyries' close connection with their ancestors means that Valkyries have affinity with the dead and can call upon their insight. Death and Inspiration Gifts become part of that character's affinity lists.

The Valkyries also have their own version of the Funeral Rite. Valkyries only preside over the funerals of those the Valkyries feel will help the All-Father. The body is ritually burned with its weapons, and blood is spilled, normally that of domestic animals but sometimes raven or eagles to honor the greatest warriors. The rite is in every way similar to the normal Funeral Rite, unless the Valkyrie achieves an exceptional success. When this happens, one of the blessed Vettier, the ancestor-spirits of the Valkyries, appears, leading a pack of midnight-black wolves. They then bear the werewolf's body and spirit into the ancestor realm of Asgard.

The death of a valiant warrior in a chronicle is a great way to get this mot involved in your campaign. Imagine the scene of a Valkyrie interrupting funeral preparations, or even the rite itself so as to send a player's friend to Valhalla....

VALKYRIA MOT RITES

SCENT OF THE EINHERJAR (•)

The Einherjar is the name of the fallen heroes who reside in Valhalla. This rite allows Valkyries to catch the scent of a fallen hero so that they may perform the Funeral Rite for her. This rite also allows them to identify whether a fallen Uratha has been selected. They will not use this skill to attempt to identify an Uratha they feel is unworthy.

Performing the Rite: This rite is very simple. It is performed by invoking the Vaettir and slowly turning in a circle clockwise, scenting the quadrants.

Cost: 1 Essence

Dice Pool: Harmony

Action: Instant

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The rite fails and cannot be used for 24 hours.

Failure: The rite fails; the point of Essence is lost.

Success: The scent of the fallen immediately springs to the nose of the Valkyrie. Any within 10 yards may be identified immediately. Any likely candidates for the Funeral Rite from farther away must be tracked. The *Summis-urdu* may catch the scent of someone within one mile per point of Primal Urge.

Exceptional Success: A raven or wolf appears to identify the dead, and the Valkyrie gains +4 dice to perform the Funeral Rite for the identified Uratha.

Suggested Modifiers

Modifier Situation

- +2 The Uratha fell in battle
- +2 If the dead Uratha's Brawl or Weaponry skill is above 3
- +1 The Uratha fell in a heroic struggle fulfilling the Oath of the Moon
- +1 Per point of Primal Urge possessed by the dead that is *above* 5
- 2 If neither of the dead Uratha's Brawl or Weaponry Skills are at least 3
- Per point of Primal Urge possessed by the dead that is *below* 5

WAKEN THE FELL WOLF (•••)

In days of old, the Valkyries often hunted and warred at the head of their own pack of feral wolves. This rite was more commonly used before the modern age, when more people owned large numbers of working dogs and wolves were more common, but still has its uses even now. With this rite, a Valkyrie may temporarily waken the predatory spirit of domestic dogs or enhance the prowess of a group of wolves — creating a temporary pack for herself, normally for the purpose of hunting or defense.

Valkyries do not use this rite lightly. Although they will use it to battle a strong foe, they will not throw away the lives of these animals. Once the animals are ennobled with this ritual, the Valkyries treat even mere dogs as wolf-brothers.

Performing the Rite: This ritual must be performed at night. The subject(s) can be from 1–10 large dogs, up to no more than two dogs per dot of the ritualist's Primal Urge. The ritemaster must keep the dogs within a ritual circle about five yards wide, drawn in fresh earth with the jawbone of a wolf. During the ritual, the ritualist coaxes the dogs into a group howl. Each dog must be fed a pound of raw meat and offered water at the rite's conclusion.

Cost: 1 Essence

Dice Pool: Harmony

Action: Extended. (10+ 1 success per dog; each roll represents one minute.)

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: All successes are lost. The rite cannot be attempted again for 24 hours.

Failure: No successes are added.

Success: Successes are gained toward the required total. Once the total needed is reached, the canines transform over the period of one minute. They do not turn into dire wolves, but they do grow more feral looking, as their fur thickens and darkens and their musculature is enhanced. They do not become mindless killing machines, but become more mannered than most domestic dogs — developing the social skills of wolves. The dogs also remember their heritage and skills as hunters and predators. Canines affected gain one dot of Stamina, Dexterity,

Survival and Stealth for the rite's duration. Use the dog write-up from the **World of Darkness Rulebook**, p. 203.

These feral hunters always recognize the ritualist as their alpha and are unflinchingly loyal. They will not stray more than 50 yards from her side while affected. The ritualist may communicate with them as if they were wolves. To take advantage of this, she often switches to Urhan to guide them in a hunt and use wolf-speak; Urshul can be used to issue commands in battle. She does not gain any magical control over them, only their loyalty. The ritualist in these forms gets + 3 to Manipulation + Animal Ken rolls to communicate with her "pack." She can still attempt to interact with them per the normal rules for Animal Ken (see the **World of Darkness Rulebook**, p. 78, and **Werewolf: The Forsaken**, p. 173).

The rite's effects last until dawn or the ritualist dies.

Exceptional Success: Considerable successes are gained. If the final roll brings the total to five greater than is needed, the dogs gain a dot of Strength as well.

VALKYRIA MOT STORY HOOKS

- **The Einherjar:** What the Valkyries do not tell others, even their initiates, is that they sometimes send great warriors to Valhalla without their consent. This practice is much debated within the mot. A character within the Valkyries is asked to make a friend or acquaintance an Einherjar, before his time. Will she give the person a chance to die a hero's death in battle or merely murder him? Can she convince her superiors to choose another victim? Perhaps the only way to save him is to humiliate him, make him unworthy. Can she do that without forsaking her vows to Father Wolf?

- **Fallen Angel:** The prideful Valkyries are not immune to degeneration. Perhaps one forced to kill a beloved is driven mad and murderously insane and begins a campaign to send the best to Valhalla. Such culling of the best Forsaken could bring about another tragedy such as the Brethren War. She must be stopped. A Valkyrie comes to the pack and asks for the characters' help with this loathsome task. Perhaps others, such as the Maeltinet, now aid the fallen *Summis-urdu*.

- **Death of an Eagle:** A character, possibly a Hunter in Darkness, gets drawn into a murder of an DNR ranger, only to discover that he had tried to arrest a Valkyrie for capturing and killing an eagle as part of a ritual sacrifice. Is it too late to cover up the crime? Does the character really want to?





SEMIRA MICCI

Auspice: Cahalith

Tribe: Bone Shadow

Mental Attributes: Intelligence 2, Wits 2, Resolve 3

Physical Attributes: Strength 3 (4/6/5/4), Dexterity 4 (4/5/6/6), Stamina 3 (4/5/5/4)

Social Attributes: Presence Manipulation (1/2/0/2), Composure 3

Mental Skills: Academics 3, Computer 1, Medicine (Emergency Care) 2, Occult 1, Politics (Uratha) 1, Science 1

Physical Skills: Athletics 2, Brawl 3, Fire arms 1, Stealth 1, Survival 1, Weaponry (Klaive) 3

Social Skills: Animal Ken (Wolf) 3, Empathy 1, Intimidation 2, Persuasion (Seduction) 1, Socialize 1

Merits: Fetish (Klaive Spear) 3, Language (English, French, First Tongue, Italian, Tigrigna, Arabic is native) 5, Resources 3

Primal Urge: 3

Willpower: 6

Harmony:

Essence Max/Per Turn: 12/1

Virtue: Charity

Vice: Lust

Health:
(10/12/11/8)

Initiative:
(7/8/9/9)

Defense: 2 (2/2/2/2)

Speed: 12
(13/16/19/18)

Renown: Wisdom 1, Glory Purity

Gifts: (1) Death

Sight, The Right Words, Know Name, Warning Growl; (2) Ghost Knife, Traveler's Blessing

Rituals: 2; **Rites:** Funeral Rite, Rite of Dedication, Rite of the Spirit Brand, Scent of the Einherjar; (2) Call Gaffling, Rite of Contrition

Semira Micci's mother was from Eritrea, and her father of Italian descent. Semira grew up a Catholic in a privileged household in Asmara. She was a wild child, and her good looks and money helped her scratch most of her itches, even in the relatively conservative atmosphere of Asmara.

As soon as she was old enough, she was sent to boarding schools in Europe, though her passions saw to it that she was kicked out of several, eventually ending up

in medical school. It was during a skiing vacation on the continent that her Change occurred and she began her life as an Uratha. She finished school, barely, but rather than start a practice servicing the rich, she has instead become a healthcare worker vagabond — plugging holes in one hospital's ER for a few months, then moving on to work as the resident doctor at some seasonal resort. This is much to her parent's dismay, but they still keep money in her accounts.

Semira became involved in a huge territorial conflict through a wolf-blooded lover she had taken. The end result was the decimation of both packs and the death of her lover. A Valkyrie was asked to help mediate the results. Surprisingly for a Valkyrie, what impressed Semira's sponsor first was Semira's struggle to save a fallen Uratha. She just did not give up and used both her medical training and her Gifts to bring him back. She chose the tooth

during her initiation into the mot and led her proctor on a grueling chase through the Alps.

Semira's natural inclination as a healer has been a constant struggle for her. On more than one occasion, she had the power to bring back a dying warrior, only to be required to let him die. This troubles her greatly.

Semira presents a striking figure. Her innate vivacity has been tempered by her Change, her initiation into the Valkirja mot and the events that led up to it. Her demeanor has changed, cooled, though her Uratha zeal for life still burns just beneath the surface. She has light brown skin and is very tall, which conceals a lot of her muscle mass. Unlike many Uratha, she has keen fashion sense, probably due to her privileged upbringing. Though her girlish coquettishness has been burned away, she can still turn heads and command the attention of most men.



EIWAZ MOT

TO WAKE THE NOBLE WOLF

When you were human, you were called a thug, idiot, junkie, uneducated scum. Some of you realized that what you were experiencing was racism. And you, correctly, grasped that this is the way of the universe: animal versus animal, lion versus wildebeest — a fundamental law of existence — us against them.

Then Father Wolf called out to you and your godlike strength, your place in the universe was revealed. You were Changed and brought into the People. You now knew that you were no longer white or black, Jew or Christian, Nazi or nigger. You are the monster, the lord of spirit and flesh, top of the food chain, the alpha predator, one born to hunt, to rule.

Yet, still blinded by the human sack that contains us, most of the People would have you deny your greatness. This is wrong. If you haven't begun to suspect it, and I know most you have, there is something you need to know, flat out. There are traitors among the People, traitors among the Forsaken.

Will you be their dupes? Will you betray your true race? Or will you serve it?

Let me tell you how...

The Eiwaz Mot teaches its members that they are the apex of creation, that others are trying to hamper their natural potential, hinder them with the laws of humans or their self-serving interpretations of the Oaths of the Moon. The Pure want to kill them, and most of the Forsaken want to enslave them. Only the Eiwaz Mot offers them freedom and protection; all that is asked of them is loyalty.

Some of the younger members of the mot, many recruited from racist groups, are slow to drop the trappings of those subcultures. (Actually, trusted members are encouraged to keep some of those contacts that might aid the mot.) But the Change and the teachings of the

mot help shift the focus of the members' hatred.

The Uratha become the new racial paragons, and everyone else are degenerates.

The true purpose of the mot is power — power over the lives of its members and over an increasingly widespread criminal organization. To the rank-and-file lodge member this presents itself as power of the group, the power over one's enemies. The power to gloat over your prey with your boot on its neck. The heady draught offered to the leadership is power over fanatically loyal mot members.

The Eiwaz Mot emerged from the shadows about 50 years ago, and now has a noticeable presence.

Many Forsaken regard them as a sick joke, or possible Bale Hounds.

Others suspect that the Eiwaz Mot are a recruitment tool of the Pure, a Fire-Touched ploy to shuttle members into their ranks when only their rituals can save the degenerate from becoming Zi'ir.

Unfortunately for the packs and lodges that suspect the Eiwaz Mot, their recruitment has remained high enough — especially among the newly Changed in economically depressed regions — that many outsiders keep their suspicions to themselves. The Eiwaz Mot's internal loyalty remains incredibly high. No disaffected members have come to reveal their secrets — or survived long enough to do so.

In the best of circumstances, an Eiwaz Mot pack tends to stretch the tenets of the Oath of the Moon, especially the most dangerous to neighboring packs, "The herd must not know." Packs within the Eiwaz Mot often make money through selling themselves out as enforcers and from acts of petty crime. Some eventually become adept at this lifestyle, but, early on, they may cause so much trouble that they are forced to move territories. The more successful packs within the mot often go on "hunts," crime sprees in other cities, before returning to their dens. They learn to master Uratha talents to cover their tracks.



Strangely, the tendency of their younger packs to lose territory through legal entanglements or by making enemies among other local packs ends up being a strength rather than a weakness. Moreover, this tendency makes the Eiwaz Mot an even greater threat to established packs. The mot provides a means and venue for these packs to temporarily bond together to take an established pack's territory, should these packs lose their own. In fact, the leaders of the Eiwaz Mot have the ability to pull this trigger on a pack that gets in their way. The mot may be small, but its ability to eventually pull two, three or four packs together makes them very dangerous.

PATRON SECRET

The leadership claims they serve a creature called Noble Wolf. Noble Wolf is not spoken of by the Firstborn; some believe that Noble Wolf is a potent, if degenerate, ancestor-spirit. Noble Wolf appears among a pack of shadowy dire wolves, at their heart, yet somehow apart, aloof. His power lies not in fang or muscle, but in his look and his voice. His first words are always quiet, restrained, ordered, yet his edicts seem to echo in the minds of those who hear him — and all who do, only wish to serve and please him.

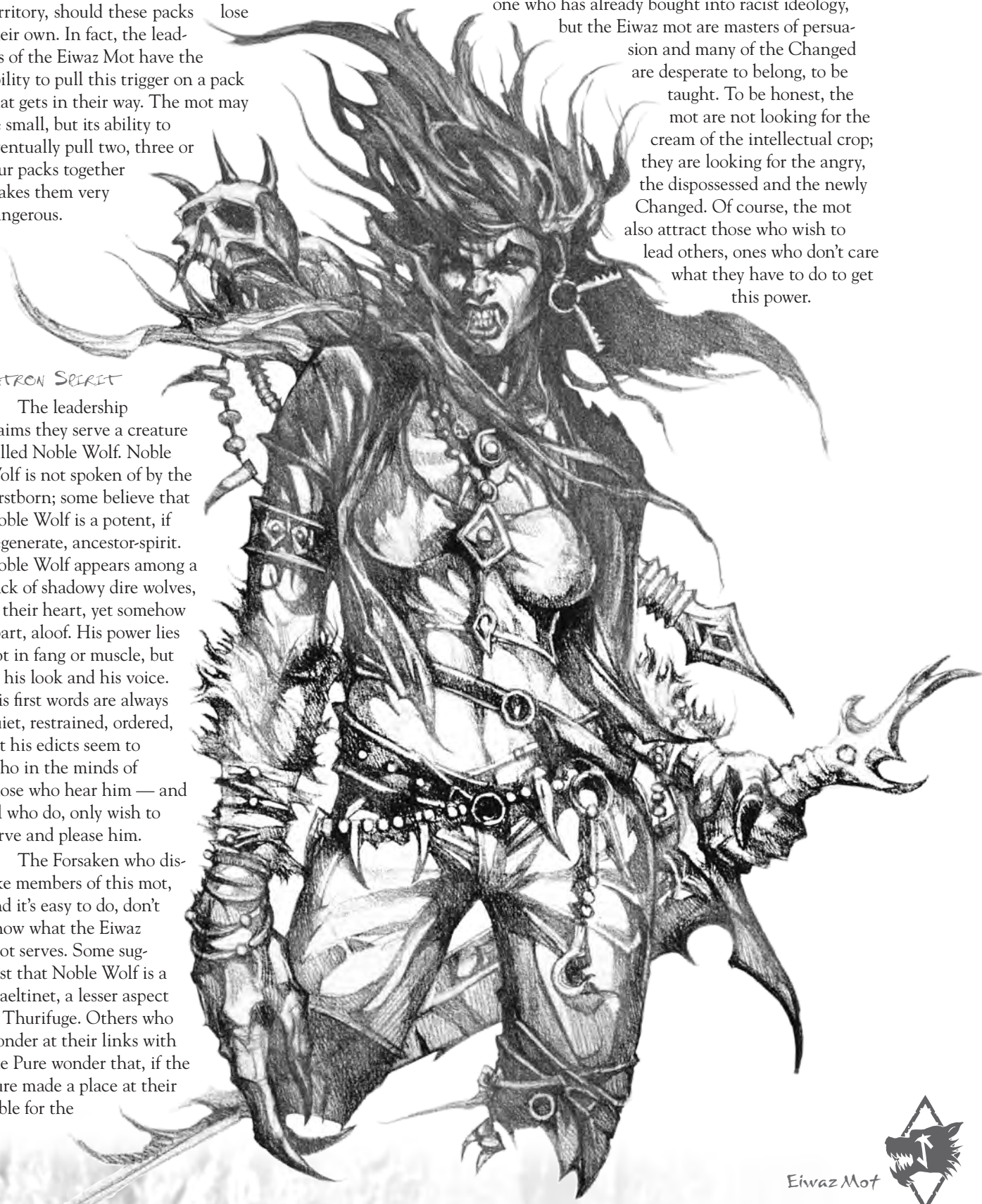
The Forsaken who dislike members of this mot, and it's easy to do, don't know what the Eiwaz Mot serves. Some suggest that Noble Wolf is a Maelinet, a lesser aspect of Thurifuge. Others who wonder at their links with the Pure wonder that, if the Pure made a place at their table for the

Eiwaz Mot, would they go over to the Pure? (Of course, the Ivory Claws especially aren't likely to make the offer.)

Perhaps they have found something... else to serve.

JOINING THE LODGE

Members of the Eiwaz Mot are always on the lookout for recruits. Sometimes the mot get lucky and find someone who has already bought into racist ideology, but the Eiwaz mot are masters of persuasion and many of the Changed are desperate to belong, to be taught. To be honest, the mot are not looking for the cream of the intellectual crop; they are looking for the angry, the dispossessed and the newly Changed. Of course, the mot also attract those who wish to lead others, ones who don't care what they have to do to get this power.





While most of the mot's recruits are Ghost Wolves, the Eiwaz Mot do have many members, especially among the Blood Talons. The mot aren't trawling for established Uratha or the well-educated to fill their packs. They are looking for Uratha who have been battered by life and crave simple answers to all their problems: "Hate the weak, help your brothers, fuck the rest."

Essentially, the lodge runs parallel recruitment efforts. The first and most overt is for rank-and-file members. Unlike many lodges, the Eiwaz Mot actively recruits. They nurture contacts in various criminal gangs and racist organizations, looking for prospective members within these subcultures who might show signs of the Change. These groups also help the mot in their various criminal enterprises.

The key to the mot is not racism, which is merely one of their tools — a blunt one at that. The leadership takes advantage of the low self-esteem and ignorance that its members had in their human lives, coupled with their new need to belong to a pack. Channeling the anger of newly Changed Uratha taken from these circumstances is relatively easy. After all, all Uratha have to face a new reality; this is theirs.

Full initiation involves hunting and killing an enemy of the Eiwaz Mot and tearing out its throat in front of his mentors. The victim is chosen carefully, then kidnapped and taken to a secluded area for the hunt. How or if the human is truly an enemy is unknown, and asking questions is a sign of disloyalty.

Once the kill has been made, the initiate is bound so that even shapeshifting will not free him. Then, lodge-mates ritually beat him within an inch of his life. Once he awakens, he is then told that this beating is the last unanswered blow he will ever take again. From now on, he is part of the chosen race, and each stain or bruise will be answered tenfold by his lodge brethren or him.

The Eiwaz Mot is almost always organized into packs — although a few members of this lodge do attempt to hide themselves among the Forsaken. These members are the most dangerous of the group, most likely among its leaders. They effectively have a shadow pack made up of Eiwaz volk, while actually belonging to another pack. This is always done for a reason: to gain intelligence, provide cover and provide access to likely converts.

The mot's leadership seems to most of the membership to be selected from the alphas of the packs within the mot; some leaders are. But the truth is that many of its leaders are groomed and selected from the start to lead due to their abilities and, most importantly, their desire to control others. Once indoctrinated, they are moved into a pack and take the reigns of power. They, in turn, are visited by Noble Wolf's emissaries. These leaders vie for prestige among themselves, but there is said to be an alpha of alphas who plans the group's overall strategy.

Prerequisites: Strength ••• or Manipulation ••• (for those selected to be leaders)

Benefits: The experience costs of raising or purchasing these Skills — Brawl, Firearms and Larceny — become new dots x2 instead of new dots x3.

Spirits of desperation, hate and pain are the mot's totem's companions, and members of the mot gain +2 dice for rolls to deal with such spirits. (Of course, Eiwaz Mot Ithaeur reject the effete classifications of spirits, only grouping them into strong/weak, predator/prey categories.)

Those chosen to be leaders gain affinity for both the Dominance and Inspiration gift lists. These are taught by Noble Wolf's emissaries and mot ancestor-spirits.

Drawback: Members of this lodge participate in two Lesser Oaths, promising to come to each other's aid in combat and to never refuse the order of a superior.

EIWAZ MOT STORY HOOKS

- **Prey:** One of the packmember's human friends or loved ones is targeted for an Eiwaz Mot initiation hunt. Will the character find his friend in time? Perhaps his or her death will inspire an investigation into the circumstances — leading the players' pack into a confrontation with the Eiwaz Mot.

- **Redemption:** This hook works best if the players have recently been helping a new Changed who was a member of some racist organization. Just when they finally get the cub's head on straight, the Eiwaz Mot shows up to complicate the indoctrination. What if the players get caught in a bidding war for a newly Changed and troubled Uratha? What if the struggle took the form of a debate between an insidiously clever member of the Eiwaz Mot, who does not play fair, and the pack?

- **A Helping Hand:** The players find themselves in need of help, and the only Uratha around are members of the despised Eiwaz Mot. Perhaps the Eiwaz Mot unknowingly has the key to a mysterious and important puzzle; perhaps a plague of Beshilu means that the pack cannot be choosey about whom it asks for help. Of course, the leaders of the Eiwaz Mot will make the price for their aid dear — such as the right to educate any one person of their choosing that goes through the Change in the pack's territory.

KAROL NICOLE

Auspice: Irraka

Tribe: Iron Masters

Mental Attributes: Intelligence 2, Wits 2, Resolve 2

Physical Attributes: Strength 3 (5/7/6/5), Dexterity 3 (5/6/7/7), Stamina 2 (6/7/7/6)

Social Attributes: Presence 2, Manipulation 3 (2/3/0/3), Composure 2

Mental Skills: Academics 1, Crafts 1, Investigation 1, Oc-
cult 1, Politics (Uratha, Human) 1

Physical Skills: Athletics 1, Brawl 2, Drive 1, Firearms 2,
Stealth 1, Survival 2, Weaponry (Knives) 2

Social Skills: Animal Ken 1, Intimidation 1, Persuasion 1,
Socialize 1, Streetwise 2, Subterfuge 1

Merits: Allies (Local Racial Supremacists) 1, Contacts (Po-
lice) 1, Striking Looks 2, Resources 1, Totem 2

Primal Urge:

Willpower:

Harmony: 5

Essence Max/Per Turn: 11/1

Virtue: Faith

Vice: Greed

Health: 7 (9/11/10/7)

Initiative: 5 (5/6/7/7)

Defense: 2 (2/2/2/2)

Speed: 11 (12/15/18/17)

Renown: Cunning 3, Purity 1

Gifts: (1) Sense Malice, Know Name, Left-handed Spanner,
Loose Tongue; (2) Sand in the Eyes; (3) Playing Possum

Rituals: 1; **Rites:** Rite of Dedication, Rite of the Shared
Scent, Lesser Oath

Carol was born to an addicted mother who ended up
in the stable of a Jamaican gang. By the time Carol was
16, her mother was dead. Carol's incredible good looks
and nonexistent home life marked her for the same kind
of fate. The government stepped in and took her son away
after her first arrest for prostitution; she was 18.

That's when Mike appeared. He did not know her, but
he paid Carol's bail and picked her up outside the jail. She
figured that he was like the rest and tried to pay him back
that night, but, for the first time in her life, a man kicked
her out of his bed, telling her that he had come to give her
back her heritage, not cop a lay.

He told her what she was becoming, and then he bit
her. Carol ran from the place, naked and terrified, and the
night took her. She Changed, and she ran, jumping fire
escapes, over roofs. She ran faster than cars that night,
and still Mike followed. When she stopped running, he
came to her with clothes and started to tell her the truth.
She was not trash, she was not a whore, she was a goddess
— a miracle of purity in the cesspool of our world.

Later, he took her to a house outside of town, one
with fences and guard dogs, with guns and alarms. He
showed her the man who lived inside, the man in a silk
suit who employed her pimp. Two months later, Carol and
her new friends in the Eivaz Mot went into the compound
and got him.

Carol hunted him down in an old factory complex
as part of her initiation, taking his hands off first. After
becoming a full member, she changed the spelling of her
name to "Karol" to reflect her new life.

A year later, Mike sent Karol to a neighboring city
to spread the word and keep a lookout for likely converts.
She has done well, using her good looks to form a few con-
tacts and sending one newly Changed Uratha into Mike's
welcoming arms.





CHAPTER



THE PALE HOUNDS

The room stank. It reeked. Ever since the Change, Olivia had felt less human repulsion at the smells of carrion and musk, but the sticky, darkened room smelled like a slaughterhouse left in the sun. The smell wasn't just the stench of blood and the swollen, sweaty werewolf who lolled in the shattered couch – the smell was even piss and shit, either that of the prey that had been brought here or just the occupant's laziness. It was enough to be grateful for the pale and diluted senses of Hishu.

Olivia sniffed carefully, her face solemn and masklike despite the room's reek. "Piggy. I see you've been able to maintain yourself in the manner to which you are accustomed."

The obese werewolf snorted with mirth. "Oh, Olivia. So sharp and acidic."

"Mmm." She ran a fingernail across a long femur lying on the side table, tracing the gnawed grooves. "Poisonous, even."

"Dear, dear. Is that what you think? Oh, Olivia, I don't look on you as food. You'd be far too gamey, not nearly tender enough. Too much exercise, too many predator's hormones." He chortled and dug a finger between the greasy rolls of his belly.

"Well, don't get too condescending, Piggy. You're going to be getting some exercise of your own soon enough. You do remember exercise, don't you?"

"Of course. You don't think I only order delivery?" He rolled forward surprisingly easily, powerful muscles churning beneath the fat. "Now you have me curious, though. Why call on me?"

"I'm not just calling on you." She picked up the femur, waved it through the air experimentally. "I've already talked to Thomas and Eliza. After you, I'm going to call on Cajur, and I've sent a messenger to the Twins. Circumstances are to that point."

"Goodness. A family reunion. How exciting." He glanced around the room hungrily, saw a hand poking out from a heap of rags and lunged. Before he could reach it, Olivia's heel came down on his wrist.

"Easy, Piggy," she said. "Save some room. I'm going to need you to have an appetite."

SORROW IS AELD THE ELDEST CALLD OF SIN.

— JOAN WEBSTER, “THE DUCHESS OF MALFE”

The world is a vile place. Nothing can change this. For every good act, a thousand evils occur. For every love, there are a hundred hates. For every true joy, there is a deeper despair. The world is fouled and poisoned by the nature of life. Life is struggle and pain and death. The world is spiraling down through this cycle, for nothing can be done to change life itself.

We know this now. We knew it at the beginning.

We were mad, then, the pulse of harmony distant and faint, drowned out by the truth. But the truth is harsh, and we had more to do before surrendering our minds to the sweet succor of the Wounds. Then came the emissaries of the Maeljin. The darkest beings in creation sent their avatars, the Maeltinet, to show us the way.

Soon it was our turn to show what we had learned. We stalked the Lunes, and we caught them. Under the dark moon we tricked the Irralunim, under the sickle moon we lured the Ithalunim, under the broken moon we drove the Elunim mad, under the gravid moon we seduced the Cahalunim and as the moon rose full, fat and bloody, we beat the Ralunim into submission. We took them to the Wounds, away from their clinging mother's sight, and we taught them.

Oh, yes, the Lunes learned well. We taught them about pain, about sacrifice and about that final moment of bliss before death. Spirits do not die the way fleshy things do — and yet, the Lunes learned their lessons well.

We left the Wounds drunk with revelation. We were the earthly servants of the Maeljin, and we had flayed the Lunes so that they might teach us secrets that no werewolf should know. Then we walked among the Forsaken, and have done so ever since. Neither the Lunes nor our sins against what the fools call “harmony” betray us anymore. Nothing betrays the Asah Gadar. We glide through hunting grounds like moonlight through a pond, and we paint the Shadow in the blood of the innocent. The Forsaken see us as packmates, rivals and foes, but never what we truly are.

Someday, they will.

HOWLING TO A POLLUTED MOON

In the World of Darkness, the Tribes of the Moon battle the Pure, Forsaken fight Forsaken and pack attacks pack. The underlying threat that every werewolf has to accept when he deals with others of his kind is that the potential for violence and fury exists only a step away. Worldviews and perceptions color a Uratha's reality, meaning that clashes of ideals are in no short supply between the People, be they at the tribal, pack or the Forsaken and Pure level of division.

And then there are the Bale Hounds, who cling to secret perceptions that few outsiders could ever truly comprehend.

The Forsaken are desperate warriors, seeking redemption and hunting to survive. Opposing them are the Pure, dominant predators seeking to return the world and Shadow to a primal state. And, unseen through this ancient grudge walk the servants of sin, the Bale Hounds. They cling to both factions, working within and letting corruption fester in the foundations

of each ideology. These werewolves represent the sweet rot that infects both opposing causes, yet they are born from — and beholden to — neither Forsaken nor Pure. The Asah Gadar see the world differently, but they reside among their enemies in a near-seamless blend. The Bale Hounds who are detected and destroyed are the foolish, the unskilled and the weak. The skilled and dedicated remain undiscovered, running with their packs and working to darken the world in secret.

A Bale Hound's mindset is not utterly removed from the trials of the hunt and the nightly struggles that a pack must face. She is a werewolf like other werewolves, and the hunt is within her soul. However, the hunt masks a deeper darkness, for the Bale Hound's thoughts are elsewhere, reaching out into the darkest reaches of Shadow. In the blackness, she sees opportunity. In the chaos, she sees promise.

THE FALL FROM GRACE

To the Uratha, the presence of a Bale Hound in their territory is a grave matter indeed. These werewolves breed instability and unrest, weaving sorrow and disorder as they go. And, what's worse, they are so difficult to detect, making it no easy feat to put an end to their corruptive influence. Your friend, your brother, your packmate — any of them could be a Bale Hound and you would only find out when the damage was done. And few Uratha ever find out *why* the hurt and suffering was ever inflicted in the first place. What do the Bale Hounds do, really, beyond generate more work for Forsaken packs and destabilize the established order? Why do the Bale Hounds do this? What possible gains could there be to such actions? From an average werewolf's point of view, the Bale Hounds are dangerous, certainly, and unpredictable, definitely — but their actions make little sense.

Unsurprisingly, most of the Forsaken see the Bale Hounds as “falling” into darkness. To become one of the Asah Gadar is to succumb to some malevolent urge, whether the impetus was external, in the form of supernatural corrupter, or internal, in the sense of a weak will or a malice-driven personality.

But the Forsaken are not aware of the whole story. Some werewolves fall to temptation, some turn willingly to the darkness and still others are deceived through their own ignorance.

At the heart of the matter, many Uratha fight not only to survive, but also to fulfill the duty of their slain Father. They do so because they believe it is the way the world should be, and inaction will breed chaos and sorrow. The Bale Hounds might agree with that reasoning, but they have opened their eyes to what they believe are more far-reaching truths.

To the Bale Hounds, the Forsaken are wrong. The Pure are wrong.

In the end, the Asah Gadar believe both factions are going to lose.

According to the convictions of the Hounds, it is a foolish and futile dream to ever believe the world could be restored to the primal state of Pangaea. Millennia of separation and the Gauntlet itself render the Pure's eventual goal completely unreachable. And, on the opposing side of the coin, the Forsaken

are battling against the chaos of the Shadow Realm, steadily losing ground by creeps and crawls to the fact that new Wounds are opening each night. Eventually, so the Bale Hounds believe, the world itself will be Wounded. The tribes of both Pure and Forsaken can rage against their enemies all they wish; in the meantime, the Bale Hounds move amongst them both and work toward their own victory.

The perceived truth behind the actions of the *Asah Gadar* is simple enough, yet rarely understood by outsiders: the world is fundamentally and naturally inclined toward negativity and darkness.

From this point of view, life is not a balance between good and evil, *yin* and *yang* or the so-called natural order of predator and prey. Life is not a balance at all, and concepts such as fairness, unfairness, good and evil simply do not apply in the real world.

This philosophy is derived from the way the Bale Hounds see the world and its reflection. The physical world is full of so much more bitterness, sorrow, jealousy, laziness, hatred and anger than anything like true joy, happiness or love. The Shadow Realm is home to spirits of negative emotion, negative concepts, negative energy — and the Wounds themselves — with a far greater number of each permeating the second world over their more positive counterparts. Magath rise to add to the unbalanced chaos of the second world, and are rarely a benefit to any hunting ground. The same can all too easily be said of the Ridden or the alien *shartha*. In short, the world is fundamentally driven more by darkness than light. Wounds spread through the Shadow, crime rates rise, wars become worse and use more devastating weapons. An inexorable spiral into negativity is a difficult argument to refute.

The Bale Hounds believe this descent cannot be successfully opposed. Rather than fight to the death trying to prevent the inevitable, the *Asah Gadar* werewolves attempt to usher in the new era so that they are on the winning side. By fearing the end of everything, they fall into their new roles. By seeking to survive and stand by the victors, they willingly defect.

Some Bale Hounds view the cult's belief with a philosophical bent, seeing the logic and enlightenment in acting as they do. Others will work with a religious fervor no less than true fanaticism, seeing the work as their calling and their destiny. Still others, perhaps more pragmatic in nature, act in order to make themselves useful to the powerful spirits that will eventually rise to dominance: the Maeljin.

THE FAUSTIAN PACT

The Bale Hounds swear oaths to the Maeljin in much the same way that the Forsaken swear oaths to the Firstborn. But why do the Bale Hounds do this? What is to gain from allying with a totem of such hateful power and malicious influence? The Firstborn offer the chance at unification and the strength that such bonds can bring. A tribal tie can be a vague link in some territories, or a tight-knit expression of brotherhood in others, but, no matter what form the tie takes, the bond between werewolves is there. Some Bale Hounds organize in all-Hound packs, where their need to maintain secrecy is lessened due to a lack of contact with other Forsaken. But most Bale Hounds remain part of their packs, keeping their change of heart and altered allegiance secret from their packmates. How does the bond to a Maeljin affect these Bale Hounds when there are no others nearby to associate with?

The reasons for joining the *Asah Gadar* are many and varied, which only adds to the confusion of those werewolves who try to comprehend any motive behind the actions of the Bale Hounds.

Spiritual Instinct

On a fundamental level, a totem bond means the acceptance of a powerful spirit. This generates a sense of security and reassurance that the Bale Hounds appreciate perhaps more than the Forsaken. After all, a Bale Hound is walking a dangerous and treacherous path; any support and reinforcement is understandably appreciated. The guidance and patronage of a spirit-god of sin is no exception, and, on the most basic level, the bond between Bale Hound and Maeljin offers surety that the *Asah Gadar* is walking the right path.

The pact is material (if not physical) evidence — assurance — that a werewolf becoming a Bale Hound is dedicated and has the resolve necessary to act against his brothers in order to work toward his own malicious goals. Of course, the pact is also a constant reminder that the Maeljin might just be watching to see if events are unfolding to their desires.

The Bale Hounds are still werewolves first and foremost, despite turning their backs on the self-imposed role of the Forsaken or the hate-driven duties of the Pure. Instinct, logic and plain common sense drive werewolves to form bonds with spirits. It's a matter of power and survival. For the Bale Hounds to do any less would be living in ignorance of their own spirit-halves. Allies are rare enough in the Shadow, and few come as powerful or influential as the Maeljin, especially if there are Wounds torn open in the Shadow Realm nearby.

A Method in the Madness

To serve one of the Maeljin is also to declare just how a Bale Hound intends to work. True, even without a totem bond, a Bale Hound's sinister efforts directly empower the Maeljin, but the tie between spirit and werewolf serves to reinforce and enhance the flow of contact and communication between them. The totem is a powerful signifier of the Bale Hound's ethics and goals as she moves through Forsaken territory, sowing seeds of corruption. There is no clearer avowal of just which side she is on in his dealings.

Forsaken might not recognize (let alone respect) that connection, but spirits tainted by the Essence of a Wound are wise not to antagonize a Maeljin's werewolf servants. Whether a tainted spirit is crazed, rendered incapable of reason or too outright alien-minded to understand the presence of a werewolf, on some level the spirit will recognize the link that the Bale Hound has to the gods that feed from Wounds. More coherent and reasoning spirits will be able to see the link much clearer, and can possibly be coerced into working with the Bale Hound — for a price, of course. No matter who you are, or what beings you serve, the laws of hunter and hunted, spirit and werewolf still apply.

Loneliness

Werewolves are a breed apart from both wolves and humans, but the Uratha share the social drives of their human sides, reinforced and heated by the wolf-mind instincts within each of the People. While a few do walk the path of the lone wolf, by choice or otherwise, doing so is an unnatural and dangerous life to live. The Maeljin always find new servants among those werewolves who turn to dark spiritual power out of loneliness.

Though fragmented, Uratha society is based on social units entirely dedicated to supporting individual members. Beyond the

level of pack is the fact that recognition and respect from other Uratha is a fundamental aspect of interaction within the culture, worked through systems of Renown. Everything in a werewolf's heart tells him that he should be *part of something*, and those who are part of Uratha life for some time feel the bite of loneliness that much harder than any newly Changed werewolf ever could. Weeks, months, sometimes even years can pass between the destruction of one pack and the joining of another. In these instances, perhaps after the loss of a pack through violence, bitter disagreements or even exile, a werewolf could all too easily find himself walking the path of a Bale Hound simply because the only other option is to be alone in a world that hates him.

Never mistake the fear and desperation of being utterly alone, especially when so much of a werewolf's life depends on being part of a pack for support and survival, and part of a complex culture no one else can ever understand.

Ignorance

The definition of "Bale Hound" as "a werewolf who serves the Maeljin" doesn't necessarily imply full knowledge. A werewolf who has made a pact with a spirit of lust in order to win over the woman of his dreams may never have heard the name "Carnala," but his actions make him a Bale Hound. Nobody, not even their fellow *Asah Gadar*, know just how many of these ignorant and solitary servants are out there.

But even among those who are organized, some Uratha join the Bale Hounds without truly realizing what they are getting into. The actual initiation must always be a conscious choice — one of the reasons the dangerous fundamentalism of the *Asah Gadar* is such a dedicated threat — but there will always be those among the People who don't see just how twisted the hearts of the Bale Hounds really are.

And once the Uratha join, it's too late to turn back.

When dark events cloud a territory and incite talk of the possibility that one of the *Asah Gadar* is near, some of the apocryphal stories that have always traveled from pack to pack involving werewolves who met grim ends while seeking to infiltrate the Bale Hounds are shared. Through bravery and naivety, some Uratha have tried to discover just what the Bale Hounds really are, what drives them and how they organize themselves. These stories, when told, never have happy endings.

Certainly, at times in history, there have been Forsaken (and perhaps even Pure) who have attempted to infiltrate the *Asah Gadar* — werewolves who willingly swear to serve the Maeljin, in order to learn the Bale Hounds' secrets and uncover just what is at the heart of this blackest of cults. Such attempts are doomed to failure. The Maeljin are not minor local totem spirits to be trifled with and deceived through sneaky misdirection and mere cunning. Any werewolf who believes she can join the Bale Hounds in order to change the actions of the sect from the inside, to learn the secrets of the *Asah Gadar* or to somehow turn the Bale Hounds against each other, is ending her life through her own naivety. Most Uratha making the attempt are driven hopelessly insane through communion with malicious spirit-gods or simply hunted and put down by true *Asah Gadar* before any such pathetic infiltration can even take place. And yet, some werewolves who make these attempts join in truth, once their eyes are opened to the truths that the Bale Hounds see so clearly.

Revenge

For the bitterest Uratha who have truly turned their back on their fellows, defection to the Pure (or Forsaken) or mere betrayal

isn't always enough. Uratha society is a constant struggle, and fraught with concepts alien to the human mind. While werewolves aren't truly human, not all of them come to terms with their new place in the world as easily as others. Some never accept it at all, and packs can shatter when one member can't take it anymore, with threats voiced and violence erupting in an instant.

Because of disassociation, hatred for the Forsaken and the desire for revenge upon former packmates, some Uratha fall to the Bale Hounds. Other Uratha might hold grudges because of past deeds that cannot be forgotten, and only the blackest vengeance can salve their ire. After all, seeds of darkness find fertile ground in such bitter and hateful souls, and any pack that laughs at another werewolf's whining howl of "I'll make you pay" would do well to look to the shadows once in a while, in case the promised vengeance takes a surprisingly dangerous form. The omega of any pack is the prime candidate for secretly falling to the *Asah Gadar* and seeking revenge because of abuse, but this is a simplification. Think of the Rahu forced to shoulder too much responsibility in battle, the Elodeth who must tirelessly keep the volatile pack from each others' throats night after night, the mistreated Ithaeur who begins to feel a disconnection from the world of flesh and spends nights listening to the whispers of hunger- and gluttony-spirits that promise satisfaction elsewhere. These are all prime candidates. Each and every one could hate his packmates so much that the gravest betrayal of all is also the most delicious revenge. The truly frightening aspect to the Bale Hounds is that they could be anyone at all: your sister, your pack leader or your own father, and you'd never know without keen senses and a lot of luck.

Survival

Finally, something must be said for all sentient life's prime urge: the desire to survive. This urge to live on and keep going is at the very heart of what it is to be a werewolf: the Hunt. The Forsaken literally live through a fight for survival, night after night, in a primal pattern of selfless duty and selfish survival. Some werewolves, unconcerned with the ethical or moral considerations of how they survive, simply take this to an extreme. Few Uratha have a totally clean conscience, so some werewolves turning to darker paths in order to keep walking is easy to see.

And it isn't such a huge leap from life as one of the Forsaken or the Pure. In the end, it all comes down to looking out for Number One, and staying alive to see another moonrise. If the best odds for making it through the Hunt one more night involve a little subtle treachery, then the desperate and the ambitious among werewolf society are always going to be tempted.

The Bale Hounds find no shortage of recruits from the ambitious, the desperate and the fearful.

STEALING RESOURCES

One of the key Bale Hound tactics is controlling resources important to the Forsaken, so the Bale Hounds can deny their enemies when need be, or allow access to potential allies or pawns for a price.

LocI

Defending a locus — especially a strong one — is never an easy feat. A variety of spirits will wish to feed at the site, and many Forsaken packs spend a serious amount of time reshaping the area around their locus and keeping the font itself free of parasites and rivals for the precious Essence. Hitting hard at a locus is a great way to destabilize and weaken a pack before the real slaughter can begin.

If the physical world nearby can be subtly “saturated” with violent acts over time, then the locus itself will become affected and altered. This is a difficult tactic to pull off, but damnably effective when a pack realizes that their locus is little more than a shoal in the Shadow. The trick is to create acts of pain and violence in the physical realm near the locus but hide them from the Forsaken nearby. A classic example of this could be a serial killer that no law enforcement or werewolf pack can track down. A Bale Hound could easily arrange for a murder- or death-spirit born from a Wound to Claim a mortal and create such a killer. A little chiminage and a suitable host could be all the incentive such a spirit needs; the scenario becomes all the more horrifying when a pack knows the murderer is nearby but can't track him down. Could their own relatives become victims?

Beyond this, another great way to deprive a pack of its locus is to lay siege to it with an army of spirits bribed through careful chiminage. These spirits, selected from those born in any Wounds in the general area, are ordered to regularly feed from the locus belonging to the pack. At the very least, this adds intense pressure to the Forsaken defenders who must battle the attacking spirits in addition to any regular trials they face. At worst, this means the locus is regularly siphoned of Essence (perhaps even completely drained) and leaves the werewolves clearly vulnerable.

LODGES

A novel way of harming a pack is to arrange for one or more of the members to be exiled from their lodges. A lodge is a superb network of strength and support for any werewolf, and arranging for one of the People to be banished from her allies and stripped of any unique powers she had is a bitter blow indeed. Banishment is perhaps one of the most personally spiteful options open to a Bale Hound, and, accordingly, difficult to arrange. The lodge totem must be deceived somehow, either

through summoning it directly or through a deception played out with one or more spirits allied with the totem.

If possible, a Bale Hound might be able to rely on another of the *Asah Gadar* who has already infiltrated the lodge (or use his influence if he himself is a member) to arrange for a werewolf to be banished somehow. The preferred method is false charges of treachery or violating the lodge's code.

FETISHES

While few Uratha truly rely on fetishes for survival, they are nevertheless very useful tools. To spitefully deny a werewolf or pack the use of their fetishes is a cunning tactic that opens all kinds of vulnerabilities. Such a move entails preparation, secret raids on homes, bribed spirit spies, ambushes in both the Shadow and the physical world and so on.

PACK TOTEMS

When push comes to shove, the glue that binds a pack together is the totem bond. Wound-born spirits threatened into service or bribed with chiminage are the foot-soldiers in this plot, and some Bale Hounds even manage to work with one or more of the Maeltnet to help coordinate efforts against multiple packs. When the time is ripe, the plan is unleashed and the “strike teams” of spirits move against the totems of every pack in the area, destroying the totems and leaving the packs vulnerable and on the edge of breaking up.

TO BITE THE HAND THAT FEEDS

Saying that a Bale Hound wants to work to promote his resonance of choice (or perhaps all negative resonance) in the world is easy enough, but it's another matter entirely to deal with how such a methodology transfers to a werewolf's life. One of the People sworn to the Maeljin embodies the influence of his



patron spirit, be it heart and soul in secret fanaticism or simply relating to his master's sinful motives on some primal, inner level. The bond is powerful and ever-present.

There is a lot of overlap in the personalities and intentions of the Bale Hounds. When one of the Uratha is sworn to the Maeljin of Sloth and another says her benedictions to the Maeljin of Pride, both werewolves might believe wholeheartedly that they are more deserving and simply purer of heart and deed than others of their kind. Always bear in mind that, although fundamental differences exist between the Maeljin, the Bale Hounds are werewolves with personalities first and children of the individual Incarna second. Few *Asah Gadar* are hollow shells that exist only to embody the sinful natures of their dark totems; such open fanaticism would never remain hidden for long, and the Forsaken would rise to challenge such darkness in the heart of a pack.

And, of course, many of the Bale Hounds begin their dark path with appreciable reasons. Few take the position that they themselves are "evil" (let alone "good") — it is all about thinking they are *right*. They just want to survive. They want to be on the winning side. They don't want to keep fighting a hopeless fight. They don't want to die in vain. They don't want to oppose what they see as the natural order. For some Bale Hounds, it is all about doing the right thing, even if it is only right for themselves.

For all their individuality, the Bale Hounds do feel the influence of their totems seep into their hearts more than any other Uratha do. The bond to the Maeljin changes a werewolf, and not for the better. It doesn't steal reason, attitude or personality — those aspects of the werewolf are already arguably twisted by the desire to be a Bale Hound, but the bond changes them nevertheless. Emotions deaden. Joy fades. Life becomes viewed through a tint of duty, pain and suffering. There is little pleasure in this outlook — not all of the *Asah Gadar* enjoy their foul work, but they slowly become affected by their Maeljin totem's primary Influence, and it bleeds into their personality in definite ways.

The Bale Hounds do not turn from their duty or shy from their unhealthy obsessions. The bond with the Maeljin takes the very real darkness within every werewolf, and twists it further, warping a Bale Hound into something much worse than his packmates could ever understand without experiencing it themselves. Once again, we see the true tragedy, for any werewolf can fall this way.

Every werewolf is capable of killing, but the Bale Hounds are more given to cold-blooded murder. This is a key difference between a Bale Hound and many of the Forsaken, for while killing a foe and causing death in fierce battle are accepted parts of life as a werewolf, arranging a murder through cold, fanatical preparation is beyond the pale for many. The Bale Hounds are certainly capable of rape or similar violation, though each would have his own reasons for such an act. The same can be said of cannibalism and torture; all a Bale Hound needs is a reason to do it — a reason that will further the cause of the Maeljin.

This is not because as a group the *Asah Gadar* are wild-eyed monsters desperately seeking to sin and cause pain. It is nothing so shallow. Bale Hounds are still, at their core, humans and werewolves. Their dark attitudes stem from the fact that the *Asah Gadar*, more than any other group among the People, give in to their basest urges and darkest inclinations in order to fulfill their goals. Few *Asah Gadar* wantonly slaughter or harm innocents unless doing so somehow serves their purpose. Careless or manic Bale Hounds — those indulging in overt depravity and openly challenging the Forsaken — are the exception to the cult's rule and are generally regarded as pathetic by their brothers and sisters.

The Bale Hounds still suffer for their offenses against their werewolf natures and their spiritual instincts — they still fall into Harmony imbalance and risk insanity for crimes against the soul. The difference between the Hounds and other werewolves is not an impunity to committing dark acts, but in the development of alternate ways to cope with the consequences.



OPENING WOUNDS

Bringing a territory in line with the Hounds' desires requires the people living there to be intensely miserable not just morose. The Bale Hounds seek violent outbursts of anger, depression intense enough to lead to suicide, lust depraved enough to make even the jaded and uninhibited blanch. Obviously, this kind of intensity is difficult to inspire, because if every day is a constant orgy of pain and angst, it rapidly becomes commonplace and makes improving the territory easier rather than harder. The Hounds certainly wish to open new Wounds in the *Hisil* in order to strengthen their power base, and they have long years of practice in doing so. Opening new Wounds requires localized bursts of negative emotion and behavior which conveniently means that a Bale Hound doesn't have to be consistently present in order to help a Wound open. All she needs to do is visit her targeted area (which has to be someplace already replete with such resonance; see p. 116 of **Werewolf: The Forsaken**) and encourage, subtly or otherwise, the behaviors that contribute to the area's spiritual decay. Human beings are normally more than capable of picking up on the area's vibe and helping things along, so the Bale Hound typically just needs to step sideway and kill or drive off any spirits in the area that might turn the place around.

Of course, one of the biggest dangers to nascent Wounds is the Forsaken. A pack that claims a territory that includes a flowering Wound will quickly work to close it, driving away the spirits of pain, lust or fear and patrolling the area to keep these *hithim* away. The Bale Hounds would love to see these meddlers gutted and put on display, but they outnumber the *Asah Gadar* by a wide margin. Fortunately, the Hounds have an easy solution — infiltrate the Tribes of the Moon and steer them away from the Wounds until they are too wide, too infected, to close.



The following section deals with the specific thoughts and deeds of werewolves sworn to the various Maeljin. Storytellers are free to chop and change the behaviors of their own *Asah Gadar* characters, but will likely find the guidelines below useful in ascertaining just how individual Hounds go about their business and how the bond to the Maeljin affects their actions.

The section below should be viewed more as a palette of sorts, with a mixture of personality traits to choose from when designing Bale Hound characters. There is no set Virtue or Vice system for the Bale Hounds to follow. Certainly, some *Asah Gadar* will fall prey to their totem's primary Influence and their own Vice will alter to reflect that, but it is by no means a standard trait among the cult. Storytellers should not feel limited by two-dimensional characters who exist only as extensions of their Vice.

BALE HOUNDS OF PSEULAK (LUL-RIAK)

Pseulak's Hounds are betrayers, backstabbers, liars and easily among the most treacherous creatures in existence. Deceit is no challenge for most Bale Hounds, who are required to keep the truth of their allegiances hidden from their packmates and fellow Uratha. For the Hounds of Deceit, the idea of deception blossoms from a secret necessity to a way of life. Anything can be achieved if the right words reach the right ears, and every being — spirit, mortal and werewolf alike — is so much easier to influence depending on what she is encouraged to believe.

Falling into the Maeljin of Deception's service is all too easy, for keeping secrets can become a way of life for any werewolf, and going from hiding one's true nature to learning the power that deception has over others is a small step. When all is said and done, the constant deceiving and misleading a werewolf may do can result in the Uratha himself becoming snared in his own web of lies.

The never-ending grind of having to maintain his secrecy (because "The Herd Must Not Know") can put intense stress on any werewolf's shoulders, as can the methods required to attain Cunning Renown. Deceiving local spirits or misleading other packs through means fair or foul can also take its toll on one of the People, eventually leading to an awakening in which the werewolf comes to realize that almost any of her goals can be achieved through misdirection and honeyed lies in the right ears.

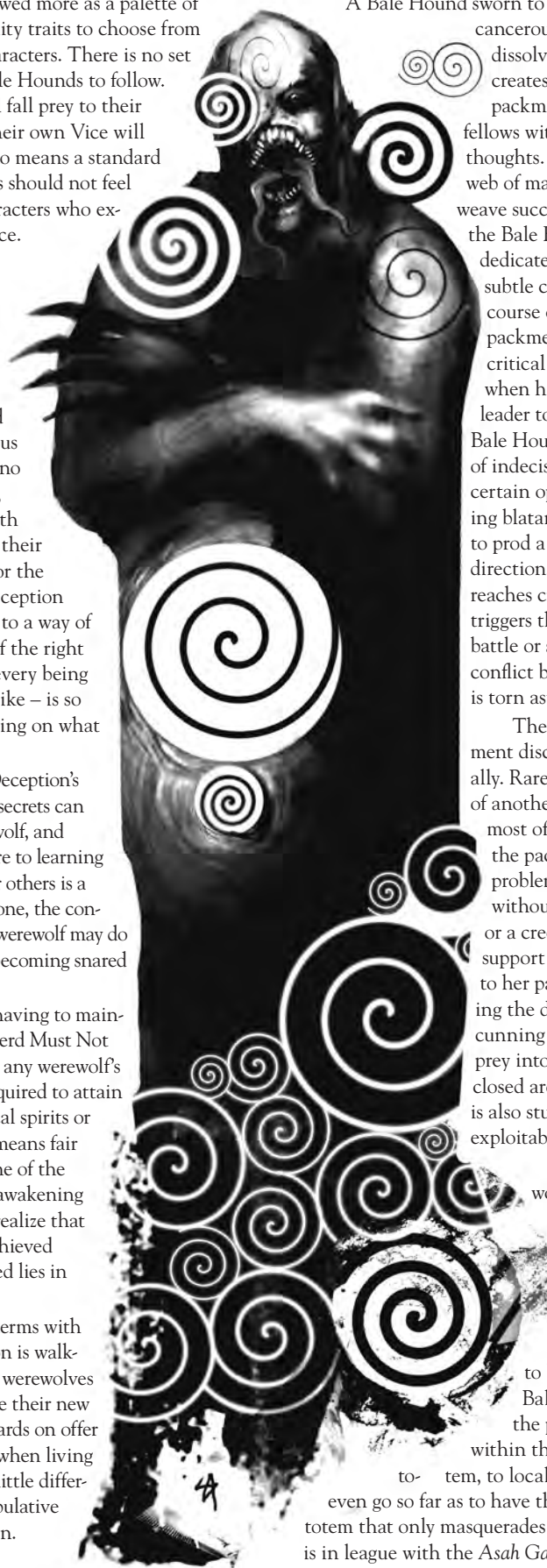
Any Uratha who comes to terms with the power of secrets and deception is walking a dangerous path — all some werewolves need is a slight temptation to take their new outlooks a little further. The rewards on offer can seem too tempting to refuse when living as a Bale Hound of Pseulak is so little different from life as a secretive, manipulative member of the Tribes of the Moon.

A Bale Hound sworn to the Maeljin of Deception is a cancerous influence within his pack. He dissolves the trust between werewolves, creates hesitation and doubt between packmates and fills the minds of his fellows with any number of misguided thoughts. For most Hounds, this elaborate web of malicious deceit takes many years to weave successfully. To outward appearances, the Bale Hound is a perfectly loyal and dedicated member of the pack. Some offer subtle criticisms and comments over the course of years, setting up discord between packmembers that will be revealed at a critical moment. A werewolf who hesitates when his alpha is in dire need dooms his leader to death because of indecision. A Bale Hound creates that single moment of indecision, feeding very subtle lies and certain opinions to his packmates — nothing blatantly obvious at first, but designed to prod a werewolf's thoughts in a certain direction. Eventually, when the tension reaches critical intensity, the Bale Hound triggers the trap. An arranged scene, be it a battle or social confrontation, instigates the conflict between packmembers and the pack is torn asunder from within.

The best of Pseulak's servants ferment discord by being everyone's closest ally. Rarely does one offer direct criticism of another werewolf, and instead spends most of her time being the 'go-to guy' of the pack, hearing out everyone's issues, problems and expressing her admiration without coming across as a lickspittle or a creep. She ingratiates herself as the support of the group, being the first to leap to her packmates' aid and always supporting the decisions of the others. Like any cunning hunter, she is not only leading her prey into a trap that will one day spring closed around the other werewolves, but she is also studying her prey and learning every exploitable weakness.

All the while, she is secretly working against her brothers and sisters. Some Bale Hounds create emotional chaos by seducing (or raping) a packmate's wolf-blooded spouse, sometimes even having a child with the victim and making sure the truth never comes to light before the right time. These Bale Hounds feed information about the pack, such as personal weaknesses within the group and the ban of the pack's

to-tem, to local hostile spirits. Some Bale Hounds even go so far as to have the pack bound to a treacherous totem that only masquerades as loyal to the pack, while secretly is in league with the *Asah Gadar*. Any kind of deceptive chaos is



plausible, including arranging for the pack to suffer the scrutiny of law enforcement, monster-hunters, complex legal proceedings or the local media.

After the web is successfully woven, the trap is finally sprung and the devastation caused is likely to destroy the pack forever, even if the werewolves somehow manage to survive the fallout. Totems turn on their pack, or are slaughtered by creatures from Shadow. In a single week, several of the packmembers' wolf-blooded relatives are found murdered. A beloved spouse reveals that she had an affair and the pack leader's son is really the child of the now-revealed Bale Hound. Spirits storm the pack's hunting grounds, riding wolf-blooded, creating serial killers in the city and any other number of uncontrolled Spirit-Claimed. Nearby packs of Pure appear, seeming incredibly well-informed about the pack's movements, tactics and the locations of all the members' homes. Wounds tear open in the Shadow near loci, and every deal and arrangement the Bale Hound has ever made finally comes to fruition.

If suspicion has still not fallen upon the *Asah Gadar* within the pack and he still stands with them, he runs with his false brothers and sisters through their last night of life. And, at the last, once all is lost and the Maeljin's servant has done his job with superb skill, he will turn his back on the pack as they meet their bloody end. After all the years of effort, the howls of pain at his betrayal and the death-cries likely will be like music to his ears.

The main difference between a Bale Hound of Pseulak and those Bale Hounds sworn to the other Maeljin is one of subtlety. Every one of the *Asah Gadar* who intends to be successful will learn the depths of subtlety and secrecy, but Pseulak's Hounds are the most likely to set up elaborate plots of deceit that take several years to ripen and develop. For all the build-up, it is no surprise that when the corruption of these Bale Hounds is finally revealed, the chaos unleashed is almost unrivalled.

BALE HOUNDS OF MAASTRAAC (ASUSAR-RIHUR)

The Hounds of the Maeljin of Envy might appear outwardly calm, but most are spiteful, bitter and resentful creatures. Those who have been Bale Hounds for a great length of time incorporate more and more of their totem's primary Influence over the years and decades, becoming hateful beings utterly twisted by a supernaturally potent jealousy.

Envy itself is similar to greed and lust, but envy is directly tied to the resentment of others for their possessions, whether material or immaterial. Of all the Maeljin's sinful Influences, Envy is the pettiest and the most pathetically spiteful, but is no less dangerous for all that, especially when the Bale Hounds enter the equation.

The *Asusar-Rihur* can look inward or outward. Some fall because they covet things that other werewolves possess — high station, a fine territory, a strong family, spiritual power. Some Forsaken desperately envy the Pure's seemingly superior relationship with the spirit world, whereas some Pure secretly crave the renounced favor of the moon and hate themselves for it. But the most common path to the throne of Maastraac is through jealousy of ordinary human beings. Some werewolves cannot abide all that they've lost with the Change, but still desire the power that comes with being Uratha. They look in windows and see humans eating, resting and making love, and are filled with jealousy. These Uratha will not renounce their power, but they long for the security and acceptance that is lost. They want it all, and they are told they can have it.

A Hound of Envy might seem to be no different from any other Forsaken, but within she is seething with bitterness over the positions and possessions of her packmates. Those Hounds who embody their totem's Influence spend countless hours secretly working toward denying the Forsaken any number of resources, possessions, advantages and anything else imaginable. Anything that could increase the survival chances of Luna's wolves must be removed or destroyed. Anything that can conceivably be turned against the People must be used as weapon against them. Bitterness drives these Bale Hounds, but it breeds an animalist cunning rather than resentful carelessness. Their hate makes them cautious.

Hounds of Envy are often farsighted when it comes to their aims, and frequently engage in ambitious plots that sabotage many packs at a time. These werewolves are adept at spotting the strengths and weaknesses of any werewolf pack, and usually devote a great deal of time in secret to studying every local pack of Forsaken and Pure, seeking out ways to use their strengths against them and deny the People any advantage they have in order to make them suffer. This is true bitter jealousy, but serves a grand enough purpose where the Maeljin are concerned. The weaker the packs in any given territory, the easier to open Wounds in their hunting grounds and breed spirits of negativity. Some Bale Hounds perform this research openly, telling their packmates that they are studying the rival packs in order so that their own pack can exploit any weaknesses found. Most Hounds simply do their research in private, gathering information, planning to breach weak points, sabotaging strong points and awaiting the time to strike.

Maastraac's Hounds have many options of stealing or destroying a pack's advantages, but the most popular are the tried and tested methods that have hailed the death of so many packs in the past. (See "Stealing Resources," p. 114.)

BALE HOUNDS OF BELIAR (NA'AKI-RIHUR)

Sloth is not mere laziness. There is nothing to fear about laziness and very little negative spiritual resonance born of such an attitude. When a werewolf is sworn to the Maeljin of Sloth, his disregard for others takes on a savage and cold-hearted clarity. True sloth is the utter lack of care for anyone or anything. No friends deserve to be defended, no lovers deserve to be cared for and no packmate is worth shedding blood for. Everything and everyone is *below* the Bale Hounds of Beliar. In fact, many even care little for their own lives, especially those fanatical enough to conceive of their own godhood once the Maeljin rise to dominance.

The Hounds of Sloth tend to be more philosophical as a group. As a resonance, Sloth itself offers very little active joy worth pursuing; rather, Sloth is appealing as an absence of unpleasantness. The true appeal of Beliar's path is the theory that Beliar will eventually triumph over all Maeljin. Eventually, the other Maeljin will run out of things to covet or despise; even they will inevitably run out of energy. As the universe tilts on toward ultimate entropy, Beliar gains more strength. At the end of it all, when none of the stars are left to bother with light, the lord of Sloth will be the entirety of creation. Cynical *Na'aki-Rihur* see the hand of inevitable triumph in human culture, as the mortals lose more and more of their own desire to achieve anything more than "getting by."

A Bale Hound dedicated to Sloth is ruthlessly efficient — not out of fevered dedication, but out of necessity and the desire to expend as little effort as possible. His hunts are savage scenes where all prey is mercilessly killed as fast as possible. Foes are

slowed initially by maiming; the Bale Hound hamstringing his prey first, or bites through the ankles in order to reduce the opponent's chances of escape or fighting back. If possible, the werewolf will take out the prey's eyes (or other strongest senses) in order to further reduce the resistance he faces. Then, after watching the behavior of the injured prey and assessing the best chance of a kill, the Bale Hound strikes hard and fast — throat, heart, lungs, the location doesn't matter as long as the strike is a lethal one. Claws rake and fangs gouge, and in a heartbeat it is over. Ironically, many of these Bale Hounds earn respect and admiration from their packmates for their ruthless and fast hunting prowess.

Once the foe is defeated and the battle is truly over, a Hound of Beliar cares nothing for exactly how long it takes an enemy to die. As long as the opponent is crippled and dying, the exact details regarding a prey's blood loss and last words don't mean a thing. And this philosophy on the hunt is carried into the rest of the Bale Hound's life. Everything worth achieving should be done quickly, efficiently, with a minimum of show, lest it be needlessly dragged out and attract unwanted attention. In this, Beliar's Hounds are subtle and careful, not lazy and careless. This makes the passionless disregard for others an even more fearsome aspect to the mindset of these *Asah Gadar*. A victim can take hours to bleed to death, and as long as no one can hear the screams, the Hound couldn't care any less.

Some of these werewolves have a unique and insidious skill for spreading their aura of disregard over others — not in any supernatural or overtly palpable sense, but by guarded words and carefully chosen conversations with others in the pack. By inspiring another to laziness and sloth (over issues of family life, pack duties and so on), a Bale Hound seeks to inspire the other werewolf into feeling disregard for her packmates. While this is rarely a direct dislike for one's pack, the disregard could believably manifest as disrespect and disloyalty, under the right circumstances. The Bale Hound may need to spend years dripping suggestions and honeyed half-lies into her packmate's ears — and the right circumstances might be a long time in coming — but the Hounds of Sloth are unusually patient. If the end result is the pack shattering at a key moment because one or more members decide to walk another path, the territory becomes all the weaker and prone to suffering Wounds. Better still, lone wolves can be picked off and murdered before they have a chance to join another pack.

Those who exemplify the totem's primary Influence turn their disregard on everything, including themselves. While such behavior initially appears to show that these Bale Hounds lack conviction and drive, in truth this "never worry, never fear" attitude stems from the belief that a share of godhood awaits once the Maeljin rise. There is an eerie threat in the eyes of a monster that cares nothing for its own life, and many of Beliar's Hounds embody a dead-eyed fanaticism made all the more horrifying due to its cold sincerity and because of the iron-hard grip it holds over the werewolf's soul. Perhaps some exceptionally alert packmates can catch this dead-eyed glance once in a while, but it unlikely to arouse any true suspicion.

Those who suffer extreme Harmony degeneration or are discovered by the Uratha often have neither the inclination nor the need to hide their allegiance any longer, and injuries to the body are 'amplified,' usually by clawing further at wounds and occasionally burning cuts open on their skin with silver tools. Once a Hound reaches the point of no return and cares absolutely nothing for his own life, he might ritually scar himself in the above manner and proceed to set up an ambush for the

Forsaken who are sure to come hunting for him. In his last moments, a Hound of Beliar so close to becoming *Zi'ir* would likely use his final meeting with the Forsaken to simply kill as many of them as possible without concerning himself with any injuries he takes or the odds he faces. Bale Hounds so far along the path to degeneration are rare, but their final stands tend to be devastating enough that survivors tell the stories for years to come.

BALE HOUNDS OF ASMODAI (MAKUA-RIHUR)

No werewolf is a stranger to her Rage. The loss of control is something to be guarded against. A Uratha's anger should be controlled, harnessed and only released on the rare occasions when it is safe — or the occasions when life and death struggles make it necessary. The release of primal, supernatural Rage is a bladed blessing, at once useful but untrustworthy, vindicating, even exulting, but also frightening for even the most experienced werewolf.

Falling to wrath is all too easy. Death Rage may save a werewolf's life, and if he wants to survive no matter who else pays the price, he may gain a religious reverence for the monster that lives within him. Others may go down this road driven by vengeance, a wrath that is all the more addictive by seeming properly righteous. All werewolves are ready to explode into a frenzy at any moment — some simply come to like it.

The Bale Hounds sworn to Asmodai allow their supernatural fury to run through them unchecked. It affects their decisions, their demeanor and even their hunting style. Their Rage is not a mandate for unsubtle butchery, though the careless or weak *Asah Gadar* certainly fall to such depredations before they are eventually destroyed by the Forsaken. But Asmodai's influence offers much more than this to the dedicated and cunning Bale Hounds. In the spirit of maintaining secrecy, Asmodai's Hounds are rarely any more overtly aggressive than their packmates. The conflicts of anger occur within the hearts of the *Asah Gadar*.

Rather than deny their primal anger as a separate part of themselves with no ties to their reasoning minds, the Hounds of Wrath accept the fury as sacred and valuable in all aspects of thought. They see it as part of the human as well as the beast; they gorge on anger and indulge in the rush. The Forsaken fear their anger and release it when the time is right. The Bale Hounds feed their anger and unleash it when the opportunity is ripe. Release is one thing, and unleashing quite another.

Decisions made in hot blood and choices made under the influence of wrath are purer — *truer* — than those made after discussion or thought, because such cold logic and evaluation no longer reflect the individual's inner feelings. It is wrathful passion, a passion that flows through everything they do, keeping them to remain true to themselves.

Or so they believe.

To embrace the Maeljin of Wrath is to walk a difficult path, for a werewolf's Rage is at once her greatest and most dangerous weapon. Rage represents an impurity that lives in legend as a shadow of a god's anger. Rage is also the key to losing control and succumbing to the depths of fury that can cost the lives of friends and packmates. Asmodai's Bale Hounds might appear no different from other Forsaken, but these are the werewolves who unleash their anger in secret, unnerving ways. When a sentient being lets an emotion as unstable as anger rule her life and affect

every decision she makes, the results can be unpredictable to say the least. On the hunt with a pack, one of Asmodai's Hounds exhibits no signs of instability, but, when away from the pack, he hides in a basement where he stores the dismembered bodies of every single streetwalker who crossed his path. The same Bale Hound is perfectly civil in conversation with his friends, though when the pack votes on important incidents his voice always calls for passionate responses to even mundane threats.

For the rest of the pack, the nightly struggles of defending their hunting grounds are enough (often too much) for the satisfying release of Rage. For the smiling, charming Bale Hound in their midst, it isn't even half of what he needs. After he leaves them before dawn, he might just pay a visit to the alpha's family and tear his children apart because of a wrong word from the pack leader. Or the Bale Hound might take out some of his pervasive, poisonous anger on someone in secret, partaking in some grimly amusing torture by beating a victim to death with a crowbar. The exact outlet is unimportant most of the time, but the regular unleashing of anger, even indulgence in Death Rage, becomes a sacred act for these werewolves. Worse, releasing anger becomes a compulsion, and sacred obsession, that allows them to feel their totem's power and spread its influence within the world.

When fury becomes holy, blood will certainly follow. Though no successful Bale Hound could truly be considered unobtrusive, when Asmodai's werewolves are finally exposed, light is often then shed on a body count of incredible proportions, mounted up over many months or years as the Hound remained in the same territory. A life spent giving in to Rage and inciting wrath in others can lead to shocking webs of events that seem only vaguely linked, such as many of a city's murders, beatings, rapes and literally any action that can arise from unrestrained (or simply maliciously directed) anger.

Perhaps the most effective way of breeding wrath in someone's heart is to render the werewolf helpless. There is something in the human condition — perhaps innate pride and self-respect — that loathes to be truly helpless and vulnerable, and many people react with anger at the thought of finding themselves in a situation beyond hope. Wrath inspired in others is doubly holy to the Bale Hounds due to the difficulty in creation, and many of these *Asah Gadar* set up elaborate scenarios designed to reduce people to focused, screaming fury. This is true wrath — not a mindless, incoherent rage, but a devoted, targeted anger that knows no depth. Some of these scenarios might involve simple “serial killer” traps in which victims are locked in urban dungeons with the remains of previous victims and given regular beatings by their kidnapper. Other scenarios are more complex, involving the use of friends and family members (often over the phone) as a means of inciting the victim to utter fury. No man, woman or child likes to be helpless, especially if his or her family is being killed on the other end of a phone line and the person has to listen.

BALE HOUNDS OF THURIFUGE (AZITHA-RIHUR)

To the Hounds of Violence, the very act of inflicting pain and suffering is sacred. Rather than hurt their enemies in the heated rage of true wrath, Thurifuge's Hounds commit their sins in cold blood, and with obsessive, psychotic forethought. The act of violence itself feeds their Maeljin totem, and any fury or passion before the deed is just wasted energy. Wrath might often

lead to violence, but violence itself needs no emotional fuel; violence has a purity all its own.

Almost all Hounds of Violence are sadists to some extent. Certainly, the philosophical can find plenty of justification for the theory that Thurifuge will ascend to dominance on the brutal deeds of humans and werewolves alike, but the truly devoted are those who exult emotionally in violence. They may enjoy the rush of inflicting pain and death for its own sake, or they may draw pleasure out of exacting brutal vengeance on those who “deserve it.” Some of Thurifuge's greatest conquests are werewolves who reveled in violence and claimed it was in the name of justice.

The *Azitha-Rihur* can bring a hideous array of weapons and horrifying situations to bear in order to achieve their ends. Worst of all, these Bale Hounds are the most likely to resort to using silver against other Uratha. Nothing is deadlier to werewolves than silver, Luna's sacred metal, and nothing can harm the Forsaken more. It's no surprise that silver makes the ideal weapon for traitors like the Bale Hounds to use at every available opportunity, as long as their secrecy is not compromised.

A favored tactic of these *Asah Gadar* is to incite their enemies into Death Rage at well-chosen moments, and revel in the resulting fallout. There is no sweeter violence than watching a werewolf lose control and turn on her friends, her family or her own pack. Naturally, this is no easy feat, and can require days, weeks or months of setting up to make sure the circumstances are just right for the maximum amount of chaos to be unleashed. But the Bale Hounds know their work will be neither easy nor quick, and patience is one of their only virtues.

In a curiously existential outlook, many of Thurifuge's werewolves find a much deeper satisfaction in inciting others to violence than in indulging in it themselves. This is not to say that these *Asah Gadar* are all at the center of Machiavellian webs of intrigue designed to reduce all around them to blows at the drop of a hat, but there are just as many fiendish manipulators among Thurifuge's chosen as there are antisocial serial killers who secretly hoard body parts in their cellars. Most of these Hounds walk the line between the two extremes, indulging in both types of behavior at some point. It is a grim truth that though all the Bale Hounds sin often enough, Thurifuge's children violate their own Harmony significantly more often by the very nature of their allegiance. This factor creates two notable aspects in the cult: Thurifuge has the fewest werewolf followers of any of the Maeljin, and those who do work in his name are prone to becoming *Zi'ir* unless they tread carefully at times.

But there are advantages to following this most dangerous path.

Thurifuge is a powerful totem — perhaps even the most powerful of all the Maeljin, purely because of his primary Influence. Violence is the cause of most of the world's Wounds splitting open in the Shadow, and the importance of this — the very resonance of this Maeljin's power — cannot be overstated. While any Maeljin's Influence can bleed into the spirit wilds, the sheer amount of war and battle that rage across the human and animal worlds means that Wounds fuelled by violence are undisputedly the most common. Of course, it isn't just war — look at any situation in which humans cluster together. Most urban crimes involve an element of violence, and this resonates across into the Earth's reflection. The alley where someone was raped, the bar where someone was shot and killed, even the road outside a club where fights break out all the time at the weekends. Every wife-beating, every terrorist strike, every act of war — all feed Thurifuge just

as they Wound the Shadow. Even the Influences of the other Maeljin frequently promote actions that feed Thurifuge's power.

The violence performed by the Uratha is no exception. The Forsaken are hardly strangers to their actions creating negative spirits even as they try to maintain the balance in the local Shadow, but, by far, the most frequently encountered spirits created by their own actions are weak violence-spirits feeding from their otherwise noble deeds.

The frequency and virulence of Wounds, the number of violence-spirits created in the world, the power constantly fed to the Maeljin totem — all add up into one distinct advantage.

These Bale Hounds are never, ever short of allies.

On paper, this can be represented by judicious purchase of the Retainers Merit. In the game, Thurifuge's Hounds can call on any number of (often powerful) spirits that will serve a variety of uses. Seeing as how violence-spirits are understandably common in the reflection of the urban cityscape, with the right chiminage — or the right threats — a Bale Hound can amass quite an army of his totem's Gaffling and Jagglng followers.

Beings as negatively aligned as violence-spirits might not be the perfect subtle spies, but they are viciously efficient as warriors and assassins for duties such as attacking a pack's totem, the pack itself or sucking a locus dry and leaving the attendant pack vulnerable. Better still — spirits born of Thurifuge's Influence make some of the sickest, most frightening and obviously the most violent Ridden imaginable. All Bale Hounds use decoys and deception to remain hidden, but a favored tactic of these *Asah Gadar* is to prepare a storm of "serial killers" in a given area if the local Forsaken are close to catching the Hound. As distractions go, there are few more intense and draining than a spate of supernaturally fuelled murders. This kind of activity will give the Hound time to prove herself to the pack by "helping out" with the troubles, strike at them as they are weakened from battle or simply flee to another hunting ground to work her dark influence again.

THE DEVILS POSTER BOYS

Some of these Bale Hounds are content to wait for years before their final plans come into effect. In this, they are no different from any other werewolf sworn to the Maeljin, but Thurifuge's Hounds have the worry that their indulgences in the name of their totem — the urges they cannot always fight — risk attracting the attention of the Forsaken. The Hounds of Violence are the "popular face" of the *Asah Gadar* to many of the People purely because these are the Bale Hounds most often caught red handed in their treachery and killed before they can wreak further havoc in the area.

The Forsaken aware of such nuances in their enemies know that other more subtle *Asah Gadar* exist but the majority of Forsaken judge the Bale Hound cult itself by the Hounds that they encounter most often and hear tales of and these are more often than not werewolves sworn to the Maeljin of Violence. As stated, Thurifuge has many cunning and intelligent Hounds in his service; it's just he also has most of the truly unstable

and careless ones, too. Ironically, this leads many Forsaken to believe that the cult as a whole is a great deal more stupid and less dangerous than it really is. Even in their weaknesses the *Asah Gadar* have unique advantages.

Reducing a pack to a vulnerable situation is just the starter for Thurifuge's werewolves, though. Once the defenses of the local Forsaken are down, the real influence of the totem begins. Many other Bale Hounds are satisfied with the chaos they have created and might just trust their web of malice to finish the Uratha off for good, but Thurifuge's influence sings in the hearts of his *Asah Gadar*, and, at this late stage in their plans, most of them are literally howling for the blood of the Forsaken. It is time for the Hounds of Violence to take the fight directly to their enemies, and they do this with fanatical relish. Some Hounds track down the packmembers individually and slaughter them during the daylight hours when the werewolves are recovering from a night on the Hunt. Other Hounds, with perhaps less intelligence and forethought, confront the pack directly in a straight fight. A much-loved tactic of the most cunning among Thurifuge's Hounds, however, is to send the Forsaken through a terrifying gauntlet before they die.

Improvised groups of violence-spirits and Spirit-Claimed track the werewolf pack through the hunting ground, relentlessly driving the Forsaken to the limits of their stamina and often herding them toward a final ambush, where the Bale Hound lays in wait. When the pack arrive at the ambush site, bloody and battered from what is likely one of the worst nights of their lives and far away from the eyes of human witnesses, the *Asah Gadar* unleashes the final howl as the traitor meets the betrayed.

Even if the packmembers have made it this far in good health and with high morale, they will have to face any number of Violence Jagglings that the Bale Hound has spent many months summoning, bribing or binding to his will. Some *Asah Gadar* seek to use silver-spirits against the Forsaken; powerful silver-spirits have been known to manifest Numen-like powers over their material in the physical realm and threaten werewolves with unexpected, eerie silver-based assaults.

However, these spirits require a great deal of chiminage first and are reluctant to strike Luna's children without good reason. And, of course, in the Hounds' own hands and claws will probably be what the People refer to as "Bale Blades," klaives, perhaps covered in runes and symbols like any other ornate klaive, but with blades made from pure silver. For details on "Bale Blades," see p. XX.

The Hound and his allies fall on the Forsaken with all the hate one would expect from servants of the Maeljin, and they reap a bloody-handed slaughter in the name of Thurifuge. Even should they lose — and few Hounds will with so much preparation — there is a fine chance that the slaughter will resonate in the Shadow and open a Wound. If the *Asah Gadar* is victorious, any Wound that opens is both a testament to his abilities and evidence of the Maeljin's favor.

BALE HOUNDS OF LAMASHTU (NAMAUR-RIKUR)

The Hounds of Pride are an interesting group, for they often don't see themselves as the junior partner in their relation-



ship with Lamashtu. Even when these Hounds know they are dealing with the Maeljin of Pride, frequently they believe they are just as important to the spirit as it is to them. They are the most likely to treat their pacts as business transactions, bartering their own (obviously highly valuable) services in exchange for spiritual patronage. For their part, the spirit-servants of Lamashtu encourage this viewpoint. Many of the finest servants of Pride are those who see themselves as “above” service. Lamashtu also appeals to werewolves who see their pride as “righteous” — patriots, tribal loyalists and the like. In all cases, the Hounds of Pride are driven by a conviction that pride isn’t even really a sin if it’s deserved. The only ones who aspire too much are those who weren’t good enough to reach the heights in the first place.

The Bale Hounds sworn to the Maeljin of Pride have two primary ways of operating. In amongst all the myriad tactics and treacheries of the *Asah Gadar*, Lamashtu’s chosen seek to instill a harmful (perhaps fatal) pride in others, while relishing their own prowess. To these Uratha, careless pride can go before a fall, but true pride can also teach a being about itself. Lamashtu’s Hounds revel in their vanity, but their self-indulgence leads them to know their own limits perhaps better than any werewolf.

More than most of the *Asah Gadar*, the Uratha sworn to Lamashtu have a tendency to establish cults centered upon veneration of themselves. This creates noted dangers to secrecy, but a pool of mortal allies is greatly useful in human society, a world where few werewolves can tread with ease or without consequences. Unlike the cults set up by werewolf servants of other Maeljin, these “pride” cults are rarely geared toward offering anything to the cultists who follow. There is no carrot and stick reward, no offers of dreams fulfilled; the cult is a simple veneration of the werewolf as a figure of awe and power.

It is easy to believe that these cults are little more than accessories to a Bale Hound’s pride, and in some cases, this is true enough. Just as any Bale Hound, Lamashtu’s werewolves feel the burning urge to indulge in their patron’s Influence, and, in some cases, such indulgence results in little more than a gathering of poor souls who are awed by the werewolf and his abilities. However, these followers are the minority — often the failures — just as the careless examples of overly violent or obviously deceptive Bale Hounds are often failures for Thurifuge and Pseulak, respectively.

A werewolf sworn to Lamashtu establishes a cult by revealing her nature and powers to the dregs of mortal society. Homeless beggars, burned-out wage slaves and survivors of real urban decay (and, in some cases, actual urban war zones) make perfect recruits for these gatherings. The deal is not one-sided; the werewolf doesn’t feed her subjects’ greed or desires, but impresses them consistently by protecting them, seeing to their basic needs and — most importantly — viciously slaughtering any of their enemies should any mortal be brave enough to ask for such a deed. The werewolf acts with a perverse *noblesse oblige*.

Through hard work and vainglorious action, the Hound of Lamashtu builds a dedicated following. Feeding the cult’s greed would create self-indulgent and demanding nuisances; taking care of their fundamental needs and dark, violent desires inspires awe, fear and respect. To be so admired is understandably a great source of pride for Lamashtu’s Hounds, and, better, adoration creates ideal servants who are both grateful and willing. Each member is a set of eyes and ears on the streets of a city and a pair of hands that can hold a gun when the time comes.

When running with their packs, Lamashtu's Hounds have a unique flair for inspiring overconfident false pride in their packmates. The subtle process takes months or years, depending on the temperaments of the packmembers, but reaps results more often than not. Any werewolf can easily feel pride in his personal strengths and abilities, and a clever Bale Hound can easily reinforce those emotions, hinting and noting certain deeds or words that add to a packmate's self-image. The most successful Hounds of Pride become the lynchpins of their packs. They are the trusted, relied-upon members — the “go-to guys” who pick up the pack after their losses and harsh nights on the Hunt with carefully chosen words of support and encouragement. As time passes, these Bale Hounds become increasingly respected for their positive attitudes and their outlook of always seeing the best in their packmates.

At the right moment, this demeanor turns sickly and dangerous. Now the Bale Hound goads his pack into ever more dangerous battles, pushing for territorial increases in their hunting grounds or confrontations with powerful local factions. The pack hear the words of their trusted, respected member who “genuinely” thinks they can handle the situation (and most Bale Hounds lay out any number of ways that the operation can succeed). Of course, they avoid mentioning the near-certainty of failure, which is often arranged at least in part by additional traps or ambushes in the form of bribed spirits from local Wounds or the Bale Hound's own cultists waiting in the shadows with silver bullets in their scrounged and stolen pistols.

Other ways of instilling a dangerous pride in other Uratha are common enough and essentially no different from any other packmate offering encouragement and honest support. An alpha can be talked into believing himself capable of winning a personal challenge with the leader of another pack over hunting ground border rights, when the reality is that he is severely outclassed. Even more appealing is the notion of targeting a werewolf's auspice moon as part of the deception. An Irraka who is encouraged for years regarding her stealthy scouting skills might be purposefully sent into a covert situation she cannot escape from, while her pack are still some way behind. An Ithaeur talked into believing he can negotiate with an extremely powerful spirit is in a great deal of trouble when his skills and Rank prove inadequate, and the spirit demands vast chiminage or sacrifice immediately, on pain of death. The opportunities for setting packmates to take ironic falls are taken gladly by many of Lamashtu's Hounds, both out of a perverse sense of humor and a desire to thwart Luna's “blessing” of auspices, which in turn is done out of spite and to earn prestige in the eyes of the Maeljin.

PACK TOTEMS

Pack totems are a danger to Bale Hounds playing the infiltration game. The Firstborn and Luna are too distant to intervene but the totem of the pack that the Bale Hound belongs to is a different matter. Even with mystical precautions hiding the Bale Hound's Harmony imbalance a pack totem spends a great deal of time with its adopted half-flesh children and is certain to notice something amiss. Many such spirits are aware of nuances that human — and even were wolf — senses cannot pick up. Many Bale Hounds

recognize the risk that at some point their pack totem might discover something sensitive and report back to the rest of the pack so the *Asah Gadar* act accordingly. Totems must be reined in secretly.

A Bale Hound wishing to act against her own pack totem has to act very carefully. Exploiting the spirit's ban might be one method of either banishing or binding the totem forcing it to reconsider its bond through extensive chiminage or betray the pack at an opportune moment. Ambitious Bale Hounds might try to somehow replace the totem with a spirit indistinguishable from the true totem but this approach is almost obscenely complicated and incredibly risky despite the excellent potential for truly ripping the pack asunder.

BALE HOUNDS OF MAMMON (GUSAASU-NEAUR)

At the core, the true notion of greed is to grasp more than one needs to survive. All beings of substance and Shadow are selfish to some degree, and almost every being within the two worlds desires more than the bare minimum they require to survive. Every being has the potential for greed. Mammon's Bale Hounds capitalize on that fact with great ease, and the desire for more than one needs soon becomes a hunt flavored with spite in the hope of denying others part of the share.

It's generally easier to snare a human with greed than a werewolf; humans are more reliant on material possessions. Most Hounds of Greed fall into one of two categories: werewolves who are still highly influenced by their old human values and cunning manipulators who see great potential for power by playing off human greed. Some werewolves fall to Mammon through an outgrowth of their territorial instinct — they want more land to call their own, and often strive for more than they can feasibly control.

Mammon's Hounds are the subtle reflections of Carnala and Baalphegor's children. Many of the Bale Hounds regard the three as mutable entities with interchangeable areas of Influence, and *Asah Gadar* dedicated to the “Selfish Three” are not uncommon, even though each werewolf is only sworn to a single totem in truth.

These *Asah Gadar* are never above a little theft in order to acquire what they desire. Spirits can be bribed to perform the actual theft, but, more often, a Bale Hound bullies Wound-born spirits into acting as a distraction somewhere in the hunting ground while he goes for the target himself. Loci are drained mercilessly, fetishes are stolen (rarely destroyed, unless they are completely useless to the Hound) and territories are slowly weakened over time as a result. This is an effective tactic, as long as the Bale Hound has prepared well in advance and is immune to suspicion.

Any Bale Hound with the right social skills or the supernatural powers necessary has the option of trying to establish a cult. But, unlike cults based on the admiration and worship of the werewolf as a great figure, these gatherings founded by Mammon's Hounds are dedicated to gratifying the cultists. The werewolf patron feeds the greed of every member, answer-

ing every demand for more and more. Greed is a path to power — the humans' greed feeds the werewolf's power. If, eventually, a Wound tears open, all the better.

To provide a number of people with their darkest and truest desires is no easy feat. A Hound sworn to Mammon who walks the cultists' path spends a great deal of time stealing money, killing people and arranging for others to be Spirit-Ridden. Human desire runs the gamut from the financial to the sexual, and a Bale Hound working to feed her followers' greed has many months (even years) of killing business rivals, arranging for people to "fall in love" with others (here's where lust- and love-spirits are bribed and bound into service) and any number of other nasty little deeds all designed to give someone just what they want — and whet the appetite for more, more, *more*.

A Forsaken pack infiltrating, or at least tracking and destroying, a Bale Hound's greed-cult makes for a compelling story. The members are drawn from all strata of human society, from the dregs who demand nothing more than food and shelter at first to the city-spanning business leaders who require dozens of bank-spirits, deception-spirits and arranged murders to successfully pull a hostile takeover of another company. These kinds of contacts mean that the Bale Hound at the heart of the web can call on significant favors when the time comes, but it also means that it is possible to track the edges of the web because it reaches out in so many directions. At some point, a Forsaken pack is likely to brush the edge of a truly successful Bale Hound's cult, and, at that point, all bets are off.

The real benefit of cults isn't the labor, or even the potential to harness the followers' negative emotions into ripping Wounds open in the second world. No, the true advantage of such a cult is in the sheer degree of favors that can be called in to assist the Bale Hound's plots against the local werewolves. Money can come from anyone who has it, but police and emergency service contacts are worth their weight in gold. A werewolf pack that is embroiled in a downtown battle is in danger enough, but the situation turns drastic when a SWAT team turns up because the Bale Hound called in a favor with a police lieutenant. Journalists and private investigators (and even mundane police tails) can make a pack's life a living hell whenever the packmembers have to do something even remotely unusual. Does the pack risk killing any of the humans who are following the werewolves and recording all of their movements? Possible, but hardly likely. Such an action leads to a dark place and often attracts yet more attention. But something's got to give, and, at some point, a werewolf will make a mistake in front of the wrong eyes.

Any career path offers a wealth of choices for exploitation against the Forsaken. Every single person who finds himself indebted to one of Mammon's Hounds has some kind of potential use. A fire at a packmate's house becomes all the worse when the fire service takes a few extra minutes to arrive. Homeless guys tailing a werewolf around the city are going to give rise to his Rage and limit his behaviors in front of witnesses. The possibilities for chaos and discord are endless, and all because people have their greed indulged by a capable servant of the Maeljin.

Bale Hounds of Carnala (DESASU-NIAUR)

The lure of lust needs little explanation; lust has been a powerful force on humanity since the beginning, and werewolves feel the desire just as strongly. However, the lust inspired

by Carnala is not simple desire for pleasure. This lust is an ugly emotion, a surge of want so strong and selfish that it overpowers taboos about debasing oneself or another. Werewolves can easily fall prey to this sensation, particularly where forbidden liaisons are concerned — a pairing with another Uratha or the desire for human partners who are repelled by the predator's aura.

Hounds of Lust must suffer a powerful emotional storm in their minds. While the Maeljin-bond weakens emotions and drains any real capacity to feel much of anything, a conflict arises when a Bale Hound finds the emotions he should have being replaced by irrational, fevered obsessions. Carnala's Influence bleeds through the totem bond with strength unmatched among the other Maeljin, and this makes some *Asah Gadar* sworn to the Maeljin of Lust extremely volatile and obsessive creatures.

Bale Hounds are generally patient, cautious people who are adept at remaining undiscovered. Carnala's werewolves sometimes offer a counterbalance to that general rule, as for each Uratha who infiltrates a Forsaken pack for years and weaves a subtle web of disharmony, there is a Bale Hound so twisted by her passions that she is unable to focus on maintaining a controlled façade. Something sinister lies within a totem bond to the Maeljin of Lust — an impurity even among the already immoral power of the bond — and it affects many of her Bale Hounds by constantly reminding them of their obsessions and lusts.

The most heavily affected lose the advantage of subtlety. The Bale Hound has no control over what triggers his lusts, and finds that the target of his malicious affections changes frequently, often in time with the lunar cycle. One month the Bale Hound is trying to show a stern façade to his pack while he is secretly unable to stop himself from eating the bones of homeless people nearby, while the following month the Bale Hound can't stop himself from committing homosexual rapes within the city limits.

Unsurprisingly, a great number of these Bale Hounds become *Zi'ir* within the span of a year or so. These are often the Bale Hounds that the Forsaken encounter and dispose of after a savage battle, hence these are the standards by which many Bale Hounds are judged. And, of course, such a misrepresentation actually works well for the *Asah Gadar*. The great majority of the Bale Hounds continue their infiltrations and work their evils behind the backs of the overconfident Forsaken who so diligently underestimate the Hounds, just because the Forsaken killed a werewolf driven crazy by something alien in the Maeljin-bond.

To inspire lust in others is all too easy for Carnala's Hounds. Their choice of worship doesn't make them any more attractive or sexier than those sworn to any other Maeljin Incarna, but naturally Carnala's Hounds have greater access to allied lust-spirits, sex-spirits, rape-spirits and so. There is a certain grim seediness to many of these Hounds, just as there is an indefinable allure to others among their number. And, though some Bale Hounds like to indulge their vices in their carefully constructed plots, most Hounds turn their depredations elsewhere (so as to remain undetected) and move exclusively through spirit agents that create Ridden to serve the *Asah Gadar*.

Simply resisting the urge for depravity is not the point; many of Carnala's Hounds find that they simply cannot fight their Vice as other *Asah Gadar* do. When the Forsaken finally catch up to the hideout of these werewolves, the Uratha are likely to find sickening evidence of any number of barbarous crimes all performed simply because the Maeljin-bond poisoned the Bale Hound's urges and drove him on to evermore grotesque indulgences.

BALE HOUNDS OF BAALPHEGOR (SA'ASU-NIAUR)

Gluttony is the desire to consume, consume, consume, without regard for the consequences or any concern for others. Gluttony is traditionally associated with eating food, but, in this vice's wider application, can represent any overzealous consumption of resources that are exploited or devoured out of addiction or desire.

A voracious hunger for flesh is a classic werewolf sin, and the People are little different. The animal instinct tells them to consume, for you can never tell when the next time of scarcity will come. Furthermore, the forbidden flesh of humans or wolves is filling and sustaining beyond that of any other prey animal, bringing raw power at the expense of Harmony. Some werewolves become obsessed with their appetites, trying to find some loophole by which they can indulge their hungers. To these wayward wolves, the King of Gluttony extends a flabby, distended hand.

Bale Hounds sworn to Baalphegor exceed at stealing and exploiting the resources of both the physical world and the Shadow Realm, and most Hounds do so indiscriminately. Who suffers for lack of the resources doesn't matter, except that Bale Hounds tend to be very pleased when the Tribes of the Moon are struggling on through hard times because a pack's locus has run dry or their hunting grounds are besieged by spirits that rapaciously seek to siphon every font of spiritual energy nearby.

Baalphegor's Hounds are prone to the same habits and tactics of both Carnala's indulgence-driven werewolves and Mammon's greed-cult schemers. However, cults founded on providing people with just what they desire aren't geared toward keeping them pleased and demanding more. Instead, the Hounds of Gluttony establish these networks of cultists in order to drive the mortals into suffering and death through overindulgence. The Bale Hounds could care less about the deaths of these followers, either. In their decline and eventual expiration, the number of indulgences these cultists have enjoyed and foul-hearted spirits they've given birth to more than make up for the loss of an easily replaceable husk of a human.

These Bale Hounds also exemplify more than just the disregard for the lives of others — the actual loathing many *Asah Gadar* feel for untainted life. If a drug addict in the "cult of plenty" is only days from death due to her addiction and no longer even begging for more, the Bale Hound will be more likely to inject her by force or talk her into it with a vapid smile, rather than just let the mortal slip away quietly. Gluttony is an underrated sin, for it has the potential to exist anywhere, and the Bale Hounds of Baalphegor like to squeeze every single drop of negative resonance from a person before he is allowed to die.

With small clusters of people all over the city (and from all walks of life, it should be noted) indulging themselves to death, the creation of gluttony-, death-, pain- and greed-spirits can literally flood a hunting ground with hungry, and dangerous, spirits. The balance of the Shadow, already a tricky prospect, can be easily upset by these continuous infestations of beings bred by a Bale Hound's cult.

Many Hounds of Gluttony are no stranger to personal indulgence, either. Essence is always a treasured resource for any werewolf pack, and the *Asah Gadar* know of few better ways to cripple a pack's effectiveness than by tapping their Essence sources and using the power for the Hounds' own sinister benefits. More than one hunting ground has fallen because one of the packmembers was secretly an Essence-glutton, who would

obviously appear just as surprised as the other werewolves when, yet again, their prized locus was reduced to a pathetic trickle.

Just as any successful Bale Hound, Baalphegor's werewolves have to know exactly when to strike in order to do the most damage to the Forsaken nearby and tear the most severe Wounds in the Shadow. There are no better times than when packmembers find themselves low on Essence and a territory swarmed by an unusual amount of dangerous spirits that crave sustenance. When these conditions begin to take shape in the area, either the Bale Hound betrays his pack to the Pure, or calls in other *Asah Gadar* for the killing blow, or lures the pack to a previously undiscovered Azlu nest or plays any one of a thousand nasty little tricks that will catch the weakened, tired Forsaken off guard.

THE PURE

What about the Pure Tribes? What do the Bale Hounds have to do with the other werewolves of the world? The answer is deceptively simple. The Bale Hounds, on the whole, do not see the Pure as a threat on the same scale as the Forsaken.

This isn't to denigrate the lethal danger of the Pure. The Pure outnumber the Forsaken, certainly, and hold more territory across the world. The Pure Tribes are also just as rabid in shaping their hunting grounds to fit their outlooks as are the Tribes of the Moon, but there is still one significant difference. The Pure, because of their inhuman desire to see their world revert to a primal state of chaos and predation, are not as great a threat to the Bale Hounds' ends.

The Forsaken fight for balance, equilibrium and duty. The Pure strive for a return to an era when physical might made right, a predator's paradise where they will rule as the highest of the hunters. Say what you will about the Forsaken — at least the Tribes of the Moon are *trying* to keep the world in balance, which disrupts the workings of the Bale Hounds considerably. If the Pure were to eventually win, the Hounds reason, the Pure's reign would cause so much suffering for the human race that the Maeljin would be greatly fed. Much of the time the *Asah Gadar* find their work already begun in domains claimed by the Pure. Bale Hounds can enter the territory and destabilize it by interfering with a Pure pack's established unnatural order and — most importantly — by goading the violent, hateful spirits into dark acts that come all too easily to the Shadow allies of the Pure Tribes. Fewer such opportunities exist in Forsaken hunting grounds, where careful infiltration over a number of months or even years is the standard attack pattern.

So, while the Bale Hounds certainly fear the power and collective might of the Pure, the Hounds find the Pure easier prey, halfway to the fall already. The reverse is true of the Forsaken. While the Bale Hounds may worry less about the Tribes of the Moon, the Hounds offer a silent and grudging respect for the Uratha's diligence.

In addition, the Forsaken have the advantages of auspices, as do all of the Bale Hounds drawn from the Tribes of the Moon. The Pure have access to their own weapons in the Hunt, but few resonate with the spiritual power of Luna's forgiveness. The Forsaken are considered at least partway to redemption. The Pure — even if their ancestors did not strike the blow that murdered *Urfarah* — remain the "Unforgiven" in the eyes and hearts of the Bale Hounds. Their pride blinds them to Luna's forgiveness, and leaves them vulnerable in many ways.

The Pure are more numerous than the Forsaken, however, and hold considerably more territory. Obviously, the Bale

Hounds will cross paths with the Pure often enough. Compromising Pure hunting grounds is, as mentioned above, usually a matter of less subtlety than infiltrating Forsaken territory. But some cunning tactics can pay off with additional benefits if the Bale Hound infiltrator works at her plan for a while. The truth of the matter is that more the Pure and the Forsaken kill each other over territory, the fewer werewolves remain to claim such hunting grounds. While the numbers of the People may not shift dramatically on a global scale (beyond obviously increasing in the decades after the Brethren War), packs slaughtering each other can make all the difference on a local scale. In this endless conflict of attrition between the warring werewolves, a lucky Bale Hound can find several hunting grounds' worth of territory unclaimed and undefended.

Naturally, some Bale Hounds attempt to maneuver Pure packs against the local Forsaken, in the hope that the former faction will weaken or destroy the latter in the area. Although few Pure packs need a reason to lash out at the Tribes of the Moon, the Pure do need at least some intelligence and preparation if they are to assure a successful assault. Here's where the Bale Hounds come in: either infiltrators or Pure-born werewolves themselves, the *Asah Gadar* openly reveal information regarding the weaknesses of local Forsaken packs and set the Pure up with advantages for the conflict. Some Bale Hounds have even willingly allowed themselves to be captured and tortured while posing as Forsaken werewolves, in order that their agonized "confessions" are taken in faith.

SOULLESS WOLF

Viruhk-Ur is a powerful and enigmatic spirit, and calls itself the Eyes of the Maeljin. The entity manifests as a healthy, gray-furred, muscled wolf in its physical prime, but with black, shark-like eyes. Soulless Wolf never sniffs for prey, never twitches its ears when hunting and never reveals anything like interest in its surroundings. The spirit's black, dead eyes remain ever rooted on the werewolf it is watching.

Soulless Wolf also claims to be one of the Firstborn, brother to the tribal totems and a true child of Father Wolf. The tale, at least as the spirit relates the story to the Bale Hounds, states that Soulless Wolf was always apart from its siblings, and apparently abandoned them forever when it decided to follow the beings it perceived would one day be the world's masters.

According to the Bale Hounds who believe this legend, the name of the "unknown" ninth Firstborn remains unspoken by the Forsaken and Pure because the tribal totems themselves swore never to speak the name of Viruhk-Ur ever again. Such was their shame and fury at the utter treacherous corruption of one of their own — far worse than "mere" divisions of Forsaken and Pure — that the Firstborn vowed they had no ninth sibling and would never breathe of its existence again. It's a difficult charge to disprove.

Some Bale Hounds add that this avowed silence was a precaution against the Uratha discovering the chance for a new patron and following Viruhk-Ur as the ninth tribe. Others argue just as defiantly that for all the spirit's rumored power, Soulless Wolf is merely a servant of the almighty Maeljin, and one that is allowed its delusions of grandeur because of some vital role unknown to most *Asah Gadar*.

There are fewer more important roles in an organized Bale Hound cult than the one played by Viruhk-Ur, for the spirit fulfills several services. It has been known to manifest to deal with any breaches of secrecy that occur, and, though Soulless

Wolf is a creature of indeterminate rank in the spirit world, few survive this spirit's onslaughts. In addition, any survivors of Viruhk-Ur's attacks won't be believed about what they apparently saw anyway.

Soulless Wolf is also a watcher, tracking Bale Hounds and observing their actions. The spirit is a Gift-giver and sometimes even a pack totem — which would seem to suggest that Soulless Wolf is of relatively modest power, but summoning the spirit with the Rite: Call Jagglng is an erratic and unreliable process that fails more often than it succeeds.

Most importantly, Soulless Wolf hides the Bale Hounds from detection by their tribal totems, whether they are Forsaken or Pure. This is performed via a ritual unique to the *Asah Gadar* known as the Rite of the Shroud. Even the Bale Hounds are unsure of just how Soulless Wolf has this power over his supposed relatives, but many assume it either comes from the Maeljin or is a result of the tribal totems banishing the memory of their sibling forever.

For specific details on "the Rite of the Shroud," see p. 140.

VIRUHK-UR'S BAN

Soulless Wolf is unable to leave the area of a Wound. The spirit can disincorporate and return to whatever existence the spirit-gods of sin have set aside for the Eyes of the Maeljin, but, when manifested in the Shadow, the spirit is bound for some unknown and unknowable reason to Wounded areas of the Shadow. Some say this lends serious credence to the notion that Soulless Wolf is not a true Firstborn, but rather a Maeltinnet spirit born (or warped) into the shape of one of Father Wolf's children to suit the Maeljin's purposes. Others point out that each of the Firstborn suffers a ban, as all spirits, and Soulless Wolf's is no more restrictive than many.

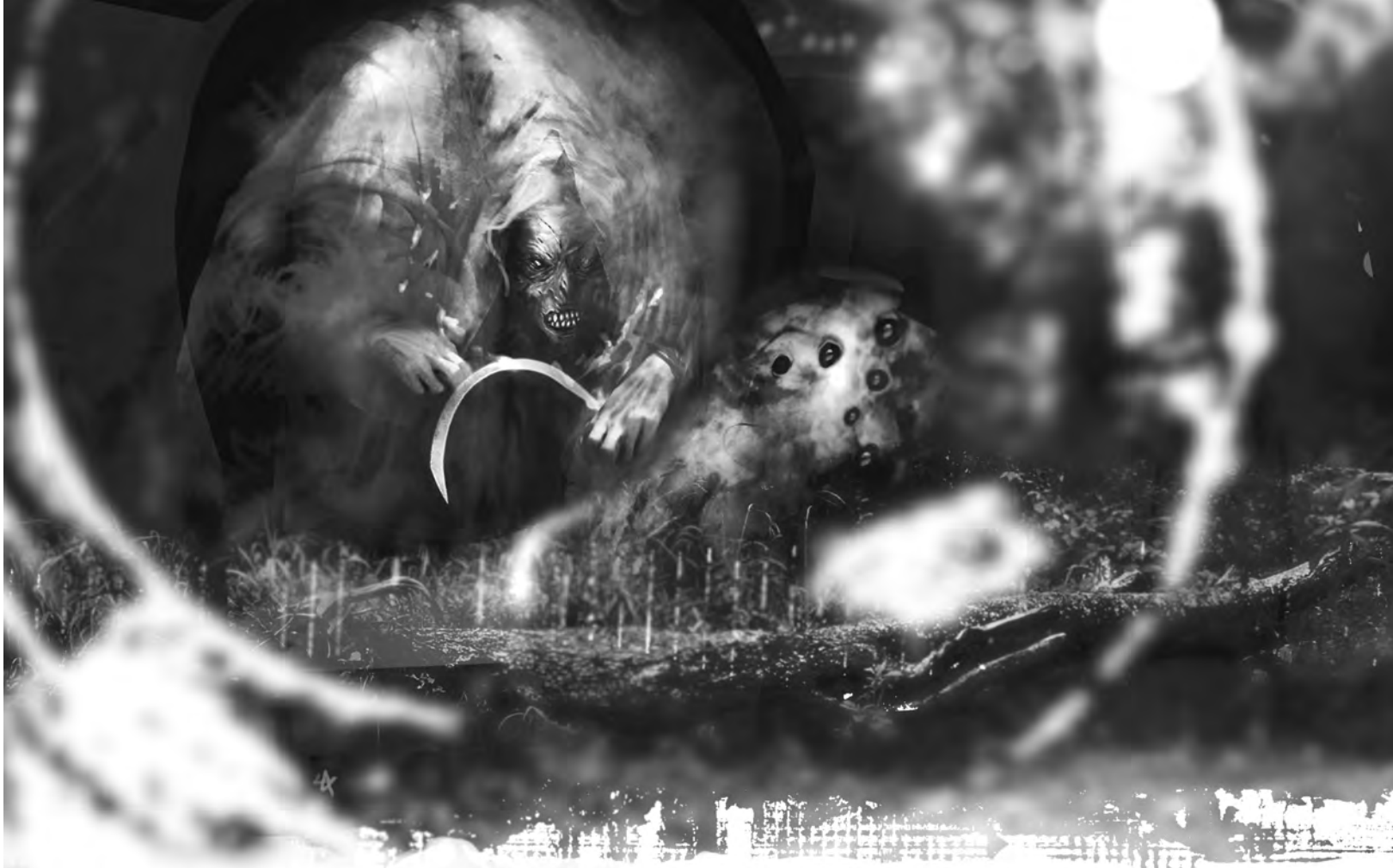
STORYTELLING THE ASAH GADAR

Exactly how the Bale Hounds are presented is up to individual Storytellers to decide in their games. The following section details several ways that the *Asah Gadar* werewolves could be organized, be in a lodge, splintered factions or even the secret ninth tribe. There is no setting default for the Bale Hounds to adhere to; these dark kin to the Forsaken can be presented however each Storyteller sees fit to match the structures established within his own chronicle.

Some of these options even work well together. There's no reason that you can't have some Bale Hounds form a lodge while other followers of the Maeljin are without any sort of larger organization. Creating a mishmash of the following ideas, picking and choosing the most interesting parts to suit your own tastes, might be worth considering. An "open secret" cult that coordinates and works in the shadows of werewolf territories is the perfect Bale Hound presentation for some, but that doesn't necessarily mean that a pack of gluttonous werewolves that follows a powerful hunger-spirit are any less *Asah Gadar*. The definition of "Bale Hound" means "a werewolf who serves the Maeljin" — this can be applied as specifically as "Methodist" or as widely as "monotheist," whichever seems most interesting.

LODGE OF THE BALE HOUNDS

A simple and thematic method of presenting the *Asah Gadar* is as a lodge, similar in design and function to any of the estab-



lished tribal lodges in **Werewolf: The Forsaken**. With this approach, the Bale Hounds have their own trials of worthiness and initiation rites just as any lodge, which the Storyteller might see fit to design if necessary. They remain members of their tribe (unless discovered), and Forsaken Hounds retain their auspice benefits.

The Bale Hounds as already presented in this chapter fit neatly into the format of a lodge. Most lodges already keep the details of their inner workings secret from other factions; the *Asah Gadar* simply take this aspect to an extreme. A Forsaken lodge provides benefits and advantages to those who pass the trials of membership, and with the Gift Lists, a new Merit and unique rites at the end of the chapter, the Bale Hounds are again little different from the traditional lodge model if the Storyteller so chooses.

AGGRESSIVE RECRUITMENT

Although left to a Storyteller's individual tastes, the formal and measured initiation methods of a lodge mean that the Bale Hounds have some leeway in seeking fresh blood for the Maeljin's cause. Any werewolf with the potential to become one of the *Asah Gadar* needs only to be instructed in the ways of the Maeljin in order to choose a totem, and to be set a Rite of Initiation, such as "the Bleeding" (see p. XX). There are no requirements apart from loyalty.

Although any werewolf must still choose to become a Bale Hound and join the lodge willingly, leading potential entrants onto the dark path is certainly easier if the *Asah Gadar* cleave to regimented, tried and tested methods of initiation. The Bale Hound ritemasters can then alter whatever aspects they desire to suit the applicant, but have an established framework of tradition to fall back on.

Call it defection, betrayal or falling from grace, once the bond is formalized between one of the Maeljin and a werewolf, another Bale Hound is set loose upon the world. With the spiritual tie to the Maeljin, the werewolf has joined the scattered society that permeates Uratha culture like the rot within the fruit.

Of course, this is easier said than done.

To become a Bale Hound is more than a declaration of intent and a desire to betray ones' friends and packmates. Certainly, there are degrees of involvement and fanaticism for the cause, but to be true *Asah Gadar* means that a werewolf has to have attracted the attention of one of the Maeljin. How a werewolf could do that depends on just how the Bale Hounds are organized in any given area and their relationships with the Maeljin. There's no welcome mat, and certainly no open induction meetings for werewolves joining the most hated cult in Uratha society.

Whether a Hound has been manipulated into walking this path or has done so entirely through personal desire, the act of attracting the Maeljin's attention is always undertaken by choice. No werewolf can be forced into contacting the Maeljin — at least, no oath sworn with false pretenses will ever fool a spirit god, and the vengeance that would fall upon the Uratha would be terrible indeed. In some territories, a werewolf seeking to become a Bale Hound will have a lodge mentor or even a pack to guide her toward the Maeljin, while in others, a lone Uratha will simply have to dedicate time and effort toward "inventing" a way to become a Bale Hound by somehow finding a way to impress the dark incarnate and perform her own Rite of Initiation into the lodge.

By far the most obvious way to draw the Maeljin's attention is to interact with the Maeltinnet. These lesser spirits of the Maeljin serve as avatars for the Incarnae, each varying from

Lesser Jagglings to Greater Jagglings rank, and are usually the spirits feasting and growing in the hearts of any Wounds in the Shadow. Direct Uratha can simply enter a Wounded area, battling against the corrupted creatures and spirits within, hoping that the Maeltinet will manifest at some point. If so, the werewolf can make his case to the representative of the Maeljin and seek acknowledgment as a Bale Hound by asking for a Rite of Initiation.

Another method of attracting the Maeljin's attention is to act toward the spread of one of their personal Influences — be it wrath, greed, violence and so on. By acting in these ways (and inciting others to do the same) the werewolf is engineering the breeding of negative spirits associated with the Maeljin. Eventually, if the acts in the area are horrific enough to scar the Shadow, a Wound will split open in the second world and one of the Maeltinet is certain to take notice. Perhaps even the Eyes of the Maeljin, if the Wound is severe enough.

Other werewolves prefer the somewhat more subtle method of summoning one of the Maeltinet in the same way one would ritually summon any Jagglings. Chiminage for the Maeltinet, however, must be tied to the Maeljin patron that the spirit represents, and, as such, can be difficult to obtain easily. Perhaps more importantly, chiminage for spirits of violence, wrath and so on can be difficult to bring together without the area's pack becoming aware of the situation, so a werewolf seeking to summon one of the Maeltinet must move quickly and carefully if he wishes to be successful.

The Maeltinet themselves vary wildly in appearance, personality and temperament. They are each the embodiment of the higher Maeljin, and speak with direct authority to the Incarnae they represent, much as the lesser spirits associated with the Forsaken's tribal totems. As emissaries of the dark spirit-gods, these powerful beings will judge the werewolves' pleas to become *Asah Gadar*.

THE CHOICE OF TOTEM

Although there will be intermediaries between Bale Hound and Maeljin, the Incarna begins to act as the werewolf's true (if distant) totem. The choice of which Maeljin to serve is a key moment in the Bale Hound's Rite of Initiation. Usually, the choice was made a long time ago, and the rite simply formalizes the bond. Once a master is selected, the spirit brand that forms begins the gradual tainting of the werewolf's passions, slowly warping them to resemble the chosen totem's Influence.

The Maeltinet serve little role in the lodge beyond acting as sometime allies and occasional messengers from the Maeljin. The *Asah Gadar* of this most secret of lodges are dedicated to their Maeljin totems and need few other spirit contacts beyond alliances of conveniences. Certainly the Maeltinet become involved with the *Asah Gadar* when they wish, but, on the whole, a Bale Hound owes her loyalties to the greater Maeljin.

Or does she? It is entirely possible — perhaps even likely — the Soulless Wolf would serve as the overall lodge totem. Through the bond with Viruhk-Ur, the Bale Hounds join with the Maeljin pantheon. In this instance, just as how many Forsaken lodges are served by spirits allied with the tribal totems, the Lodge of the Bale Hounds is served by the favored spirit of the Maeljin Incarnae.

In any case, despite the Maeljin's grand powers, they serve at a level somewhere in-between pack totem and tribal totem. They certainly do not manifest to the number of times most pack totems would, and the Maeljin communicate almost entire-

ly through servitor messenger spirits or Soulless Wolf. However, no matter the method, the Incarnae probably interact with their adopted children more often than most of the Forsaken tribal totems ever do. More often than not, this interaction comes in the form of signs and portents in the dark places of Shadow — omens within Wounds that the Bale Hound traitor in a Forsaken pack must decipher alone.

Gravely important messages are relayed by lesser spirits associated with the Maeljin totem, or the Eyes of the Maeljin itself, tracking the werewolf from the nearest Wound and seeking to deliver the spirit's message without alerting the ire of the local Forsaken pack.

Among the Maeljin's favored methods of contact are revealed as Wounds with walls or surfaces covered in bloody runes or weak spirits that seem to cling to existence merely to repeat the same whispered, garbled message over and over. A message from the Maeljin is chilling in its viciousness or awful in its obvious horror, and frequently manifests in the most fouled locations within a Wound.

Messages that are somehow intercepted or interpreted by a Uratha pack can spell doom for a Bale Hound, who must somehow survive his pack's realization that he is in contact with the Shadow's sickest and foulest spirit-gods. More than one of the *Asah Gadar* has found his presence revealed by a cunning pack that managed to decode the omens or the message left for a Bale Hound in the area.

The contact between totem and werewolf is generally a one-way relay of tasks demanded, important information given and occasional threats made by the Maeljin. The Incarnae are not in constant contact, but weekly (and at the least, monthly) contact is not unusual. The Bale Hounds are keenly watched by their totems, and a werewolf sworn to the Maeljin often finds herself being stalked by one of the Maeltinet, a lesser servitor spirit associated with the dark gods or the Eyes of the Maeljin itself. These spirits will usually watch silently, then depart.

Again, though these spirits attempt to be subtle, keen Forsaken packs have been known to expose a Bale Hound by keeping track of the dark spirits sent by his foul masters to observe the traitor.

The Maeljin Vow

Allow no true desire to pass untouched.

Just as the Forsaken adhere to unique vows to honor their tribal totems, the Lodge of the Bale Hounds must also cleave to an oath. However, while the vows of the Firstborn are focused on outward action and matters of honor, the oath that Bale Hounds swear to the Maeljin is one of selfish indulgence.

The vow is simple enough, but has many ramifications. At its core, the oath means that the *Asah Gadar* should never refrain from indulging in their vices, lusts and base urges, as long as it is safe to do so. Of course, many Bale Hounds — who have suffered the gradual erosion or corruption of their emotions — experience no real desires as normal humans would understand the term. What mortals and Forsaken werewolves feel as emotions and passions are reduced to creeping, pressuring urges that demand to be satisfied — compulsions, not desires.

The penalties for violating this "oath of the lodge" should be as serious as that for a Forsaken werewolf violating his tribal ban, including the subsequent degeneration roll if the Hound's Harmony is high enough. There are also potential social ramifications: a Hound of Lust who passes up the chance to possess

an object of desire is likely to anger her spirit-allies. For the Bale Hounds, sometimes it really is a case of “damned if you do, damned if you don’t.”

THE MAELTINET

The lieutenants of the Maeljin serve as incarnated aspects of the great spirits of sin and spend much of their time at the heart of Wounds, seeking to spread the cancerous influence ever-outward across Shadow. This last matter is not an easy task in hunting grounds where the Forsaken hold territory, and the Maeltnet work with the *Asah Gadar* more often than not out of tactical sense and a need for each other. The Bale Hounds are the adopted children of the Maeljin, but the Maeltnet are the true spawn of the Incarnae, and no werewolf in her right mind ignores the chances inherent in teaming up with the lesser reflection of a spirit-god.

The Maeltnet are work well as the advisors, allies and, occasionally, commanders of the Bale Hounds in any given area. The Maeltnet are wise in the ways of the Maeljin and the nature of Wounds, and can bestow Gifts themselves. In some rare instances, Maeltnet even serve as totems for all-Hound packs, or masquerade as the totem of a Forsaken pack once the Hound has destroyed the real totem.

Whatever the bond between individual Maeltnet and *Asah Gadar* might be, the two factions share a goal and are both well-equipped to achieve their ends. If a serious Wound has rent the local Shadow apart, the chances are any Bale Hounds in the territory are in contact with the malicious being at the heart of the spiritual injury.

Soulless Wolf is as involved or as distant as the spirit feels is appropriate for individual Bale Hounds. Some *Asah Gadar* see the Eyes of the Maeljin only as a taskmaster and a threatening presence that will not tolerate failure, while others interact with the spirit as a mentor and trusted lodge totem more akin to an ally than an overseer. Like much of its enigmatic nature, the Eyes of the Maeljin is free from the restrictions placed on many spirits, and exists somewhere between lodge totem, pack totem, spirit-ally and spy for the true totems.

DARK PANTHEISM

In this presentation of the Bale Hounds, the *Asah Gadar* are formed of a fractured religion that offers as many varieties of worship as there are Bale Hounds. Each individual “cell” of the cult in a given area may or may not work loosely together, sharing information about weaknesses and potential avenues of attack, but few of the werewolves agree on just how best to serve the Maeljin.

In this interpretation, the Maeljin Incarnae are revered as a pantheon of beings, each admired not for its own unique nature but as part of a glorious host. Individually, they are each “merely” an Incarna, but, as a united host, their Influence creates a pantheon as powerful as any Celestine. Few Bale Hounds adopt a single Maeljin as a totem; most Hounds serve the pantheon as a whole in hopes of reaping the fullest reward. Instead, every werewolf is bound to a personal totem — hidden from the eyes of the Forsaken — that serves as the Bale Hound’s tie to the Maeljin and an ally in the years of corruptive influence. The totem is always one of the lesser Maeltnet, equivalent in power to a pack totem.

After the initiation into the cult, which may or may not take the form of a formal Rite of Initiation, the newly made *Asah Gadar* is asked if he wishes to serve the Maeljin alongside “an attendant.” Should the werewolf answer in the affirmative, one of the lesser Maeltnet spirits — a being that features a vari-

ety of aspects from several Maeljin — is bound to the werewolf in alliance from that moment on.

AVATARS

In the sick faith of the *Asah Gadar*, the Maeltnet are worshipped directly as avatars of Bale Hounds’ gods. These spirits are consulted on a variety of matters, prayed to for blessing and guidance, begged for Gifts and so on. Much is expected of all the spirits, but a great deal is given in return, for few of these fanatics would consider (and even fewer would dare) to refuse a request from one of the Maeltnet.

The bond between a Bale Hound and the Maeltnet totem she follows is a virulently intense, and notably unhealthy, one. To these werewolves, the spirit-allies they converse with every night are direct links to some of the most powerful beings in existence — the entities that will one day rise to dominate the world. The Maeltnet are the prophets of the Maeljin — the truest children of the pantheon — and the psychological impact of their presence cannot be overstated. Believing your cause is the right one is one thing — having evidence from the gods that this is so is another thing entirely.

The presence of the Maeltnet affects these Bale Hounds much the same way that overexposure to the horrors of the Maeljin can affect any werewolf. But the minds of these zealots are further pressured by near-constant contact with their spirit patrons. The Maeltnet have at their disposal what could be the most warped, yet fanatically efficient, cult of terrorists, murderers and hunters in the two worlds. In the hopes of earning favor in the eyes of their pantheon, many Bale Hounds keep in contact with each other only to learn what their fellow *Asah Gadar* are scheming so that they might try to slyly ruin a rival’s plot or engineer a better one of their own.

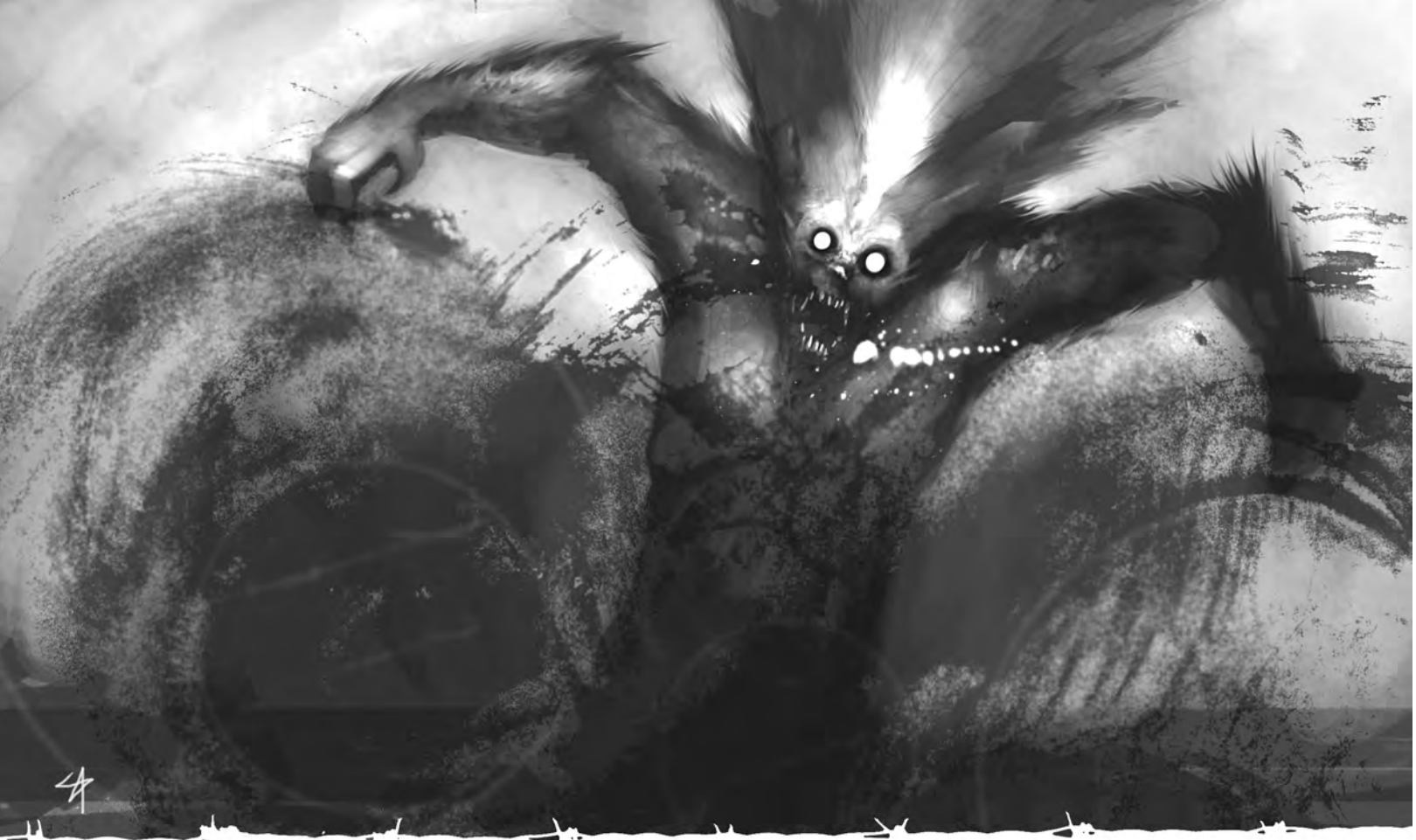
With the avatars of the gods looking on, what better chance would anyone have to earn the Maeljin’s affections? Blessings mean Gifts and rewards, and perhaps eventually, ascension to the ranks of the Maeltnet...

THE MAELADAR

A particularly insidious belief that has permeated the Bale Hound faith is the ascension of the truly worthy to the ranks of demi-godhood. Ancestor-spirits are relatively common in Uratha culture, seen as the spiritual embodiment of an entire bloodline, manifesting as family members from ages past to assist their descendents today. The Bale Hounds have a similar belief, though it has their own special twist in the tale: a true return from death, and not a mere spiritual simulacrum.

Amongst the religious faithful, it is said that those who truly please the Maeltnet will be allowed to rise upon death and join their ranks. In this manner, a Bale Hound who dies after a life of duty will be able to return as one of the Maeltnet, imbued with a fraction of the Maeljin’s power, to guide other *Asah Gadar* just as he was once guided. The Bale Hounds believe that they are the only werewolves with access to this opportunity, for surely no spirit short of Celestine status could ever bestow such a mighty gift upon its followers, and the other Celestines do not care enough for mortal life to ever consider it. Even Luna Herself has only partially forgiven the Forsaken for their ancient sin, and never offers her children the chance for true eternal life, so the Bale Hounds are convinced they have the right.

The *Asah Gadar* call these Maeltnet the Maeladar, and they are believed to be among the highest tiers of worship, below



only the Maeljin and the Eyes of the Maeltinet. Some even say that Soulless Wolf was brought back from death by the Maeljin when the spirit was destroyed by the Firstborn, and is therefore something akin to the “first of the Maeladar,” albeit born from spirit and not flesh.

The Maeladar may or may not truly be what they claim to be. But the Bale Hounds believe the Maeladar are, and this belief makes a twisted sense along with their faith if true. The ascension to the ranks of the Maeladar is considered a separation of the fleshly side of a werewolf’s being, which leaves her spirit-half laid open to the world and gives great power. Others who somehow manage to stumble upon the secret might be somewhat more skeptical, and see in the Maeladar nothing more than another charade by the Maeljin to manipulate the *Asah Gadar*, just as the Maeljin do with the “false Firstborn” Viruhk-Ur. Just as with Soulless Wolf, the reality of the situation is up to the Storyteller: whether she prefers the Maeladar to be the souls of favored Bale Hounds reborn as Maeltinet or yet another shadowy lie in a faith already built on deceit and treachery. The united Maeljin could arguably have the power for the former explanation to be the truth, but the second explanation is immediately thematic.

PACKS

While few Bale Hounds find that their exact ideologies match one another’s, the notion of all-Hound packs isn’t as alien if they treat their service to the Maeljin as a religion, rather than a duty. Packs may or may not be as ill-fated and short-lived as in other presentations of the cult, but the bond of fanatical devotion permeates the Bale Hounds’ everyday lives and some will band together for survival without splitting up and infiltrating the Forsaken. A Bale Hound pack can just kill any other Uratha who seek to stop the spread of the Hounds’ Wounds, after all.

An all-Hound pack is not common, and just about everything in the selfish, urge-driven cult seems aimed at a “lone wolf” ideal with each Bale Hound seeking to impress the Maeljin as best he can. But such packs do happen.

Realistically speaking, these packs are potentially as doomed to fail as any real unity between the unstable *Asah Gadar*, especially when matters of totems are raised and the pack must choose a single Maeltinet to follow. But, on the very rare occasions that an all-Hound pack manages to form and last a few months without tearing itself apart, the results are devastating to local Uratha. Many Forsaken packs will simply never have encountered a threat as dangerous as a rival werewolf pack that calls on allies from Wounds and lives to poison the entire local Shadow. Faith is a dividing factor for the Bale Hounds, true, but, in exceptional circumstances, faith can also be a serious bond.

HOLY SITES

To the fanatical *Asah Gadar*, the places in the Shadow where the Maeljin’s influence is most keenly felt are sacred sites that must be honored. Wounds have become truly holy to the Bale Hounds, and must be defended as the most precious of loci and expanded whenever possible.

Firstly, the sickest of Wounds often spawn or summon a member of the Maeltinet, and perhaps even the Eyes of the Maeljin itself. Any number of spirits are born within a Wound’s terrible radius, too, but these are regarded as lesser servants, below the *Asah Gadar*, and the werewolves need only answer to the Maeltinet that manifests in the heart of the Wound.

When a Bale Hound is within a Wound, her faith in the Maeljin forges a powerful connection to the holy site around her. When defending any tainted area, the *Asah Gadar* fight with

insane fury, fanatically seeking to slaughter their foes and bury their remains in the poison-saturated ground of the region.

System: The cold-hearted faith of the Bale Hounds ignites into a shrieking frenzy when their holy sites are threatened. When fighting within sight of a Wound, any Bale Hound may enter Death Rage without a roll to resist, and all rolls to harm or injure another being gain a +2 bonus. Few Forsaken knowingly assault a Bale Hound within a Wound, for the werewolf's insane fury becomes a more terrifying weapon than ever before.

MAELTINET TOTEM CREATION

Storytellers presenting the Bale Hounds as a dark, fevered religion should consider just how important and unique the Maeltinet need to be. Stories focused on this presentation of the Bale Hounds will need a greater degree of interaction with, and detail about, the Maeltinet. These spirits are the direct “ambassadors” from the Maeljin, and are indeed weaker manifestations of the Incarnae themselves. Of course, that weakness is relative, for even the weakest of the Maeltinet is a spirit of Jagglings rank, and the Eyes of the Maeltinet, rumored to be below only the Maeljin in power, might even be an Incarna in its own right.

Power, Finesse and Resistance

The Power Trait is usually the highest and the most important of the Maeltinet's three main Attributes. These spirits spend a great deal of their existences exerting their will on the surrounding Shadow, and, as manifestations of the Maeljin, the Maeltinet possess no shortage of potency. Maeltinet with high Power ratings often demand tasks from their Bale Hound followers, threatening the werewolves if there are any hints of refusal. Finesse is important for those Maeltinet that serve as “generals” or organizers over lesser Wound-born spirits, and a high Finesse Trait can often mean that the spirit serves as a “bishop” or other religious guide over his werewolf followers. A Maeltinet's Resistance depends primarily on the strength of the Wound that sired the spirit, though a few unique examples will deviate from that general rule and appear surprisingly weaker or stronger than they at first appear.

Influences

A Maeltinet's Influences are obviously drawn from those of its parent totem. The Bale Hounds might worship the grouped Maeljin pantheon, but the Maeltinet are still the specific representations of individual Incarnae. In addition to the “set” Influence of the Maeljin, the Maeltinet will also have access to any number of Influences that pertain to negative emotions and actions, such as hate, bitterness, rape, suffering and so on.

Size

Each of the Maeltinet is unique in appearance, and their Size Traits depend entirely upon their current incarnations. Some manifest as small, impish creatures or as disembodied facial features, while others take the shape of images from the nightmares of their Bale Hound allies or a grotesquely sinister version of the existing Wound-born spirits in the region.

Maeltinet Bans

As demigods to the Bale Hounds, the Maeltinet insist that each werewolf follower show her eternal dedication in life by upholding a personal ban until her own death. This ban is held to be the most vital aspect to becoming one of the Maeladar, and none of the *Asah Gadar* who have broken their bans have ever arisen as one of the Maeltinet afterwards.

These are some of the more common Maeltinet bans demanded by the servants of the Maeljin in exchange for contin-

ued patronage. If the chosen ban is not performed as promised, then the Bale Hound risks losing the bond to his chosen totem, and could be left in the unenviable position of risking the ire of the Maeljin pantheon.

Remember when creating your own bans that most Maeltinet pledges are grave oaths and are rarely easy to fulfill. Bale Hounds have a hard time placating their totems, but receive great benefits for doing so. In turn, these bans are often forged to be directly spiteful toward Luna or the Forsaken in general, which seems to appeal to many Maeltinet spirits' senses of humor, honor or desire. A great way to reveal one of the Bale Hounds in a story would be to discover the details of the sinister pledge one of them holds with a Maeltinet totem, and a story could revolve around the characters trying to force the Hound to break the pledge. A cunning Forsaken pack hunting for a way to make a Bale Hound break his own ban is a stylish way to break his greatest advantage into pieces, as a werewolf without a connection to the Maeljin is just a lone wolf without any support in a world that wants his blood.

- You must taste the blood of a sentient creature (other than yourself) every day between sunrise and sunset.
- You must intentionally violate the Oath of the Moon once a week.
- Once a year, you must go without seeing the face of Luna for an entire month.
- You must eat the spirit-flesh of a spirit within a Wound once a week.
- You must ritually “tithe” suffering to the Maeljin, swallowing at least a mouthful of blood from every kill you make, and whisper the name of your Maeltinet patron as it rolls down your throat.
- You must create (and maintain weekly) a shrine to your Maeltinet patron, including visual representations and offerings that please the spirit, i.e., carved glyphs, idols, paintings and so on.
- You must intentionally violate the Oath of the Moon once a month, and leave a human witness alive.
- You must make a fetish every year from the bones of a werewolf you have personally slain during the last 12 months.
- You must kill one man, woman or child who carries your family blood in her veins, every year.
- Never let a relationship between a Uratha of your pack and a wolf-blooded mortal result in childbirth.
- Every three years, you must impregnate, forcibly or otherwise, another packmember's wolf-blooded relative without betraying your identity.
- Every full moon night, you must not tell a single truth from sunset to sunrise.
- You must taste the tears of nine people every month.
- When your auspice moon is in the sky, on one night every month you must destroy a Lune of the affiliated choir.
- You must carve your totem's name into the flesh or bones of every living creature you kill.
- You must make sure that each of your packmates has his own blood shed at least once a week.
- You must never howl at Luna on the nights when your auspice moon is in the sky.
- You must record every act you have ever performed for the Maeljin, written in glyphs using your own blood, in a secret place.

A THOUSAND BLACK HEARTS

It is always a possibility that the *Asah Gadar* are simply werewolves who fall in with dark-aligned spirits, and live their lives serving the Maeljin's goals without the need for indoctrination into a greater cult. What of the alpha who forms his own pack and gradually "infects" his comrades with no other outside influence? Or the pack that falls to the same Maeljin totem through shared intentions and desires? What if there was no cohesive effort to bring the world into an eternity of suffering, and there were simply werewolves who betrayed their kin for their own reasons?

Some Storytellers might prefer to present the Bale Hounds as scattered, disparate werewolves who follow the dark path of the Maeljin with no central organization and no desires beyond their own satisfactions. The notion of reducing the world to a state of suffering might mean nothing to these individuals, who are free to believe in the Maeljin's eventual dominance with feverish faith, or to become one of the so-called Bale Hounds purely as a means of furthering their own personal interests.

There is no cult. No collective faith. No insidious organization laboring in the shadows of Uratha society. There is no stereotypical member of the *Asah Gadar*, and, worse, there is no way for the Forsaken to predict the actions of their greatest enemies.

PACKS

Bale Hound packs can be chaotic groups, no matter how they were formed. A Forsaken or Pure pack that becomes *Asah Gadar* as a group is still a mishmash of personalities and skills, though the packmembers soon become tainted by their connection to the Maeljin and their emotions change perceptibly. Tempers might shorten, sinister urges arise and perversions surface among the werewolves. On the hunt, they might become overtly malicious and spiteful, or frighteningly cold and callous, depending on where their loyalties to the Maeljin lie. Neighboring packs are certain to notice some changes, at the very least.

The real trial comes in the interactions of the packmembers themselves. If the members follow different totems, with each werewolf supernaturally affected by his chosen Maeljin's primary Influence, cooperation between Bale Hounds bound together like this becomes harder to manage. Every sin and emotion embodied by the Maeljin flows through these werewolves every minute of their lives, affecting the way they think and act. When they are around each other in such close proximity, the sinful urges clash and tensions rise between packmembers.

LONE WOLVES

With no organization, formal or otherwise, those who are alone when they uncover what they believe to be the truth of the Maeljin's eventual rise must also walk down the path alone. Every chance at discovering new lore pertaining to the dark Incarnae is an opportunity too good to pass up. Every Wound in the area offers a thousand insights. Forsaken werewolves may begin the fall into becoming *Asah Gadar* purely because their interest is so raptly piqued by the nature of Wounds in the Shadow. After observing these areas of intense corruption for so long, these werewolves might find that the abyss gazes right back into them.

Many potential Bale Hounds will know nothing more than that there exist some werewolves who serve the Maeljin for reasons unknown. Some Uratha might hypothesize that it's because the Maeljin can offer something that no other totems can or that the werewolves who fall into their service are doing so because they see their eventual rise as a certainty. Initial

encounters with spirits of a Wound might take vastly different forms as a werewolf goes behind her packmates' backs and seeks to converse with the beings born in suffering-rich realms of Shadow. And what she discovers might just unlock her mind to a new way of thinking, especially if she is lured in with the offer of the forbidden knowledge available to the Bale Hounds.

This presentation has advantages and disadvantages for Bale Hound characters in the setting. Many Bale Hounds in other presentations are deep-cover infiltrators anyway, but there is a support network of fellow dark-hearted werewolves out there if they really had to be found. With the lone wolf approach, the Bale Hounds have little hope for such opportunity, and may not even see a need for it. This tends to make the *Asah Gadar* (who are often fantastically skilled at deception and self-sufficiency in anyway) ever so slightly better at holding out on their own.

Deep down, every single one of them knows that he's alone, and even if he ever meets another self-professed Bale Hound, the chances of the two of them having anything in common in ideology or approach are slim indeed. That can lead to impossible alliances that break up almost immediately (or more likely never even get underway) or complementary teamwork with each Hound covering the areas his "packmate" lacks. On the unfortunate side, the lone wolves will have extreme difficulty creating and maintaining their own Bale Hound-specific fetishes, and might very well miss the chances to learn the unique Gifts of the *Asah Gadar* purely because they never discover a way to learn, or never see the need to try.

The behavior of these werewolves is likely to reflect an eerie clashing mixture of the aspects of the Maeljin that each Bale Hound is aware of. Many of these Bale Hounds will develop trusting relationships with Wound-born spirit-allies, using these beings as additional manpower in their cause, as sources of information about the nature of the Maeljin and the Wounds and as a way of learning the secret Gifts available only to the *Asah Gadar*.

THE NINTH TRIBE

Revealing the Bale Hounds as the secret ninth tribe of the People may be tempting. It is certainly plausible given the information presented within this chapter, but the revelation takes a new meaning if one gives credence to the ravings of the creature known as Soulless Wolf, the Eyes of the Maeljin.

That said, to present the Bale Hounds as a true tribe rather than a cult or lodge requires very little adjustment on behalf of the Storyteller. The main difference between this tribal explanation and any other presentation of the *Asah Gadar* is that the origin of Soulless Wolf must be taken at face value. There can be no doubt, no hidden truths, no misleading claims of godhood or delusions of grandeur — Soulless Wolf really must be the ninth spirit-child of *Urfarah*.

More than this, it must be accepted truth that because of the Firstborn taking oaths to forget Viruhk-Ur's very existence, the Forsaken can never become aware of the totem of the Bale Hounds tribe. This is a vital factor in maintaining the notion of an *Asah Gadar* tribe; were the People ever become aware of the truth of the matter, even a race as disparate and divided as the Uratha would likely unite in a war against the Bale Hounds and their revealed totem. Unlike the numerous and powerful Pure, the Bale Hound tribe and its totem would represent a target that the Forsaken would stand a very good chance of destroying once and for all. Measures to detect *Asah Gadar* within packs might be developed, and Soulless Wolf's spiritual protection would no

longer apply, allowing other werewolves to see spirit brands leading to both Viruhk-Ur, and, worse, to the Maeljin. That kind of exposure would herald the death of the Bale Hounds.

So the ninth tribe must remain hidden, no matter the cost.

INITIATION

To join the Bale Hounds tribe, a Rite of Initiation must be performed, commonly known as the Bleeding.

The Bleeding is unique in that the ritual is entirely open to the applicant's interpretation. Any of the Maeltinet, when confronted by a werewolf with the skill and courage to approach such a powerful servant of the Maeljin, is likely to accede to conversing with the Uratha. The Maeltinet are always aware of the possibility of fresh blood for the Bale Hounds, and often forge strong relationships with the werewolves that the spirits personally bring into the *Asah Gadar*. Few werewolves are ever turned away at this stage, for almost all have clearly learned something of the fall into corruption and deserve to be tested to see how they might fall further, all the way, into serving the Maeljin.

The Maeltinet will reveal to the werewolf that if she truly seeks to become *Asah Gadar*, she must "blood herself" in honor of the Maeljin she wishes to serve. This will involve performing any vile actions the werewolf deems worthy of her Maeljin soon-to-be master's attention, undertaken for no reason other than to win favor among the dark spirit-god host. Depending on the patron the werewolf wishes to follow (and which ones she is aware of), the Bleeding might involve planned murder, assassination, rape, torture and any emotional or physical pain imaginable. No more advice or direction is given, though it is made clear that the Uratha must perform the Bleeding before the eyes of a lone spirit that is assigned to follow and observe.

This spirit is, of course, Soulless Wolf.

It announces itself as Viruhk-Ur, Soulless Wolf — the ninth Firstborn spirit-child of *Urfarah*. Usually at this point, the werewolf realizes she has passed the point of no return.

If the Hounds are to function as a tribe, although the Maeljin are still the highest spirits that the werewolves must serve, the totem that must be impressed in the Bleeding is Viruhk-Ur. In this presentation of the *Asah Gadar*, the Maeljin are distant god-figures; they are to be appeased and their ideologies must be followed, but Soulless Wolf is the main spirit-bond that each Bale Hound shares. It is through a bond to Viruhk-Ur that the tie to the Maeljin is formed.

And, ultimately, Soulless Wolf decides whether an applicant passes his Bleeding. Those who fail to impress the Eyes of the Maeljin are killed where they stand, and the secrecy of the Bale Hounds is preserved.

VOW OF THE BALE HOUND TRIBE

Destroy the Sanctity of Balance Wherever It Is Found

Just as the five Forsaken tribes cleave to a personal oath in honor of their Firstborn totem, in addition to the Oath of the Moon, the Bale Hound tribe must also follow an individual oath. Violating this creed is a risk to Harmony, similar to any tribal ban. A Bale Hound werewolf is expected to constantly work to disrupt the balance of Forsaken (and to a lesser extent, Pure) territory, unless the risk of exposure is high. Soulless Wolf decides when to judge that this creed has been broken, and the totem responds by directly appearing to the werewolf in question and threatening him regarding his lack of action.

The *Asah Gadar* functioning as a tribe also opens some new tactics for them to use against the Forsaken. Rather than each Bale Hound embodying the strengths and Influence of a single Maeljin, the werewolves are likely to develop tendencies and sinful urges related to several of the dark Incarnae. While this might generally make for more "unstable" Bale Hounds who are more prone to madness and Harmony degeneration, each werewolf will likely use a variety of tactics applicable to the several Maeljin the werewolf serves. There are no "Bale Hounds of Asmodai," but rather a host of werewolves using the strengths and vile tendencies of many Maeljin spirits.

RENOUN

As a tribe, the Bale Hounds would still gain Renown in the appropriate five categories; for whatever mad reason, the Lunes still ratify their Renown as they would for any other Forsaken. Honor would be rare and Purity almost entirely absent. The Bale Hounds' primary Renown category is, naturally, Cunning — for it takes exceptional cleverness to hide as a tribe among the rest of the People.

Tribal Gift Lists: Evasion, Tainted Moon, Wound
The Maeltinet

If the Bale Hounds are presented as a tribe, then the Maeltinet are much less important to the *Asah Gadar* than they would be in alternate interpretations. The representatives of the Maeljin are still the resident lords of the Wounds, and occasionally act as emissaries of the Maeljin or Viruhk-Ur, but the Bale Hounds pay primary attention to Soulless Wolf, the Eyes of the Maeljin. They perform rites and sacrifices under the light of the moon in honor of their totem, and some tribe members, beyond even the Maeljin's ultimate ruination of the world, strive for Soulless Wolf's revenge.

REVELATIONS

Forsaken werewolves who learn any of the Bale Hounds' secrets are in a great deal of trouble, no matter what form the cult takes, but Uratha who learn about the truth of the ninth tribe are in a dire situation indeed. They will be rabidly, ruthlessly hunted in order to be silenced.

Though the tribes of **Werewolf: The Forsaken** are not globally organized or bound by efficient communication on a vast scale, there are aspects that appeal to the notion of tribal unity, be the werewolves *Suthar Anzuth*, *Mennina* or, indeed, *Asah Gadar*. Perhaps the one event that is sure to bring several Bale Hounds together in a unity of action is the hunt to butcher a werewolf who knows more than she should.

Storytellers who want to "out" the Bale Hounds in a dramatic reveal in their chronicles may find that the Ninth Tribe approach works wonderfully. Not even the Brethren War really forged the Forsaken to band together, but the discovery of the Bale Hounds as the so-called lost tribe may just be the catalyst Uratha society needs.

Such a revelation might make the basis for a fantastic chronicle.

TURNING FROM THE PATH

Werewolves can leave their tribes if they truly desire, and attempt to join others by swearing allegiance to the tribal totem. Although the Bale Hounds are technically able to do this, turning one's back on the *Asah Gadar* is obviously a good deal more dangerous and a more involved process than "merely" leaving

one of the Forsaken or Pure tribes. Bale Hounds who consciously decide to rejoin the Tribes of the Moon have one hell of a challenge on their hands. Few even try rejoining, and the truth is that none ever succeed. It is not a simple quest for deliverance and redemption — a Bale Hound has a litany of sins and torturous crimes weighing on his soul. Trying to “set things right” is essentially an impossible task for any child of the Maeljin.

REDEMPITIVE CHARACTERS

Even in a chronicle focused on redemption a Bale Hound is a controversial choice of protagonist. Years of rape, murder and torture don't just cease to matter because a werewolf now wants to fight the evils of the Shadow and fulfill Father Wolf's duty. To stand side by side with a werewolf who was once a Bale Hound is not simply “letting go of the past.” It is the equivalent of trusting someone such as Jeffrey Dahmer or David Berkowitz with your life and the lives of your friends and family. These killers promise their dark days are behind them, but how would you truly feel when this new friend knows names and addresses of your family and stands behind you in battle just out of sight? In a communal pack dwelling, would you leave your door unlocked at night?

The image of the “lone wolf” seeking redemption is an attractive one, but many groups may find the Bale Hounds beyond the pale even for such stories. As gamers, moviegoers and readers, we might admire independent thought and going it alone in a story, but some people are alone because they are, in short, screwed up and removed from humanity — not because they make cool characters. When confronted with the equivalent of a pedophile and child murderer (if not literally that), many players would rather solve the controversy with a cathartic bit of final violence. It's not unreasonable for them to think so. Be certain you know the sensibilities of your group before attempting to introduce such a story element.

Many Bale Hounds find their emotions deadening, rotting away over time, and find it harder and harder to feel much of anything, let alone something as anathema to their cause as guilt or pity. An *Asah Gadar* can feel an overwhelming rush of emotions directly from the Influence of the Maeljin totem the werewolf serves. This erosion of the mortal mind is not reflected in game mechanics such as Harmony — this is not a decay that can be fought or resisted with experience points. It is a gradual acceptance, and, finally, an unmoved, blasé reaction to the horrors that a Hound inflicts every year, every month, every night of her life. This is more than a simple shutting down of the brain; the Maeljin totems alter their children's thoughts and emotions even as the Bale Hounds find their mortal minds developing defenses against constant, repeated atrocity.

This also means that some Bale Hounds have no emotional capacity to revel in their behavior, or even experience real joy in any form. So, at some point, these dispassionate creatures can indeed question their vows to the Maeljin and their own roles in bringing pure suffering to the world. Questioning their roles is one thing, but turning away is something else entirely. No matter what a Bale Hound thinks of his own actions and the deeds he must perform, his eyes are open to a truth few other werewolves know: the world will one day belong to the Maeljin. The outpouring of suffering in the world — the majority of which is human suffering — will eventually, finally, warp Earth and Shadow beyond the attempts of the Pure to alter it, and the attempts of the Forsaken to repair it.

A Bale Hound must turn from this perceived truth, perhaps somehow convincing herself that the rise of the Maeljin is a lie. Even if she comes to believe the Maeljin will never truly drag the world into a state of suffering, she must still reconcile the fact that she has spent many years trying to bring about that chaos. Worse, even if she survives long enough to attempt to join the Forsaken, a Firstborn totem will probably be able to read the mind of any applicant who seeks entrance to its tribe.

If the near-certainty of being killed by the Maeltinets and other Bale Hounds doesn't put the notion right out of the werewolf's mind, and the surety that he will never gain access to a tribe doesn't shoot down his hopes of treachery, then his ill-fated defection can begin.

In a very short space of time, any other Hounds nearby and members of the Maeltinets will probably note that the Bale Hound is no longer as involved in her depredations as she has been in the past. The Maeltinets spirits that watch the *Asah Gadar*, Soulless Wolf among them, are not blind to a Bale Hound who no longer performs the Rite of the Sin-Eater. If a werewolf ceases performing the ritual, it is clear that something is very wrong. Either the Bale Hound risks falling into utter degeneration, or she is somehow, for some reason, no longer as dedicated to the cause of the Maeljin as she once was.

The Maeltinets rise from the Wounds within and near to a werewolf's hunting grounds, and they hunt down the Bale Hound to demand an explanation. If the werewolf's reasoning is flawed or rings falsely to the alien ears of the sin-spirits, the Bale Hound will not survive the meeting. The spiritual servitors of the Maeljin rarely take chances on such an event, and many Maeljin are perfectly capable of reading minds.

So the Bale Hound has to run. He has to flee either at the very first sign of real doubts, which is incredibly unlikely, or he has to flee when he knows for certain that the Maeltinets are coming for him. If he moves anywhere near a Wound, he is as good as dead. The Eyes of the Maeltinets may be bound to Wounded areas of Shadow, but Soulless Wolf will make quick work out of any ex-Hound who is foolish enough to run into such a trap.

Spirits as powerful as any one of the Maeltinets (let alone several of them) likely will also make short work of a lone Bale Hound who is on the lam and totally bereft of allies. If she somehow makes it to the Forsaken, she is looking at an equally quick death at their hands if she admits what she is. Most packs will not want to shoulder the risk of deceit, and even fewer will want the Maeltinets breathing down their backs because the packs have taken in a fleeing Bale Hound.

If the Bale Hound is already in the pack and admits his allegiance to the Maeljin, he'll likely be killed by the vengeful Uratha for any and all of the horrors they've been put through because of

his influence over the years. If he seeks to keep his allegiance a secret and just live out the rest of his days as a normal Forsaken werewolf, the Maeltinnet are probably not above betraying their ex-ally to his packmates and enlightening them as to his old ties and oaths to serve the Maeljin.

There are a thousand reasons that defection won't work. The best any Bale Hound can realistically hope for is to betray what secrets she can to the Forsaken before one of a hundred deaths catches up with her. And even then, all she is really succeeding in doing is alerting the local werewolves of cult issues they will barely comprehend and may not even believe, while setting them up as ripe targets for the Maeltinnet and any other *Asah Gadar* in the area.

Even should he somehow reach a position of legitimately joining the Forsaken, what tribal totem would ever let in a creature with such a past? Deception will not work, as Soulless Wolf will sever the bond between the Bale Hound and the Maeljin the moment information emerges that the werewolf has defected. Any of the Firstborn will be easily aware of the fact that this werewolf has spent years masquerading as a member of the Tribes of the Moon, and simply would not consider letting such a tainted soul join their own tribe. Worst still, any of the tribal totems that discover a Bale Hound nestled in their midst is going to tear the werewolf limb from limb, or demand that the tribe does so. Call it revenge, call it anger — the fact is that it's also a last-ditch effort at some kind of security.

At the highest end of the scale, a Bale Hound running on luck and redemptive drives might just manage to become a Ghost Wolf who runs with the Forsaken. Retaining Harmony in the face of old habits will be a constant fight. The Hound's real emotions may never really return. No pack is likely to ever trust such a wretched creature, and if they don't kill him out of spite or pity, the Maeltinnet are sure to catch up to their ex-ally one night. Every Wound in the region becomes doubly dangerous, for the spirits within will all remember the treachery. Spirits allied with the Forsaken may be unwilling or otherwise reluctant to bestow Gifts on a creature who has performed so much harm to the Shadow in his lifetime. The Bale Hounds will hunt the traitor ruthlessly; any drink of water might be poisoned, and every battle could be an ambush disguised as a fair fight.

The bottom line is that these creatures can exist, and a few rare Bale Hounds may, indeed, seek to turn from the dark path. Their actions cannot be washed away with a change of heart and good deeds, and they are most likely to die long before making amends. Yet it's still possible to try.

STORYTELLER MECHANICS

The following section details the unique supernatural benefits of the Bale Hounds cult. These powers are among the darkest and foulest secrets possessed by any of the People, and the Uratha who learn of these abilities are either fully fledged members of the *Asah Gadar* or hunted mercilessly to be silenced.

These are the powers that define the Bale Hounds and form much of what makes the cult the loathed and dangerous influence that it is in the game setting. Storytellers should be very careful about ever letting players acquire one or more of these powers for their own characters, considering just how tightly guarded these ancient, sinister secrets really are.

HARMONY

Harmony is a constant difficulty for the Bale Hounds. Their sadistic and cruel actions frequently violate the Oath of the Moon and cause Harmony degeneration. For a werewolf to lose Harmony dramatically, it becomes only a matter of time before his rites begin to fail and his pack and the werewolves of nearby hunting grounds notice that the Uratha is in danger of becoming one of the *Zi'ir*. The Bale Hounds walk a dangerous line with their deeds; their fanaticism threatens each of the *Asah Gadar* with mental and spiritual ruin, for the fate of the Broken Souls await any who fall too far into Harmony imbalance.

On a less dramatic but equally practical note, a werewolf who begins to develop odd compulsions due to Harmony loss (and Bale Hounds almost always develop compulsions based on the Maeljin's Influences) is at risk of exposing herself to the ire and the claws of the Forsaken.

Perhaps the greatest secret of the Bale Hounds is that they are able to violate the Oath of the Moon and go some way toward hiding the stains of sin from their souls, functioning despite their inner imbalance. The cult would have died long ago if its members had no way of concealing themselves from the Forsaken; the ability to shield one's dark acts from the rest of a pack is vital to the survival of the *Asah Gadar*. This ability seems to stem from the spiritual bond with the Maeljin,



executed through Soulless Wolf (either because of the spirit's status as a representative of the Maeljin or because it is, in truth, the ninth Firstborn). Viruhk-Ur — alone of all the Maeltinet — barter with the Bale Hounds in this manner, answering their summons and hiding the instability of their souls. This service is not without its costs. But even the Bale Hounds who doubt the parenthood of Soulless Wolf find the Rite of the Sin-Eater too valuable to ignore.

THE SIN-EATER

In many early Christian communities, there was a resident known as a sin-eater, who would take money and food from bereaved families in exchange for “taking” the sins of a recently deceased person. In this exchange, the departed soul would enter afterlife unstained and pure, while the sin-eater's soul would carry all of the sins that the deceased had performed. The spirit calling itself Viruhk-Ur offers a similar custom, though with grisly differences.

As one of the Maeltinet and often responsible for contact between the Maeljin and the Bale Hounds, Soulless Wolf also bears the sacred duty of cleansing his fleshly cousins' souls. But it is not a true cleansing — rather the Eyes of the Maeljin teaches a rite that offers a certain spiritual strength in lieu of true purity of spirit.

In exchange for blood that the Bale Hounds shed in the Maeljin's honor and benedictions in Viruhk-Ur's long-forgotten name, the wolf-spirit takes the sins of a werewolf into himself. Sins against the Oath of the Moon and any actions that have caused a loss of Harmony are “hollowed out” from a werewolf's soul, as Soulless Wolf stores the darkest actions of the *Asah Gadar* within its own alien consciousness. The sins remain, but the effects are hidden somewhat.

This has two effects for the Bale Hound cult. Obviously, on the surface, being able to perform rites and invoke spiritual powers without the discord of the Hounds' screaming souls disrupting the process is an incredible advantage for the *Asah Gadar*. And, of course, being able to retain sentience in the wake of abominable acts that would soon drive any Uratha into *Zi'ir* is an immensely valuable gift for a werewolf. The Bale Hounds are all too aware of the dangers of indulging in depravity to the point to which one risks becoming a Broken Soul. They may be able to hide the effects of some of their sins, but the dangers remain.

But these are the obvious (and notably one-sided) benefits. No deal with any entity from Shadow is so beneficial to one side of the bargain and not the other. This is where the second effect comes into play.

The Rite of the Sin-Eater means that one of the Bale Hounds' most important totems has thousands, *tens of thousands*, of years of depravity, murder, rape and torture within its own mind. Whether Soulless Wolf is truly one of the Firstborn is difficult to prove for many reasons, but key amongst these is the fact that the totem is now insane beyond all reckoning.

No spirit can ever have a truly human mindset, but whatever stability Viruhk-Ur once possessed has been eroded from countless centuries of taking the sins of the Bale Hounds into itself. Now, when the spirit appears to the *Asah Gadar*, it is a cold, passionless and merciless totem — everything one might expect from a representative of the Maeljin. Werewolves who contact their dark totems through Soulless Wolf must first convince the Eyes of the Maeltinet to serve as a go-between, and, depending on Viruhk-Ur's circumstances at the time, this may not be as easy as offering simple chiminage. Sometimes, serious sacrifices and incredible offerings must be made in the name of the Maeljin in return for Soulless Wolf performing services or teaching rites.

The Bale Hounds must also shed a great deal of blood and energy into the Rite of the Sin-Eater if it is to work correctly, and this in itself can be draining and costly. The ability to maintain certain aspects of one's Harmony despite repeated murder and torture does not come cheap by any means. For full details on “the Rite of the Sin-Eater,” see p. 142.

NEW MERIT

FLAYED LUNE (....)

Prerequisite: Bale Hound

Effect: The character has either been granted use of an *Iduth-Su*, or has created one of the Flayed Ones himself. These unfortunate beings were once Lunes, but after being exposed to the obscene Rite of Dead Light they have become barely sentient creatures, completely subservient to the Bale Hounds. The Moon-Skin is visible in the *Hisil* as what appears to be a few shreds of silver light, flickering and rippling over and over in the vague outline of the Lune it once was.

These wretched beings are hidden by the Bale Hounds, often in deeply infected Wounds, and sustained by the *Asah Gadar* nearby in exchange for bestowing Gifts upon the Maeljin's werewolf servants. Any Moon-Skin is capable of granting Mother Luna Gifts, Eclipse Gifts, Tainted Moon Gifts and any Gift associated with the auspice choir that the Lune once belonged to, as long as the Bale Hound has the required number of experience points necessary to purchase the Gift he wishes to learn. The character must still be of the appropriate auspice to learn Auspice Gifts; a Bale Hound who was drawn from the ranks of the Pure cannot learn Auspice Gifts at all.

Disadvantage: The *Iduth-Su* are in a constant state of critical injury, kept extent only by the Essence that the Bale Hounds feed them. The *Iduth-Su* are unable to hold Essence, and thus cannot spend the daily point of Essence to sustain themselves. To maintain a Moon-Skin, a Bale Hound must feed it a point of Essence per night at moonrise. If even one moonrise slips by without this expenditure, the Lune dies (probably with great relief) and dissipates.

In areas where more than one Bale Hound is present, the *Asah Gadar* usually share a Moon-Skin and take turns feeding the poor creature the Essence it requires. This involves shedding one Health point's worth of the donating Hound's own blood over the being's flickering, ebbing form and spending an Essence point, which is transferred to the *Iduth-Su* during the process. If a Bale Hound is alone in the area and seeks to maintain this Merit, she must ideally learn of some way to siphon a great deal of Essence in the local region, either through loci or learning a way to drain Essence from Wounds.

Also, the *Iduth-Su* are extremely difficult to create and maintain, and the Bale Hounds don't take kindly to members who allow the *Iduth-Su* to die through carelessness, or those Hounds who create *Iduth-Su* in great numbers and risk drawing Mother Moon's watchful attention. An *Asah Gadar* who behaves in either manner can expect serious reprisals from his fellow Hounds.

GIFTS

Bale Hounds are still werewolves. Those from the Pure still maintain their ties to the enigmatic and powerful spirits of the Pure Tribes, and Hounds who defect from the Forsaken still retain the ties to their tribal totem, as explained above. Both

Pure and Forsaken Bale Hounds, therefore, maintain the ability to learn Tribal Gifts in the manner of their fellows. (Even if using the Bale Hounds as tribe option, in which case the Hound purchases Gifts as appropriate.)

Better still, the Forsaken *Asah Gadar* keep their auspices. Luna is not a moral entity, and her Lunes can be courted by any werewolf who hasn't burned away her auspice through the rituals of the Pure. The Bale Hounds can still learn Auspice Gifts as normal, though some Hounds practice a very dangerous game by capturing Lunes and forcing particularly vile Gifts out of them.

ECLIPSE GIFTS

An eclipse is a few brief moments of darkness, the Earth hiding in the moon's shadow or the moon obscured by the Earth. That, in a way, is a near-holy time to the Bale Hounds, when the moon is blinded by darkness. These Gifts are taught by spirits of darkness or some rare Lunes (particularly Irralunim).

While these Gifts are quite appropriate for Bale Hounds, Storytellers may choose to make them available to other werewolves. The Bale Hounds don't have a monopoly on the concept of darkness or shadows.

NIGHT-EYES (•)

Werewolves in Urhan form already have the sharpened senses of a true wolf, but this power allows the werewolf to see perfectly well in pitch darkness even in Hishu form. No natural darkness or shadow can defeat the werewolf's vision, and he sees as keenly as though it were a night lit by the full face of Luna. The werewolf can still be blinded by supernatural means, or through natural means involving damage to his eyes. The Uratha's enhanced sight can only pierce natural darkness without worry.

Cost: None

Dice Pool: Wits + Survival + Purity

Action: Instant

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The Uratha's vision is troubled by flickering black shapes, rendering her near-blind for the rest of the scene. The werewolf suffers a -3 penalty to all rolls involving her vision for the remainder of the scene, or a whole hour, whichever is the soonest.

Failure: The Bale Hound's perceptions do not shift.

Success: The character can see perfectly well in natural darkness and suffers no penalties to vision-based rolls.

Exceptional Success: The character's sight becomes so attuned to the darkness that he gains a +2 bonus on all sight-based Wits rolls for the remainder of the scene.

THE SHADOW'S SECRETS (••)

The Uratha can concentrate on any patch of shadow within her line of sight, and attune her senses so that she can hear and smell anything in the vicinity of the shadow. This is a useful Gift for a werewolf crouching on a rooftop or in an alleyway and who yet still needs to hear the conversation of her prey despite their distance down the street. The Gift works well in urban settings, when anyone standing in a city's limits at night are constantly surrounded by the shadows of buildings, streetlights, alleys and so on.

Cost: 1 Essence

Dice Pool: Wits + Occult + Wisdom

Action: Instant

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The character hears the quiet whisperings of the shadow-spirits nearby instead of the targets' voices. These are mellifluous, alien whisperings telling of every detail the shadows have seen that night, and the voices set nerves on edge and seem to make very little sense. The werewolf suffers a -4 to all hearing-based Wits rolls for the remainder of the scene.

Failure: Nothing happens.

Success: The character can make out the voices of the targets near the chosen shadow as if the werewolf was standing within the patch of darkness himself.

Exceptional Success: The werewolf's senses become so amplified by the Gift that he can also scent the targets as if he were standing within the patch of shadow nearby.

SAROUND OF THE BLINDED MOON (•••)

The Uratha can call upon this Gift to summon his own eclipsing shadows. The darkness generated by this Gift is normal shadow, created to mirror the spiritual darkness of a lunar eclipse, and can be pierced by flashlights, sunlight and so on. When used subtly, such as in a dark alleyway or a forest at night, the summoned shadow can cloud the poor lighting completely and immerse the area in pitch darkness. Bale Hounds use this Gift in order to confound their foes or make last-minute escapes without the worry of being seen leaving the area.

Cost: 1 Essence

Dice Pool: Manipulation + Occult + Cunning

Action: Instant

Suggested Modifiers

Situation	Modifier
Moonlight	+3
Dusk or poorly lit street	+2
Poorly lit room	+1
Well lit room	—
Any sunlight present	—

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The werewolf fails to summon the darkness of a lunar eclipse, and is unable to attempt another summoning until sunset the following evening.

Failure: Nothing happens.

Success: The spiritual reflection of an eclipse permeates the area, lengthening shadows and limiting vision drastically in an area of 20 square yards (or the entire room) for the rest of the scene.

Exceptional Success: The area affected doubles to a 40-square-yard area and further limits senses such as hearing and scent, inflicting -2 penalties to any rolls involving those senses while immersed in the summoned shadow.

DARKENED MOON (••••)

This Gift draws on the power of the lunar eclipse to blot out the werewolf's victim's access to the powers granted by Luna. The target loses access to all auspice abilities and even to the lunar marks of Renown. This Gift is presently unknown to the Pure, though the ramifications of it falling into their hands are very unpleasant.

Cost: 1 Essence

Dice Pool: Intelligence + Occult + Honor versus Resolve + Primal Urge

Action: Instant and Contested; resistance is reflexive.

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The werewolf is afflicted by the Gift's effects as if Darkened Moon had been successfully used on her.

Failure: Nothing happens.

Success: The werewolf gains more successes than her target. The target immediately loses all access to Auspice Gifts, and any Auspice Gifts that are currently in effect on the target are canceled. The target also cannot use any auspice abilities and cannot add his Renown to any dice pools. The effects last for the duration of a scene.

Exceptional Success: The effects last for 24 hours.

GAUNTLET WRAITH (•••••)

The werewolf has developed such a command over shadows that she can use her power to push herself through the Gauntlet when she is immersed in darkness. The Gift only functions when the werewolf is hidden from Luna's sight; the power fails to function if the Uratha can see the face of the moon from where she stands.

The werewolf can step into any shadow that is at least the same size as she is, and appear on the other side of the Gauntlet, either from spirit to substance or from the physical realm to the second world.

Cost: 1 Essence

Dice Pool: No roll is required.

Action: Reflexive

TAINTED MOON GIFTS

Some of the more dramatically twisted weapons on the arsenal of the Bale Hounds are perversions of Luna's own blessings. The Tainted Moon Gift list is a fine example of the auspice choirs turned against Mother Luna in a sickly sweet violation of the natural order. The werewolf must have access to one of

the Flayed Ones, a Lune that has been bound and tortured, in order to learn these Gifts. For more information, see the "Merit: Flayed Lune," p. 136, and "the Rite of Dead Light," p. 145.

BLOODY MOON (••)

Under the full moon, the corrupted Lunes teach the Bale Hounds to tap the full potential of their Rage. For a Hound, entering Death Rage is not a struggle for control or a surrender to murderous urges. Death Rage is the only time that the *Asah Gadar* truly feels like herself.

This Gift is permanent once learned. It does not need to be activated and requires no expenditure or dice roll. Bale Hounds with this Gift suffer a -2 penalty on all rolls to avoid entering Death Rage, but are all the more dangerous when Death Rage comes. The werewolf with this Gift gains an additional +1 to Strength, Dexterity and Stamina, above and beyond the normal bonuses associated with Gauru form.

Cost: None

Dice Pool: No roll is necessary.

Action: N/A

GRAVED MOON (••)

The Bale Hound who uses this Gift appears more vital, more alive and more human — at the expense of those around him. Using this Gift steals the vitality from others, changing their spark of life into a mask for the Hound. The people whom this Gift afflicts don't realize the effect the Bale Hound has on them. Passersby become weak, bitter and depressed, sick people or infants die and even the Hound's packmates feel out of sorts and restless. Meanwhile, the Bale Hound appears normal, trustworthy and even happy.

Cost: 1 Essence

Dice Pool: Manipulation + Subterfuge + Glory

Action: Instant



Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The character becomes suffused with the positive energy in the area, but instead of reflecting the energy, she absorbs it. The character must immediately check for Death Rage; even if she keeps herself under control, she feels nauseated for the remainder of the scene (–1 on all rolls unless she subsequently enters Death Rage).

Failure: Nothing happens.

Success: The character siphons off the positive and life-affirming energies and feelings from those in the immediate area. This grants him an extra die per success on all Social interactions for the remainder of the scene, but also drains Willpower from any ordinary humans within a radius equal to 10 yards per dot of the Bale Hound's Primal Urge. The Willpower drain affects those with the lowest Willpower ratings first (so if the Bale Hound has two successes for the Gift and there are three people within the radius with Willpower 3, 5 and 8, the first two lose a point of Willpower). If the drain would afflict someone who is currently out of Willpower, the Gift inflicts a point of bashing damage instead. The werewolf gains no Willpower or Health by using this Gift. The drain is merely a by-product of the Gift's effect. The werewolf cannot gain more dice to Social rolls than he drains Willpower; if he uses this Gift in an area where only one human is within range, he gains only one die to his Social pools.

Supernatural entities are not affected by the draining effect of this Gift. The Gift may be used only once in any 24-hour period.

Exceptional Success: No effect beyond a greater Social bonus.

BROKEN MOON (•••)

The Elunim police the Uratha for violations of Honor, seeking balance between human and wolf, Rage and temperance. After the flaying rites of the Bale Hounds, the Lunes look at the broken moon as just further evidence that balance is unnatural, and they are quite happy to teach the *Asah Gadar* how to upset it.

Successful use of this Gift forces other werewolves into Death Rage. The Bale Hound need only glance at the target to activate the Gift.

Cost: 1 Essence

Dice Pool: Presence + Expression + Honor versus Resolve + Primal Urge

Action: Contested; resistance is reflexive and unconscious.

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The Bale Hound immediately enters Death Rage.

Failure: Nothing happens.

Success: The target automatically enters Death Rage, changes to Gauru form and attacks the first thing at hand.

Exceptional Success: No extra effect.

SICKLE MOON (••••)

Under the crescent moon, the *Asah Gadar*'s warped Lune servants show them how to silence any spirits that might ally with their prey. Use of this Gift requires that the werewolf see the spirit, either by peeking into the *Hisil* or using the Two-World Eyes Gift (a manifested spirit is also vulnerable). A spirit's Defense does not apply to this attack.

Cost: 1 Willpower

Dice Pool: Strength + Occult + Wisdom – spirit's Resistance

Action: Instant

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The Bale Hound's attack on the target spirit not only fails, but alerts every spirit in the area as to what just happened. Even in areas populated by spirits that despise the Forsaken, the Hound won't remain masked for long.

Failure: Nothing happens. The spirit notices the attempted attack with a successful Finesse roll.

Success: The spirit is wracked with searing pain as its Corpus sloughs away like diseased flesh. The spirit suffers one point of damage per success on the Bale Hound's attack.

Exceptional Success: Damage is applied to the spirit's Corpus and Essence, making it possible for a Bale Hound to completely destroy a spirit with this Gift.

DARK MOON (•••••)

The Irralunim help the Forsaken to surmount minor obstacles, but many Irraka suspect that these Lunes are much more powerful than they let on. The no-moons would be distraught, then, to find out the Gift that their patron choir grants to the Bale Hounds. With a touch and a single word in a language no Forsaken understands, the Bale Hound can strike an Uratha blind, deaf and insensate. Locked in a world of silence and darkness, completely cut off from any sensory information whatsoever, the victim must struggle to maintain his sanity and his control. Death Rage offers release, because in *Kuruth* the victim's conscious mind takes leave — but the victim has no way to know who he might kill during this frenzy.

Cost: 1 Essence and 1 Willpower

Dice Pool: Wits + Subterfuge + Cunning versus Composure + Primal Urge

Action: Contested; resistance is reflexive and unconscious.

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The Bale Hound falls unconscious as the Gift reverses itself upon her.

Failure: Nothing happens.

Success: The target loses all sensory input, becoming blind, deaf and unable to smell or feel the world around him. This is disturbing enough for human beings, who typically flail and scream incomprehensibly when afflicted by the Dark Moon. Werewolves, though, must immediately check for Death Rage and continue doing so every minute. These rolls incur a cumulative –1 penalty, meaning that in five minutes the Uratha has a –5 penalty to avoid Death Rage. The sensory deprivation lasts for one minute per success on the Bale Hound's roll.

Exceptional Success: When the Gift's effects wear off, the target must immediately check for a derangement (Resolve + Composure; failure means the target develops a new derangement, probably involving fear of the dark).

WOUND GIFTS

These particularly vile Gifts are learned from the spirits serving the Maeljin. The Gifts draw on saturation in negative resonance, and become fearsome weapons in the arsenal of the *Asah Gadar*.

WOUND-BORN (•)

With this Gift, the Maeltinets blesses the werewolf with the ability to cope with the taint of Wounded places, as if she had been born in a Wound like one of the Maeljin's own avatars, and saturated in such resonance from birth.

The Bale Hound becomes immune to the foul resonance emanating out from a Wound. He no longer suffers the penalties of entering and interacting within Wounds, as described on p. 259 of **Werewolf: The Forsaken**. This Gift requires no expenditure or dice roll to activate, only a moment's concentration.

Cost: None

Dice Pool: No roll is required.

Action: Reflexive

LORD OF THE WOUNDS (••)

With this power, the werewolf's "spirit-half" is tainted by the Maeltinnet. To Wound-born spirits, the Bale Hound now appears as one of the Maeltinnet (albeit in a strange, half-fleshly form) and his words (and bribes) are accorded greater weight. Any Bale Hound with this Gift adds a +2 bonus on all rolls to bargain, bribe or command spirits. This Gift lasts for the duration of a scene.

Cost: 1 Essence

Dice Pool: No roll is required.

Action: Instant

BLESSING OF PAIN (•••)

Wounds cause very real spiritual pain to those who enter them. They are poisoned sections of the world, where aberrations and abominations are born in the Shadow, and they are the very worst of the sickest and most tainted place in the two worlds. The Maeltinnet can teach a Bale Hound how to harness the sickening power of a Wound, and force her opponents to feel the spiritual pain of a corrupted world with a single caress. The Bale Hound must touch her target to activate this Gift, though it cannot be "transferred" by a claw or bite.

Cost: 1 Essence

Dice Pool: Intelligence + Occult + Purity – target's Resolve

Action: Reflexive

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The Bale Hound is struck with the feelings of pain and unease that he was trying to force on the target. Until the next moonrise, the Bale Hound suffers an additional Health point of damage from all injuries he sustains.

Failure: Nothing happens.

Success: The target is suddenly wracked with sickness, and suffers all the penalties of entering a Wound, as detailed on p. 259 of **Werewolf: The Forsaken**. The effects last for one turn per success on the roll.

Exceptional Success: The effects last until the end of the scene, and the roiling, impure sickness is potentially enough to drive the target insane. The target must make a Harmony (substitute Morality or the appropriate trait for non-werewolves) roll with four dice, and suffers a derangement if he fails. Creatures with no Harmony equivalent, such as spirits or Hosts, are immune to this effect.

SPIRIT SUFFERING (••••)

The Maeltinnet teach the Bale Hounds how to draw the suffering of others to replenish their personal energies, much how a spirit feeds on occurrences of its primary Influence. This Gift allows the Bale Hound to attempt to siphon Essence from a mortal experiencing a negative emotion or urge — lust, wrath, greed and so on. The Gift only works on normal human beings, and only if the target is feeling a negative urge or emotion, such as a Vice, one of the Maeljin's Influences or an obviously dark emotion such as hatred.

Cost: N/A

Dice Pool: Manipulation + Empathy + Cunning versus the subject's Morality

Action: Instant and Contested; resistance is reflexive.

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The attempt fails, and the Bale Hound is unable to summon the spiritual willpower to spend Essence points until the following moonrise.

Failure: Nothing happens.

Success: The target is struck by powerful feelings of apathy and lethargy, as her emotions are spiritually ripped from her mind. The Bale Hound gains a point of Essence, and the human suffers a –1 to all dice rolls until she next sleeps and recovers with rest.

Exceptional Success: The Bale Hound receives two Essence points instead of one.

COMMUNION WITH THE WOUNDS (•••••)

A perverted version of the Knowledge Gift: Communion With the Land, this power is granted to the most powerful Bale Hounds so that they might know the location and details of every Wound nearby. The werewolf opens his mind to the pulsating, sick pressure of the Wounds, and gains the knowledge of what is occurring in each Wounded area within several miles. This knowledge increases the Bale Hound's understanding of just how to most efficiently defend each Wound, as well as getting a look at the current state of the surrounding areas.

Cost: 1 Essence

Dice Pool: Intelligence + Survival + Wisdom

Action: Instant

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The Bale Hound receives conflicting images and messages from the spirits of the Wounds. She suffers a –1 penalty to all rolls for the rest of the scene as her senses are overwhelmed with the backlash.

Failure: The werewolf receives no images or messages from nearby Wounds.

Success: The character immediately gains full knowledge of all Wounds within a 5-mile radius, their proximity to loci, the number of spirits around the areas, the name of the Maeltinnet present within each (if any) and general terrain features. When in the area of one of the Wounds he has seen, the Bale Hound gains a +2 to Defense and Initiative. The Gift's effects lasts for a scene.

Exceptional Success: As success, but the distance of the knowledge spreads to 10 miles, and the bonus to Defense and Initiative is +3.

RITES

RITE OF THE SHROUD (••)

To conceal their existence from the Forsaken, the Bale Hounds must mask their spirit brands to the Maeljin Incarna. Through the Rite of the Shroud, the *Asah Gadar* bond with Soulless Wolf, the so-called forgotten Firstborn, and establish a connection to the Maeljin through Viruhk-Ur. In this role, Soulless Wolf is nothing more than an intermediary that allows the Bale Hounds to possess Maeljin or Maeltinnet totems without being revealed as traitors to Luna and *Urfarah*. The Rite of the Shroud is always taught to a Bale Hound on the night she joins the cult, and attended by the Eyes of the Maeljin after a formal Rite of Initiation. Soulless

Wolf itself, any of the Maeltinet and most of the Maeljin's trusted spirit servitors can teach this ritual to the Bale Hounds.

Performing the Rite: For more structured presentations of the Bale Hounds, this ritual follows the Rite of Initiation (such as a Bleeding). Rite of the Shroud must be performed in a Wound, after attracting the attention of Soulless Wolf through deeds or by summoning. The rite can never be performed without the Eyes of the Maeltinet present.

Soulless Wolf describes, step by step, what the werewolf must do after he has passed his trial to gain entry to the cult. First, the Hound-to-be must chant the names of eight people close to him, and swear in First Tongue that he will kill them all before his own death. This is a solemn vow, and though not mystically binding, it serves as a powerful oath highlighting just how far the Bale Hound is falling into personal corruption. He is then instructed to swear the following three promises:

- "I swear that with my claws I will tear Mother Moon from the sky."
- "I swear that with my deeds I shall destroy all that the People have worked for."
- "I swear that all the blood I shed shall be to see the Maeljin rise."

After speaking each sentence, the werewolf is instructed to reach into Soulless Wolf's mouth and break a fang free from the spirit's powerful jaws. After the third promise, when the werewolf holds three of Soulless Wolf's fangs, the Uratha is instructed to swallow them and concentrate on the feel of the spiritual matter dissipating throughout his body.

In the silence that follows, as the werewolf meditates on the sickening sensation of having swallowed pure Corpus from what seems to be the most powerful servant of the Maeljin, Soulless Wolf circles the Uratha eight times, growling the names of each of the Maeljin Incarnae as the spirit completes a circle. Then Viruhk-Ur waits for the werewolf to open his eyes, and demands that the Uratha speak the name of the Maeljin he desires to serve, or die here so that he may never speak of the secrets he has learned.

If the werewolf attempts to back out of this part of the ritual, he is destroyed swiftly and mercilessly. If he speaks the name of his chosen Maeljin, he feels the ice-cold rush of connection in his blood, as the Maeljin totem reaches for his heart. Here is the point at which the character rolls for the rite's success.

Dice Pool: Harmony

Action: Instant

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The Maeljin are sickened by the thought of accepting this werewolf into their service. Soulless Wolf immediately turns to destroy the character; only the rarest of Uratha will survive a battle with the Eyes of the Maeljin.

Failure: The rite fails and the werewolf must try again, before sunrise, or she will be destroyed by Soulless Wolf.

Success: Soulless Wolf leaves the Uratha alone in this moment, and the werewolf is free to leave the Wound. The werewolf is now one of the *Asah Gadar*, free to work against the local Forsaken of his own will and learn the cult's dark secrets if he is able to find a teacher.

Exceptional Success: Soulless Wolf remains to answer any questions the werewolf has, and will help the Bale Hound find other *Asah Gadar* nearby by revealing their locations if required.



RITE OF THE SIN-EATER (••)

In Soulless Wolf's role as the Eyes of the Maeljin, the spirit plays a vital part in the Bale Hound cult. It is he who takes the sins of the *Asah Gadar* into himself, ensuring that the werewolves are able to mask their dying Harmony and infiltrate the Forsaken without their rites and ability to enter the *Hisil* failing completely.

The method by which the Bale Hounds save their own souls is based on an old Christian custom, adapted and corrupted for the cultists' own uses. By tithing extensive chiminage to Soulless Wolf, the *Asah Gadar* pay for their dark deeds to be masked for another lunar cycle.

Performing the Rite: This rite must be performed within a Wound, and can only be performed by an individual on himself — never with a ritemaster. However, it can be performed with or without Soulless Wolf being present. The Bale Hound must tithe a great deal of chiminage for the rite to function, in addition to spending two points of Essence.

Firstly, the werewolf recites a litany of her recent sins against Harmony, and pleads with the Maeljin to take each of the sins from her soul. She offers chiminage appropriate to each of the Maeljin: items representing wrath, greed, lust, gluttony, violence, envy, deception, pride and sloth. A relatively popular method of gathering such challenging chiminage is to murder mortals who exhibit these sins in their lives, and then use their blood, bones or other body parts as items in the offering. Though the most common method for acquiring the necessary chiminage, this is by no means the only accepted one. Many Bale Hounds “store up” any items that can be used in future offerings, for a werewolf never knows just when she might suddenly need her sins eaten in a hurry after a particularly grueling engagement.

After the sin-chiminage is gathered and offered to the Maeljin as a gift, the Bale Hound must cut his own flesh and shed blood for nine minutes over the offered items. Obviously, due to regeneration, this can be something of a trial itself, and many of the *Asah Gadar* use ritual silver knives for this part of the ceremony. The Bale Hound must not talk to another being, or the ritual automatically fails. The blood is to be shed in silent contemplation of both the pain the werewolf is feeling, or while begging the Maeljin for aid.

Once blood has been shed for nine minutes — a minute for each Maeljin Incarna — the werewolf spends two Essence points into the last trickle of blood, and pleads once again for her Maeljin totem to lend him spiritual strength.

With these words spoken, the character can make the roll to see whether the rite is successful.

Cost: Two Essence and two points of lethal damage from blood loss.

Dice Pool: Harmony. For each additional Essence point spent beyond the mandatory two points, the Bale Hound gains a +1 bonus to the roll.

Action: Instant (once the lengthy ceremony is complete).
Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The rite fails, and the Bale Hound may not attempt to perform the rite until another lunar cycle has passed. It is likely that during this month, the Bale Hound will again suffer Harmony loss, increasing the difficulty of the next performance of the Rite of the Sin-Eater, and potentially leading the werewolf in a downward spiral to the life of a Broken Soul.

Failure: The rite fails to please the Maeljin (or fails to attract their attention entirely), and the Bale Hound must once

again gather the necessary chiminage before performing the rite in the future.

Success: Soulless Wolf manifests, representing the Maeljin. Often without a word, the spirit consumes the blood-covered chiminage, taking the sinful offerings and the Bale Hound's blood into the spirit's own Corpus. For the next month, the Bale Hound may add +2 to all Harmony dice rolls involving rites and stepping sideways. This bonus cannot raise a Bale Hound's Harmony dice pool above seven dice.

Exceptional Success: The Maeljin bless the Bale Hound for her masterful chiminage and dedication to their foul destiny. In addition to the results gained from a success, the dark gods bestow a further gift for the coming month: the Bale Hound may effortlessly resist all compulsions gained from Harmony loss for a full lunar cycle.

SHRIeking GLYPHS (•••)

The walls of some Wounds have been known to display dozens of strange symbols that resemble First Tongue glyphs, but read as gibberish if deciphered. Bale Hounds use these sigils in two ways: as a way to mark the location of an *Iduth-Su*, so that other Bale Hounds can track down one of the Flayed Ones if he desires, and as a way of repelling werewolves with high Harmony from attempting to investigate and cleanse the Wound.

The symbols have little effect on werewolves with Harmony scores of 4 or less, but those with scores of 5 and higher feel severe discomfort and even pain if they look at the runes on the walls, trees or ground of the Wound. The exact nature of the discomfort depends on the viewer's Harmony, and the penalties stack with those already in play from the characters standing within a Wound.

Harmony 5: The runes are ugly symbols that seem to almost make sense, and could possibly be describing the history of the Wound and what has occurred in the area. The werewolf suffers discomfort from looking at the symbols, as if his skin were crawling, but no mechanical penalty.

Harmony 6: The runes are alive with some kind of power of their own, and, though the words they represent are gibberish, the werewolf can hear them being whispered in her mind. Whenever the character looks directly at them, the whispering increases to a painful shriek within her mind, inflicting a -1 penalty to all dice rolls until the character looks away.

Harmony 7: The runes are definitely alive, somehow. They seem to shriek their nonsensical meanings into the mind of the character, inflicting a -1 penalty to all dice rolls while the character is within 10 yards of the symbols.

Harmony 8+: As Harmony 7, though directly looking at the symbols intensifies the horrific shrieking, and the character must make a Willpower roll to prevent himself backing away from them.

Performing the Rite: The Bale Hound learns the names of several of the Wound-born Gaffling spirits of the area, and writes the names on the Wound's surfaces with his own blood. Once the werewolf has gained the cooperation of the spirits involved, the werewolf can use this variant of the Fetish Rite to bind the spirits one by one into these bloody runes, creating fetishes that exist only to psychically shriek in torment at their confinement. Some spirits actually agree to this horrendous treatment without being first bound or tortured, either out of mindless desire to serve the Maeljin or out of fear of death at the Bale Hound's hands.

The rite works on all of the named spirits at the same time, though the maximum number that can be affected at once is equal to the Bale Hound's Harmony.

Dice Pool: Harmony

Action: Extended. (10 successes needed; each roll represents one minute.)

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: All accumulated successes are lost, the spirits break free of the binding before it takes hold and seek to attack the Bale Hound for her actions.

Failure: No further successes are accumulated, the rite fails and the spirits are not bound into the glyphs. The ritemaster must create new glyphs if he wishes to try again in the future.

Success: Successes are added, and when the required number is accumulated, the spirits are bound into the symbols.

Exceptional Success: No additional effect beyond the several successes gained.

RITE OF DEAD LIGHT (....)

The Rite of Dead Light allows *Asah Gadar* to keep Lunes in a semi-sentient, near-death state of constant agony. The spirit is cut off from returning to Luna, and is utterly subservient to the ritemaster that bound it, in the hope that it will be granted release in death. In truth, the Lune is dying — dying eternally — but the Rite of Dead Light feeds the spirit just enough Essence to maintain its agonized existence forever. These tortured, bestial Lunes are known as the *Iduth-Su*, the Flayed Ones.

This is no easy feat. The ritual to hollow out the Lunes and rebirth them as Flayed Ones must take place on a lunar eclipse, and within the boundaries of a Wound. If the Bale Hound can arrange this difficult circumstance precisely during the short time the moon is eclipsed by the Earth's shadow, then the most difficult part is out of the way and the Rite of Dead Light can be performed. A Bale Hound who is fully ready for this ritual will consider using the Rite of Binding on the Lune to make sure it is unable to flee the tainted Shadow landscape when the treachery is revealed.

Performing the Rite: Before the Lune is even present, the Bale Hound must establish a "heresy circle" of runes defying the love offered by Mother Moon. These are the ritual signifiers that show the Bale Hound is truly prepared to violate the will of Luna and corrupt one of her blessed servants. Once it is within the Wound, the Lune must be reduced to zero Corpus within sight of the heresy circle (which some Bale Hounds use as a Binding circle if they know how). Bale Hounds traditionally seek to "flay" the Lunes by inflicting row upon row of claw-carvings that literally peel the Corpus from the spirit's body.

Once the Lune resembles nothing more than a hollow shell of its former self, the Bale Hound offers the creature chimaera of a kind only appropriate only for the Maeljin Incarna, such as Essence drawn from a Wounded locus or the Essence-rich blood of another werewolf. The Lune, starved and near-destroyed, will be forced to take the offering in order to sustain itself. At this point, the poor spirit is ingesting Essence with tainted resonance, and as the character makes the Harmony roll, the Bale Hound begins the chant that will bind the betrayed Lune to his will and tear away what little sentience remains to the creature.

Dice Pool: Harmony versus the Lune's Resistance

Action: Instant and Resisted.



Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The Lune breaks free at the last moment and flees the Wound, unless the character has established a Rite of Binding beforehand, in which case the spirit simply dies with obvious relief.

Failure: The Lune is destroyed in the exchange of energies, and fades into nothingness.

Success: The Rite is successful, and the chant binds the Lune to the will of the Bale Hound. The *Iduth-Su* instinctively recognizes any of the *Asah Gadar*, and serves them with blind devotion. The Flayed One is restored to the Traits that it possessed as a true Lune, though its only source of Essence is through a Bale Hound (or, rarely, one of the Maeltinet).

Exceptional Success: The *Iduth-Su* is fanatically loyal to the Bale Hound who bound it, above all others. His voice is the first obeyed, no matter the Rank of any other *Asah Gadar* that the Flayed One encounters.

Bale Hound Fetishes

SKINNER MASK (TALEN)

The Bale Hounds have many grim powers and fetishes at their disposal, but potentially the most grotesque of fetishes used by the cult is the Skinner Mask. This mask is created by flaying the flesh from a person's face while he or she is still alive and conscious, and binding a deception-spirit within the wet, rag-like skin immediately after it is removed from the victim.

Skin taken from dead bodies or unconscious victims fails to function as it should, so only living, aware subjects may be used. Part of the criteria for creation is the suffering the victim must endure as his or her face is cut off. Also, although Skinner Masks are traditionally made with as much flesh from the face as possible: if much of the tissue is ruined in the extraction (perhaps from a victim's struggles), then the fetish may be created with only a few strips of skin, as long as there is enough to cover at least a quarter of the Bale Hound's own face.

Once the spirit is bound within the skin, the *Asah Gadar* may press the flesh to his own face, and will immediately begin to look exactly the same as the victim, even down to height, weight, eye color, hairstyle and so on. The deception is a masterful one, lasting until the following moonrise, and adds four bonus successes to any disguise rolls to impersonate the (now faceless) victim.

The Skinner Mask even makes the Bale Hound give off the same scent as the impersonated victim, and masks the werewolf's own scent.

There are limits to a Skinner Mask's power. If the character shapeshifts from Hishu form, the fetish splits apart and breaks, destroying the effect instantly. Although the fetish cannot be used on the undead, it works perfectly well on werewolves and mages, provided they are alive and coherent when the flaying begins.

Bale Blade (....)

Bale Blade is the nickname for the silver weapons used by the Bale Hounds against the Forsaken and Pure. Though the *Asah Gadar* suffer Harmony degeneration for carrying silver weaponry and using it against other werewolves, they still risk it enough to have developed these traditional tools. Some Bale Hounds use them as holy artifacts of their treacherous faith, reverently maintaining the weapons as they would the most treasured heirloom fetish, while other *Asah Gadar* simply keep Bale Blades as they would nay tools, ready to be used when the time is right.

Bale Blades vary wildly in appearance. Most are long daggers or swords, though the blades themselves range from roughly carved chunks of silver with a bone handle to the most exquisitely made silver blades that sport a host of runes, naming the blade's past owners and victims. Silver is not a particularly strong metal, however, and none of the *Asah Gadar* use these weapons in everyday combat. They are last resort weapons when they have to be, but are generally used only as the final advantage in a Bale

Hound's plot to rid the region of Forsaken defenders. Any Forsaken caught using a Bale Blade suffers the mandatory Harmony roll for degeneration, in addition to another Harmony roll with two dice for knowingly using a weapon of the Maeljin-serving Bale Hounds.

In addition to the silver damage inflicted by this weapon, on any turn that the character uses an all-out attack (see the *World of Darkness Rulebook*, p. 157), two more dice are added to the attack (raising the total bonus to +4). Extremely aggressive spirits (often born in Wounds) are usually bound into these weapons.



*"Is there some sort of appeal to being ignorant?
Do you sleep better without the knowledge of
things outside your tiny boundaries?
Perhaps it suits you, not knowing why you should be afraid.
If you die having only known a single beautiful lie,
perhaps you'll be happier.
Or perhaps that will be the worst regret
to haunt you in Hell."
— Olivia Citysmith*

this book includes:

- Multiple alternate creation myths and the lodges who exemplify their heretic ideas
- Human cults formed around werewolves and the denizens of Shadow
- The secrets of the Bale Hounds from scattered cults to the rumor of the ninth tribe



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