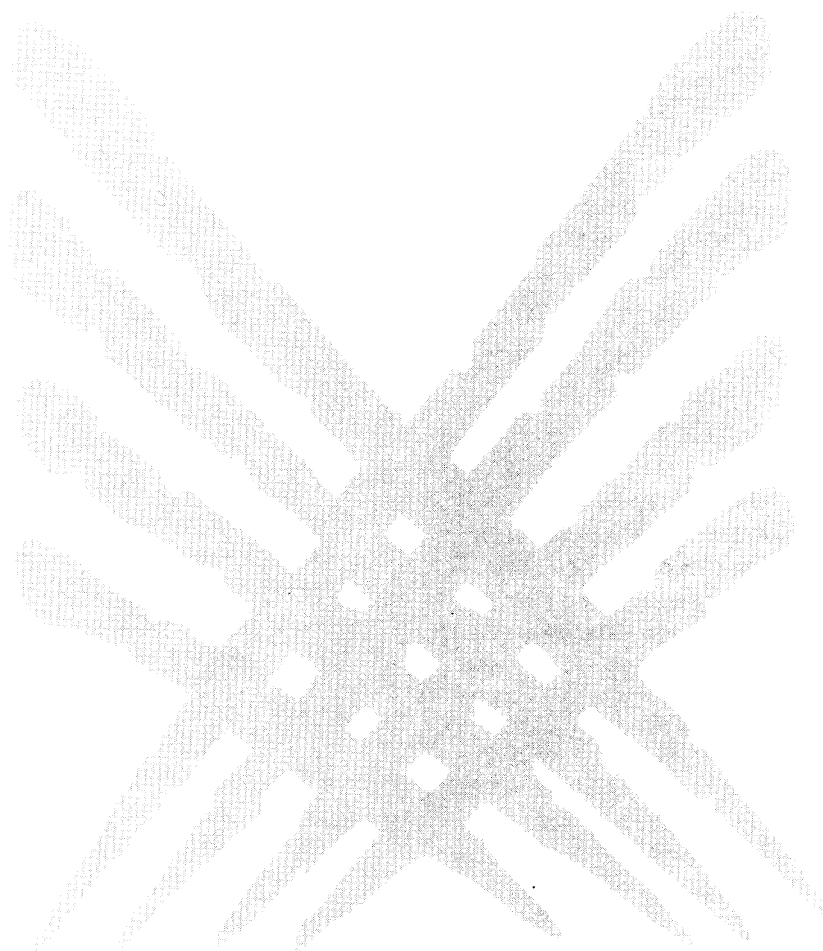


BOOK OF THE WEAVERTM



The Sourcebook of the Weaver for Werewolf: The ApocalypseTM

BOOK OF THE WEAVERTM



By Sue Armstrong, Deena McKinney,
Ethan Skemp and Sven Skoog



The Strand-Rider's Tale

Stop. Do not reformat this file. These words are not yours, but they are important. Listen to me. I have a story to tell you, one that you should hear for the good of your tribe.

Listen. I was an Iron Rider — one of you, one of your forefathers. I walked firsthand in the swelling cities, and even if I had not been trained to smell the Wyrms, its stench would have sickened me. You know what the time was like — people were ground into meal by machines and mines and tyrants of finance. The Wyrms pulsed in the cities and factories, taking the Weaver's new creations in its jaws and savagely mauling them into instruments of suffering. I wept to think of how the Weaver and the Machine were enslaved by greed and ignorance, and I swore that I would do my part to fight this.



Of course, I thought my task was simple – to fight the Wyrms and rescue the Weaver from its talons. I thought that the rest of the Garou Nation were fools for leaping to the Wyld's defense and leaving the Weaver to be devoured by the far stronger Wyrms.

I was, of course, naive.

I had been born into a family of means, and used their resources to further my fight. And it was a good fight, much better than the blood-soaked wilderness brawls of our cousins. My weapons were paycheque and revolver, steam and the printed word. The Wyrms' coils rose thick and oppressive in the cities at the time, and I was there to meet them. And as I grew into my role, the city grew around me. Sometimes I thought of it as my child, and paced its streets with paternal possessiveness; sometimes I thought of it as my parent, and curled up in its warm gaslight gaze and sleepy brick arms. I would have thought of it as my mistress as well – had it not sent a mistress to me.

Her name was Elena. She pretended to aristocracy, and in truth her grace and wit would have enthralled the nobility of Europe. It certainly enthralled me.

We had been introduced by a colleague of mine, and no, I cannot recall or access the tribe or even the name. Unimportant. But in the polite drawing-room conversations, he let it fall that she knew certain things, that she was not one of "us" [Iron Riders? Garou? I cannot recall his meaning] but was one of "us" nonetheless. I took his meaning to be that Elena was Kin, and her mystique captured me so that I never thought to inquire further. After all, it would have offended – something I soon could not even contemplate doing to her.

I never saw her eat, and I might have feared at first, a little, that she was a vampire. But no vampire can pretend to actual life the way that she was alive. Only once did I quietly wake when she was still asleep, and I watched the rise and fall of her chest, listened to her heart beat and her blood pulse, tasted her smell of sweat and life.

Too much life. Before long, I was sure she was a shapechanger like me, and yet she could not be Garou. Her eyes blazed with the fire that only comes from being a creature that can see all of life, both flesh and spirit. But there was no Rage to her — her anger burned cold when it burned, not furnacelike as it is with us. It was strange, and I felt nervous — but so many fears can be quelled by a lover's touch, when that lover understands you in ways no human, much less wolf, can.

I learned her true nature some nights later.

I had told her that I had an appointment in an opium den, and left the true nature of my visit unspoken. I had my vices, to be sure, but opium was not among them; Elena knew as much, and knew that this would be a "business" visit. So with a promise to call on her the evening after, I set out about my affairs.

They were waiting for me, of course. The man I had chosen to kill had forewarning of some sort, and it was my misfortune to learn that not only was he a sorcerer of some fashion, but that the women on his arms and lap were Wyrms-beasts in female skin. There was pain — terrible, burning pain that I can only reconstruct, not remember. I fought back with all my strength, and it was enough; his concubines splintered and jellied under my talons, and he

would have been next. He was a sorcerer of discretion, though, and took the first opportunity to magic himself away. Perhaps I would have never found him.

But I did, the very next night. I found his shrunken, desiccated husk, wrapped in twine-thick cobwebs, laid neatly across my coal-scuttle the very next night. And after I had set it burning, wondering all the while, I went upstairs and found a radiant, flushed Elena pouring brandy into two snifters.

She chuckled deep in her throat. "Did you find your present?"

I feel certain that the elders would have censured me had they known. Perhaps if I had been older myself, or more innocent, I would have torn away from her then. But nobody tells a Garou what to do, or so I thought. And although the images of bloated, bulbous spiders danced across my fancy in the dark, it somehow made my hunger for Elena all the more rapacious.

Then I made the mistake of trying to reconcile my "duty" with my love. In the midst of a conversation filled with quiet flirtations and double-speak about our contrasting shapeshifter natures, I decided I would draw her out; either I would understand more about her, or bring her closer to me. So, most casually, I said:

"You've never once mentioned the name of Gaia."

I should mention that her smile was always metallic, like bright red paint over polished steel. Her reply was, "Neither have you."

I faltered then, and had no reply.

This troubled me for some time afterward. Why was it that Gaia's name would not come to my lips unless I directly made an effort? Her gift of life pounded in my veins — or was it

actually the heart of Gaia's energy at all, and not the pulse of something else? From where did I draw my iron strength, my furnace heart, my electric speed, if not from the Earth Mother?

I tried to ask Cockroach for his wisdom then. Into the Umbra I went, into the heart of the city's glowing webs. His voice was a faint clicking, intertwined with... something else, a peculiar atonal melody. I tried to focus on Cockroach's voice — no, I lie. I could not resist the other sound, the song of wheels on rails and gears humming on their spokes.

When I realized this, I fled from the Umbra in shame, thrashing my way through the Gauntlet, collapsing in the street.

How much time passed then? I cannot say. I have no idea how to guess time in minutes any more, much less hours or days. Elena came to me, though, and nursed me with her touch.

"What is this?" I finally cried. "How is the voice of the city so strong, when it is so beset and should be weak? Why do I hear it in my head?"

"Poor thing," she murmured. "It hurts not to understand, doesn't it?" Her caress was cool on my cheek. "I can help you understand if you want. I want to help you. May I?"

My eyes were closed. I know that much.

"Please," I said.

I felt her lips against mine, then on my ears. Her whisper rustled like old silks. It was faint, and in no language I knew. And then...

And then, it seemed, she was answered. By a sound that was alien to me and yet resounded in my bones like a cub's call for its mother.

"Listen," she murmured. "Can you hear that? It is the language of my queen, whispers of things to come. It is the future of this world."

I listened then. I opened my ears and I heard it all.

From that point on — I believe it was as if I were sleepwalking, but I cannot say whether my senses were clouded then or if my clarity of perception is half-complete now. Perhaps I waited and mulled; perhaps I began my journey immediately. I do not know. I remember only that I stepped past the Gauntlet and into the heart of the spirit-city. The lights were blurred around me, but I could sense that they were patiently guttering, biding their time until they could flare so brightly that night would be no more. I paid them little heed — I simply walked, and she walked quietly behind me.

The Web was alive with miraculous electricity, and the tighter the strands grew, the brighter the lightnings. The filaments grew closer and closer together, curving and dipping into the heart of it all. I saw the concave form at the center of it all, and I recognized it for what it was. There was no longer any question, any choice — nor do I believe I would have cared for one at the time. I stepped into the heart of the spirit city, and lay down in the cradle prepared for me. The skittering of the spiders gently closed around me. I slowly closed my eyes and sank into their ministrations.

What then? -

[as0[[[[0s49-@§]]]]]]]

Then came madness. Madness now to recollect it. A time without a body, a mind set to run as electricity over the web. Separated. Unified. I cannot say whhhh'h'Δ·Δ°°'†\$f54— no, I will not remember. There is no then. There is only now. Now.

Listen.

Sometimes— I pass the wrong way down a junction, or am thrown from one strand onto another when the Web

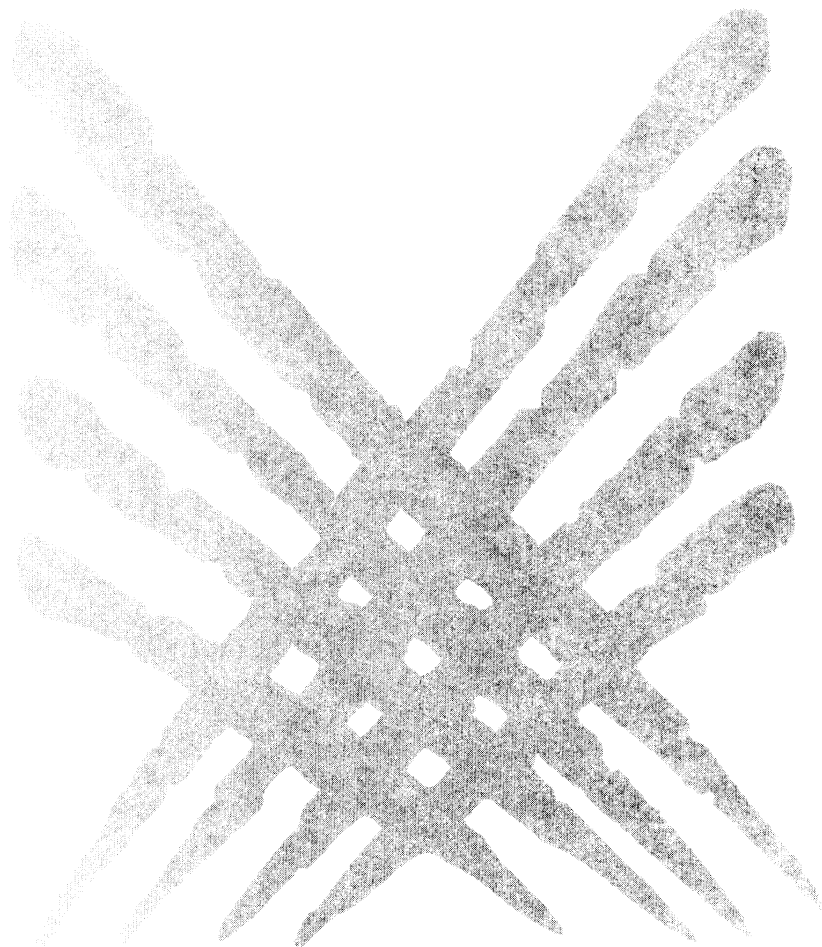
shakes. A little of myself... is reloaded then. I look for things of my old life, and eventually — nanoseconds are so long to me now — I remember that my old life is gone, and my friends are no more. And then...

And then sometimes I drown myself again in the Onesong, giving up despair for unity. Other times I struggle to manifest myself, only to fall into fugue from exhaustion. But sometimes — now — I go hunting for the electronic records of my tribe, such as this machine, and I tell as much of my story as I can.

I don't have so much as a second left; the Onesong is rising in volume. I am to be collected again. Again, do not delete or reformat this file. Learn my story. Tell your Moon Dancers.

She is great and majestic and terrible — but she does not need your assistance. Her power is too strong already.

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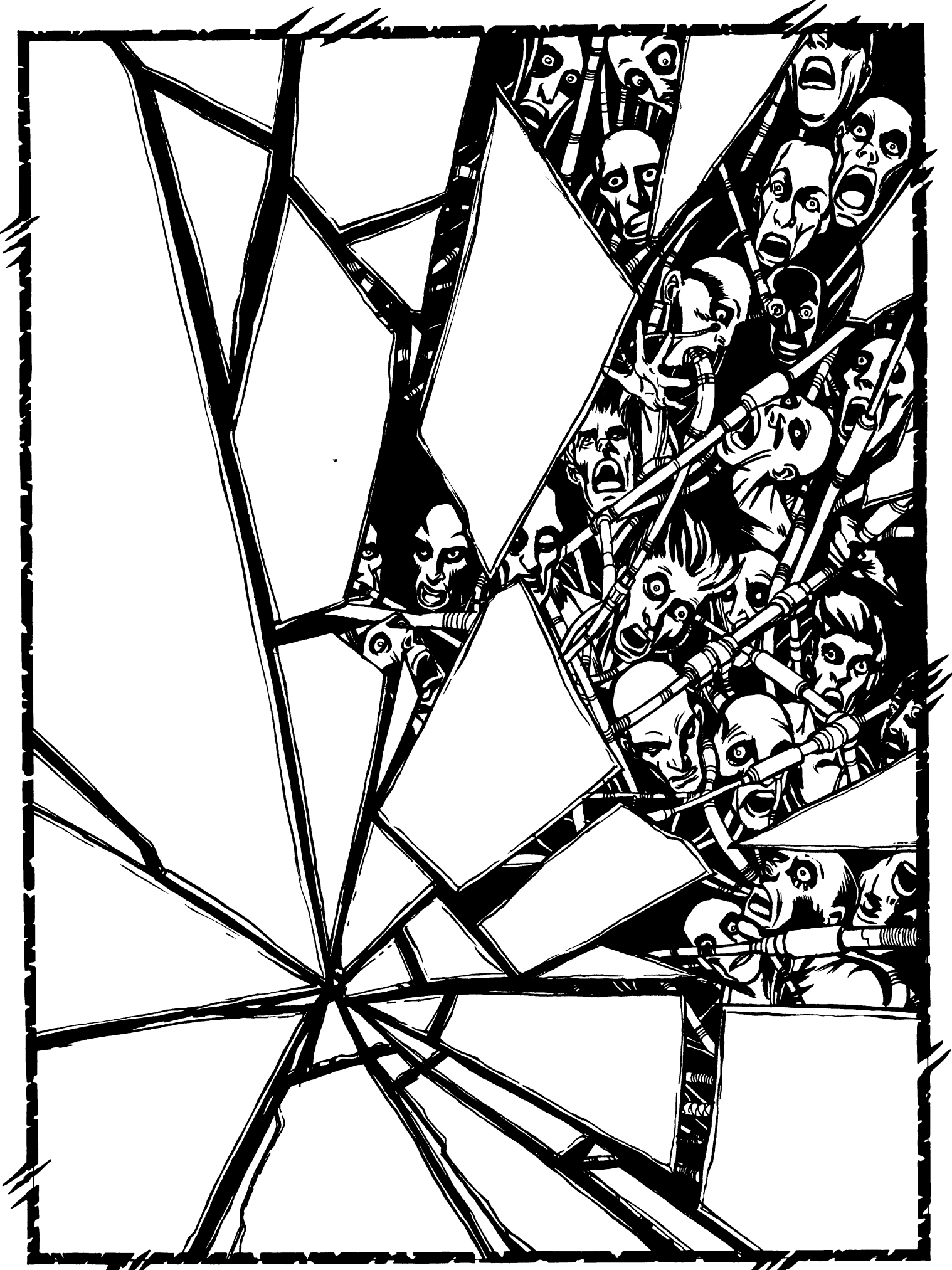
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INTRODUCTION: THE SNARLED SKEIN

*Nature is a part of our humanity, and without some awareness
and experience of that divine mystery man ceases to be man.*

— Henry Beston

Humanity has struggled toward the concept of a utopia for centuries. We dream of someday having a society where pain and suffering are nonexistent, and art and literature flourish. We want a society where crime is a mere pipe dream, where everyone is free to do as they will, where we can have whatever we like with *just* enough effort to make us appreciate it, but without sacrificing convenience. We want justice and technology and peace and health — and every day, people do what they can to bring us one step closer to this idealized existence. We hope that we'll be enlightened enough to appreciate this society and not abuse the power we gain, and we hope that someday our level of technology won't outstrip the everyday man's comprehension of that technology — a world without ignorance, technoshock or fear. If we can balance our own knowledge with the wisdom to use it, perhaps someday it will be possible.

But one of the fundamental things that is wrong with the **Werewolf** universe is that Balance is corrupt — and Progress and Science are insane.

It all comes back to the Weaver in the end. According to the legends of the Changing Breeds, the universe went wrong when she lost her mind. She is the one who raised the

Gauntlet; she is the one who bound the Wyrms, driving it insane. She is indirectly responsible for all the corruption that the Wyrms have worked since then — and she is directly responsible for the unchecked growth of the Pattern Web. She could very well be the real enemy of the shapeshifters, one more powerful than the Wyrms. Even if the Garou manage to stop the Wyrms in its tracks, if the Weaver isn't healed of her madness, they'll just be exchanging one Apocalypse for another.

The magi perceive her threads, too; a powerful faction of mages in fact further the Weaver's will each time they exert their own on reality. The Namers would call the Weaver "Stasis" — but they are wrong. The Weaver allows change, usually in the name of "moving forward" — however, she has no power to create on her own. Like a deranged maiden aunt, she fusses over the children that aren't hers, trying to claim them for her own. She orders and defines and records, insisting on Naming the things that she can't produce. She narrows potential, insisting that things only grow into the things she wants them to be.

She is ally to some, enemy to others. She isn't malicious; nor is she benevolent. She is simply unyielding. It's her way or no way at all.

A Word of Explanation

Some of the scientifically minded or technophiles among you might be irked a bit by the tone of this book. Specifically, you might get the impression that we White Wolf folks are a bunch of hypocritical Luddites, frothing at the mouth about how we'd all be better off in lightless caves, and then typing it into our Macintoshes so that we can collect our paychecks on time and drive home to our CD players and video game platforms.

In a word — relax.

Yes, technology and science have done wonders for the whole world, not just humanity. Nobody really misses smallpox, and it's science that helps us realize exactly why this ecosystem of ours is worth preserving. But remember, this is the World of Darkness we're talking about. Of course we're going to focus on technoshock and vivisection, on pollution and blind progress. We're going to tell a story about a society that's receiving social and technological advances faster than the general populace can learn to responsibly use them. Because this stuff is real, and it's even *more* of a problem in the World of Darkness, where there's a potent spiritual entity who's contributing to the insanity. We'll leave all that fantasizing about science only ever being used responsibly to *Star Trek*. In *Werewolf*, the world is a mess, and it isn't looking any better.

But hey, you knew that already.

How to Use This Book

Book of the Weaver is your guide to the madness of Grandmother Spider. It offers insight into the "mindset" of the most powerful of the Triat (though again, speaking of what the Weaver "thinks" isn't much more accurate than metaphor, considering that the Celestine operates on a level that mortals and shapeshifters alike can't comprehend). It

offers antagonists for some chronicles, allies for others, and a word of warning on keeping relatively free of the Weaver's webs. After all, once she has something, she doesn't like to let go. Look at what happened to the Wyrms....

Legends of the Garou: The Strand-Rider's Tale is the story of an Iron Rider who went astray, and what happened when he stepped too near to the heart of the Weaver's web.

Chapter One: Cosmology details the origins and history of the Weaver as the Garou know her, as well as delving into her hold over humanity and methods her servants prefer.

Chapter Two: WeaverTech contains a mix of hardware, software and wetware to throw at your players — or, in some cases, for the players themselves to use as toys.

Chapter Three: Grandmother Spider's Brood details the servants of the Weaver, witting and unwitting. Some may be the characters' allies; others — like DNA — will almost certainly be antagonists.

Chapter Four: Talespinning is the Storytelling chapter, full of advice on how to properly use the Weaver's touch in games, as well as possible story and chronicle ideas to take players on a tour of the Pattern Web.

Finally, in the **Appendix** you will find descriptions of the new charms employed by some of the Weaver's minions.

Glossary: Specialized Terms

- **Device** — A piece of technology advanced beyond ordinary expectations; this can be mundane in nature, infused with some amount of Weaver energy, or created by Technomagick.

- **Drone** — Human or supernatural hosts merged with Weaver-spirits; the Weaver's equivalent of fomori.

- **Naming** — To the shapeshifters, the process of defining something on a physical and spiritual level. The first things' Names were given by Gaia, and the Weaver has been traditionally jealous of this power. Mages are often called "Namers" for their tendency to, in the eyes of the shapeshifters, alter things' Names to suit their convenience.

- **Onesong** — The Weaver-spirits' method of communication; can be hypnotically seductive to people who hear it.

- **Three Seeds, the** — Dogma, Science and Technology; the legendary three gifts of the Weaver to humankind, allegedly granted to encourage humans to define and control their environment.

- **WeaverTech** — Super-advanced technology that relies on bound spirits to fuel its abilities; essentially, technological fetishes. Need not be created by shapechangers.



Onesong: The Weaver-Tongue

The litany trilled through Ik'vk'Ich's mind as the K'gk'ai and Tr'k flanking her volleyed response to response to response, a synchronous survey of their sensory input and surroundings, faster than sound. It could be described as language only by the most extreme definition — it conveyed primitive impressions and decisions from the Web's simplest neurons to its sentience clusters, and as for the rest, it did not even fringe upon auditory perception. Only the Mk'lk'm and above were capable of the full range of expression; lessers did not require it. The Web was one, and knew all a single strand knew.

The insectile analogy often attributed to the Weaver is frequently more fitting than any of its postulants could ever have expected. Such abstractions as Jung's *spiritus mundi* or the entomological "hive-mind" have been discovered on both sides of the spiritual barrier.

This transcendent language — likened to "song" by those creatures capable of even grasping it at all — is known and used in at least a rudimentary form by all the Weaver's children. All share data. All share decisions. All are one.

Storytellers may give appropriately gifted characters (Cybersenses, Sense Weaver, equivalents) some small chance of intercepting fragments of the Onesong — impossibly-compact bitstreams, many-layered information undercurrents, telepathic "static," whatever form will best contribute to the scene. Such glimpses will be garbled and unclear, however, and seekers are well advised to accept an imperfect understanding of their innermost workings. Those who have come closest to cracking the Weaver's code are invariably won over by whatever they unearth — newly-subverted strands and pillars in her ever-expanding Web.



CHAPTER ONE: COSMOLOGY

Whatever does not spring from a man's free choice, or is only the result of instruction and guidance, does not enter into his very nature; he does not perform it with truly human energies, but merely with mechanical exactness.

— Wilhelm von Humboldt

Introduction

Although the Weaver has certainly risen to the position of most powerful among the Triat, the Garou are of two minds about her. Her function, like that of all the Triatic spirits, is of course necessary. Without her, physical beings and things would have no coherent form or function. There would be no laws of nature to ensure that the world ran in an orderly fashion. Without the Weaver, all would be chaos, unformed, shifting matter and raw energy in a world where cause need not follow effect and no sentient being could survive — if only because it would immediately go mad.

On the other hand, it is evident that she has gone much too far. Her madness spurs her to attempt to calcify everything, both in the Umbra and on the physical plane, into static changelessness and dreary homogeneity. Many Garou agree that she is quite mad, but do not realize just how so; nor do they fully ken that this is her greatest weakness. She is a

powerful and subtle being, her influence not always evident and werewolves often overlook her doings in their pursuit of all things Wyrn-tainted. In fact, the line between the Weaver and the Wyrn is often fuzzy, so that Garou often mistake the Weaver's works for those of the Wyrn, and react accordingly. Other times, the influence of the Wyrn is indeed more powerful and obvious, and the Weaver's role in the situation is ignored as incidental and irrelevant. In most cases nothing could be further from the truth.

In many ways, the Weaver still serves as an ally to many Garou, and certainly to humanity. However, in the grand scheme of things, her mad spinnings are far from what the universe needs. If she ever manages to throw off her madness and restrain herself, then there might be a chance for balance once again. If not, then the ultimate result will be a universe of pure and perfect order — of the lifeless sort.

The History of the Weaver

From the desk of
Simon

Antonine:

Thank you for the loan of your records. I'm glad to say that we're finally finished. Although I'd never have managed this without Sings-With-Spirits' primal understanding of the natural order (proof positive of the importance of instinct), it did take some time to reconcile his explanations with the scientific and historical interpretations you've uncovered.

Again, thank you. This is far from comprehensive, but I hope it'll go a long way toward being a history that the young homid cubs will be able to digest.

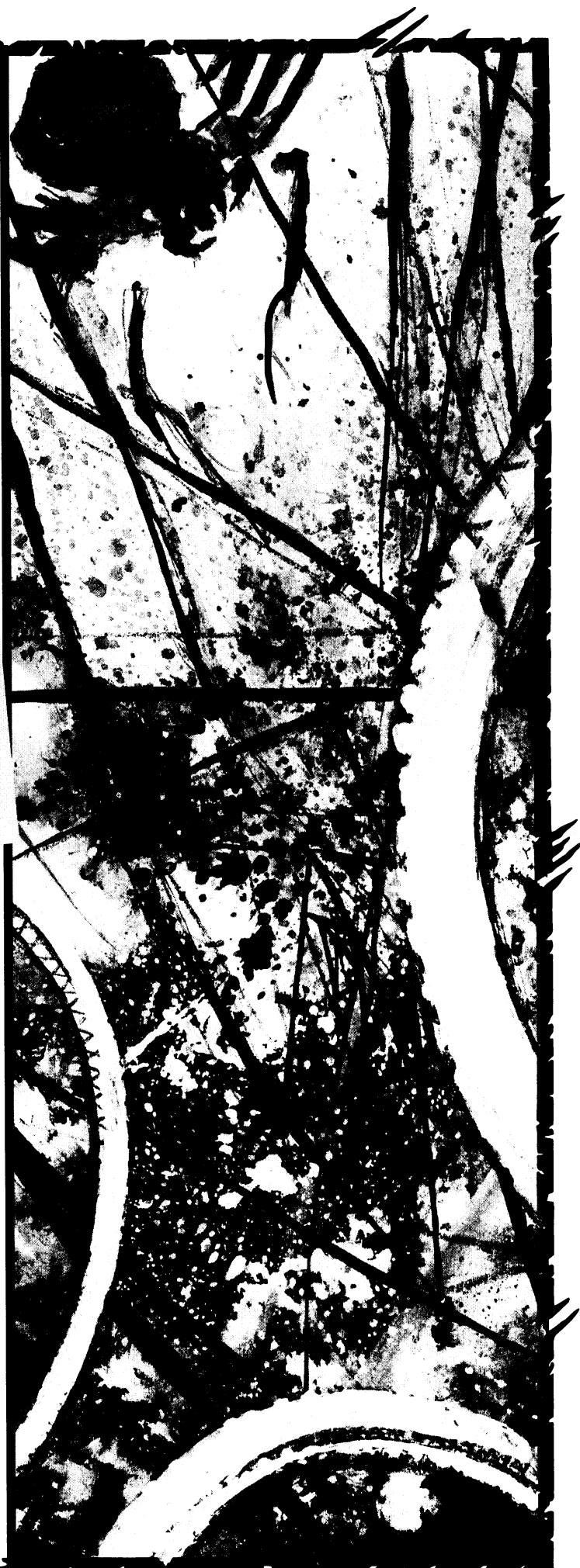
— Simon

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First, of course, there was Gaia.

Then out of the primordial blackness arose the Triat. These three powerful spirits, Wyld, Weaver and Wyrn, worked in harmony for eons, their purposes set, their courses unwavering. Unbound Wyld generated the raw matter and energy of the universe, and set within it the seed of potential for change, for development, for evolution. Stern Wyrn kept an eye on things, watching for excess, making sure that all things wound down in their proper time so that matter could be destroyed and recycled, providing the universe with entropy and the arrow of time. Busy Weaver had the greatest task of all — to take the raw matter and potential the Wyld created, and to give it form; it was also her duty to ensure that things behaved by certain rules, so that there would be an order to the cosmos at large.

At first, the Weaver's job wasn't too difficult. Energy becomes matter and vice-versa; gravity set to a certain value ensures that gas clouds condense to galaxy clusters, which in turn spawns stars and planets within them. With a majestic slowness, pattern and order came to the universe out of the original seething froth, and this pleased the Weaver. The Wyld ensured that the universe didn't remain static, and the Wyrn ensured that the fuel of the stars used would eventually, run out, causing the stars to explode and release the





elements forged within them into space, and perhaps to collapse into an all-devouring black hole. The Weaver did not like these “flaws,” but the Wyrms insisted it was an essential and effective device for cleaning up cosmic detritus and dead-weight. Besides, he pointed out, her own laws demanded that stars above a certain density collapse into a singularity. The Weaver reluctantly consented to let them be, just so long as she didn’t have to see the damn things. Thus were singularities hidden behind event horizons.

The Fall

The Weaver continued weaving, complexities inlaying complexities built upon more complexities. The more complex the universe became, the more the Weaver’s consciousness expanded. A new layer of complexity arose—out of Gaia came life. Simple at first, the spark of malleability provided by the Wyld allowed it to change, evolve, grow, become even more complex — guided, of course, by the rules of the Weaver. The Wyrms ensured that life, too, was governed by entropy, growing old, dying, decaying. Hosts of spirits appeared, growing stronger, spawning smaller spirits. In those days, the line between spirit and flesh, between Umbra and material world, was practically invisible. Living things and spirits commingled. Wyld encouraged a variety of forms to appear, and Wyrms occasionally raced through the world of flesh to clean the slate and start practically anew.

Weaver paused in her work, and looked around. The harder she looked, the less sense her work made to her. “What is the point,” she asked, “in making pattern and form if Wyld changes it and Wyrms destroys it constantly?” Her question echoed in the void, unheeded and unanswered.

She cried out in anguish; her mind fractured. In this way was the Tellurian wounded.

The Severing

In a fit of rage, the Great Spider wove a barrier that crashed between the physical and spirit worlds. The Gauntlet brutally separated spirit from flesh, quelling the riotousness of their unfettered coexistence. Cries of agony and loss rose from the furthest reaches of the Tellurian, but the Weaver did not care. Order had to be imposed.

Next she turned her attention to the Wyld. It was too changeable, too uncontrollable. She saw the endless change it caused as incomprehensible, and decided that if she could only bind it, the world would make more sense. But Wyld was far too fluid; no matter how hard Weaver tried, no matter how strong or tight her bonds and traps, it could not be caught and kept for long. Like quicksilver through a sieve, the Wyld always poured free from her webs. Furious now, Weaver turned her attention to the Wyrms.

The Wyrms had always been a source of annoyance to her. Here were her beautiful creations, lovely in their complex and precise mathematical forms, orbiting and



living and proceeding in a clockwork manner just as she had ordained. How dare the Wyrms cause their decay and destruction! Wyrms were not as slippery as Wyld, and proved to be an easier fly to snare in her webs. As the unwitting old serpent was more tightly bound into the Pattern Web, Wyrms' own consciousness exploded, then shattered into countless fragments. As he madly tried to force his head free of the webs, the strands cut his consciousness into the Hydra. His mad, frantic thoughts radiated out into the Tellurian and took form as Banes, Urge Wyrms, the Maeljin Incarna, and more. Still bound, still mad with pain and hate, he has sought revenge upon his captor ever since.

Weaver, however, was satisfied with her catch, neither knowing nor caring about the effect it was having on Wyrms. Now that the force of entropy was contained, she could enjoy the fruits of her endless labors without having to see them go for naught, destroyed in Wyrms' maw to be reprocessed into raw potential by the insufferable Wyld. Wyld, of course, was still free and caused no end of problems, but Weaver considered that it would eventually be weakened enough through her calcifying spinning that it could easily be caught. She also began to realize that many Wyld spirits could not survive well in areas where she had been hardest at work, and so began her attack on the Umbra itself.

Where the spiritual counterparts of all things — from rivers and rocks to mountains and clouds and such — had all been vibrant, sentient beings, they now began to be sapped of their energies. This process has taken a long time, and is still continuing — but the result is the mindless ephemera they seem today. Many Theurges believe that this is only the first step to complete calcification of these objects, of utter binding within webs spun by Pattern Spiders. It may also be that these things will eventually disappear completely, drained forever of the Gnosis maintaining them. Indeed, where the Weaver's webs are most evident in the Penumbra, the colors are more muted, and the less likely it is that sentient representations of inanimate objects will appear. The vast majority of buildings and other man-made objects are nothing more than insensate ephemera; only those buildings and other objects which have been deliberately awakened are represented by true spirits.

But reworking the Umbra was not enough, and work went too slow. There were not enough Pattern Spiders to do the job. She looked again upon Gaia, and there espied a new creature.

The Weaver's Pact

"What is this?" she inquired to no one in particular. For there, on the grassy plains, huddling at the fringes of the trees, were apes. They were not where they belonged; they should be in the forests. But the forests were retreating, and the apes did not follow, being left to fend for themselves on the plains. "More change!" fumed the Weaver, angry that things hadn't stayed the same since the last time she looked upon the world. But before she turned away in disgust, to try to make things stop here, she happened to notice that just perhaps this new



thing could be used to her advantage. These apes were walking upright, and their hands were free, you see.

Her mind churned, seeing, as is her wont, the potential in rawness. She approached these creatures with sympathy. "Oh, my," she exclaimed. "It seems Gaia has forgotten about some of her children! Look at you! You have no fangs, like the wolf, to catch your meat. You have no hooves nor horns with which to protect yourself, nor do you have any claws for digging. How do you survive?" The apes showed how they lived, eking out a living scrabbling the best they could for roots, gathering what plants they found and scavenging carcasses. "Oh, no, that will never do. I can help you, though. I can give you a powerful Gift that will ensure that your kind need never have to struggle like this again. You will be warm and comfortable and safe, and master of all you survey. You will be my adopted children, and may use this Gift freely as you will. In exchange, however, I ask that you help me learn and understand, that I may satisfy my mind. You will help me bring order to the world."

This deal was too good for the apes to pass up. They accepted, and as they did, a new light shone in their eyes — a terrible, cold light never before seen on Earth. One picked up a sharp, edged rock, and used it to cut at a carcass. Lo and behold, the joint and the meat came off much easier. Before long, these apes were shaping stones to their will, and using certain stones to make sparks to light fires on purpose. And they taught these skills to others of their kind, and their children.

The newly born Garou saw this, wondering at what they were doing. "We are making cutters and cooking our food to make it easier to eat," said the leader of the apes. Some Garou didn't trust this activity, but held their tongues. Others thought it tricks taught by Rock and Fire-spirits who managed to materialize, and so thought little of it. Others were fascinated, and emulated those tricks.

Eventually, some of the apes discovered how to use tools to kill. Oh, how excited they were after spearing their first large beast. "Fresh meat! All we want!" they shouted. And they feasted. The Garou saw this, too, and some grew worried. "It is nice that you have learned the hows of the predator," they warned, "But it would behoove you to learn the ways. Do not kill too much, else it would be bad for you." The apes nodded their heads and passed the cooked meat. The Weaver watched this, and smiled. Her children were progressing, using the Gift she had given them.

The Impergium

With hunting, the apes gradually learned to make other things out of the animals they killed. Bone and antler could be used as tools, and garments for warmth and adornment could be made from hides and sinew. Hides and plants were also useful in making shelters, so that one might hide from strong sun, rain showers, and predators. Organs could be used to hold water to take away from the lake or river. The apes also learned to weave baskets and such to hold more

forage in, so that the gatherers could take more food back to the camp. They learned how to catch fish, and overcame their fear of entering the water. The apes prospered, multiplied, and spread.

As they traveled from their ancestral homeland, their Changing Kin followed. Some spread to the north and west, some to the east, and some continued on southward. They killed as they went, honing their hunting skills and making more use of hides as they ventured into harsher climates.

Then Gaia became distant, and the world became cold. The Wyrms spread himself across the land in her absence. The Weaver feared that her children might be lost, but no! Not only had they spread themselves so wide, but they had well learned the use of fire to keep themselves warm. Though some abandoned simple hide huts for caves, they managed to continue to progress, making better tools that could slay ever-larger creatures. Some, in the warmer places, were beginning to learn to chase prey animals into enclosed areas so that they might be more easily slain *en masse*.

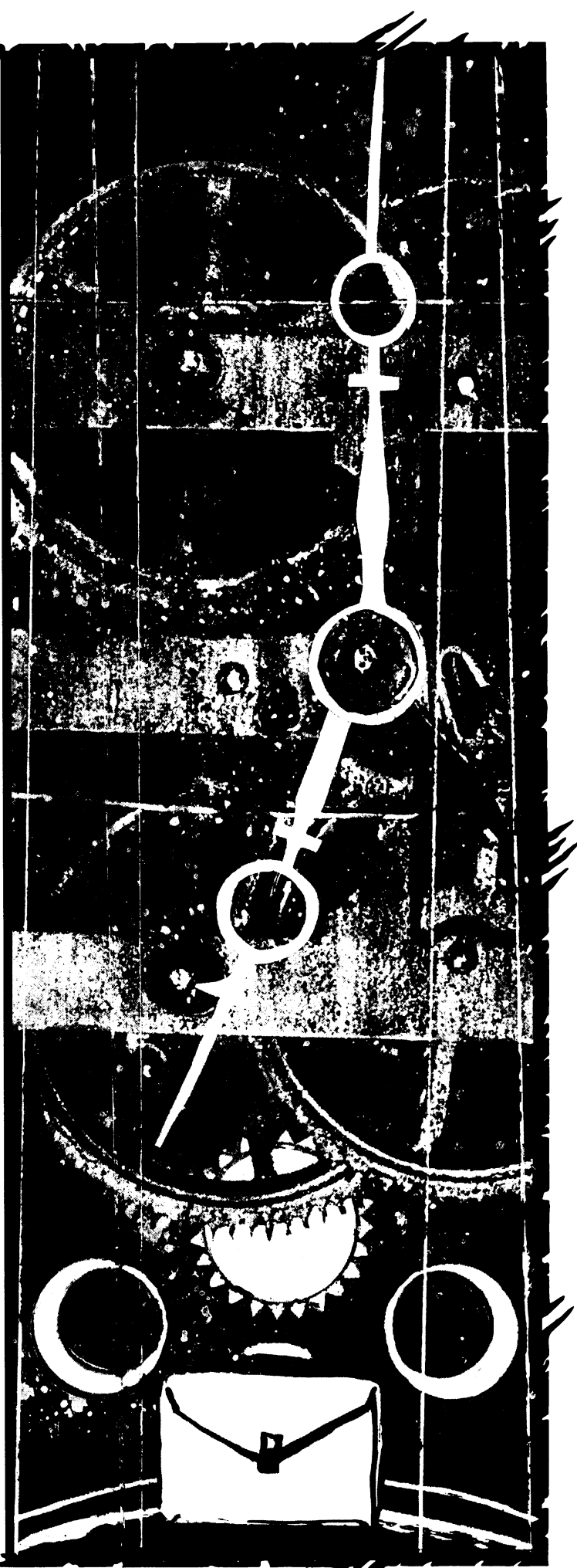
Things became harsher, and times tougher. The Garou of the north asked, "Where have the mammoths gone?" for none had been seen in a while. The apes, now almost completely hairless and wrapped heavily in mammoth skins, replied, "We have killed them all. They could not bear the brunt of our spears. We were stronger, they the weaker. We needed food, fuel and hides. So we killed them, every last one."


Horried, the Garou looked even more closely at what humans were doing. Wherever they went, they had begun to lessen the numbers of prey significantly. "It is the work of the Wyrms," they decided. "The Wyrms has gotten into them, making them do this." The more warlike of the Garou decided it would be good to control the numbers of humans, if not wipe them out completely for their taint. Some decided to take their humans away from the Wyrms, where they might be shown better how to behave. Others argued against the leaders, saying that the humans should not be punished for something the Wyrms has done, but rather taught better in Gaia's ways.

We know the rest of the story. But usually one detail is omitted, a very important detail: After the Impergium was called off, the Weaver vowed never again to let her children be so victimized.

The Rise of Civilization

When the Garou retreated, men, spurred on by the Weaver, set to work with a freer hand than before. They learned quickly how to tame and control plants and animals, and learned to use mud and stone to make better dwellings. When the Garou returned, they saw the massive changes that had been wrought. Some entered the cities and stayed there, while others preferred to remain in the wilds. The Red Talons had long since cut off all relations with humans, and were shocked and horrified at what they now found. The Garou looked more closely around them, and saw the strict order that human society had formed. They realized the





effort that building such edifices took, and dismayed at the neat, ordered rows of grain tended with hoes and the docile, captive-bred sheep, goats and cattle. They saw that some of their wolf kin had, under human guidance, become less than wolves. They saw, too, that people were leaving Gaia behind to worship strange, new gods. Only then did they understand exactly to whom the humans had sold themselves — and by then it was too late.

The Industrial Age

As human society progressed, the intricate dance between Weaver and Wyrn became tighter, the Wyrn feeding from and often abetting what the Weaver wrought. Look for yourself; history charts the slow but steady expansion of her webs. But there came a time when her power grew almost exponentially.

In the 14th century, the invention of the fully mechanical clock ushered a new regimentarianism into human life. No longer was the day variable; people were finally removed from the tyranny of the sun's setting and rising depending on the time of the year. No longer did townsfolk have to dance to wholly natural rhythms, as the serfs did. Business could be conducted at a purely human-dictated schedule. Work hours became regular in the primitive factories of medieval Europe.

The seeds of technology continued to grow, spawning more and more efficient factory systems. Even during the latter medieval period, high labor-intensive mass production facilities were in force, though generally manned by relatively skilled laborers — weavers, artisans and craftsmen of various sorts (and gender; women were not entirely exempt from this type of work, especially in the textile industry). The use of coal helped fire this industry — and pollute the cities. The Wyrn's touch fell heavily upon London, where the famous London Fog was actually a killing, sulfurous smog from the burning of so much coal. While cities had always had problems with inadequate sanitation, their growth throughout the medieval period facilitated the spread of diseases such as the Black Plague and cholera, the latter of which originated because of the use of rivers as open sewers. But the cities proved attractive for boys who had heard of the money to be made there, that couldn't be made on the farm, or as a smalltownsman's apprentice. Thus, the Weaver's call brought many a young European straight into the Wyrn's coils of sickness, corruption, and death.

Various lines of technological progress — both in city machinery and in agricultural practices — came together in the 18th century to begin what we now know as the Industrial Revolution. The Weaver had finally knit together the ultimate trap, and she watched with fascination and delight as humans were drawn ever more tightly into her web. As her web tightened, Wyrn thrashed, this time loosing the Defiler in yet another spasm of agony and madness. As Wyrn thrashed in his bonds, the unfortunates suckered into the industrial web suffered.

The new factories were unlike anything seen before. While fewer people were required to do the work, thanks to machines that could do the work of many people, workers were required to spend long hours tending their machines. Furthermore, workers no longer needed to be especially skilled or trained. Young children were put to work in these places at much lower wages than their adult counterparts — even the women, who received far less than men. Many youngsters died in these factories, due to long hours, bad food, and endless torture at the hands of their taskmasters. Indeed, quite a few of the more brutal foremen fell wholly to the Wyrms; the Weaver's advances offered plenty of new opportunities for temptation. I understand that there were even Ferectoi and Black Spiral Dancers who had learned what the factories could offer them long before Pentex was founded. But the factory owners themselves, their government lackeys, and their apologists, were guided by none other than the Weaver, in their insistence that such atrocities could not be helped, were the price of progress, and only served to bring a more ordered and prosperous society — the siren song of the Spider throughout human history.

While the Iron Riders (soon to become the Glass Walkers, but not yet) raged at the more obvious abuses, they were completely blind to the ultimate source of the misery thus caused. Other tribes became alarmed at what they saw as the Weaver's excesses, but the Riders continued to insist that the Wyrms was the true cause of the trouble — not the Weaver, who had woven the web of destruction in the first

place. As the Riders protected the increasingly wealthy industrialists and made their apologies to the rest of the Garou Nation, the Bone Gnawers were left to pick up the pieces left shattered by the workings of Weaver and Wyrms while conditions worsened. Only with the help of the Children of Gaia and their Kin were they able to get the voice of the exploited heard in the 20th century.

And thus was the tone set for the modern age.

The Twentieth Century

Systematic attempts to annihilate whole ethnic groups have occurred — most notably in Nazi Germany, but also in Rwanda, the former Yugoslavia, and elsewhere. Similar tendencies have existed throughout human history, but only in the twentieth century has technology made killing on such a scale practical.

— Carl Sagan, *Billions and Billions*

The 20th century has seen the most rapid advance of technology, the most intriguing new trends in religion, and the greatest of scientific discoveries. The first radio broadcast was in 1901, and communications in general improved over the 19th century marvel of the telegraph. Manufacturing became more efficient. Great mysteries of the cosmos were studied and better understood, from the structure of the atom to the structure of the universe. Human life expectancy improved (at least in some countries) and advances in medicine improved the quality of life for those able to access it. Religious sects flourished, and new ideas of spirituality were grafted onto old to revitalize and spread some beliefs, most



notably the spread of Eastern philosophy and New Age beliefs — encouraged here and there by Stargazers and Children of Gaia — since the 1960s. In some ways, it appears that the Weaver has done well by her children, and the world under her control might not be that bad a place after all; certainly, it would be better than a world mastered by the Wyrms.

The 20th century has also, unfortunately, seen the worst excesses of human endeavor, a fact of which many Garou — particularly Shadow Lords — are keenly aware. The extermination of Jews in concentration camps, the poisoning of wildlife and humans alike by potent pesticides, brutal wars over political and religious affiliation, the rise of fundamentalism into a formidable and potentially dangerous force with its calls for harsh repression of those who do not adhere to fundamentalist values, the atomic bombing of Japan, nuclear testing — the Wyrms feed from all of this and more. But it has been the seeds of the Weaver which have grown and borne fruit to power such blatant crimes against Gaia.

The Weaver's sanity would seem to have deteriorated throughout much of this past century, faster so than in previous ones, if the pace of technological, scientific and religious change is any indication.

The New Breed of Human

Nothing about the 20th century is more startling than the incredible extent to which industrialized man is removed from the basics of nature in his everyday life. His food has been gathered or killed for him, processed, and packaged in airtight containers. He moves from house to car to work and back in a climate-controlled environment; he may need only to be out in the sun or rain for brief moments at a time. Few modern Western humans have the skills they would need to survive on their own without modern tools and conveniences; even so-called survivalists ensure they have firearms and canned or freeze-dried foodstuffs. Millions of people also can only survive through the intervention of modern medicine and its attendant technology; people who, even a mere century ago, would not have lived past early childhood are now living to ripe old ages.

From the human point of view, of course, all this is for the best. After all, very few people wish to see their children or other loved ones die of conditions that are, in the modern age, preventable or curable, Darwin be damned. On the other hand, genetic problems that would otherwise be weeded out are instead propagated throughout the human population, weakening the species in general and making humans even more dependent on science and technology for their continued survival. As the ways of the Western world are spread to all corners of the globe, more and more humans become thus dependent. Africa, the cradle of humanity, is a case in point. Parents continue to have many children, despite the fact that Western medicine helps more of those children to survive; this only ensures that more mouths must be fed, which means that farming techniques must be modernized in order to prevent mass starvation.

I realize that this is a disturbing point for me to argue; truly, I must sound almost like a Get or Shadow Lord when I talk about the deterioration of the human stock. But it is a real issue; your wolf side should tell you how wrong this feels. The Stargazers understand the need to cut the threads of the Weaver; think on this yourself. The Weaver feeds on the development of modern society; the more dependent humans become on technology, the more tightly bound they are to her — and, of course, to the Wyrms.

Compiled from the copious records of Antonine Teardrop by Sings-With-Spirits, lupus Uktena Theurge and recorded by Simon White Crane, homid Stargazer Galliard

The Whys and Wherefores The Weaver's "Psychology"

"One thing that the Garou tend to continually downplay or overlook is the fact that the Weaver is, indeed, full-blown, bull-moose crazy. She's just as crazy as the Wyrms, but in a different way. She's a perfectionist, bar-none. It's this drive to perfection that causes her to calcify things into stasis — because, after all, once something is perfect, there's nowhere left for it to go except back into imperfection. And a perfectionist can't stand that, not one bit. Another thing a perfectionist can't stand is change. If things are constantly changing, then it's hard to make them perfect, or at least to make them stay that way. For another thing, she's lost her sense of purpose. She knows she's driven to create pattern and form and all the rest, but doesn't know why. Nor does she know why she should put up with Wyld and Wyrms running roughshod over everything she does. It goes deeper than that, as well; she's having what might be called an existential crisis.

"Whether she made the laws of the universe or not, she simply doesn't understand them. They seem pointless and arbitrary. If she had a reason for making them that way, she can't remember what it is. If she didn't make them, then all the worse. And that puts her in a quandary; her entire purpose is called into question, and as we all know, a spirit needs purpose to give it form; when a spirit begins to question its purpose, it risks losing its entire identity. So she's got to frantically try to gain that sense of purpose back, and the only way she can do it is by learning her own laws. Therefore, technology wasn't the only thing she gave humans when she made her pact with them; she managed to slip a mickey, if you will, into the punch. But that's neither here nor there right now. What's important is to remember this — while she might seem to be the lesser of two evils, kid, she's still pretty damn bad. And prob'ly getting worse, from what it seems."

— Ruffles, corvid Corax

The Weaver is insane, but her insanity takes a different form than that of the Wyrms. Unlike the Wyrms, she is still whole, rather than shattered into many and various separate entities each vying to outdo the others. Rather, her single mind wars with itself, much as a paranoid schizophrenic's does.

(A note: clinical schizophrenia does not mean that one has multiple personalities — that's a separate mental disorder in and of itself. Rather, it simply means that the patient's mind is "cut off" from reality; the patient does not experience it in the way that mentally healthy people do, and so suffers from delusions, hallucinations, and phantom voices in the head. Granted, in the World of Darkness, not everyone who experiences these things is schizophrenic, but there are still people who simply suffer from natural chemical imbalances in the brain without ever having encountered a supernatural denizen of the world at large.)

The very nature of the reality she created has lost all meaning to her, and she is obsessively driven to find meaning again. Compounding this problem is that she has many ideas of how to do this, but can't settle on just one. Therefore she has spread several different seeds throughout humanity in the hope that at least one will come to fruition and guide her. But as time passes, the seeds grow concurrently, and humanity's activity burgeons, her mind has only become more fractured than before, as she switches attention from one mode to another, in a surprisingly disordered fashion. This disorder in her own brain only makes her mental state worse, and the competition between her seeds further adds to the mess in her attic.

Basically, the Weaver has gotten more unstable as time and history have marched on, her actions more frantic and her adopted children more divided. Though it seems that technology has reigned supreme with science at a close second, if one looks closely enough at the rifts between these two and the third one may get a bare glimpse of the total chaos that is the Weaver's mind.

The Wyrn and the Weaver

Politics makes strange bedfellows.

— Charles Dudley Warner

"Look out, over there in the waters. My ancestors remember a time when those rocks were home to many, many seabirds. Each year, birds would come from all over and cover every inch of the islands, breeding and laying their eggs. So many birds that each could barely move without disturbing two birds next to him. They would come to islands like these all down the coast, where the Croatan lived, and farther north, too. My people would take advantage of these times, and paddle out to climb the rocks to where they nested. The most important bird of the rocky islands was the spear-billed one. He was tall, black and white in color, and could not fly in air but swam as if flying through water. Your folk would call him "Great Auk." But my people never took too many. The Wendigo and the Croatan made sure of that, and anyway, there were far too many birds for the people to hurt much. They would eat well these weeks, and thank the birds' spirits.

"Then the Wyrmbringers came with their giant canoes. Few at first, and then more. Even the first ones, starving from being so long at sea with little food, would take many, many spear-billed ones, herding them into the boats as if they were the Wyrmbringer's sheep. Then they would leave, or go down the coast, or up the Great River as far as the Great Falls or even Gitchigoumi,



maybe. And more boats came, and more men, and they would take many birds, too.

"But the Wyrmbearers weren't happy with just eating the birds, no. They also sold the meat to others like themselves. They also collected the eggs, and the spear-billed ones only laid once a year, whether or not their eggs came to young. They ripped young and adult alike to pieces to use as fish-bait, to catch the many, many cod that once swam here. And then they found the spear-billed ones had good fat, fat that could be rendered to feed their Weaver machines back home. So many, many more birds than ever before were boiled alive only for the fat to make this trayne oil, and others of their kind would fuel the fires right there on the treeless rocks. Most of the birds died this way, and that is how they began disappearing — boiled into oil every one, my ancestors say. They saw. They know. Even after these birds became few, white men came again to rip the very feathers from their bodies. Tons of feathers, for pillows and beds and blankets. So many. So many things. So many dead.

"And so the spear-billed ones left us. They died, every last one. Men did the Wyrms' work to feed the Weaver's machines."

— Voice-of-Stone, Wendigo Theurge, Newfoundland

The Weaver and Wyrms have a symbiotic relationship of sorts. Because the Wyrms is trapped directly within the Pattern Web, he not only directs much of his hatred at things of the Weaver, but is better able to affect Weaver-things than Wyld-things, corrupting them to serve his purposes. The Weaver, more often than not, fails to notice this. Or, if she does notice, she often assumes that whatever it is that is happening is somehow furthering her own cause. It all too often does.

While the Wyrms tries to remake the world through corruption and destruction to suit his own ends, the Weaver, too, has a goal. She wants to remake the world no less than the Wyrms does, but in her own image — an image of perfection, frozen in perfection, unchanging and static.

To this end, the Wyrms often unwittingly helps his most hated enemy.

Humanity and the Weaver

Nearly everything on Earth has the Weaver's mark on it. The very fact that things have definite physical form and substance to them is a hallmark of her work. Animals, too, have a touch of her within them, beyond the obviousness of their bodies. Some animals use simple tools in order to make food easier to get; chimps who use stripped sticks of wood with which to extract termites from their mounds are one example, and some troops have been known to use a hammer and anvil setup — involving a rock and a root — in order to crack tough nuts. Non-primates use simple tools as well, from the clamshell-cracking rocks of the sea otter to the cactus needles the woodpecker finch uses in order to dig insects from holes in trees and cacti. Some animals make their own housing, and in some cases alter their local environment somewhat in doing

so. Beaver dams and lodges come immediately to mind, as well as the hives of bees and paper wasps, and the nests of birds up to and including the extravagant bowers built by bower birds, which are even decorated with shiny or colorful objects. Some of these instances are engineering marvels, especially when one considers the limitations of the animals who built them. In this way, the Weaver has given gifts that lack a double edge; in fact, the simple beauty of a beehive is testament to the great debt the universe owes her.

But only one animal does all these things, and more, at a tremendous scale: *Homo sapiens*. While man was originally a creature of Gaia, like all others, the pact he made with the Weaver has weakened his link with the Mother, and he is barely even aware of it. Some have a sense of this loss, and try to regain it in their own fashion, but few are truly successful enough to shake off the Weaver's shackles on their souls completely. Humans, of course, know nothing about the Weaver or their relationship to it; all their accomplishments are utterly of their own doing, after all. But as with the Wyrms, people can feed the Weaver without even the slightest prodding. Many are; the Weaver need not waste her time and energy micromanaging human societies to make them dance to her tune eventually, though she does occasionally touch individual humans directly. But the bits of herself that she planted with the early humans to act as seeds provided the impetus for those accomplishments — as well as man's worst excesses and deepest hubris.

According to the lore of the Stargazers, the Weaver gave men three Gifts, three seeds, which she hoped would grow and help her in her tasks. When the seeds were first planted, they quickly spread to all ape-men living at the time; all took root, but not all flourished at once. In some cultures, which arose after the African Diaspora, those seeds were stifled at the level to which they had already grown, often at least partly thanks to the shapeshifters who managed to discourage excessive Weaverish behavior. In other cultures, however, which weren't watched so closely by Garou, or in which the Garou turned a blind eye or actively encouraged certain activities, the seeds blossomed. By the time the two sorts of cultures met, those whose technological Weaver-seeds had been stunted had little chance of surviving intact — as the Three Brothers, the Bunyip, and their Kinfolk were to discover the hard way.

The Three Seeds Dogma

Individual opinions aside, human religions most likely weren't directly handed down by the Weaver. The Garou sometimes assume that human religions are merely poor shadows of old Gaia-worship. In a way they are, and in some cases, the rituals and rites performed by the religions of the worlds have their basis in older rites once used before the pact.

But the Weaver is interested in religion because religion's main purpose is, or at least was, to explain the world in spiritual terms. The Weaver hoped to encourage humanity to systematically discover facts about the Umbral side of the



universe without interference from Garou, and to impose their own rules on the spirit world. But she had to wait; this seed did not begin to take root until after the Impergium, when men began building cities, and during the War of Rage, when all their shapeshifter kin were too busy ripping each other to shreds. Before that time, the Garou would work with the shamans — often the most respected of the tribe — to help the shaman convey the proper attitude towards the invisible nature spirits. This helped keep humans at least spiritually close to Gaia, even if they were already slipping from her bosom.

When humans were finally free to build their cities, however, the old ways just didn't seem to be enough. They began adding new concepts to old ones, instituting gods of the harvest and the flood alongside moon and earth gods and goddesses. Even household gods and gods of the hearth sprung up in human faith. This didn't trouble the returning Garou much. Where they could, they and other shapeshifters — such as the Kitsune in Japan — did their best to encourage these new beliefs to remain grounded in the faith of Gaia. Men had long performed rituals of their own to propitiate the spirits, and so the appearance of new sorts of rituals wasn't, in and of itself, seen as a problem. Indeed, in many parts of the world, newer religions still bear the mark of Gaia on them, particularly the peaceful, highly spiritual temples of Shintoism, and the myriad gods and rituals of Hinduism, which even still retains the concept of a Triat. Tribal beliefs barely changed at all, mostly because the people that held them did not pick up an intensively agricultural way of life or build cities. Those that did, such as the Aztecs, began to show the earmarks of what happened in the Middle East, where the Dogma seed came to full bloom.

It was in the Middle East that the religion of the One God, the male all-creating and anthropomorphic deity of the Hebrew tribes rose and flourished, eventually to take on myriad forms. Those worshippers, in whose breast this seed flowered, fully and finally turned their backs on Gaia in a conscious move. It is true that the Virgin Mary and even the Magdalene have been venerated from time to time in the Roman Catholic paradigm; witness a church dedicated to the Magdalene in the Languedoc of Southern France, about which many books have been written. But this weakened form of Gaia-knowledge has never been strong or widespread enough to offset the obviously male yet Weaverish nature of Middle Eastern monotheism.

And the worst part of this (as well as any) religion is dogma. Although some splinter groups chose to worship their god or gods in whatever fashion they desired, far too often the more common choice was for rules. Priests told their followers, "Do *exactly* as I say" (often with an unspoken "and not as I do"), cementing the One True Way to peace and redemption. Needless to say, there were consequences.

The Black Furies have long called it the Patriarch. Not quite the God of the Hebrews or their descendants, this Incarna has nonetheless grown quite strong off the unwavering faith of many believers. It is an entity of absolute

spiritual law, of unquestioned obedience and intolerance. Most Garou — even Black Furies — fail to see the Weaver-origin of this particular concept of God the Father, for reasons detailed below. Those who do often miss its full significance, or emphasize the Wyrnish effects of it instead. They're not too far from the truth; the atrocities committed in the Patriarch's name have tainted its (or rather, his) very being. Although still the Weaver's creature, corruption taints the Father's breath.

Still, many Garou overlook the Patriarch's connection to the Weaver. The most obvious one is that the Patriarch is seen as male, while Garou often think of the Weaver as female. To date, no Garou has ever been said to have encountered this Incarna in person, which is probably just as well. It is doubtful that any questers would survive an encounter with this likely unfriendly spirit. But those Garou who pooh-pooh the Patriarch-Weaver connection use this as evidence that the Black Furies are merely being reactionary and paranoid.

The second is the effects that the three forms of monotheism have had throughout history. Wars, the Burning Times, the Inquisition, the Crusades, even the current violence between Protestants and Catholics in Ireland, Hindus and Muslims in the Indian subcontinent, and Jews and Muslims in the Middle East, all have the smack of the Wyrn to them, whether in its guise as Eater-of-Souls or as the Beast-of-War. And this is correct. Because of the Wyrn's special position to defile and corrupt the Weaver's works, he found it quite easy to poke his tentacles into the very roots of religion early on (and from there, into Dogma). Unsurprisingly, the worship that fed the Patriarch proved most fertile ground for his machinations.

Corrupted Dogma has loosed plenty of other miseries on the world. Consider the Normalites (*Freak Legion*, pg. 61). Garou who have encountered these horrifying fomori haven't failed to miss their potent Wyrn-taint. However, the underlying implications of these creatures' existence aren't as obvious. The Wyrn cares not for "normality" — indeed, everything its servitors do are perversions of what could even remotely be considered "normal." The Weaver, on the other hand, is very concerned about normalcy. The very concept of perfection brings with it the notion of homogeneity — there can be only one Perfection in the Weaver's mind, one lock-step way of doing things. Anything that deviates from the norm must be rooted out and eliminated.

This is where Normalites fit in. These fomori are often drawn from gays corrupted by the rigidity of Dogma, convinced that they're not "right" or "normal" in their homosexuality. And of course, many people don't consider homosexuals "normal"; indeed, the homosexuality is often noted to be prohibited in the Bible. Gays and lesbians often only get the idea that they are "abnormal" because of the religious influences around them — friends, relatives, Churches, televangelists, a host of others. While Normalites can in fact be produced from any human who has convinced himself, because of societal pressures, that he does not

belong and is not normal, it's a sad fact of today's society that homosexuals are the most common victim of this tragedy. Normalites are just one more example of how the Weaver and the Wyrn intertwine, with the Wyrn taking prominence — or at least the most blame — in the union.

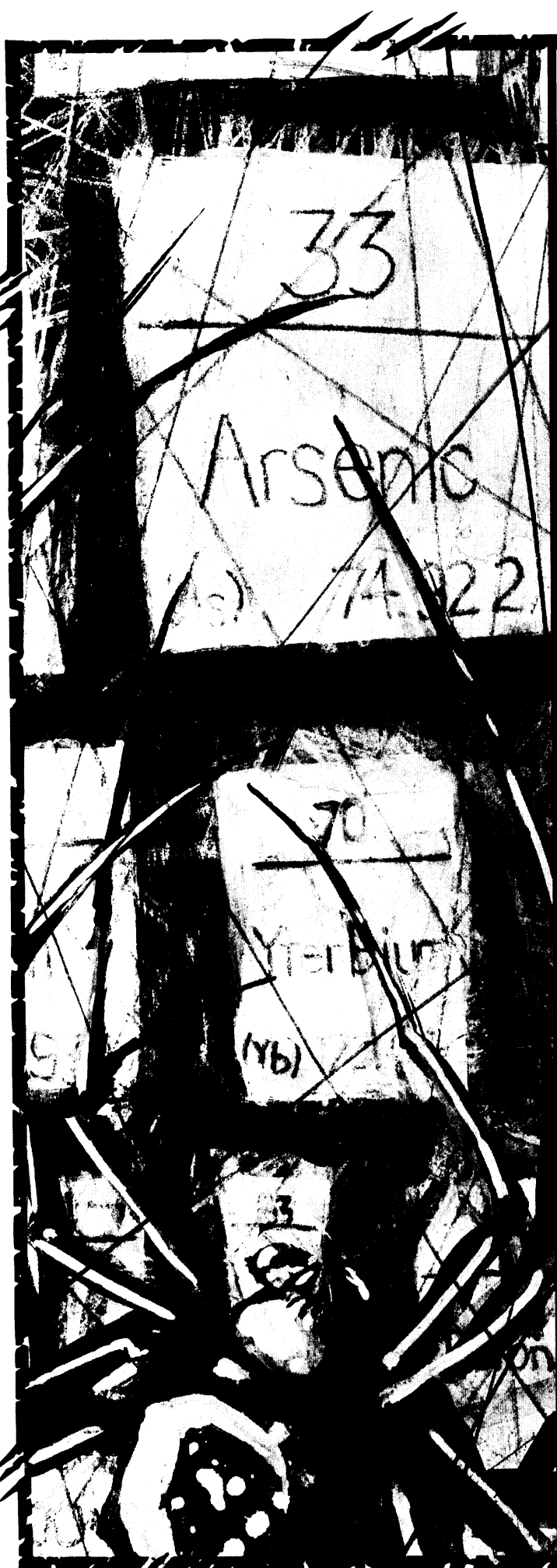
This is the terror of the Weaver's insanity. Religion has lost its original purpose for many people; there are countless "believers" who don't really care about spirituality, as long as they can be reassured that they'll "get what they deserve." As the Weaver's mind grew more unstable in her search for cosmological stability, the impulse to calcify began to take over and overwhelm her other desires. This tended to calcify the Dogma seed, making the most "developed" of religions static and highly ritualistic in and of themselves. Now, the most vociferous of these religions seek mainly to bring others into its fold, to force conformity to their ideals. The effects are generally somewhat less dramatic than the pathetic case of the Normalites, but can be no less devastating to its victims, or effective in its impact.

The rise of fundamentalism in several different religions in the late 20th century may be an ill tiding of a further deterioration in the Weaver's psyche. While not as ritualistic or hierarchical as "mainstream" religious sects are, the fundamentalist factions nevertheless demand a high degree of conformity in society, restriction of freedoms, and condemnation of those considered deviant. This may well be an indication that the Weaver has abandoned all pretense or hope of understanding, and now moves forward to simply perfect and calcify. It's a horrible thought that one of humanity's highest virtues — faith — has been terribly mauled and all but destroyed by dogma gone insane. But in the World of Darkness, it seems that save for a minority of people, this is largely true.

Science

Science is, at its very base, merely a method of querying the natural world to discover how it operates. It asks many questions, and tries not to impose its own presuppositions on what it will find. While many mages — and some Garou — think that the practice of science itself calcifies reality, this isn't so. It blossoms out of the Weaver's need to understand herself and what she has woven. Humans, through their pact with the Weaver, have inherited this need to know and understand, and so ask questions and investigate. They turn their eyes both to the stars and to the interior of matter itself.

Science makes many mistakes on the way to knowledge, but is ultimately self-correcting, as anyone with curiosity enough can ask the same questions over, and do their own investigations. Far from calcifying reality, the practice of science merely reveals it for what it always has been since the Weaver first wove it, mindlessly, in its own certain fashion. Theurges often speculate that the reason the Gauntlet is higher around scientific labs and the like is because reality is defined more stringently around such places; rather, it is simply because Pattern Spiders and other Weaver-spirits are attracted more to such places, with their activity strengthening the barrier between



this world and the Umbra. Unfortunately, this cuts humans off even further from the world of spirit.

As scientific inquiry is open to anything which can be evidenced, measured, or otherwise studied, the world of spirit, contrary to what many contend, could very well be open to scientific inquiry. The same is, of course, true of the "supernatural" material denizens of the World of Darkness. Garou who have encountered the scientists of Developmental Neogenetics Amalgamated know this all too well. DNA is the premier research facility that has actually come into some contact with Garou. Werewolves, of course, can be captured and studied, and this is exactly what DNA wishes to do, now that they have some inkling that such odd creatures exist. While they do not entirely know the full truth of what Garou really are, it may well only be a matter of time and research before the truth is known. Similarly, spirits could be studied if scientists got a hold of them, as could be the Umbra if they could get there. Once this happens, Garou, spirits, and the Umbra would become as much scientific fact as atoms, stars, and gravity. The problem for Garou is that scientists can't keep their mouths shut, and are compelled by their trade to get their findings published. Should a DNA scientist actually get enough information on Garou, they will publish their findings in any journal they can, which will spur others to try to capture Garou for themselves.

This activity alone could prove very inconvenient for the tribes.

Science has been the Weaver's weakest seed throughout history. It has suffered incredible setbacks, both after the collapse of Classical Greece and during the later medieval period. In both instances, the servants of Dogma managed to stifle the growth of the Science seed, at least temporarily. While the Weaver's thirst for understanding has, at least at times, been strong, it is easily overridden by her other impulses.

That said, science is not without its faults. While most areas of science are benign — astronomy, for instance — the biological sciences are open to horrifying abuses. The naturalist in the field, the Jane Goodall observing her subjects, is the most popular vision of the biological investigator. Then there are the Charles Darwins and the Robert Bakkers who take a look at life's past in order to understand it in the present. Linnaeus and his intellectual descendants try to understand how life interrelates. Linnaeus' classification system has turned out to be relatively restrictive, as even modern taxonomists admit; but these restrictions affect only how people see certain "transitional" animals such as Archaeopteryx (which has the features of both dinosaur and bird) and does not affect the reality that such animals did, indeed, combine the features of more than one class. Working biologists keep this strictly in mind, and so the reality of the "transitionals" is little-affected in that wise. Microbiologists look within the cell to unravel the genetic code.

But the one thing haunting biology for much of its history is the practice of vivisection. Religion dictates at first decreed that biologists could not even dissect a human corpse, but no such limitation was ever set upon living animals. During the Renaissance, it was common for physicians to nail dogs to tables and slice them open, alive and publicly, to demonstrate how the organs worked or how blood flowed through the veins. In fact, this is the very method through which blood circulation was first described and understood. The squeamish were admonished to think of the animal's body as nothing more than, in the view of René Descartes, a bit of "clockwork." Cries of pain were to be ignored, as they were nothing more than the twanging of a spring that had been broken. The sensation of pain was not to be attributed to what the animal was feeling, because the animal could not feel.

As if this weren't bad enough, the same argument was eventually extended to human beings who were not of the right sort to merit consideration. Into this category fell the poor, the female, the non-white, the mentally deficient and combinations thereof. Most of what modern medical science knows of gynecology was attained through experiments done unwillingly and often unknowingly on poor, black female patients. While legislation has stopped the overt use of humans in this manner, the practice still continues covertly, especially in countries that lack the controls of the developed world — though a few exceptions are known to exist in North America itself. This attitude

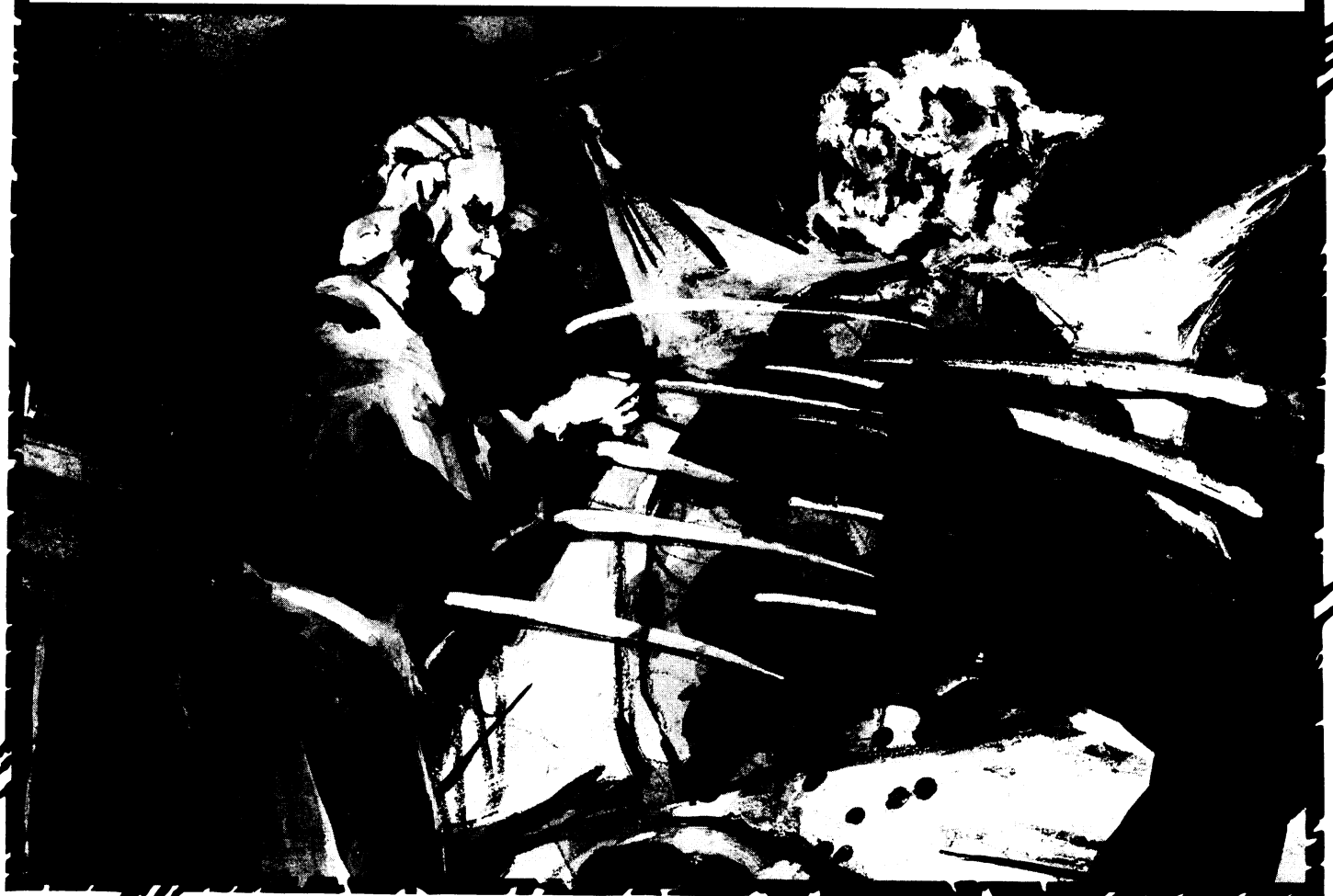
may well help to explain why DNA scientists feel so free to subject their Garou captives to any amount of torture in their investigations, even Garou who refrain from shifting from Homid while in captivity.

Wyrnish? The practice of vivisection in the name of science need not be of the Wyrms; natural human curiosity and arrogance takes care of that well enough. The gifts of the Weaver are very powerful, indeed. Today, literally billions of animals worldwide — most of them rodents, but including dogs, cats, ponies, goats, rabbits, monkeys and chimpanzees, man's closest relative — are subjected to all manner of scientific torture, all quite legally and condoned by society at large because the public is assured that its own interests are at stake should the practice be ended. Less well-documented is the number of people subjected to the same treatment. Those in power who know about it also turn a blind eye, secure in the thought that their own interests — whether personal, medical, or financial — are at stake and also that their interests override the rights and needs of those used in such experimentation.

The other problem for Garou with regards to science is that it is said to be the father of the third seed — Technology.

Technology

While it is dependent on science — one has to understand one's surroundings to a certain degree before one can change them — Technology was the first seed to begin growing after the Weaver allegedly implanted it into the





human soul. It has also had the most profound and obvious effects upon Gaia, and so is regarded as the hallmark of the Weaver's hand. It is also the most attractive and obviously beneficial seed as far as humans are concerned. With technology, they have been able to shape the world to suit themselves, extend their lifespan, increase their population, and impose order upon society and nature.

The first form of technology to be utilized was that of food-production. Weapons for butchering and killing were, of course, the earliest known tools to be wielded by men, along with tools for digging and carrying roots, tubers, and other plant foods. Once humans learned how to plant seeds, the next great revolution came with the invention of the plow. At first a simple stick, agriculture took off when it was built into a wedge-shape that could be pulled by men or animals. Long rows could be tilled, and many more seeds planted at once. The increase in food production allowed more people to survive, and the sedentary lifestyle thus imposed encouraged the building of cities. The administration required for assigning work and plots of land, storing and keeping track of grain, and counting and keeping track of livestock stimulated the development of bureaucracies, classes, writing, and laws. With the development of such a simple implement, humans started to gravitate to a high level of social order all on their own. The Weaver watched in delight and amazement at this achievement; the Wyrms watched as well, finding dank nests within the new tangle of society in which to breed. Kindred,

however long they had been around by this point, also found the cities to their liking, as it concentrated their herds, making it easier to feed and hide amongst them.

The growth of agricultural technology has, since then, been slow but relatively steady, taking off only since the late 19th century. A few of those agricultural changes have proved quite detrimental. The Dust Bowl of the 1930s was caused by practices that ensured high yields — for a while. Then the water began draining off the land, and topsoil began blowing away, leaving nothing but devastation. Minions of the Wyrms took advantage of this condition and exacerbated it, leaving in their wake a great deal of suffering and starvation. Today, great amounts of highly toxic pesticides are used to protect crops against harmful insects and diseases, and animals are overdosed on antibiotics and fed unsafe feed in order to keep them growing as cheaply and quickly as possible in the most crowded conditions manageable on “factory farms.” The twisting intercourse between Weaver and Wyrms is once again visible in such places to those who will see.

Ultimately, the three seeds are not in and of themselves corrupt, nor are they automatically the source of misery. But in light of the Weaver's insanity, and with the record of their abuses, it's easy to see that the Weaver's gifts have been horribly misused over the centuries. With a little bit of balance, they would hold the keys to a better existence for man and animal, flesh and spirit alike. However, we all know what happened to the force of Balance in the World of Darkness....

The Weaver in the Umbra The Pattern Web

The Pattern Web is best thought of as the mesh holding the universe together. Without it, all would dissipate into incohesiveness.

— Simon White Crane, Stargazer Galliard

The Pattern Web is the lattice that underlies all of reality. It can be said to be alive, but not really conscious. It is the spiritual scaffolding which supports both material and Umbral reality, the framework for all that exists.

In the vast recesses of deep space, the Web is less tightly woven, allowing the Wyld to snake its way through much more easily. The result is the foaming froth of quantum mechanics that is the “vacuum” of interstellar space. Closer to Gaia, however, the Weaver has spun the web much more tightly, making it difficult for even the fluid Wyld to squeeze through and exert its influence on Earth. The Wyrms themselves are bound into a coarser section of Webbing, but it is simply too large to be able to slip through its bonds, and the Web itself is much too strong to be broken with ease.

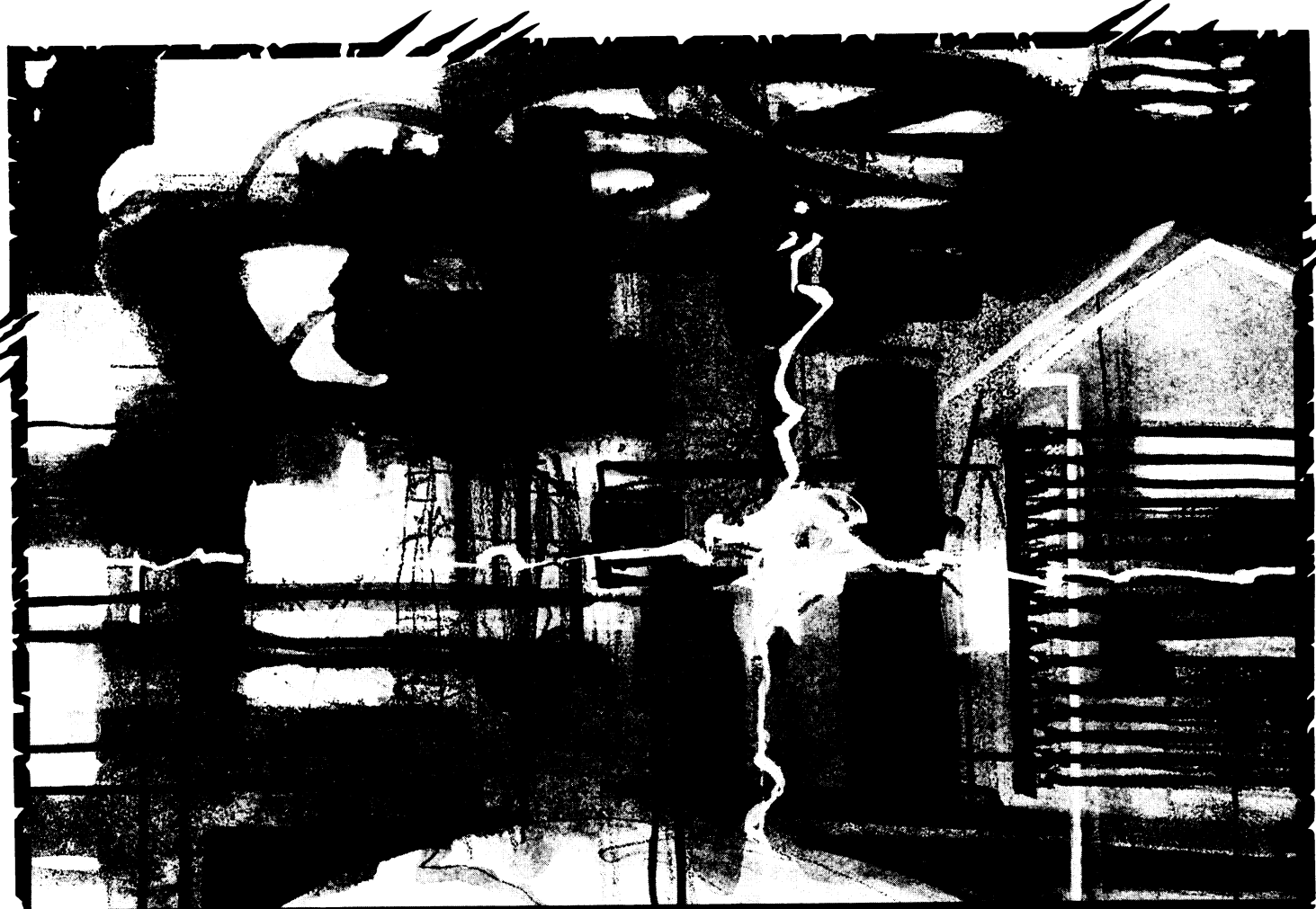
The Pattern Web is the oldest and largest structure in the universe, but very few Garou ever come into direct contact with it. Part of the reason for this is because it is quite

“remote,” underlying reality rather than being an actual part of reality itself. The webs that coat portions of the Penumbra are actually reflections of the Pattern Web itself, the “tip of the iceberg,” as it were. When a Garou walks on the Pattern Web, she is walking more or less within, behind, and beyond the universe all at once, traveling the interstitial void between spirit, matter, and anything which may be beyond the Tellurian.

Stretching as far as the eye can see and beyond, the Pattern Web can be disconcerting for inexperienced Garou trying to travel its strands. The webbing spreads in all directions, in three dimensions, and may often swarm with strange Weaver-spirits and Wyrms-spirits; even Wyld-spirits can be encountered in sections of Web where the mesh is loose enough to allow it. Where the webbing is tightest, myriad calcified spirits may be found if one looks closely enough. There are fewer in further reaches, but those unfortunate spirits bound there tend to be greater Jagglings or worse. Some Uktena Theurges, in fact, fear that the Totem of the Croatan, Turtle, is now trapped within the Pattern Web, calcified for eternity in some remote part of it. Glass Walkers scoff at the idea in public, but some entertain secret suspicions that the tales might be true.

The Web is patrolled constantly by various Weaver-spirits, who will attempt to entangle and calcify anything they encounter upon it. Woe to the Garou who can't manage to convince the spirits that they belong there!





Worst of all, communication between Weaver-spirits has improved in the past few years, as the Onesong has reached a new pitch with the appearance of computers and the Internet. A single Geomid stationed in the Pattern Web can summon, through accessing the Digital Web, swarms of Pattern Spiders in mere seconds.

The Digital Web itself has begun to weave itself into the Pattern Web, making access to it by Weaver spirits that much easier. As with the Pattern Web around Gaia, it too is tightening, its mesh becoming smaller as the years pass. What this ultimately means is any Theurge's guess.

Whether either Web can be considered a Celestine is also open to debate. However, many Glass Walker Theurges suspect that the Web itself spawns Pattern, Guardian, Net, and other Spiders at its need. This theory is supported by the fact that such spirits appear to come from the Web itself when alerted by a clumsy Garou.

The webbing seen marking buildings and other man-made objects in the Penumbra is simply an extension of the Pattern Web itself. Pattern Spiders work to weave the Pattern Web as close to Gaia as possible in their work to calcify the Earth's Shadow. In the long run, if they are successful, the Penumbra will become choked with tight webbing, and the Earth itself will be one endless city.

Weaver Incarna The Machine

The Machine grew up with the rising technological prowess of humanity. With the coming of the computer age, the Machine is now stirring almost to full awareness, now broadcasting its unconscious thoughts out through the Tellurian via the Digital Web. Computers are nearly ubiquitous in private homes, and most of these are linked to the Internet. The Machine is now growing faster than any spirit has ever been known to, and may soon reach Celestine status.

A few Glass Walker Theurges who follow the Machine's progress have become alarmed at the Machine's rise in power. They fear that if it does reach Celestine status, it may be powerful enough to challenge Gaia Herself. Other Glass Walkers feel that Gaia can take care of herself, and say that the Machine would never do this, anyway. The Machine is here to help Gaia, they insist, not to overthrow Her. The Machine's true intentions are unknown, and the Theurges are reluctant to report their theories to the other tribes for fear of serious reprisals against both their own tribe and the Machine itself.

This hesitancy may well bode ill, for the growing Machine has begun to flex its muscles for the first time in history, and could figure prominently in the coming Apocalypse.

The Patriarch

While the Machine's power grows, that of the Patriarch remains relatively stagnant. Its greatest influence was during the Dark Ages, and since the Renaissance its influence began to slide somewhat. However that tide may be turning yet again.

The modern fundamentalist movement proves that the Patriarch is as strong as it ever was. This new breed of mortals may not be as rigidly ritualistic as the old Church, but they are at least as concerned about conformity as their medieval counterparts. Even more, they tap into the Machine to spread their message and, sometimes, intimidate or even kill. With the approach of the year 2000 and increasing millennial hysteria, with the rise of fundamentalism in the Middle East amongst both Muslims and Jews, the Patriarch gains strength and prepares itself for the days to come, sending out Jagglings and Gafflings of its own to encourage humanity to walk its line. While it isn't anywhere near as powerful as the Machine, it may well be able to create problems in the near future for both the Garou and Gaia.

The Science Incarna

The Incarna of Science, if it can be said to exist at all, is becoming more tightly bound with the Machine. Knowledge for knowledge's sake has become passé — what matters in the dying days of the twentieth century are results. The Weaver herself has all but forgotten her passion for understanding in her drive to calcify and perfect. As such, Science has nearly become the complete servant of the Machine, and its lesser servants are becoming indistinguishable from the Machine's servants. This weak Incarna has been crying for help, but has been heard by very few; and those who do hear it, such as mages, often miss the point. In the not-so-distant future, this Incarna may well slip in power to become just another member of the Machine's brood, and any hope for healing the Weaver's mind will have been lost; the consequences of this may be very dire, indeed.

What's in a Name?

Some say Gaia began Naming; others claim the Weaver has always had this power. Whatever its origin, most Theurges agree that the Weaver now abuses this power over the very nature of the universe.

Once a thing — or even a group of like objects — has a Name, its potential and limitations calcify so that even the Wyld has difficulty changing it. Thus, the Weaver has become obsessed with Naming. The use of Names has become one of the Weaver's chief tools in facilitating the stagnation of the Tellurian. Humans, possessing some small bit of this power through the Weaver, unwittingly aid in this.

The Weaver's lust for order made Naming very attractive to her; once things are Named, they can then be

classified, pigeonholed into hierarchies and such down to as fine a detail as you please. With this comes the ability to control via the use of a Name. This is partly why humans have such influence on the environment, probably moreso than even their technology should allow on its own.

Of course, the abuse of Naming has come back on humans; in the 20th Century it has become increasingly difficult to hide or alter one's identity. With the advent of multiple pieces of ID for just about everything, cradle-to-grave social security or insurance cards, and vast databases, humanity is falling ever more quickly into a trap of their own — and the Weaver's — devising.

Individuals are much more easily affected by the use of Names than are groups, which is why "primitive" peoples made very sure to hide theirs, having a false name for every day use. They knew that a wicked sorcerer could easily use their true Name against them, should it be revealed. Spirits, too, know well how powerful a Name is, keeping their own secret lest anyone gain direct and complete control of them.

With the abuse of Naming, life becomes more depersonalized. Individuals become lockstepped into roles defined by the myriad Names to which they have become attached — personal, group, ethnic, company, etc. Names are collected in centralized databases, and it becomes increasingly difficult to change one's life by changing identity. Young homid Garou often have difficulty with this, finding that their new lives are complicated by their human name being left in the system, while lupus Garou often have trouble functioning in human society because of their lack of ID cards.

The stringent use of Naming also affects nature, to some extent. The development of Linnean binomial classification for biological species may be spiritually linked with a slowdown in the ability of many creatures to adapt to a rapidly changing world; as their Names become more defined, species lose their flexibility of behavior. How this may affect their attendant spirits is not yet known, but may be the cause of the decrease in spirit activity and the increasing phenomenon of spirits falling victim to calcification in the Web.

The process of Naming has become very important to the Weaver, as it has for human society. In fact, this may be her biggest obsession, and possibly her biggest weakness. As she dotes more and more on Names and the classification and ordering that go with it, she may be easily distracted from other, possibly more important things. Unfortunately, neither the Garou nor mages, the two groups best equipped to deal with the reality-endangering consequences of excessive Naming, are fully aware of the Weaver's influence in this matter, and so can do little to halt or reverse the process. (It's worth noting that the Garou want no help from the magi in this regard; to their eyes, most mages are as guilty of abusing the power of Naming as is the Weaver herself.)



The Realms

The Weaver's effects are felt all throughout the Tellurian, but are most vivid within the Near Umbra. As the Pattern Web tightens further and further from Gaia, the Near Realms are more at risk of becoming calcified within it. Although Near Umbral geography is not set, as it is in the Penumbra, some Umbral travelers have begun to speculate on the nature of certain Realms.

The Scar

The Scar is probably the best evidence of a Weaver-Wyrm connection to be found, but most Garou — even Theurges — simply assume the Wyrm has invaded what was a purely Weaver realm. From its first discovery, however, it has always formed a home for Banes as well as Weaver-spirits. Both Weaver and Wyrm feed on the travesty of this Realm — the Wyrm on the worker emanations' pain and despair, and the Weaver on the strict order imposed upon them. It is the Bane overlords which see that the emanations are kept in line, endlessly toiling in the Weaver's factories and office buildings. The Scar is, in fact, probably the best representation of the Weaver's mad desire to control and calcify while incidentally making the world a living nightmare. If the Weaver does not notice (or care about) the Wyrm's doings in such a place, what hope is there for the material plane?


The CyberRealm

The CyberRealm is more purely Weaver than the Scar ever was, as it represents technology itself. It has likely been around for a very long time, but until the 20th Century it was too small to be noticed or at least considered a Realm. Now, however, it grows exponentially as the pace of technological change picks up. It is also the only Realm that does not appear to "move"; once this Realm is found, it can always be readily revisited by the same Moon Paths. In recent years, it has grown noticeably in size, while becoming more difficult for creatures of the Wyld — especially non-Glass Walker Garou — to access and navigate.

From the CyberRealm one may access both the Pattern and Digital Webs, and possibly even the Weaver's own Deep Umbral domain, though no one has yet found the Anchorhead site. From Uptown one can also attempt to enter the resting place of the Machine, though the route is strictly guarded by various technospiders and other Weaver-spirits. As the Machine grows in power and consciousness, so too does the CyberRealm. There is no telling what will happen when the Machine fully awakens and begins to assert itself more strongly.

Other Near Realms

The Weaver is also having an effect on the various other Realms and Domains. Wolfhome especially has been



experiencing such encroachment; where it was once a paradise for lupus Garou, it has increasingly become a nightmare of traps, cities and human emanations. The Umbral homelands of other creatures have also begun to change for the worse in like manner.

The Flux Realm has long been encased in a shroud of Pattern Webbing, and Pangaea is also a recent target of busy Pattern Spiders, who have been discovered trying to encase this Realm as well. So far, Pangaea has been able to escape Flux's fate, but how long this state of affairs can last is unknown. In Battleground is a little-known subrealm in which spirits allied with the various members of the Triat fight it out. What few reports come from there suggest that not only are Weaver spirits gaining the upper hand, but have allied themselves with Banes in order to better overcome minions of the Wyld. It is difficult to find, however, so it is hard to verify these tales for those who give them any credence at all.

The Weaver in the Deep Umbra

While the Wyld still holds sway over much of the Deep Umbra, the Weaver, like the Wyrms, has her home in its furthest reaches. No Garou has visited her actual home yet, which is probably just as well. Anything entering her Realm would be instantly calcified. This is a domain where nothing changes, where webbing holds everything in stasis. It also holds the shades of technology-yet-to-be, advanced devices any Glass Walker or Technomage would give their eyeteeth for. The true Names of everything known and unknown in the Universe are inscribed on the walls of the Perfect City that is the Weaver's home, categorized and arranged with utmost care and order. Every place in the entire cosmos — including Malfeas — can be accessed from here, as it is the hub in the vast spider web of spiritual and material reality. Gigantic Geomids store information about things mere Earthlings can't even imagine. Within the mass of Webbing at the center, sits the Weaver herself, madly spinning her insane schemes and seeking meaning in perfection, protected by her own weaving. No other spirits reside here; all is perfect in the Weaver's home, and it is too well protected from the Wyld and Wyrms to be in any danger of change or corruption. At least, so the Weaver thinks....

The War Upon the Wyld

Nature is a system of finely tuned chaos. The "Balance of Nature," if it exists at all, is quite tenuous. A small alteration in a given local system may well have a larger impact elsewhere. Even the cycle of the seasons can be affected by slight changes in the atmosphere, whether it be by volcanic emissions or man-made effluvia. Such climatic changes can lead

to the extinction of some species, and encourage the diversification and subsequent speciation of others. Over long periods of time, nature fluctuates rapidly, and often.

The Weaver finds this state of affairs absolutely intolerable.

Being the perfectionist that she is, even the controlled dance of evolution represents too much messiness; she would much rather see all of creation frozen in a state of perfection. And if that happens to mean that creatures die, then so be it — living species are unruly things at best, always mutating all over the place, never staying the same for more than a few million years at a time with very few exceptions. But with the Wyld free, biological species will continue to change; the Weaver is yet unsuccessful in binding it.

The answer to this “problem” is, of course, human endeavor. The call of progress has all too often been a call to bloodshed. As species after species vanishes, the apologists cry that such is the price of progress, that the bison or what have you were “in the way.” While the Wyrn represents destruction for destruction’s sake, the Weaver inspires destruction for the sake of continued human expansion for her benefit. As technology progresses, the task of clearing the way becomes that much easier.

But some animals are directly useful to modern society, and so these are not only protected, but bred and “improved.” Such improvement has become highly technical in the 20th century, incorporating gene splicing, *in vitro* fertilization, even cloning. Most livestock and food plants are now tightly limited in genetic variation, and thus highly dependent upon man to help them survive and propagate. The ultimate goal is, of course, to have genetically homogeneous breeds that always breed true for certain chosen traits. With the Weaver’s gift of Technology, this is becoming reality. The downside is that these engineered breeds are highly susceptible to disease, pestilence, and genetic problems, but this is simply an obstacle to be overcome by yet more highly developed technologies.

As the 20th century draws to a close and Apocalypse is nigh, the world’s wildlife finds itself increasingly stranded in biological “islands,” surrounded by cities, farms, and other trappings of civilization. No longer can herds migrate freely, and conflicts between humans and animals increase. Even national parks set up to protect wildlife are under continuous pressure by developers, “sportsmen,” and others to strictly control the Wyld and make conditions more comfortable for humanity. Reintroduced wolves are not welcome in Yellowstone, and calls for bears to be more rigidly confined or completely removed from parks increase in proportion to the amount of tourism in the parks. Wild animals are simply too unruly; they may leave the park boundaries, or bother campers within the park. And of

course, the real, unstated purpose of these parks is not to protect wildlife, but to entertain people. If nature must be altered, contained, controlled or even annihilated to make the parks and preserves more attractive to Weaverish, comfort-loving humans, then they will be. What, one might ask, will be the ultimate outcome of this policy?

A Mickey Mouse Solution

If the media is a reflection of the human “ideal,” then imagine what wilderness would be like if the Weaver had her way. Major entertainment studios have always delivered a “palatable” vision of nature — neat, clean, and sanitized beyond reality. Cartoon animals are typically sexless and highly civilized anthropomorphic beings. In fact, they are barely recognizable as animals save for the appearance of their heads (and even then that’s often a stretch). Even the highly “realistic” renderings of animals in cartoon opuses like *Bambi* barely mask the very unrealistic behavior of the creatures thus depicted.

Actual wildlife films started off in much the same way, with staged shots and cutsey narration to make the animals seem more “human” in their motives and behaviors. Although wildlife documentaries now take a more nitty-gritty view of the actual business of survival, this isn’t always an improvement. OmniTV is particularly notable for running specials such as “When Animals Go Bad,” horrorshows of animals mauling people and going on “rampages.” Unsurprisingly, these programs tend to encourage suggestible people to strive for a more controlled wilderness, one where animals “know their place.”

The ultimate extension of this mentality is the modern theme park. No real animals are to be seen in these parks; rather, realistic robots act as stand-ins. Animatronic birds talk and sing in Hawaiian rhythms; bears lose their predatory nature in favor of being lovable hillbilly jug-band performers. Many of these parks have employees lurking nearby to snatch up litter the instant it hits the ground — after all, in a perfect environment, there are no imperfections. Perfect people don’t litter... and if they do anyway, best to keep up the illusion of perfection, rather than make a fuss.

Various theme parks in America, Europe and Japan teem with Weaver-spirits that practically clog the local Umbra. Indeed, there is no place on Earth more Weaverish than these parks. They are immaculately clean, appearance codes for workers are strictly enforced, everything works smoothly and efficiently, and an air of artificial bliss permeates the atmosphere. If the Weaver gets her way, the entire world will be a theme park writ large — a world micromanaged down to every last individual’s behavior and devoid of anything resembling a natural plant or animal.



The Shapeshifters

Glass Walkers

The Glass Walkers have unwittingly become the Weaver's pawns in her war against both Wyrms and Wyld. Over time, they have even become uncomfortable with Wyldish Gifts and fetishes. They aided the Weaver in encouraging the humans to build cities.

Yet through all this, the Glass Walkers do not realize just how entwined with the Weaver they are. They seek to guide her, without understanding how she manipulates them. The Walkers are vigilant about keeping the Wyrms from corrupting technology without comprehending how they further the Weaver's interests — or even what the Weaver's interests really are.

A few Theurges have begun reporting worrisome behavior among some Weaver-spirits. Unfortunately, their explanations for these phenomena often fall far short of the truth. As the Weaver's mind becomes more erratic as it wars with itself, the repercussions reverberate through all Weaver's children and servants. The Glass Walkers themselves are more divided than ever before, with the techie factions rising in power over more traditional camps. The appearance of the Cyber Dogs may well be one such symptom.

The Cyber Dogs are made up of Walkers unabashed about their connection to the Weaver, though members of this camp keep their more extreme views to themselves. They seek to better the Garou through high technology, sometimes going as far as forcibly implanting cyberware into unsuspecting lupus. In this fashion they have tapped directly into the Weaver's technomind which seeks to calcify everything through the spread and ultimate total domination of technology. Whether or not they are aware of this is anyone's guess; what is clear is that they have indeed given themselves over willingly and completely to the Weaver. While the old Mafia dons and corporate wolves struggle to retain power in their respective areas, the Cyber Dogs thrive and are growing in number. The Dogs have little if any respect for their woodland brethren, and little more for the more traditional of their own tribe. Any mention they make of the Wyld is merely lip service, and their only thoughts of Gaia are how she can be "improved" through the use of more technology.

Most of the other tribes are unaware of the subtle transformation taking place within the Glass Walkers; indeed, the Glass Walkers themselves are barely aware of it. Fewer and fewer Walkers even come into contact with the world outside the cities, and many younger members fail to see any use at all for the Wyld in aiding Gaia. Indeed, many lose sight of Gaia completely in their Weaver-thrall — an old fear voiced by other tribes that is becoming reality. The Walkers themselves turn a blind eye towards this, and still

insist they serve Gaia rather than the Weaver. Soon, alas, this may no longer have any truth to it at all as the tribe teeters on the brink of giving themselves over completely to the Weaver. Under the influence of the Cyber Dogs and other high-tech camps, it may happen sooner rather than later — and Gaia will have lost another tribe to a member of the Triat.

The Others Ananasi

The Weaver is the heart of the war that splits our kind today. Our Queen resides in the heart of all foulness, and some say that the Weaver's betrayal was what cast her there. I and my kind know better; what could protect our Queen from falling into corruption, were it not the Weaver who bears our likeness? It is the nature of spiders to spin and weave; the Hatar are fools, and the Kumoti doubly so.

— Shantayne Piroqui of the Skein-Spiders

Bastet

Rajah's works are something we do not fault him for, and something we can do little about. Forget the other tales — it was the dogs that dropped the wall between flesh and spirit, and the dogs who have barred us from our right to the spirit world. They would make everything out of proportion, including the deeds of Cahlash. Fret not about the affairs of the spirit world; surely things could be doing better with our presence, but the dogs should have thought of that sooner.

— Toby Shining Coat, Bagheera Tekhmet

Corax

You ask me, things aren't as bad as they could be. Sure, there's some people using all this tech in really hideous ways, but let's face it — people would kill people even if all they had were rocks. The only thing we really need is for the Garou to drop some of the really nasty offenders with a little more regularity. Of course, it'd help if there were some more of the wolves around for that — and hell, some more of everybody else, too. I guess the Weaver's messed up along with the rest of the universe, huh?

— Dead Man Steve

Gurahl

Tapestry Maker is indeed wounded, but no less so than her siblings. Perhaps the only chance of winning the Apocalypse is to take a great many people and follow the Pattern Web into her lair, there to cure her of her madness. In curing her, perhaps we can cure the Triat. But such a task would require more of us than there are living today....

— Oleyah Voice-of-Mourning, River Keeper Kojubat

Kitsune

Neh! Weaver, it all over place! Everywhere you look, is all schedule and government and say-so and passport. Sunset people fools for letting Spiders run crazy and put glass and metal all over

place. Now it run crazy all over East, too — where place left to stand? Crazy. And Yomi knows trick of running on the strands that don't stick, just like they live there. Were up to me, I tell people go nuts cutting web strands, dump Yomi on heads and maybe make place a little easier to breathe in. Us Foxes would do it, but we're very small. Other guys get better results — well, need to, or Sixth Age catch us with trousers around ankles!

— Blackfoot, roko Gukutsushi

Mokolé

Everything spins out of hand, faster now than it did so long ago. Few people see the ties between Weaver and Wyrn, but we can remember so many times that the two worked hand in hand. In fighting one, we fight the other — there is no longer time to be selective.

— Red Sky Waiting, Noonday Sun

Nagah

Only the truly blind would be unable to see that there is trouble here, and only the truly ignorant would not realize that it is the failure of Balance which is at fault. Our shapechanging brethren would do well to be reminded that they are the incarnations of balance in this age — how else would one explain their mixture of tradition and change? — and that it is their responsibility to address the troubles at hand.

— Astika Bloody Dart, Ahi Kamsa

Nuwisha

You walk the Umbra as long as I have, you'd think you'd have seen it all. Not hardly. I had to drop in and out of the physical world about ten times in a year, just to make sure I was judging the passage of time right. The Webs are piling up in here about fifty times as quick as they used to, and it's not showing any signs of slowing down. Soon there won't be enough room to stand. That's right, it's a serious problem. And if we're taking something seriously, then maybe those other guys ought to be paying more attention, too.

— Kokopelli Steals-the-Wind

Ratkin

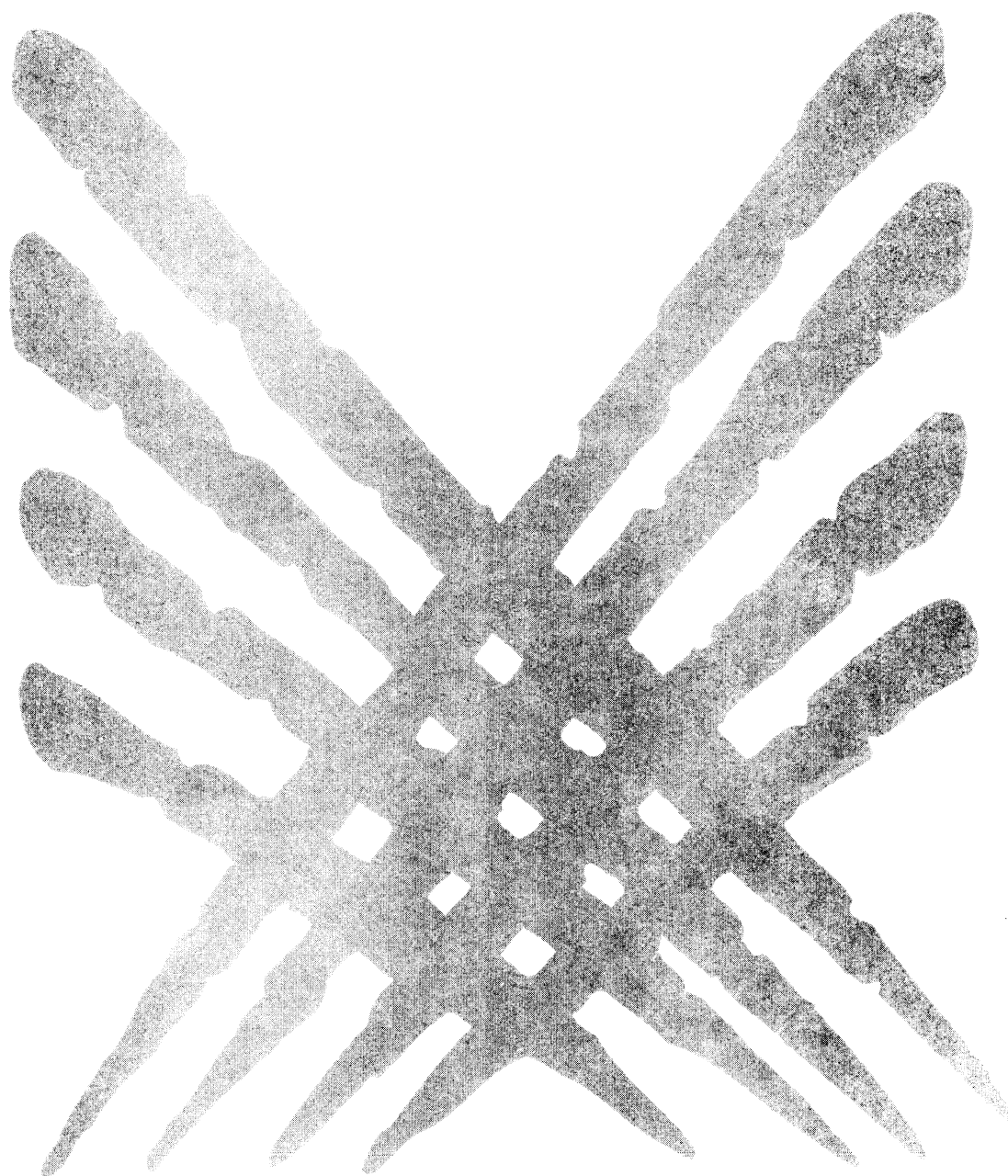
Yes. The other bastards haven't bothered to get off their asses long enough to slow down Mama Spider. Yes. Now they're shocked that she's gotten so tough. Pah. Big fucking deal. We get by in the crannies and holes between the webs. Just like we always have. We will learn to gnaw holes in the Pattern Web, if it comes to that. We'll survive. It's what we do.

— Cat-Chewer, rodens Shadow Seer

Rokea

It is known to us that C'et walks on the Unsea, and that her tracks coat the lands there. That is her affair. In the oceans, she must bow to Kun, and the Shelled One is not strong enough to challenge the Mother of Fishes. Our place is secure — Unsea is its own children's concern.

— Seven-Lives, Brightwater Rokea





CHAPTER TWO: WEAVERTECH

I do not even know where to begin.

Where I once saw warmth, life, and joy, all is cold, grey, and sterile. When others touch me... it is like the distant memory of a touch. Slowly, surely, I lose resolution — the me I used to be is being rewritten by a pale, antiseptic replica. A meaningless string of zeroes and ones, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing, if you prefer.

And I fear this mechanized shell devouring me — more than I fear burning in a mythological inferno, or even fading into insensate oblivion, if it comes to that.

I hope that others will carry on the battle where I have fallen.

End recording.

— Teeth-of-Titanium, once-Glass Walker Ahroun

Deus Ex Machina: Technology in the World of Darkness

Afficionados of multiple genres within the Storyteller system (particularly **Mage: the Ascension** and **Werewolf: the Apocalypse**) will doubtless find the distinctions between real-world technology, spirit-driven WeaverTech, and Device/consensual Technomagick somewhat arbitrary and vague.

Confusing though it might seem, use the following as a representative set of general guidelines:

- **Mundane Tech** — pretty much anything encountered or expected in the real world. As a rule of thumb, anything in a sci-fi film which evokes “Wow, that’s neat” reactions as opposed to “What the...?” (Batman’s complex belt-mounted grapples vs. *Star Wars* lightsabers, etc.)

- **Technomagick** — creations ridiculously above and beyond the pale of reality, but limited in lifespan by popular belief/disbelief. Many mages would argue that cold fusion and room-temperature superconductors don’t exist yet due to a dearth of true believers! When Technomagick Devices fail, they usually fail *hard*, as the crushing weight of reality’s laws comes down on the offending gadget. The Weaver is willing to go easy on the Technocracy’s magick — they do tend to honor her laws — but ultimately, not even these Namers are safe from the consequences of meddling with reality’s pattern.

- **WeaverTech** — mystical gadgets not bound by strictures of Sphere magick, but not as versatile. Triatic magic, like any Changing Breed, is a symbiosis of spirit and flesh, and not limited by beliefs — if anything, it’s governed and powered by the *spirit*’s beliefs, which are anyone’s guess.

Like any creature new to its environment, the Weaver’s brood tries to blend in with its surroundings; consequently, Weaver fetishes are often indistinguishable from high technology. In the absence of like-minded forces, however (other spirits, members of the Changing Breeds, even those few mages with world views sympathetic to the Gaian

pantheon, etc.), Weaver-magic withers and dies, as would a flower deprived of water or sunlight.

For example, a prosthetic/replacement arm, close if not passably similar to flesh (color/detail/synthetic materials), with rudimentary control/dexterity (tensile springs, a Boston elbow, perhaps even crude extensions into muscular/nervous systems), is a classic example of "cutting-edge" medical technology reaching into the twenty-first century. (The MIT/Utah "Dexterous Hand" robotics project is just such an example.)

The same prosthetic, constructed from a metal-and-microchip base, capable through as-yet impossible bio/nanotechnology of perfect manual control/flexibility/strength (if not greater) — or, better still, an actual functioning clone or graft which yields true blood/marrow/tissue samples — sits firmly on the side of Technomagick, at least for the next few years. (In fact, many such experiments doubtless line the halls of countless Progenitor labs somewhere.)

New Background: Device

You possess one or more pieces of state-of-the-art technology. These may be simply highly advanced mundane technology, or might be gimmicks fueled by Technomagick and designed so that people other than actual mages can use them. They are typically of great value and possess a number of built-in "facsimile powers" (often similar to fetishes or Gifts) based on their design. The greater your score in this Background, the more valuable the Device. The Devices in this chapter can be used as samples or springboards for new ideas, or even take a look at *Mage: the Ascension*, if you own that book, for other possible Devices.

- A weak item (eversharp carbon-fiber knives, polymer-crafted firearms, clean-burning fuel)
- A useful Device (powerful handheld electromagnets, simple prosthetic limbs)
- A significant Device (room-temperature superconductors, other cutting-edge technology)
- A Device slightly ahead of the scientific curve (brainwashing/mind control hardware)
- A powerful Device with unprecendented impact on mortal science (anti-gravity generator)

Now take the same approach from a spiritual direction (an intricate, many-fingered hand spun from crystalline fibers, an amalgam born from the union of carefully-crafted silicon-and-steel moving parts with a sensitive spider-spirit, or perhaps even an alien creature camouflaged as a perfect flesh-and-blood replica coexisting across both planes and capable of reaching into the Umbra) and you have the makings of a Weaver fetish. (Stephen Hess, powerful Philodox and CEO of John Henry Enterprises, brought great dishonor upon himself and his tribesmen when made an end-run around his metis-deformity in this manner.)

The devil, they say, is in the details...

Crafting

Many of the following "fetishes" and "Devices" are in fact, not quite fetishes or Devices in the strictest definition. Many are crafted by ordinary mortals and quietly infused with supernatural power by Weaver-spirits; their makers probably have no idea that their gadgets' efficacy comes from a supernatural backing.

Ultimately, it's up to the Storyteller to decide which of these fetishes work nicely as actual Garou fetishes and which are more WeaverTech in nature; similarly, some of these Devices might actually represent the state of the art in mundane technology in your chronicle, while others are Technomagickal Devices specifically designed so that non-magi can use them. In all, it basically depends on what sort of tone you want technology to take in your game.

[*Mage* Storytellers take note: This is a *Werewolf* supplement; that's why we're talking about the Weaver instead of "Stasis," after all. Don't use it as the last word on the blurry line between real-world technology and the domain of Technomagick in the World of Darkness. Unless you really, really want to.]

Hardware Animus Energy Alternative Adapter

Level 3, Gnosis 6

On first glance these fist-sized devices, cabled, complex, and crafted from a blue-black nitinol-titanium alloy, resemble something out of a Gigeresque gallery. These squat, sinister units, each strangely reminiscent of a human heart, are docked in eight-foot columns of translucent plasteel filled with a weak saline solution similar to those found in sensory deprivation tanks, furthering the freakish B-movie parallels.

An accidental offshoot of research involving self-sustaining cybersystems, the Animus adapter was originally designed as a cardiovascular backup — a piece of drop-in metabolic machinery serving as a go-between bridging biological and mechanical energy sources, setting up a mutual recharge cycle in much the same way as an automotive alternator.

As is too frequently the case, however, initial conceptions gave way to unforeseen incidental applications, and



the theory of the thing was quickly surpassed by its practice. Hundreds of these grotesqueries are said to line the innermost chambers of Pentex and Developmental Neogenetics Amalgamated laboratories.

System: When installed alongside a cardiovascular bionic conversion, the Animus adapter functions as expected — the system both regulates (as would a pacemaker) and revitalizes. Treat Stamina as the user's +2 for purposes of soaking damage or resisting unconsciousness, and as effectively unlimited for prolonged or steady exertion (load-bearing or running). The adapter uses only the wearer's digestive and respiratory systems for fuel (which it in turn replenishes).

An unaided human adrenal system *may* be coupled with an adapter, but is quickly outpaced (and fatally overstressed) by its energy consumption. This has led to the commission of heinous deeds in the name of science; rumors abound regarding comatose human batteries wasting away in Animus cylinders, slow-acting systems introduced into hospital and life-support equipment, and even more unspeakable atrocities.

Armalite-Steyr AS-115 Assault Rifle

Device 1

A seamless union between Eastern European engineering and American manufacture, the AS-115, patterned by its designers to a rigorous set of computer-optimized schematics and military specifications, may be the answer to Rutger Hauer's signature snarl, "We need... *bigger fucking guns.*"

Although similar in color and overall size to the M16 rifles and M4 carbines issued to American troops, the similarities end there. The AS-115 comes in a bullpup configuration (although conventional stocks are also available); breaking from the Vietnam-inspired .223 trend of the 1970s and 1980s, the carbine is chambered for high-velocity aluminum 7.62mm caseless ammunition (rare civilian semi-automatic models will accept any .308 cartridge). Equipped with an electronic ignition system in the place of its traditional firing-pin-driven counterparts for underwater and deep-space operation, more than 98% of the rifle is crafted from a unique injection-molded polymer. Although the AS-115 will not pass through a metal detector unnoticed, it is easily broken down into a handful of small metallic parts not readily distinguished to the untrained eye as belonging to a firearm. Unsurprisingly, the AS-115 is already enjoying great popularity among certain security companies and military forces; Garou can probably expect First Teams to be packing these monsters in the near future.

System: The AS-115 has four settings: safe, semi-auto, three-round burst and full-auto. Despite its light weight, an ingenious mercury-column recoil compensation system reduces burst/spray penalties by one (difficulty 8 for full-auto, 7 for a three-round burst). Approximately one out of every twelve rifles (one per platoon) comes equipped with an underslung M203 grenade launcher (difficulty 6, range 400 yards, damage as per grenade type used).



AS-115

Caliber	Difficulty	Damage	Rate	Clip	Conceal	Range
7.62mm	7	8	25	25	T	275

Bionics/Cybernetics

Variable Rank, Gnosis (2 + Rank); alternately, Device 1-5

From fantastic machinations of Asimov and Gibson to crudely-fashioned appendages dating back to dynastic China, the marriage of man and machine has been a longtime dream of scientists and storytellers. Though widely regarded as science fiction even by the World of Darkness' diverse denizens, a select number among the Glass Walkers and Hakken know otherwise from firsthand experience, and distressing rumors abound regarding tragic DNA experimental subjects and sinister perversions wrought by Pentex technicians.

So-called 'basic' bionic/cybernetic modifications (that is, those without subsidiary spiritual attachments (Gifts *et al.*)) artificially augment physical and/or perceptual attributes.

Examples include:

- *Alloyed Endoskeleton* [reinforced Stamina]
- *Lexical Database* [book-knowledge Intelligence add-ons]
- *Myomer Musculature* [temporary Strength boost]
- *Ocular Recognition/Targeting System* [heightened Perception]
- *Pheromonal Secretors* [enhanced Charisma]
- *Reflex Filaments* [inhuman coordination/Dexterity]
- *Subliminal Harmonizer* [voice-augmented Manipulation]

- *Synaptic Accelerators* [preternaturally quick Wits]
 - *Syntheskin* [artificially-altered Appearance]
- ...as well as half a hundred other artifacts of cyberpunk legend.

Of somewhat more scholarly interest in recent years is the introduction of 'chipware' — miniaturized units of throwaway memory, hardwired directly into the lower mnemonic centers surrounding the cerebral cortex and stem. Although unimaginably expensive, prohibitively difficult to come by, and often incompatible with individual brain chemistry, this cunningly-guised biotechnology offers a quick and comparatively easy alternative to the tedium of subliminal learning or by-the-book instruction.

System: One additional point in any Attribute (or Ability, in the case of chipware) per Rank is a good rule of thumb for basic bio-booster hardware. Additional effects (e.g., multiple Attribute/Ability bonuses, powers mimicking those of other fetishes and/or Gifts) may be added on a point-for-point basis (using the rank of the fetish(es) or Gift(s) in question)... with their own associated spiritual issues and negotiations, of course. Halve the benefits, however, if dealing with implants that can shapeshift to match a shapeshifter's various forms; ergo, a shapeshifter's four-dot

cybernetic limb only grants two dots of Attribute modifiers. In no cases will a shapeshifter's body accept an implant that isn't a fetish — even Technomagick isn't capable of adapting to the half-spirit nature of the Changing Breeds.

Players and Storytellers should keep in mind the potential hazards of mismatched muscle groups and unrehearsed physical activity; an over-enthusiastic guinea pig who attempts a 75 mph sprint on same-day cyberlegs or a series of fresh-chipped circular kicks without an accompanying regimen of physical conditioning is going to be in for an unpleasant surprise when she tears multiple muscles and surrounding ligaments.

But the physical dangers of overpressure pale before the psychological. Although it seems second-nature to us, the cerebral burden of controlling four autonomous appendages is computationally daunting, and tampered with only at great risk to the experimenter. Radical bionic replacement (or installation of any additional limbs) invariably results in unwanted side effects, from psychosomatic discomfort (cramping/muscle seizure, severe migraines, phantom pain) to irreparable emotional trauma (antisocial Derangements, autism, withdrawal, even catatonia) to subtler internal complications (such as the onset of Parkinson's Syndrome or similar degenerative nervous conditions, given the morbid moniker 'Black Shakes' by fanboy Cyberphreaks). These risks (and subsequent afflictions) should increase in frequency and severity with the Rank of the fetish(es) in question, and are left to the Storyteller's discretion.

Bottomless Magazines

Talen, Gnosis 3

Crafted from a nondescript matte-black metallic alloy, these war talens are made from standard high-capacity autopistol magazines, and must be tailored to specific makes and models of firearms. Identical in every way to their mundane counterparts save for the lack of load indicators, they never run out of ammunition for the duration of the firefight in which they were loaded. A pack of militant Monkeywrenchers operating out of Hong Kong's Mother of Peach Trees Caern refer to these showy and ostentatious items as "John Woo Specials."

System: Truly ridiculous feats of sustained fire are possible using these items, whose preternatural effects last for one scene. At the end of the scene in which it was first used, the talen runs dry, becoming an ordinary magazine of manufacture and capacity appropriate to its associated firearm (and, without load indicators, not a very useful magazine at that).

Breakneck Overthruster

Level 2, Gnosis 4

An intricate fist-sized mass of cable and chrome, mated with turbine collars, fuel intake valves, and/or other electro-mechanical modules suitable to its target platform(s), the

Bionics versus Cybernetics

Although these two terms are often confused, used interchangeably, and/or regarded as "technobabble," they refer to very different things. Bionic science concerns itself with the enhancement of normal biological capability or performance through electronic or electromechanical devices, while cyberneticists make a study of similarities, differences, and possible connections between computers and the human nervous system.

Put more simply, bionic systems are simple (if powerful), physical in nature, and typically motor-driven; cybernetics, on the other hand, tend to be intricate, internal, and, to some degree, intelligent. Functional prosthetics, mechanical servos, structural reinforcements and inserts — these are the stuff of bionic engineering. Synaptic accelerators, pain-limiters, and optimized nanoprocessors operating in parallel with the prefrontal lobe — these, on the other hand, are textbook aspects of cybernetic theory.

Overthruster (brainchild of the mysterious hengeyokai sentai Gaiaimon) interfaces easily with any air-, land-, or sea-based propulsion system. Although perpetual motion appears to be beyond the capabilities of even the greater Celestines, this device *does* come pretty close.

This awesome technofetish augments the efficiency and output of its parent drive by at least a factor of three, stretching the limits of believability — automobiles coupled with the Overthruster experience dramatically lessened acceleration curves and consumption approaching hundreds of miles to the gallon, while impellers and jet turbines seem to shrug off the limitations of surface friction, soaring to still greater performances. (Indeed, this device might enjoy greater airborne application, were it not for the inescapable setback posed by pilot blackout at or around Mach 3....)

Dumbed-down versions of the Overthruster (including but not limited to the afterburner systems employed by F-18 jet fighters) have apparently cropped up in unaided human endeavors; whether this is a case of true serendipity or some gently guiding hand, no one is certain.

System: Miraculous as this device might seem, it quickly outpaces even the most sophisticated mundane components; assume a maximum lifetime of two or three hours' continuous use (somewhat longer if uses are short-lived and/or widely spaced) before system-wide failure (seizure, overheating, part fatigue, etc.) effectively disables the host vehicle.



Cerebral Conditioning Systems

Device 4

These devious little items, each no larger than the head of a match, are as close as the mortal world has yet come to the “mind control” theme recently popularized by conspiracy theorists and science fiction enthusiasts.

The 1990s version of the “Queen of Hearts trigger” is actually an experimental union of several pioneering technologies. Fiber-optic shunts piggybacked directly onto the surface of the brain are used to stimulate pain and pleasure centers (in accordance with obedience and disobedience, respectively) during the first few weeks of conditioning. Microdiffusers tied to the recipient’s glandular system time-release mild narcotic agents, pituitary extracts, and adrenal additives directly into the spinal column. Inner-ear implants emit carefully-selected subharmonics of the 443 Hz tone observed to induce susceptibility to suggestion. [This last effect is clearly audible (if difficult to pinpoint) to those using the Heightened Senses Gift or some equivalent.]

System: The conditioning relies on time and repeated exposure, though long-term recipients gradually slip from eager-minded receptiveness into a slack-jawed, unquestioning zombie state.

Roll the target’s Willpower (difficulty 8) for each week of continuous exposure. Success means no change for that week, failure a permanent decrease in Willpower by one. At

Willpower of two or three, the subject is under more or less complete control; below this number, the target becomes all but a mindless vegetable in need of coaching to exercise or even eat.

Cornerstones

Level 1, Gnosis 6

Countless unassuming talismans of this type were introduced into North America with the immigration and labor-intensive periods of the early twentieth century (many of which were Mafia- and Glass Walker Don-controlled). When built into the foundations of buildings, these cubes of grey stone (some of which bear peculiar engravings) bind a sympathetic spirit into the structure’s Umbral manifestation. This stowaway-presence often takes on a cohabitant relationship with the building’s original “tenant”; in many cases, the Building-spirit is subsumed and/or replaced altogether.

A handful of powerful Dons and Theurges among the Glass Walkers have rekindled the ancient vows of friendship and loyalty with these symbiont spirits; the networks of information and influences made available to these few are considerable indeed.

System: There are no explicit game mechanics, although building-spirits bound using Cornerstones are far more favorably disposed (and helpful) towards those who bind or otherwise invoke them.

DERVISH (DExterous Remote Vehicle, Ishapore Series)

Device 3

Based on full-body waldo designs for HAZMAT and hostile-environment applications, this state-of-the-art feat of mechanical engineering appears at first glance to be a metallic mockup of a diminutive (approx. 140cm tall) human skeleton. Networks of cables, pneumatic pistons, and microsensors run alongside the alloyed 'bones,' and redundant ocular sensor arrays give the 'head' a rather disturbingly skull-like appearance.

Units are frequently outfitted with mission-specific equipment, SCUBA-derivative gear for aquatic operation, or even camouflaged in clown garb or other innocuous-seeming attire. One DERVISH unit, generally believed to be property of the LAPD (who affectionately refer to it as "Arnie"), has been lovingly detailed with stenciled labels proclaiming it a "Cyberdyne Systems Prototype," product of "J. Cameron Engineering."

System: Although the system takes a little getting used to, the DERVISH vehicle, through a complex series of joystick grip-actuators and stirrup-pedals, potentially affords an operator full motor control of a remote set of limbs and sensors (treat as operator's Dexterity - 1; the one-die penalty may eventually be overcome with time and training). Telemetry with the head-mounted audio and visual recorders (which extend into ultraviolet (night-vision) and

infrared (thermal-vision) spectra) provides a virtual real-time what-you-see-is-what-you-get navigator's interface.

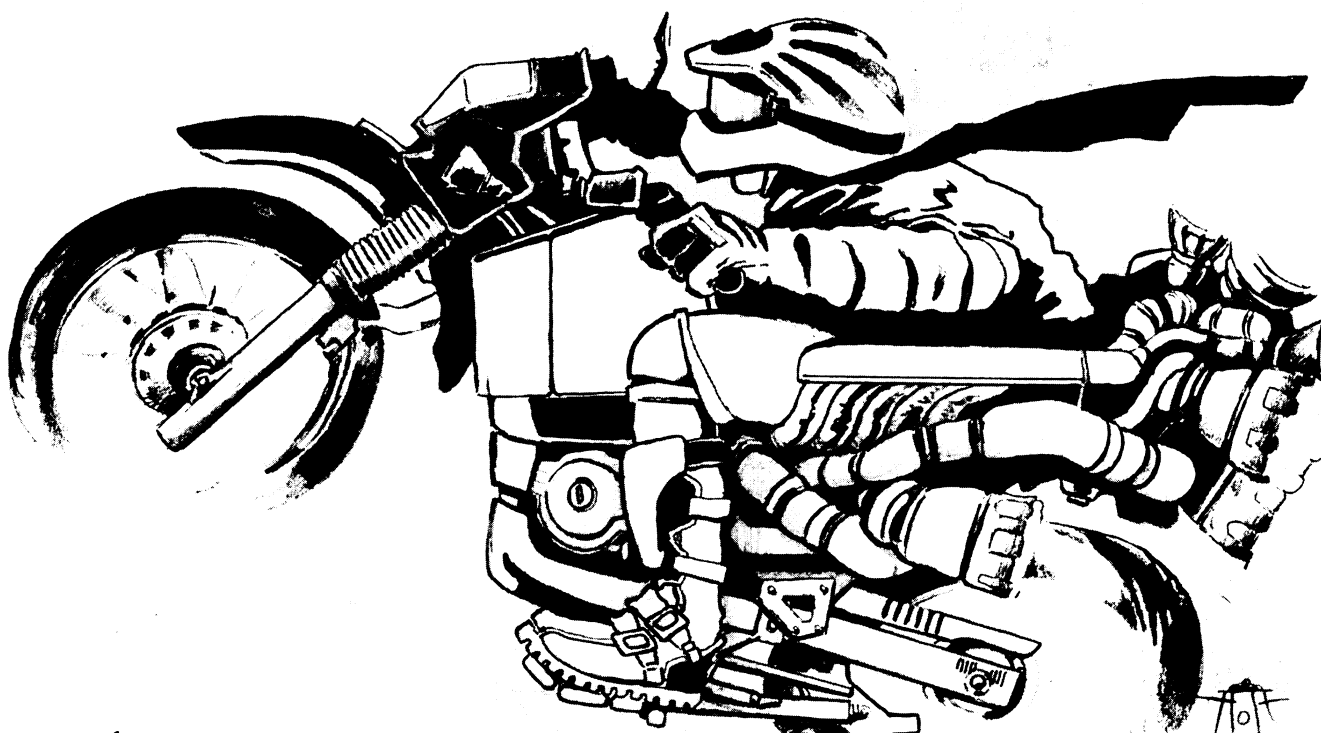
In a pinch, the DERVISH may even be used in combat; its four-fingered hands (the fourth is an opposable thumb) are capable of balling into fists or open-handed slaps, as well as picking up and operating whatever objects and/or weapons prove necessary for the task at hand. (The unit possesses a high degree of manual strength, but suffers from asymmetry, imbalance, and an extremely lightweight frame; treat Strength as 4 for crushing and/or gripping, 1 for all other purposes. The endoskeleton is lightly armored and has three soak dice.) Storytellers may wish to assign operators a new Skill, Pilot (Waldo Vehicle), after a sufficient breaking-in period.

Work is already underway to improve upon the DERVISH design; the next generation of such devices, custom-tailored for specialized applications such as dance choreography, are rumored to incorporate inverse-kinematic interfaces tied directly to a full-body suit worn by the operator, whose physical motions guide and drive the vehicle. Clearly the unmanned-technology revolution begun by such innovative pioneers as Project Pilgrim and the Voyager space probe is far from over...

Easy Money

Talen, Gnosis 4

The Weaver's crusades against change do not always manifest themselves in predictable or traditional fashions. An old financier's in-joke claims that money can be neither



created nor destroyed, simply forced back and forth through the system in different forms — and nowhere is this more true than in the case of these quixotic talismans. Though the overwhelming majority of these Talens take the shape of hard currency, a few representative specimens have arisen bearing the stamp of newer technologies (traveler's checks, credit cards, secure e-cash).

System: Regardless of when, where, or how this money is spent, every penny will somehow end up back where it started—circulating through local/remote banks, merchants, miscounted change, invalid transactions, fortuitously dropped bills, even subtle computer errors, until the exact sum returns to its spender's pockets, distinguishing marks, serial numbers and all. The cash always finds its way home, unless physically destroyed, in which case an equivalent number of differently-denominated bills and/or lines of credit are returned. Needless to say, since the Easy Money is a talen rather than a fetish, it's good for only one refunded spending spree — after that, it's simply money.

Of course, a few cagey Theurges have prepared sums of cash that return to their *enchanters'* pockets after expenditure, regardless of who actually does the spending.

Gyrojet Pistol

Device 2

Although self-propelled rocket ammunition technology existed as early as World War II, it was shelved by most nations after a preliminary analysis showing the projectiles to be impractical and unsafe. (This opinion was seconded on the field following a tragic series of explosions resulting from Russian tank turret-thrown rockets.)

In the World of Darkness, however, desperate times often necessitate desperate measures. Two competing corporations have submitted gyrojet prototypes for the military market's perusal; Heckler & Koch's SRP (still being tested) and the Israeli Military Industries (IMI)'s Vanguard (available in limited production).

The Vanguard, a (marginally) handheld sidearm similar in size but heavier than its predecessor (the IMI Desert Eagle), sports a fully-shrouded 6" barrel and slabside profile. Its twin-spring launcher works in conjunction with a delayed-thrust mechanism to ignite rocket projectiles after (and *only* after) they have cleared the barrel; needless to say, botches rolled while using this weapon should have catastrophic consequences (misfire or explosion).

Expansion of this design into a gyrojet rifle is unlikely; for the size and weight, you're better served using a LAW or similar device. Nonetheless, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) is currently considering the 12.7mm Sagittarius round as a possible successor to the 9mm

Parabellum. This news, accompanied by reports of newly-developed smartweapon and microelectronic guidance systems, may make the proverbial "bullet with your name on it" a terrifying reality.

Metamorphosis Inhibitors

Level 3, Gnosis 4; alternately, Device 3

Gaia's guardians have always numbered among (and dealt in return) the chiefmost casualties of the centuries-old friction between Wyld and Weaver. Consequently, sinister constructs intended to injure and incarcerate the Changing Breed have matriculated into the dreams and dungeons of mankind since the dark days of Torquemada's Inquisition.

The world has come a long way since that bygone era of silver manacles and spiked collars, however. Such devices now take on a microtechnological likeness — digital wristbands, latent intravenous agents, subdermal implants, and the like — skating a dangerous precedent towards malevolent Weaver-magic recognized, accepted, and utilized by the planet's mundane population.

System: These cruel implements force their wearers into a single form (generally Homid), making it difficult and/or excruciatingly painful for them to shift into others. Such unfortunates experience a +3 difficulty modifier to all shapeshifting rolls and suffer three aggravated wounds (soakable) every turn spent in another form (or trying to). Some few units are known to exist which restrain painlessly; sadly, they are rare.

Myrmidon Exoskeleton

Device 4

Mechanized monstrosities torn whole and beating from the stuff of science fiction, these anthropomorphic harnesses, built on ultra-lightweight carbon-composite frames and microsecond-response myomer fiber networks, represent mankind's latest attempt (spearheaded by those "in the know") to take the fight back to the Changing Breeds.

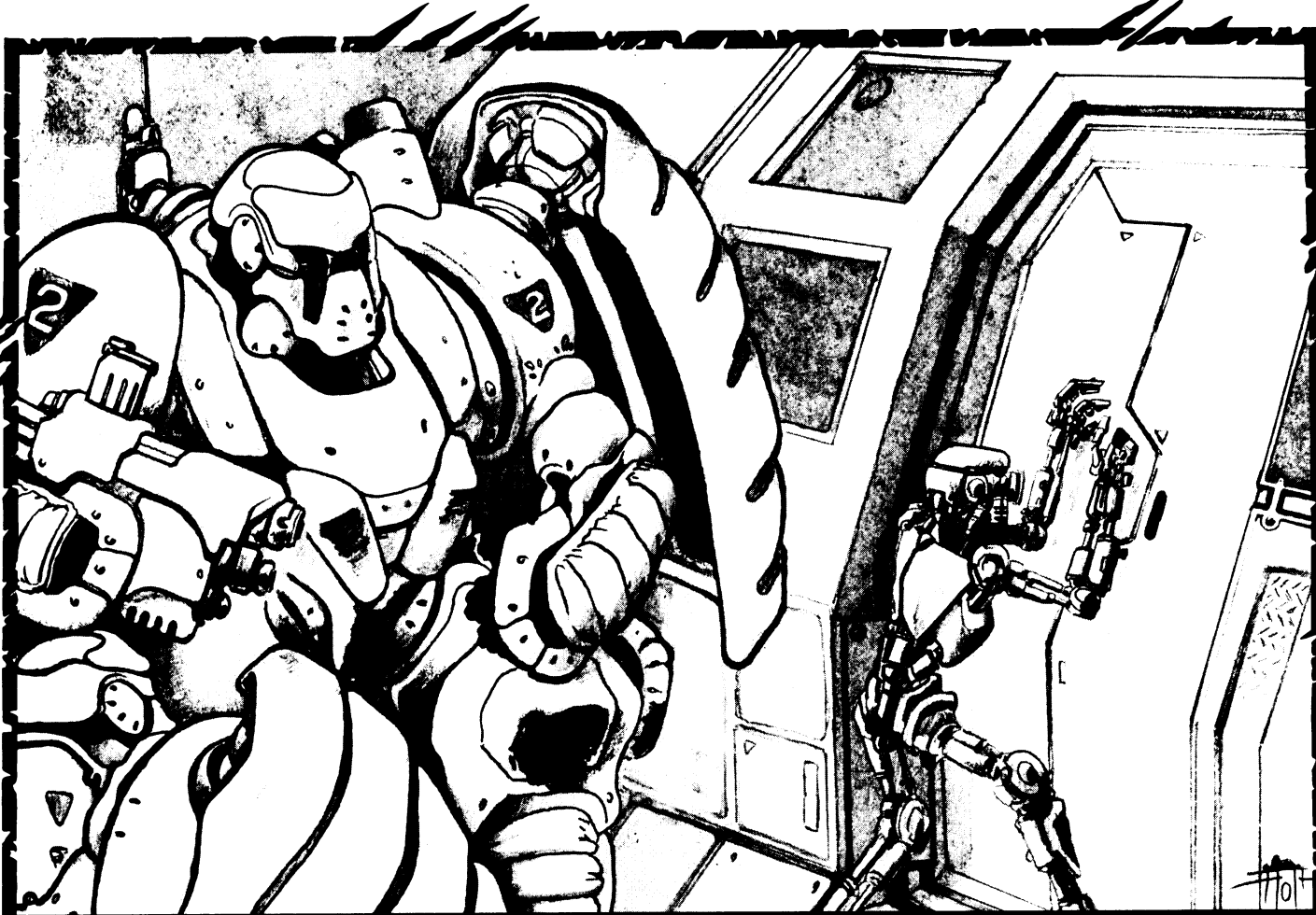
However the prototype design was conceived, its inspiration appears to have spread like wildfire; at least ten of these exoskeletons occupy a secure annex of Massachusetts' Hanscom Air Force Base (developed and funded under the auspices of "construction/hostile environment operations"), and additional units have been unveiled in selective screenings held before the United Nations' Nuclear Security Council. Furthermore, 'Web-distributed bootleg satellite photos purportedly taken over Siberia strongly suggest that these battlesuits (or at least their primitive predecessors) have seen more than their share of action since the dying days of the Cold War.

Obviously influenced if not outright controlled by some paranormal-savvy organization (Developmental

IMI Vanguard

Caliber	Difficulty	Damage	Rate	Clip	Conceal	Range
12.7mm	8	12*	2	6	J	40

* Damage is dependent on ammunition used; current standard-issue is high-explosive. Treat as aggravated damage.



Neogenetics Amalgamated, Special Affairs Division, Pentex, Shinzui, or the like), these man-sized assault vehicles, although considerably slower and clumsier than their furred-and-fanged counterparts, are more than capable of holding their own in a fight against supernatural opponents.

But what, wonder armchair soldiers and joint tactical commanders alike, were these behemoths forged to *fight*?

System: The Myrmidon stands approximately nine feet tall and features a three-quarter-ton servo-driven chassis (Strength 6, Stamina effectively unlimited for purposes of lifting or running).

It operates on crude electrostimulus from a trained pilot, handles more like a forklift than a piece of Japanese animation (treat Dexterity as operator's Wits minus two), and bristles with armor as well as armaments (Armor Rating 5, choice of arm/shoulder-mounted .50 caliber turrets (difficulty 7, damage 8, burst-capable), 30mm cannon (difficulty 7, damage 10, burst-capable) or even rocket launchers (difficulty 8, damage 15); needless to say, these features are not generally made known to those outside the laboratory). Tempest-hardened, silver-alloyed, and aquatic variants may also exist.

Noetic Navigation Interface

Device 1

Man's greatest works often spring from the humblest beginnings, or so an old adage reads.

The first publicly-acknowledged noetic (from *noetikos*, Greek, "of the intellect") system was, of all things, a video game — a primitive 3D bowling-alley simulator in which the player, connected via cranial electrodes to an alpha-wave monitor, "steered" the ball right with structured thought and let it drift leftward by relaxing or daydreaming.

Although the product and its parent company failed to popularize the niche market at which they were aiming, immediate extensions of the technology were obvious, and several governments quickly snapped up the project. The abortive F-24 fighter and Pawnee-class helicopter contracts, shelved following a handful of fatalities in testing, were widely believed to feature low-level cerebral interfaces in their test-bid models; indeed, at least one hush-hush military vehicle has used rudimentary noetic predecessors for years (see the *Myrmidon*, above). And the best is surely yet to come...

System: Although noetic technology is still decades away from being practical or even reliable, its earliest incarnation — a convoluted and fragile series of electronic contacts, encephalogram translators, and sensitive switching elements — *does* permit elementary mind-driven motion.

Initially, mobility is spastic, jerky, and exhausting; treat Dexterity as operator's Wits - 3. (Although this penalty may be lessened with time and practice, mobility will never exceed the user's Wits - 1.) Users may "drive" noetic machines for up to their Stamina rating in hours, after which



they succumb to exhaustion and must rest (preferably eight hours' sleep).

For reasons not yet fully understood, noetic systems are more responsive to left-handers. Miles Cassel (Vice President, Research and Development, Lockheed-Boeing Incorporated) attributes this phenomenon to differences in cerebral connectivity, going so far as to postulate the existence of a new subpopulation of "noetic naturals" (*Homo sapiens mentis*). His words, however, have fallen largely on deaf ears...

Raiden Unit

Level 3, Gnosis 7; alternately, Device 4

Some two or three dozen of these artifacts were allegedly constructed for Emperor Hirohito and his chiefmost generals during the dying days of World War Two. They consist of half-dollar-sized zinc inserts crafted to fit the palms of both hands. These inserts branch into hundreds — thousands — of copper filaments, equally spaced in an unseen mesh around the wearer's body, which terminate in a three-pound rectangular controller worn against the small of the back. All components are exceedingly brittle and corrosion-sensitive, and must be carefully cleaned and maintained lest accidental discharge occur (a liability which did not endear the system for use in the field).

The Raiden unit gathers and focuses ambient electricity (atmospheric ionization, static charge, even the surface tension from nearby liquids), projecting and/or releasing it upon command. The resulting shock is virtually like being hit by a lightning bolt. Those few Shadow Lords (Hakken or otherwise) who even remember these increasingly rare devices (as "Mantles of Thunder") revere them as holy relics.

System: Assume a maximum charge of ten damage dice (aggravated to most creatures), which may be discharged in whole or part at the user's option, and which replenishes at a rate of one die every other turn (faster in direct contact with a battery, generator or other power source). Effective range is fifteen feet; the player must roll straight-up Dexterity, difficulty 7 to hit (there aren't any skills that adequately represent accuracy with this thing).

Semiorganic Storage Elements

Device 1-5

The latest controversy fueling the long-standing conflagration between knowledge-based AI programmers and neuroscientists, this marine biologist's fantasy was first conceived in the Silicon Valley (Palo Alto's up-and-coming OrgoTech Laboratories). It has since been heralded as the fulfillment of technology's fabled "fifth generation" — a potential missing link between man and machine.

This miracle of biotechnology sounds considerably more impressive than it seems at first glance; a standard SoSto (Semiorganic Storage element) appears to be nothing more than a glass-cased cube, almost twelve inches to a side, lined with honeycombs of an unremarkable off-white calcified substrate. (This jealously-guarded "secret recipe"

incorporates certain oceanic invertebrate by-products and secretions not unlike those present in a coral reef.)

When exposed to a weak electrical charge, each cell in the semicrystalline matrix can be induced to store “zero” (charged) or “one” (neutral) nearly indefinitely. Coupled with the correct hardware, the resin becomes functionally equivalent to modern transistor-driven memory — but entire orders of magnitude smaller and more energy-efficient, thanks to physical properties and complex geometry unique to the body-centered cubic lattice. Mass-production and parallelization techniques mated with these innovations may well make effectively limitless fast-access desktop storage a reality by the turn of the century.

Further explorations into the next obvious application of this non-silicate-based technology — simple-cellular organic storage elements, gated logic, even programmable bioprocessors — are already underway. One research consortium operating out of the University of California at Berkeley has reported limited success with fungus-based storage systems, while a classified project at the National Center for Supercomputing Applications (Champaign, Illinois) conducts round-the-clock investigation into possible bacteriological data-carriers. (See the **Mage** supplement **The Technomancer’s Toybox** for details on these and other extensions of biotechnology.)

But these tides do not turn quietly. A handful of corporate-secure reports have begun to accumulate on various research staffers’ desks concerning spontaneous state-change and unexpected adaptive-learning behaviors exhibited by a select few prototypes. Are the Californians on the verge of creating a monster?

System: The Rank of a SoSto Device determines its storage capacity. First-generation (Rank 1) devices are roughly equivalent to 1990s high-end hard drives (6 to 9 gigabytes), while advanced models (Rank 2-5) can achieve nonvolatile capacities in the terabyte range or even higher.

This technology carries no game mechanics per se, though Storytellers may wish to assign extra dice or lowered difficulties to certain Computer- and/or Research-related rolls. (Using even one SoSto for online storage, after all, it would theoretically be possible for an average Websurfer to download and compress every bit of data she hears, reads, or sees in her entire lifetime.)

ShadowSim Projector

Level 4, Gnosis 7

Shinzui Industries introduced their *KageMono* (“ShadowWare”) series prototype in the early 1990s, taking advantage of unprecedented private-sector interest in affordable VR (Virtual Reality) hardware. Their efforts, though eclipsed by an insurgence of copycat enterprises hoping to mimic the Japanese megacorp’s accomplishments, were not overlooked by the technological elite: “The battle has been joined,” *Scientific Monitor* headlines proclaimed, “to take human consciousness to new worlds.”

None of them — not even the highest tiers of Shinzui research and development — knew just how close they had come to the truth. Cleverly disguised as cutting-edge realtime-rendered VR equipment, the Shinzui apparatus actually serves as an elaborate platform for Umbral travel. The unorthodox transport mechanism seems to feed on Weaver-energies, flourishing in places of stasis and structure.

The dozen or so functional models known to exist across Europe, North America, and Asia conform to two basic configurations — conveyances (vehicles identical in appearance to full-body VR cradles) and projectors (hundreds of sophisticated sensor arrays linked to high-fidelity multimedia systems (flatscreens, wide-spectrum speakers, three-dimensional holographic displays, and the like)).

At least one variant of this fetish (the Erhardt Engine, a Danish competitor’s clone) has been demonstrated to operate in reverse, projecting Umbral objects (and possibly creatures) into the *physical* plane. Is it possible for WeaverTech to bridge the gap between Gaia and the ungifted? And what purpose does it serve, considering that the Weaver was responsible for the rise of the Gauntlet in the first place? What does this apparent change of heart (from an entity that’s the antithesis of change) signify? The air is rife with speculation...

System: Obvious advantages to Garou users include stationary transit (the user’s body remains suspended in a spheroid rig, leaving her spiritual self to wander the Umbra untethered), removal of the need for a reflective surface, and the contingency for disconnection at a moment’s notice (through direct command, automated kill-switches, and/or vigilant assistants), instantaneously returning to the material realm at a known point of emergence (but at some risk to mind and body — roll Stamina vs. difficulty 7 to avoid catatonia, insanity, or worse).

Similarly, this system is much easier to use in areas of high Weaver density; use the table below to determine the difficulty for stepping sideways with the ShadowSim.

Area	Difficulty
Science lab	3
Inner city	4
Mini-mall	5
Open highway	6
Rural countryside	7
Lonely train track	8
Untouched wilderness	Impossible

Toroidal Electromagnetic Repulsor

Device 2

Short, squat, and surprisingly heavy for its size (60 cm diameter, perhaps 90 kilograms), this space-age repulsor (actually a miniature yttrium-barium arsenide accelerator) is currently the most powerful man-portable electromagnet on the planet. Commonly deployed in dozens, they are

channel #mciccone

Xaos: The guard has been neutralized; I've reached the lab door. Now bypassing the redundant safeguards.

RAMses: Do a double-check. Ernhardt security is pretty tight.

Xaos: Confirm clear. I'm inside. Powering up the grid and sub-systems.

RAMses: 'Virtual reality.' *snort* Amateurs.

Xaos: Activating verbal recording. I'm hooked up. Ready to enter the rig.

RAMses: Let's see if the Ernhardt Engine is all it's cracked up to be. Proceed.

Xaos: Initiating upload... Display reads... 'Umbra' something.

Xaos: i

Xaos: i i its

Xaos: wha ttthe. no

RAMses: David! David, what the hell is going on?

Xaos: everywerenothere all

Xaos: ohmygod

RAMses: David! Get out of there! Abort! Abort!

Xaos: ;Hhh;3...[1 j^P\$11L J<.-Z;
qhhxz.,(S,hhx -D.)Fv;d1@F^B L>

NO CARRIER

beginning to see use by law enforcement and military agencies in the establishment of invisible barriers and secure weapon-free perimeters.

When activated, the TER (or "donut") brings an extremely powerful magnetic field into being, which is itself toroidal in shape (making the magnet a donut within a donut, so to speak) and extends approximately five meters in every direction from the device's center.

The magnetic field is perceived at its periphery as a gradually-increasing elastic barrier, and, needless to say, repulses iron, steel, and other ferrous metals (even aluminum, brass, and lead castings which contain impurities and/or trace elements left over from their molds).

Miraculous though the toroid might seem, it does have its drawbacks. The magnet is bipolar; that is, metallic objects introduced into the "hole" region of the "donut" (unlikely as that is to occur) would be attracted with force equivalent to the repulsion which occurs externally. More to the point, the electromagnet uses up its power supply *very* quickly; a

TER runs on thin-film nickel-cadmium batteries chosen for their robustness and reliability over higher-tech alternatives, but exhausts them in a matter of minutes (half an hour of continuous use). Spares must be kept on hand and ready to swap on very short notice.

Each TER incorporates a remote activation/deactivation device, to prevent its users from being caught in the magnetic field; this control, however, can be imitated or simply stolen.

Can it have escaped the attention of the TER's designers that even the human *bloodstream* is laced with iron-rich hemoglobin?

System: Closer to the center (two to three meters), repulsion occurs with *extreme* force (well over 1500 foot-pounds); even a supersonic bullet cannot pass through the field without significant deflection (treat Firearms rolls as difficulty 10, and even that only after extensive study and practice with the trajectory in question). Large metallic objects slide or topple radially away from the TER's center, while smaller ones (less than 45 kg) will frequently tear loose of their moorings (if anchored) and/or take flight (possibly causing injury). Note that a single human body will not carry sufficient weight to successfully anchor an object; those entering the field must let go of their metallic possessions or be carried with them.

Vetruvian Harness

Level 2, Gnosis 3

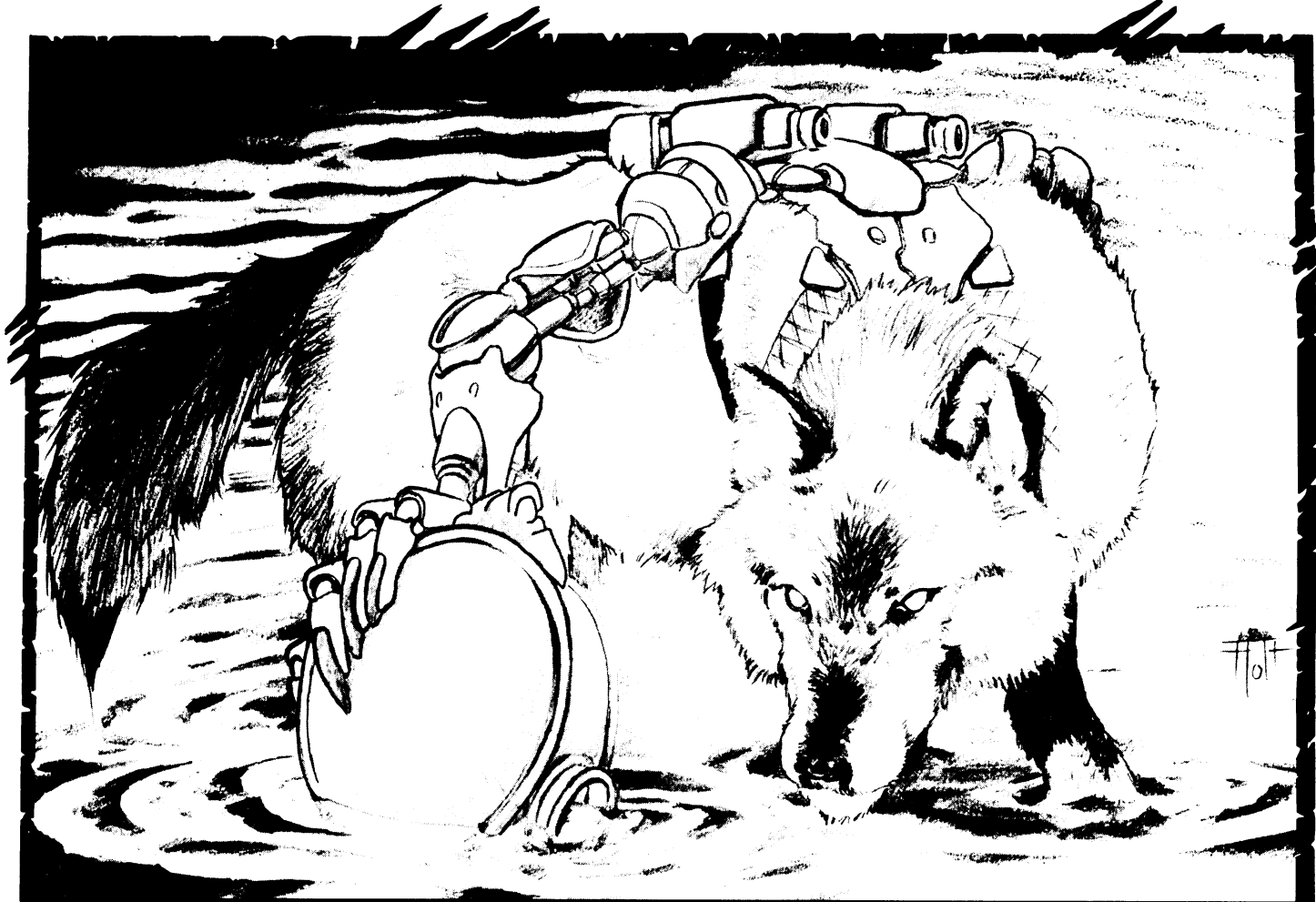
These devices, adapted from a primitive (dolphin-mounted) Connecticut shipyard's design, provide Garou in Hispo and Lupus forms (and even wolves, if they can be suitably trained) with the semblance and facilities of an additional set of limbs. These expansions, commonly dedicated to their owners, can be configured with a variety of attachments — claws, grasping digits, various tools, or even weapons (see "Hazards in the Workplace," the comic prefacing the *Glass Walkers Tribebook* for an example of the latter).

System: Most of these devices allow manipulation and control of two extra "extremities"; they don't allow extra actions without the use of Rage or dice pool splitting, but are in most ways admirable substitutes for flesh-and-blood limbs. Although considerably more flexible than the real thing, these appendages are nowhere near as facile or dexterous; the wearer's Dexterity is effectively a point lower for the purposes of using the harness (although the Hispo or Lupus Dexterity usually makes up for this).

Software Akagi Security Screen

Level 2, Gnosis 6; alternately, Device 2

Developed by a Taiwanese hacker using the handle "Bassho" (after the eleventh-century Japanese poet), this ingenious algorithm has become the hottest thing on the 'Web since Phil Zimmerman's PGP cryptkey. Several key players within the United Nations have already adopted a



heavily modified variant for internal security in the event of Threat Condition Charlie (electronic terrorism).

Akagi (Japanese, "red castle") reacts to invasive electronic presences, including but not limited to hackers, tape-worms, and viruses. Once triggered, it floods the network with a number of false copies of its host computer onto the network (initially 255, spawning false subnets and exploding into 255²⁵⁵ if/when the invader gets close to burning through them all — treat as practically infinite); these false copies are dynamically cycled through virtual memory in smaller sub-groups so as not to overburden the original system.

Whereas the screen is a primarily passive defense, it serves to frighten attackers away or to keep them busy long enough for traces and/or countermeasures to be deployed. (To further complicate affairs, a British variant of the Akagi digifortress (christened "Minas Tirith" by "Saruman," its 14-year-old whiz-kid creator) has already come into being which nests its false computer-copies one within the next, up to seven deep.)

System: The subtle nature of this security program makes it difficult to penetrate, although, given an original copy of the Akagi code with which to experiment, Storytellers might allow hackers an Intelligence + Computer roll (difficulty 10) to discover a back door or some identifier separating the host computer from its false copies.

Note that the fetish and mundane-tech versions of this program differ considerably in one important respect; only the Akagi-fetish's false computer-copies show up in the Umbra.

Conundrum

Level 3, Gnosis 7; alternately, Device 4

This pervasive programmer's suite (first marketed as "Götterdämmerung") first came to public attention after an auspicious maiden voyage which left Endron Oil's electronic infrastructure in smoldering ruins for an entire quarter. Billed by *Warez* e-zine as "Mechagodzilla 2000," the package is already touted by many as the computational breakthrough the world has been waiting for — a new branch of problem-solving theory so advanced it will render all its predecessors' axioms and postulates obsolete.

System: The Conundrum metavirus is both fiendishly simple and brutally unstoppable. Using a series of embedded libraries and subroutines, the user introduces a mathematical impossibility into an innocuous-seeming piece of carrier code (computer games, encoded BBS downloads, compressed image files or even electronic mail). This impossibility must be custom-tailored for the system in question (a geometric figure which cannot be represented in three-dimensional space would be sufficient to defeat a visual-recognition program, for example), and can be as simple or complex as dictated by the number of successes on an Intelligence + Computer roll,

difficulty 7. (One success indicates a marginal attempt readily solved by a mainframe in a matter of minutes. Two successes may confound even advanced systems for hours or days, and three or more might cause a system-wide shutdown. Note that the user may *not* accumulate more successes on this roll than she has dots in the Enigmas Ability.)

What makes this hacker's superweapon so dangerous, in spite of its well-understood design and methodology, is the inherent difficulty in programming a computer to handle all possible computationally-unsolvable problems. (To make a long story short, it can't be done.) As the situation now stands, the only defense against the Conundrum agent is a standalone computer network completely inaccessible from the outside world, or an automated kill switch which forces shutdown after a specified CPU-busy time period.

The source code and design documentation behind the continually-changing hypermathematical Conundrum routines are known to only a select few cyber-anarchists 'Webwide, who keep their copies well-hidden among their most valuable (and secure) possessions. If a copy *were* to be leaked to the outside world, it would only be a matter of time before firewalls and anti-virus patches were counter-coded — that is, until the next incarnation was released...

DoubleFeint

Level 2, Gnosis 6; alternately, Device 3

This library of "feint-within-a-feint" macros and code templates is believed to have originated somewhere in or around the hacker's Mecca of Ouluboxi, Finland. Whether or not recent Scandinavian investigations on the part of Pentex ICS (through its associated corporate fronts) have anything to do with this bit of urban legend is left as an exercise for the reader.

This devious package essentially creates a "ship in a bottle" — a simulated computer environment, indistinguishable from reality to all but the most dedicated scrutiny, beneath which its users play an intricate game of information warfare. Elite *überhackers* use *DoubleFeint*-smithed fool-proof logins, user IDs, seemingly-innocent background processes, and/or falsified crash/system emergency symptoms as a cover for their riskier exploits; security specialists and system administrators lay subtle snares (gaping holes in firewalls, illusory back-door passwords, and the like) for those who would trespass onto their electronic territory.

System: Currently *nouveau chic* among the computer elite, *DoubleFeint* gives both sides of the digital war a "second chance" — users (hackers, system monitors, etc.) must penetrate this false identity/environment before revealing (or letting slip) any real information.

In game terms, this becomes an additional margin for error on Computer-related rolls; the first successful monitoring attempt (or failed infiltration) unearths only the falsified data. Repeated efforts (a second success or failure) are needed to punch through this false front; before this is breached, however, most intelligent users will take action (springing their trap(s) or just plain disconnecting).

Storytellers should feel free to make pertinent rolls in secret, treating botches as catastrophic missteps (e.g., the hacker's true identity has been discovered without her knowledge, or the system administrator's snare has been quietly spotted and left untouched).

Theoretically, there is no limit to the number of secondary (and tertiary, and so on and so forth) systems that can be nested one within the next; in practice, however, attempts to layer more than one false front result in severe system overload, often leading to irrecoverable crashes.

Cyberjocks among the Garou have capitalized upon this already ingenious design, taking it to a new level; such spirit-infused software gives its user(s) false Umbral identity or even invisibility as well as electronic powers of evasion.

genEsys

Level 5, Gnosis 8

Myth, madman's creation, keystone to the secrets of the universe, forgotten language of a long-lost doomsday machine, mathematical fetters imprisoning an ancient Incarna of the Weaver — there are more urban legends surrounding this fragment of code than there are copies allegedly distributed throughout the 'Web. The closest anyone has come to successful decomposition and/or documentation of this system is the recovery of an incomplete text file referring to "Ephemera Generation Software."

As its name might suggest, the *genEsys* algorithm creates, or at least coaxes chaos into a higher state of order — catalyst to an interpretative process which bridges the gap between potentiality and actuality, spinning structure from shapelessness. Through this miraculous translation from conception to manifestation, dreams (and nightmares) really *can* come true, or so it seems. Using an iterative series of user-input definitions, specifications, refinements, compilers, optimizers, linkages and block-transfer computations, any conceivable object(s) (and, to a lesser degree, lifeform(s)) can be patterned, detailed, and implemented.

System: Although comprehensive systems are hard to set down when it comes to playing God, the generative process is arduous, exhausting, and intensive (mentally, physically and spiritually). Assume a minimum of one full day spent coding for every square foot or so of material to be created — double or triple this estimate if the creation in question is complex, intricate, and/or composed of many smaller parts, multiply by at least ten if even a small degree of intelligence/sentience is desired. (Perfect biological creations are impossible, owing to human (and Garou) science's still-limited understanding of organic mechanisms; with sufficient time and preparation, however, moderately life-like and/or intelligent simulacra may be fashioned.)

An Intelligence + Computer roll (difficulty 8) must be made for each and every day spent in the construction phase; failure on this roll indicates lack of progress for that day. (Treat botches as serious setbacks that increase development

time, or, worse, fundamental flaws overlooked in the design which will come back to haunt the programmer later...)

Following its dynamic design, the construct is generated and grown; assign this a cost in Gnosis equal to the number of days spent coding. (This fuel can be contributed all at once or (more likely) over the course of several days/weeks — in general, most will find the process difficult and draining.)

Once compiled and furnished with spiritual fuel, archetypes fashioned in this manner take on permanent, tangible existence in the *Umbra* only, and disintegrate/lose resolution the moment they attempt to cross (or are forcibly brought across) the Gauntlet.

How this limitation of the genEsys algorithm would respond if/when introduced to the Shinzui projector and others of its ilk is anyone's guess...

MIDAS.EXE

Level 1, Gnosis 4

Often subtler than the cliché ATM-card fetish, and certainly faster than the time-honored “brute-force” hacker's approach, this pesky little subroutine takes the passé practices of cyberphreaking, computerized theft, and credit card fraud to the next logical level. It's “the choice of a new generation” — as advertised by that new generation, anyway.

System: MIDAS.EXE can theoretically hack any financial database, sight-unseen (ATM, bank, credit card network, others as appropriate) with which its host computer can physically connect — it's just a matter of establishing that physical connection. Once online, the program, through a sort of rudimentary learning process, will even assist and second-guess its user; add number of successes on a straight Gnosis roll (difficulty 6) to the next Computer-related dice pool dealing with this system.

Note that specialized cases (ATMs, telephone sub-systems, etc.) require appropriate (often unique) hardware for physical connection; the laptop-connected magnetic ATM-card probe from *Terminator 2: Judgment Day* would be a good example.

As with any new hacker's toy, careless and/or constant use may attract the attention of certain watchers — or even those who watch the watchers...

OcClude

Level 3, Gnosis 6

A most unusual application from an entirely unexpected source, the OcClude encryptor was written and released by Fergus McClude, small-scale ‘Web celebrity and Theurge of the Fianna, perhaps the only member of his tribe in all of Ireland whose affinity for computers outweighed his passion for dance or drink.

Like its contemporaries (RSA, SSL, Triple-DES, half a hundred other compression/encryption packages), OcClude encodes material from the prying eyes of others. Unlike its contemporaries, OcClude can encode almost anything — digital or material. Using this program, electronic items



(files/folders) and/or physical presences (objects, even living creatures) can be removed from sight — removed from view, made harder to find without a code key, hidden from the Desktop, as it were.

Not long after releasing this software to the 'Web, McClude disappeared from public reckoning, both on- and off-line. Did he assume another identity? Run afoul of a Pentex ICS strike team? Or succeed in encrypting himself? The Irishman's legends loom larger than he ever did....

System: A Computer + Intelligence roll (difficulty 6 for files, 7 for objects, 8 for living tissue) must be made to successfully encrypt the item in question (which immediately disappears from view, suspended in some null-state or Umbral pocket-Realm, unaging, unaware, and, when decrypted, will reappear exactly where it previously vanished). Large or complex objects may require multiple successes, at the Storyteller's option, while botches — well, we'll just leave that to your discretion.

OcClude can even encrypt intangible things such as sensations or memories, given certain materials and preparation (one example might include EEG equipment, an appropriate computer interface, extensive knowledge of Computer, Electronics, and Medicine). Adjust time and/or required successes accordingly for such delicate operations.

Vulcan AEI 2.0

Level 2, Gnosis 5

This advanced developer's environment, termed a second-generation AEI (Affordance Engineering Interface) by its reclusive creator, serves as an extension of its hardware-oriented predecessor (Vulcan's Interface) into the programmer's world.

Once installed, this high-level command language gives users direct and intuitive control over any firmware/software-driven system (elementary keyboard input ("format hard drive"), vocal/microphone direction ("Mother, I want to turn off the self-destruct sequence"), virtual touchscreen navigation, etc.) over any system employing firmware/software. Examples include but are not limited to: mainframes with privileged superuser access, Internet browsers and their associated computers, even modern automobiles' embedded microprocessor systems.

Owing to its complexity and stubborn refusal to successfully up/download, the Vulcan AEI must be installed in person, and will not operate over networks — although rumors run rampant through the Digital Web of an imminent 3.0 upgrade in the works.

Wetware The Dionysian Strain

Level 5, Gnosis 8

Throughout its checkered history, mankind has been plagued by so-called miracles of science — last-ditch measures of desperation, often born of depravity or warfare. More often than not, these become abominations the hu-

man race would take back if it could — abominations for which no individual or group will take credit.

Sadly, the world of the Weaver is no different. This mutagen has been used twice in human history to preserve the Veil when it was close to collapse — in both cases the circumstances and conspirators responsible for such decisions have been kept as closely guarded secrets from the Garou Nation. Its origins stem from an unsanctioned Progenitor research lab, some shadowy Eastern syndicate, or a clandestine series of experiments conducted by extremist Glass Walker biotechnologists using Red Talon pituitary glands, depending on who you ask.

System: Whether ingested or introduced intravenously, *defixio luporum hominumque* causes severe, wracking pains in a human recipient, whose immune system receives one chance (standard soak roll, difficulty 9) to fend off an hours-long transformation into a monstrous man-wolf form. Three successes are required to shrug off subversion; failure turns the subject into a gargantuan wolf (just shy of pony-sized), while partial success results in an incomplete metamorphosis (something along the lines of a monstrous lumpy, hairy Glabro lookalike).

In all cases, transformations are irreversible, and rob their victims of both speech and reason (or so those in the know fervently hope — the alternative would be unthinkable). Such subjects are invariably hunted down and subdued (or killed) for study and vivisection — it is their complete lack of supernatural forensic evidence (blood/tissue samples, DNA, *et al.*) which has, to date, helped preserve the great game played by mankind and the Changing Breeds.

Eternity

Device 2

One might at first believe this cosmetic product to be the handiwork of Magadon, Pentex or some similar subsidiary of the Wyrms. Comprised of antioxidants, moisturizers, and other unspecified "rejuvenative agents," it certainly fits the description of any number of so-called "Fountains of Youth" too good to be true.

Eternity differs, however, in that it really *does* work — to hold back the biological clock while attempting, unsuccessfully, to help the user emotionally acclimatize himself to potential immortality.

Prohibitively expensive and distributed only in circles of the social elite who can afford its particular brand of magic, Eternity comes in small jars of cosmetic cream, which are rubbed into the skin all over the subject's body. Dermatologists have access to significantly stronger solutions, similar to cortisone in texture and consistency, which can be injected directly into fleshy deposits (bags beneath the eyes, jowls, love handles) as would be any topical steroid.

The drug (whose precise composition is still a mystery to modern science) accumulates in the user's system, and takes three to four weeks before changes become visible. Once activated, however, the effects are obvious and impressive;

wrinkled and/or spotty skin regains a smooth, even appearance. Pigment is reallocated to the flesh and hair, restoring color and bestowing something of a "baby-face." Even physiological symptoms of old age (joint pain, lack of recall) are held somewhat in check by Eternity; whereas a septuagenarian will not snap into the body of a twenty-year-old, he or she will take on a somewhat younger appearance (such an individual might be mistaken for fifty or even forty-five), maintaining that appearance for as long as he or she takes the drug.

As if addiction to immortality were not enough of a caveat, however, there are other risks. The self-same agents that preserve physical and synaptic function have been perceived to induce unknown and unpredictable side effects within the cognitive and emotional centers of the brain. Longtime users of Eternity gradually become colder and more distant over time, less emotive, less "human" (treat as Humanity loss if you own **Vampire: the Masquerade**) — sometimes becoming sociopaths or even serial killers.

Lucid

Device 1

Closely related to its parent drug, mild hallucinogen LAE-23 (lysergic acid ethylamide, once peddled on the city streets under the questionable name "Pink"), several variations on this peculiar pharmaceutical are used by certain special operatives and security forces throughout the world. Though still weak and unpredictable in its efficacy, this sensory stimulant has rapidly emerged as foremost among several recent developments threatening the integrity of the Veil... and the future of the Garou.

Long-term exposure to Lucid catalyzes a subtle and not-yet-completely-understood psychoactive process, expanding the user's perceptions in one direction while dulling them in others.

System: Users of Lucid operate at a penalty of one die from their Wits-based dice pool, but add one additional die to Delirium rolls for every consecutive twenty-four period during which they have ingested the drug. (Bonuses are cumulative, to a maximum of five additional dice after five consecutive days.)

Frequently-severe reactions and side effects have prevented the migration of this additive into human society (drinking water and commercial foodstuffs, for example); with the recently-redoubled efforts of such agencies as Interpol's Odessa Alternative or the United States Department of Defense Special Affairs Division, however, the lives of innocents may be luxuries their respective administrations feel they can no longer afford to preserve.

Medusa

Talen, Gnosis 8

Effervescent, silvery-white and strangely beautiful, this terrible calcifier, like its Gorgon namesake, is clearly not of this world — nor favorably inclined toward its inhabitants. The frightening concoction (which consists of some

otherworldly enzyme seated in a methoxyacetylene suspension), though liquid, is lighter than air and extremely volatile; it must be stored in an airtight container or it will quickly evaporate. Its origins are unknown, although one popular theory claims it stems from the same unearthly substance of which the crystalline strands of the Pattern Web are comprised.

As if this malign transmutant's very existence were not enough, the Wagnerians first credited with its discovery insist that it came not from the forges of any Theurge or Bane-brood, but from the lightless realm of the alien Vhujunka (see **Book of the Wyrm Second Edition**), whose deepest caverns are lined with the fossilized remains of unwary once-trespassers.

Those who continue the quest for evidence of extra-Gaian planes and powers should be careful what they wish for...

System: When exposed to flesh (living, dead, even cybered), the Medusan simplex springs into life, immobilizing then ossifying all that it metabolizes (skin, hair, nails, even inorganic materials in immediate (touching) proximity). To make contact with the target, the user must make a Dexterity-related roll appropriate to the method of dispersal (spray, bucket, makeshift grenade); difficulty is 6 for large areas of exposed skin (increase for fur, clothing and/or armor). The number of successes on this roll dictates duration and scope of the effect; one success indicates only temporary numbness or partial paralysis, while three or more successes might mean permanent loss of limb function or even complete petrification. (Targets may elect to reduce the number of successes by expending Willpower, or heal petrified tissue over the course of several weeks using Gifts and/or regenerative powers, at the Storyteller's option.)

Plethora

Level 3, Gnosis 5

Introduced in early 1980s contraceptive-conscious North America, wonder drug in a society brimming with wonder drugs, this innocuous pink capsule is called blessing by some, curse by others. There are those among the Thirteen Tribes who see Plethora as nothing short of a miracle, a promise of deliverance from the End Times; others, however, see it as heresy — deliberate violation of the Litany, a step closer to fulfillment of the Prophecy of Phoenix — and herald to the inevitable Apocalypse.

This powerful vituperative tips the reproductive scales in favor of the Garou genome. Whereas the Gift normally breeds true in approximately one-tenth of Garou/non-Garou couplings, children conceived under the influence of Plethora have proven far more likely to undergo their First Change. (Limited data culled from the first generation to reach puberty indicates an emergence ratio hovering around 50% or even higher.)

Such epiphany is not without its price, however. Plethora children (whether Garou or Kinfolk) are almost unilaterally born sterile and disfigured, either physically, emotionally, or both (treat as metis) and may not possess the Past Life or

Pure Breed Backgrounds. (The spirit-stuff running through their veins is wholly external and symbiotic in nature, and not inherited from any Garou parent.) Further, those few Garou-Garou offspring spawned from this dubious reproductive aid are grotesque monsters (treat as metis, but add one *additional* disfigurement per parent using Plethora). Such travesties are generally incapable of living unassisted, and are euthanized at birth.

No one will take credit for this left-handed gift to Garou society, although it is almost unquestionably the handiwork of the Glass Walkers, who have advocated strengthening their numbers by any means possible for decades.

RDX

Level 3, Gnosis 5

Newest entrant in a field of designer drugs, procreative poisons, and synthetic stimulants, this adaptive neurotoxin is almost assuredly the handiwork of an acronym-obsessive government agency—though its precise parentage (Developmental Neogenetics Amalgamated, MI7 Operation Clarity, Project Twilight, or another as-yet unseen powerplayer) will likely lie forever hidden beneath a mountain of paperwork.

Whatever its origins, RDX kills—and it is remarkably good at what it does.

System: RDX (cryptically referred to as “Unweaver” by some spirit-sighted Uktena) is a chemical assassin—a swift, sure agent which, once introduced into a target’s bloodstream, ferrets out its strengths, weaknesses, and metabolic idiosyncrasies, then acts accordingly to eliminate with a minimum of muss and fuss.

(The poison induces cardiac arrhythmia, electrolytic imbalance, and similarly inobvious symptoms in human hosts, resulting in seemingly-natural fatalities. Garou and others of the Changing Breed succumb to argyrosis (a greyish-bluing of the cornea and nails caused by silver deposits in the body, often fatal), and the only pack of vampires known to have unwittingly fed from human carriers experienced several hours of manic anxiety and insatiable hunger before lapsing into a torpid state.)

Although fearsome in its ability to adapt and overcome, the retrovirus is in its comparative infancy, and can still occasionally be fought off. Victims’ immune systems may attempt to resist (toxin inflicts (10 - Stamina) Health Levels (soakable as aggravated) during the first turn, weakening by one Health Level per turn thereafter until metabolized (reduced to zero) or victorious (causing death/Torpor to the target)—subsequent reintroduction to RDX, however, will result in a (cumulative) +1 penalty to future soak rolls.

ReGen 7

Level 4, Gnosis 6

This invasive retrovirus is named for its homeworld, the seventh Near Realm theorized and discovered by Garou Voidseekers during the Second Renaissance of Man (early sixteenth century) which explorers now call the CyberRealm.



One could argue that this devilish agent tries to help its hosts — it *does* keep them alive, after all — offering them virtual immortality at terrible cost.

System: Once ingested (willingly or unwillingly) by a subject possessing the Gaian genome (Garou, Kinfolk, others of the Changing Breed), the ReGen parasite triggers a subtle metamorphosis in its consumer's metabolic and regenerative systems.

Under the influence of ReGen 7, the host's body quickly and efficiently repairs any and all damage (even fatal damage) it sustains, short of decapitation or outright disintegration. (The parasite's healing factor outpaces that of the Changing Breed (one Health Level per turn, resting or active), and even overcomes wounds wrought by silver, a fact which perplexes the scientific-minded among the thirteen tribes.)

Such healing can hardly be considered natural, however. The injured body draws from the nearest source of inorganic material, lashing out with grotesque pseudopodia and sealing its wounds with whatever substance is immediately available. (The parasite prefers silicon (and absorbs a volume equal to that of the open wound), but will accept metals, plastics, and even radioactive isotopes (in that order), albeit to a lesser degree of efficiency (double or triple the necessary amount). Regeneration will not occur in the absence of suitable fuel.)

The healing process, although remarkable, is uncomfortable in the extreme — accounts vary from a sickening pulling sensation to excruciating pain exceeding that of the initial wound — and, over a sufficient stretch of time, dehumanizing. (Longtime users ('sufferers' might be a better word choice) experience eventual detachment/psychoses (select appropriate Derangements) and eventual suicide, or, still worse, become mechanized patchwork zombies, devoted to spreading the alien affliction.) No natural (or supernatural) *remedy has yet been found to purge the infestation; only death or as-yet untested methods (mind-body transplant, sympathetic magick, direct Celestine intervention or perhaps the cleansing flames of Erebus) yield escape.*

A splinter faction of mages calling themselves "Progenitors" are suspected to encode an evolved specimen of this nanogen into its supersoldiers. Further, a watered-down offshoot has apparently made its own way across the Gauntlet, acclimated to human hosts and made its presence known on city streets — this retrograde pharmaceutical, known as "Archangel," induces superhuman strength, murderous frenzy, and eventual death through adrenal overload in its users.

Reunion

Talen, Gnosis 6

A modernized and medically-accepted alternative to the Rite of the Kin-Fetch, this supernaturally-sensitive synthetic, preferred by tech-savvy Theurges and tribes, has proven instrumental in the identification and recovery of more Kinfolk and Lost Cubs than was ever previously thought possible.

Reunion is introduced to the individual to be tested in one of three ways: subdermally (manifesting as a lump beneath the skin where injected, possibly discoloring), as a blood-borne indicator (mixed and observed in a test tube), and/or orally (in which case the recipient's urine and feces will carry results).

System: When introduced to first-generation Kinfolk blood, or samples from one who has undergone/will undergo the First Change, the Reunion chemical changes color, texture, and even density, coalescing from a colorless, odorless solvent into a thick mercurial solid. The results are nearly impossible to misread (Intelligence + Medicine, difficulty 4) and unlikely to interfere with other tests (thus it is often 'piggybacked' onto blood-typing, HIV screenings, and other common labwork).

Certain elements within the Garou Nation have smuggled both equipment and intravenous agents carrying the Reunion indicator into the medical circles of their surrounding communities; as they do with all things 'good' and/or 'pure,' however, Pentex is known to have copied a strain of this vaccine for their own uses. The fight over Gaia's orphaned children continues....

"Slipstream"

Talen, Gnosis 5

This powerful and versatile substance first came not from the confines of a research laboratory, but aboriginal Australia; specifically, the shadowed gorges of Katajuta beneath the rocky Olgas. Scientifically-minded contingents within the Garou Nation view this unusual tincture as indicative of powerful tools and technologies of a bygone era — remnants of magics and mysteries harnessed by civilizations eons older than our own.

The Slipstream ablativ (called *pitantjatjarakurunba* ("two worlds") by those who guard its source) appears as a black, mildly reflective liquid not unlike crude petroleum in its natural state. It is typically stored and transported in clay pots or sacks of thick oilcloth.

The viscous liquid activates when painted, poured, or otherwise transferred to an object so as to completely cover its surface (e.g., dipping). When distributed in such a manner and given a few hours' time in which to dry (during which it hardens into a gritty reflective coating not unlike mica rock), the coated object becomes capable of breaching the Gauntlet once (and *only* once); it may pass through any reflective surface of sufficient size, as would any Garou.

Once through, the object in question cannot repeat the translation without a second coating; furthermore, transit is physically stressful and takes its toll on the material(s) transported. (Assume slow damage and degradation sufficient to destroy a man-sized object after half a dozen cross-Gauntlet trips, more for larger objects, fewer for smaller ones.) Care and precision are essential in preparation; Slipstreamed items with incomplete or blemished coats are fissured or reduced to component parts.



The handful of incidents in which objects have emerged from the Slipstream translation apparently clawed or even burn-scarred fuel speculations of a between-place, neither physical nor Umbral, where transport occurs. It is for this reason that no organic test subjects have yet been exposed to the resin, and none who know of its nature would dare make the attempt.

Triton

Device 2

Named for an implacable sea-god whose whim saw sailors to safety or the grave, the Triton additive may in time render SCUBA (Self-Contained Underwater Breathing Apparatus) and other oxygen-storage gear obsolete. SEAL Team Six and its collaborative American/Norwegian naval researchers are its only known source.

Triton is a superoxygenated fluorocarbon suspension (in effect, liquid oxygen at room temperature) that, for a short time, replaces the human circulatory system's need to breathe.

The additive comes in three forms: bottled liter-sized breathers (by far the most common), time-release gel capsules, and intravenous injections. Using any one of these three, a human recipient may function underwater for a period of one to three hours (dependent on body weight and exertion level); subjects must consciously fight off the instinct to breathe, however, or they will be in for an unpleasant surprise (water-filled lungs) upon surfacing.

System: Triton has no side effects *per se*, but those operating under its influence in an oxygen-rich environment (i.e., the surface) will experience slight dizziness and disorientation (equivalent to mild hyperventilation); subtract one die from Dexterity- and Wits-related rolls until the drug runs its course through the user's system.

Exhibit 338: The Antichrist Serum

Level 6, Gnosis 10

This one-of-a-kind object was affectionately named by a creative (if creepy) security guard who watched one too many Wes Carpenter flicks. It sits crated in a classified storage facility alongside hundreds of other curiosities of its ilk.

Removed from its crate and other packaging, the object appears to be a slender three-foot cylinder of some iridescent blue-green fluid, thicker than most liquids, yet not quite solid. An obvious testament to technology advanced beyond anything the world has yet seen, it remains warm to the touch (37° Celsius) in all environments and is fashioned from some glare-free glass — although, if it is glass, the instrument has not yet been forged that could even scratch its surface.

More stories than storytellers surround this unearthly container and its strange payload, which resists all attempts at identification. Some believe it to be ichor



from an ancient Weaver Incarna, heartblood that retains power over its mistress still. Others maintain it is the stuff of Before — the primordial essence of a dawn time older than Names, identities, or even consciousness. And more than a few, pointing to same-time similarities between this item's discovery and the recent struggles at the Sept of Bygone Visions, whisper that it

serves as prison to no less an entity than Thrassus Thrice-Damned, Smallest-Talon of the Wyrms itself.

But how could such a corrupt power (or *any* Wyrms talisman) enshroud itself so completely in heretofore-unseen Weaver technology? And what hellish alliance could explain such a merging between Weaver and Wyrms?



CHAPTER THREE: GRANDMOTHER SPIDER'S BROOD

Beware the minions of the Weaver! While we are busy fighting the Wyrms, as our Mother commands, the Weaver's servants sneak in behind to further blind the apes to the glory that is Gaia! Is it any wonder that the monkeys do the Wyrms' bidding when they are bound into the same web it is? Be on guard against the Spiders, pups, for if you aren't careful, you may fall into the same trap as the apes and the Urrah have. The Weaver's gifts look shiny and wonderful, yes, but only at first. Look more closely and you can see the rot that lies within the heart of anything she offers. The Wyrms corrupts, but it is the Weaver which opens the doors to corruption of the human spirit. Beware the Weaver, cubs. It is the duty of Red Talons everywhere to fight what she stands for, as the Wyrms stand directly behind.

— Weaverfoe, Red Talon Philodox

Like the Wyrms, the Weaver has a host of servants and techniques she uses in order to further her plans. Unlike the Wyrms, however, the Weaver's methods are subtle enough that not only is the general population unaware of her very existence, but the Garou themselves have very little idea of the true threat she poses.

The whole of the human species could be considered servants of the Weaver; there are very few humans in the modern world who are untouched by modern technology, science, and dogma. Those few who remain retain a tenuous hold on their traditional lifestyles, and will likely be overtaken within the next century — if they are not wiped out completely, their old ways of life forgotten by all but anthropologists.

Some humans, however, may be considered more "Weaverish" than the average population. Engineers, com-

puter programmers, scientists of all disciplines, members of strict religious sects, and others fall into this category. This does not mean that they are in any way "possessed" by Weaver-spirits, and may not even register strongly under the Gift: Sense Weaver. In fact, most humans show up to some small extent with this Gift.

The Weaver's hold on society is as strong as it is simply because humans perceive the Weaver's way as "better" and more comfortable than any other alternative. Technology does, in fact, make life much easier than it would otherwise be, but it also creates many problems — problems of which most humans would rather remain unaware.

While many scientists understand at least some of the dilemma technology causes, they rest assured — and assure the rest of the population — that more technology can be developed to correct these problems. Thus is a vicious cycle begun, one that is nearly impossible to break at this point in human history.

The seed of technology protects and nourishes itself by feeding ignorance and sloth. The easier life gets, the less people feel they need to know, and they less they do for themselves, preferring to leave difficult tasks to machinery. In addition, the more complex the technology gets, the harder it is to keep up with all the new developments. The average western Joe simply cannot devote enough time to understand the implications of high technology because he has enough on his hands simply trying to survive in an intricate, technological society. Those who cannot even keep up with the most common technological devices — such as computers — fall

by the wayside completely, and often wind up jobless, homeless, and hopeless. They end up outside of society, often turning to drugs and crime just to cope.

In fact, many problems of modern society can be traced to its sheer complexity. A million laws, rules, and regulations crowd up every aspect of modern life, making it difficult for many people even to make a living for themselves. You can no longer simply start up a business by buying something cheap and then selling it — you need a vendor's license, as well as knowledge of tax laws, employee protection laws, safety laws, zoning laws, and dozens of other things before you can even sell your first widget. And if you require a loan in order to start up, things get even worse. Even when walking down the street, you must keep in mind regulations against jaywalking or walking on the grass. Under these conditions, is it any wonder many choose to opt out and attempt to live in total disregard for The Law?

Such a complex society only works because the majority of its members can and do cope to some extent or another. And they agree that such an arrangement is a "good thing," or at least, good for them, and don't seek to effect a change in the status quo. Those who cannot cope — well, the less said about these social deviants and the corrupting influence they have on young minds, the better.

The mousemaze of modern society can be thought of as a reflection of the even more complicated maze of the Weaver's mind. As order and complexity are her bailiwick, the humans that are her willworkers in the physical plane similarly encourage more and more complexity in their own societies. Of course, just as the Weaver has been driven insane by her own inability to cope with complexity for complexity's sake, and her own inability to comprehend the point of it, so too do many humans follow her path to insanity by being unable to cope.

Others, of course, become obsessed with order, right down to organizing their own underwear in alphabetical order by brand or color. As it tends to be the folks who cope best who run things, however, society promises to get even more complicated than can be imagined.

Conformity is another of the Weaver's greatest weapons, which ensures that those who cannot cope stay in line. Whether it is imposed by secular laws or a monolithic Church, conformity keeps society moving forward along a path paved by the Weaver. It also helps weed out her (and society's) enemies by making non-conformists more striking and odd-seeming, easier to spot and possibly lock away "for their own good." Even societal subcultures, such as biker gangs, Goths, hippies, and others conform to some extent or another to others in their own group, by wearing similar clothing styles or driving the same make of vehicle. Although American society professes to cherish individuality, it is very difficult to be truly individual and original; chances are, it's already been done and there may even be a ready-made label for folks who do the same "original" thing or dress "outlandishly" in the same manner. If you *are* the first to do something, you can be

sure that others will soon follow, copying the mode of dress or lifestyle in order to be "different from everyone else." This drive for conformity is something the Kindred are well aware of, and of which they take full advantage. Witness the popularity of the Goth movement, in which youngsters try to be different by dressing up as vampires, making the Masquerade that much easier to maintain.

Technology ultimately encourages rampant conformity, especially through the mass media. Television images of beautiful people with nice cars and homes living average middle- to upper-class lives lure many people into the belief that such a lifestyle is highly desirable and encourages them to think that if only they work harder and conform more that they, too, will be as happy as the characters in the sitcoms and soap operas. Such shows beamed internationally help to spread the idea that one way, the American Way, is the best way to be, resulting in the same products, fashions, and lifestyles across the globe. And yet hardly anyone stops to question whether such a phenomenon is ultimately desirable. Those who do are unworthy of consideration, or are thought of as Chicken Littles who whine needlessly about the loss of diverse cultures.

Conformity thus also encourages laxness in critical thought. If you can "keep up with the Joneses," you must be doing all right, even if you are overstressed by work, bills, family, and other demands. If someone does not conform to general societal expectations, then obviously that person is "evil," a "deviant," or possibly a dangerous criminal, and one is free to mistrust or even hate that person simply because he or she is too different. Such laziness in critical thought processes is at the root of the general ignorance and intellectual sloth complained about by educators who monitor knowledge scores of students. It is simply easier to accept whatever society says is "right" and "normal" without ever questioning it, than to observe, learn, and formulate your own conclusions about any given subject. And, of course, the other side to this mindset is that when *any* deviation is deemed wrong, the more grievous offenses (theft, assault and the like) get lost in the shuffle. It's this sort of attitude that places blame on a rape victim "for bringing on herself" and not on the real offender — particularly if the offender is an all-star quarterback or other local celebrity. The Weaver makes the rules, and the Wyrm fattens itself on the results.

But of course, modern society itself encourages this activity, even if there is no real conspiracy to try to force the populace to conform. Again, those in power tend to be those who enjoy the status quo, and it is their views which tend to get the most air time. While the Internet itself is a forum open for all to speak their views regardless of whether or not it conforms, a minority view may often be shouted down in the newsgroups, and then relegated into a sort of digital boondocks where only other "deviants" might look, with the result being that someone with something non-conformist to say will basically be preaching to the converted.

Quite often, in times when it seems that humanity may be giving in to Wyldish impulses, servants of the Weaver will step

in to try to help people recognize that non-conformity is not as desirable as it first seems. The hippie movement of the '60s is thought by some Children of Gaia to have been brought down, ultimately, by Weaver's workers who instigated a backlash against the culture; others simply assume that the lifestyle offered by the Weaver proved too alluring for the movement to live beyond the hippies' youth. The transformation of ex-hippies into the Yuppies of the 1980s would seem to bear this out, but unfortunately, none of them ever thought to look more closely at the matter, so the truth may well never be known. Conformity and its handmaiden, ignorance, both serve the Weaver very well. The Spider loves order, and an orderly, unquestioning conformist society makes it far easier for the Weaver to achieve her goals than it would be should every individual choose his own way, or question every little thing that comes along. Unfortunately, this also serves the Wyrms, as people fall into despair or give in to hate. When hateful people become leaders, history shows that the conformist drive in humanity will often lead to great atrocities, such as in Nazi Germany.

While at least part of the Weaver quests for knowledge, it is within the Spider's best interest that humanity also be ignorant about its state. If anything but the sheer complexity and tragedy of modern society can be blamed for widespread problems of crime, drug use, suicide, and violence, so much the better. As far as Garou are concerned, the Wyrms is the author of all these; servants of the Weaver are most often ignored while the werewolves go on a Bane hunt. But, more often than not, some Weaverish aspect of society — perhaps one that a person cannot even articulate — drives a potential fomori to the deeds which attract the Wyrms' minions. Besides, Weaver-spirits are a dime a dozen in the cities; a Psychomachiae or Scrag waiting for its opportunity to possess an unhappy, frustrated street kid is a far more obvious target.

According to popular belief, the Information Age is upon us. Information, they say, is the most valuable commodity of the late 20th century and will rise in importance through the 21st. Modern technology, however, allows such an overload of information that it is impossible for the average person to keep up with it all. Worse, the "information" often purveyed on television is relatively innocuous, and doesn't do much to truly educate people on the whys and hows of modern society, nor does it give the kind of information that would get people to thinking whether or not there could be a better way of doing things. One example is the change in tone of daytime talk shows; while once Mr. Donahue would have guests who came to talk about the political and social situation of the 1970s, the talk show hosts of the 1990s would prefer to parade those who have outrageous lifestyles, or problems with cheating spouses — and the more excitable they are, the better. And the audiences eat it up, because it is more entertaining and less mentally demanding to watch two women scratch each other's eyes out over some fellow than it is to listen to some hippie bitch about "the establishment."

Such ignorance is actually desirable to those in power — and to the Weaver — because if people knew their true state of affairs, and had the informational tools on how things could

be changed, then the privileged who depend on the status quo might lose their comfortable positions. While truly useful information is not hard to come by, it gets lost very easily within the sea of junk that is so highly attractive as a diversion. In the Umbra, information is indeed controlled by Information Geomids and Net Spiders, who themselves will try to distract a prying Garou with a stream of useless but interesting or titillating data that has no relationship to anything the Garou wishes to know — and the more sensitive the information, the harder it will be to navigate the stream of garbage.

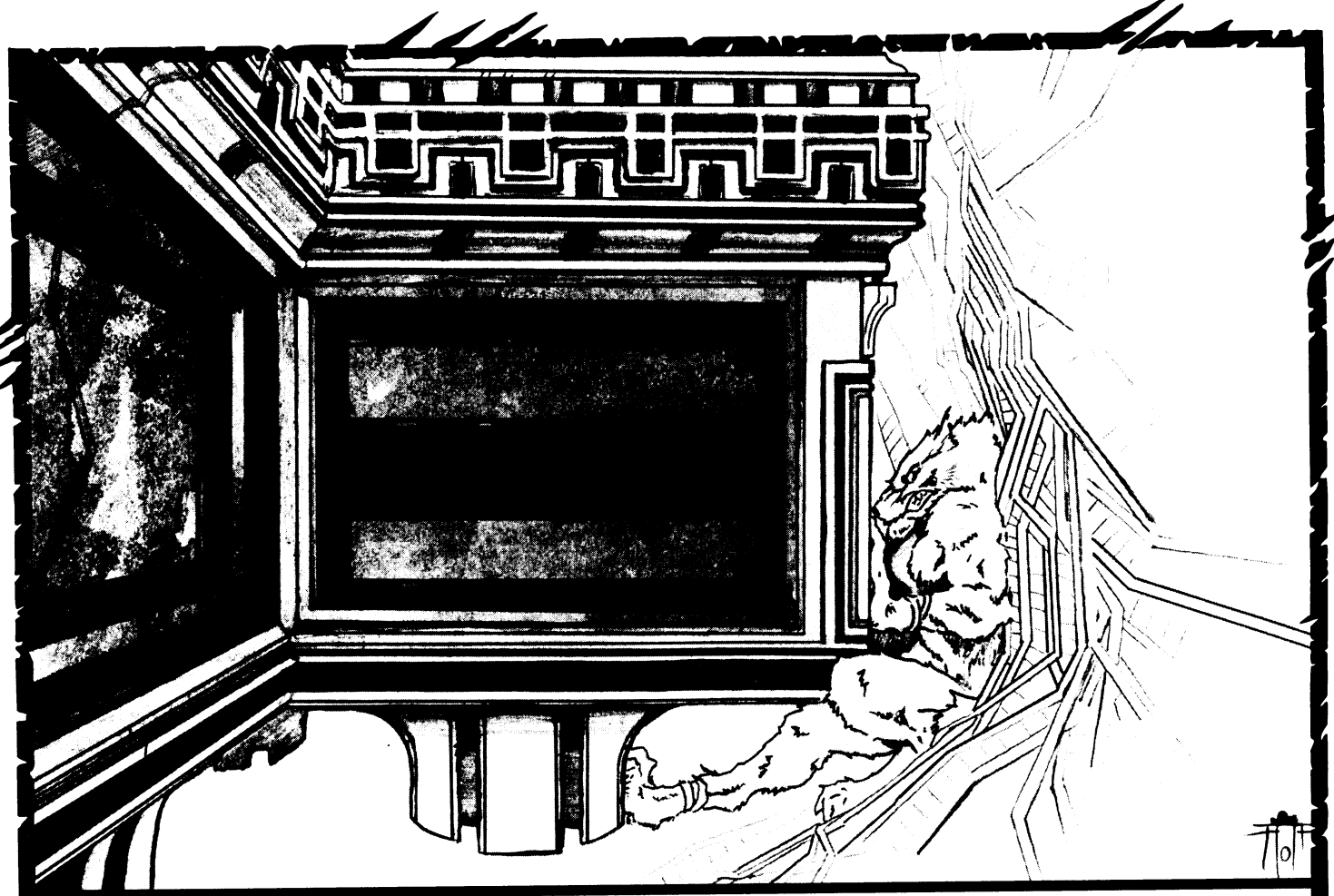
Another concept the Weaver's servants make good use of is that of endless progress and growth. Progress and economic growth are the very wheels driving the developed and developing world. Any sacrifice is acceptable for these twin ideals; if we don't cut down that forest for the new factory, they say, we will all be plunged back into the Stone Age. Nothing is suggested, of course, that at least a minor reduction in technological and social complexity levels might actually be desirable for humanity and the world in general. Nor does anyone stop to think that if the forests are clear-cut, then loggers will lose their jobs anyway, for having nothing left to cut down.

One of the most cherished beliefs of humanity in general is that the economy will continue to grow. Of course, this often means assuming that we will never run out of the things that make up the basis of the economy, or that if we do, we will find alternatives to take their place. One hundred and fifty years ago, it was unthinkable that the bison or the passenger pigeon should ever go extinct because there was obviously so many of them; twenty years ago, it was considered unthinkable that the fisheries should ever collapse, as the oceans were touted as "inexhaustible" sources of food for the burgeoning masses of humanity, and all that was needed was better technology to extract even more foodstuffs from them.

The concept of growth is tied directly to the shadowy concept of progress. With progress, it is believed, all our problems will be solved. Unfortunately, the fact that progress often brings with it a new and more challenging set of problems is almost always overlooked in favor of the promise of a bright, shiny future where progress brings technology to the point where it can solve every problem without creating new ones. This promise is, of course, a lie, as the Stargazers have been quick to point out to anyone who cares to listen. It is part and parcel of what they term as the "Web of Deceit" that the Weaver spins, to keep humans complacent and blind to the depressing reality around them.

Some of the more common mortal servants of the Weaver, when it comes to progress, include politicians who use the words "progress" and "growth" as buzzwords which they know will always work. It is through these orators and leaders that people remain secure in the knowledge that, with just a little more work, things can only get better rather than worse — if only because to suggest how things could get worse is tantamount to heresy of the most heinous kind.

Of all the Weaver's servants, the Pattern Spiders are the ones most familiar to Garou, as they are the spirits which



spin the underlying fabric of reality. However, the Weaver also has spirits which serve to spin webs within men's minds, the webs that bring them to believe in the promises of progress and technology, and that keep them on the proper path as far as the Weaver is concerned. While the Seeds that she planted within the hearts of humans long ago do well enough on their own to make *Homo sapiens* truly her own child, a host of spirits ensure that the Spider's adopted children keep up the good work and don't, as a group, fall entirely to either Wyrn or Wyld — or Gaia. What follows is a look at a few of the more common examples of Weaver's servants, though others may well exist but are even more difficult to detect, or simply work almost exclusively in the Umbra or one of its Realms.

Spirit Servitors

Let me see if I understand you correctly. A creature — an army of creatures — who lay claim to the Silver Void?

Spinning order out of chaos? Making uncharted territory their own?

Why is the notion so alien to you?

You have been told that this is but one of many worlds, have you not?

Surely you realize ours are not the only interested parties?

— William ("Kneels-to-None") Nero, Judge of Doom

Geomids

Inorganic embodiments of the Weaver's energies, these Umbrood appear as fractals, geometric solids, or intricate mathematical patterns. They serve as receptacles and nodules for information, and work in conjunction with various Weaver-spirits, providing patterns for their great Web.

Geomids encountered in the Digital Web are more commonly referred to as Icons.

Attack Geomids

The front line of defense for the Pattern Web, these spiked and edged crystals and solids attack any unrecognized form they encounter (non-Spider or Geomid). They have two major attack forms. First, they may simply slash a spirit or Garou into small pieces. Second, large clusters of them (usually triangle- or diamond-shaped) will cover a target and fuse themselves into a solid around their victim, effectively calcifying her.

Attack Geomids will not react to unrecognized forms with anything but direct hostility, much less attempt to communicate with them (although crafty Glass Walkers may succeed in temporarily confusing or otherwise misdirecting them). All damage inflicted by their attacks is aggravated. At least one Attack Geomid has demonstrated knowledge and power sufficient to open and travel along a Moon Bridge.

Rage 6, Gnosis 4, Willpower 9, Power 20

Charms: Airt Sense, Group Fusion*, Materialize, Reform

Information Geomids

Informational Geomids store knowledge about a particular subject. They may take the form of any perfect solid, whose size and complexity is determined by the nature of the information they store; such a being containing an encyclopedic repository may manifest as an enormous fractal incomprehensible to most viewers, while the smallest Informational Geomids ("Bits") are simple spheres, tetrahedrons and cubes capable of only one-word "yes" and "no" conversation.

Informational Geomids share a rudimentary hive-mind link with the Weaver's arachnid minions. If an Informational Geomid is attacked, it can usually summon a number of Weaver-spiders to protect itself; similarly, if an Informational Geomid's form is destroyed, its remains may be studied by Net-Spiders or other spirits to determine the cause and circumstances of its destruction.

In keeping with the inflexible, unified nature of the Weaver's reality, Informational Geomids are more often than not woven directly into the Pattern Web.

Rage 4, Gnosis 10, Willpower 5, Power 20-100

Charms: Airt Sense, Informational Link*, Materialize, Solidify Reality, Tech Sense

Structural Geomids

These architects guide the Pattern Spiders' construction. Structural Geomids use their own bizarre angles and extensions to provide stability for laying initial webs. Although they are not warriors, some Structural Geomids are quite large. They will usually leave an area if attacked. If forced into combat, however, they will attempt to crush their attackers or slam them into hardened areas of the Pattern Web. These attacks inflict non-aggravated damage (though they are often sufficient to cripple, maim or pulverize an opponent).

Rage 5, Gnosis 10, Willpower 8, Power 30-150

Charms: Airt Sense, Materialize, Reform, Solidify Reality, Spirit Static

Elementals

The overwhelming majority of dealings with non-classical elementals are conducted by Glass Walkers (though the Stargazers and hengeyokai have for some time dealt with metal elementals, and the Eastern shapechangers are rather accepting of these new spirits). Perhaps owing to their relative newness to this world and close proximity to human technology, modern elementals are generally more amenable to summons, service and bondage into fetish-form than their classical counterparts.

Glass Elementals

Glass elementals manifest as glass sculptures or golems fashioned from shards of shattered glass or other ceramics. These forms often reflect the elemental's personality and disposition; some are beautiful pieces of tinted artwork, while others are sharp-edged scratched monstrosities. They

dwelt in the Umbral reflections of their element, are typically slow to act (but quick to anger), and are vain to the point of narcissism; most accept simple chimerage such as artistic lighting, cleaning, or promises of maintenance.

Glass elementals cannot be induced into attacking or opposing Glass Walkers in any way. All bear an unrelenting hatred for Bird-spirits and their earthly cousins, for obvious reasons.

Rage 7, Gnosis 7, Willpower 4, Power 45

Charms: Materialize, Shatter Glass, Throw Glass

Metal Elementals

Metal elementals appear as humanoid figures composed of the specific metal(s) they represent. The "bodies" of these creatures are veritable patchwork quilts of panels, joints, and gears firmly held together by equally varied collections of rivets, screws, welds and chains, each movement a deafening grate or screech of metal on metal.

Ill-tempered and arrogant, metal elementals favor loud noises, flashy multicolored lights, and industrial structures; these self-styled "lords of the earth" have little patience for subtlety or conversation with others. Despite their braggadocio and distemper, however, they are surprisingly nonconfrontational (all brass and no bite, one might say) and susceptible to flattery and praise (a trait which mystics and philosophers of the Orient have been exploiting for millennia).

Certainly the oldest of the non-classical elements, metal elementals see themselves as the generals of civilization and are not above working with humans to increase their own influence.

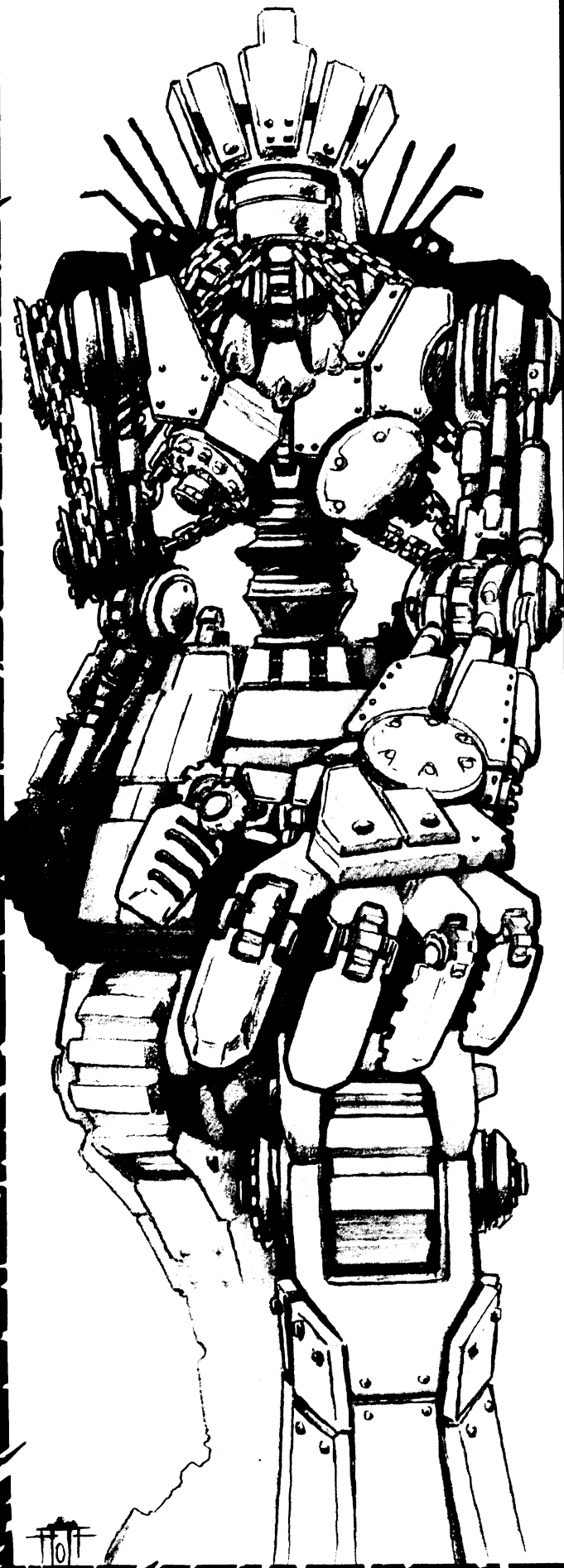
Rage 5, Gnosis 4, Willpower 10, Power 30

Charms: Armor, Materialize

Plastic Elementals

These are the newest of the modern elementals. (They claim Gaia spurred their insurgence in the mid-twentieth century to keep pace with the expanding human population.) Plastic elementals assemble their physical forms from collaborations of mismatched and ill-colored plastic products strewn about their immediate surroundings. They can be found (or summoned) in any urban environment, but prefer to lair in large plastic repositories such as junkyards or recycling centers.

Plastic elementals are perhaps the only egalitarian members of their kind; whether ball-point pen, drinking cup or Samsonite, their parent element has risen to eclipse the markets of the world, and they are only too aware of the fact. Their single-mindedness and obsession with technological advance borders on Machiavellianism; plastic elementals will agree to almost anything in the name of promoting the role of plastics in the world, and are soft touches for supplicants wearing plastic ponchos or raincoats. They have an especial fondness for injection-molded polymers — introduce a Glock-toting Ahroun to a plastic elemental and



you've made a pair of lifelong friends (as well as a gun which will never overheat or misfeed).

Rage 6, Gnosis 5, Willpower 8, Power 35

Charms: Armor, Materialize, Reform, Spirit Static

Electricity Elementals

The relationship between these dangerous, alien-minded creatures and their more moderate-minded cousins (lightning elementals, who are generally believed to be their predecessors) is unclear at best. First discovered in the late eighteenth century after humans began harnessing electrical energy for their machinery, these creatures prefer to take forms of electric fields or arcs dangerously throwing off sparks and standing hair on end. Most dwell in the CyberRealm or Digital Web, with occasional jaunts into the Gaian plane; they cannot stray far from wiring or similar conductors. (If isolated from such carriers, the elemental will go berserk, leaping from living being to living being in a manic attempt to stay alive, inadvertently electrocuting its hosts as it passes.)

Communicating with electricity elementals is difficult at best. They are not easily persuaded into parley, have no sense of past, present, or future (everything happened/happens/will happen *now*), and unpredictably fly from motionless inactivity into fits of active aggression. Many consider the incessant manipulations of modern science to have rendered them insane, although a select few summoners have found them strangely eager to inhabit fetishes after being appeased with sizable sacrifices of conductive materials.

Rage 7, Gnosis 5, Willpower 6, Power 40

Charms: Airt Sense, Control Electrical Systems, Lightning Bolts, Short Out

Atomic Spirits

Too scarce and unfamiliar to properly be termed "elementals," these spirits dance in the unexplored atomic fires. They are to the Weaver and Wyld what radiation is to the Wyrn — the raw, untapped power of limitless reaction. The mystery of their newness is compounded by the depths of their knowledge; they understand much of the Wyrn and the basic structure of the universe, as their kind existed at the beginning of all things.

Atomic spirits (the term "nuclear elemental" has not yet caught on among the spirit-savvy) are occasionally consulted by Glass Walkers, and will answer queries with short, factual responses, but only if helped in "advance" — usually by detonating the atom-smasher in which they are trapped.

Rage 5, Gnosis 10, Willpower 10, Power 40+ (circumstance-dependent — can be effectively unlimited at ground zero of a 100-megaton nuclear strike)

Charms: Airt Sense, Atomic Blast (as Blast Flame, but three points per die of damage), Break Reality, Materialize, Reform, Solidify Reality

What's that you're saying? The existence of the atom's been debated for centuries, so atomic spirits can't be recent additions to the spirit world? Well, try this on for size: although the *idea* of the atom may date back to Democritus, the first atomic spirits (or any tech-spirits, for that matter) didn't emerge until its parent technology took hold with the general populace.

Just don't tell any of those **Mage** buffs. We'll have them arguing consensual reality until the cows come home....

Spider-Spirits

These spirits do the bulk of the Weaver's work in the Umbra. Where the Geomids are essentially mobile resources and the modern elementals an example of Gaian spirits touched by the Weaver's strands, the Weaver's spider-spirits are the worker ants of the Pattern Web, keeping order and expanding the Web's influence.

Although the arachnid motif is virtually ever-present among Weaver-spirits, it shouldn't be construed that these spirits are the actual Umbral representations of Earthly spiders. The Gaian Spider-spirits that represent the thousands of spider species are typically loners by nature, and have no particular interest in order or form beyond maintaining their own. Still, the Weaver's own actively pursue Spider's children for conversion — after all, they already have the form required. All that is required is that they learn their function.

Backdoor-Spiders

These spirits resemble many-legged hermit crabs on those few occasions when they take on physical manifestations; they prefer the ephemeral solace of the Digital Web, however, and can be found there far more frequently... when they can be found at all.

A Backdoor-Spider prowls the networks until it finds a place to call its own. (This is typically a little-used conditional branch, local variable, or programmer-only access pathway, hence the name.) It lurks there, springing out at unwary visitors (authorized or not) and attempting to drag them into Weaver-stasis, where they are kept as sources of sustenance and systematically drained of "data-juice."

Rage 4, Gnosis 8, Willpower 7, Power 35

Charms: Airt Sense, Hide, Reform, Solidify Reality, Spirit Static

Channel-Spiders (“Mind-Eaters”)

The Channelers were once benign order-spirits, but the Weaver's madness coupled with the Wyrms' patient pervasion has changed all that. When encountered in the Umbra, these Weaver-Banes appear as massive spiderlike creatures

with blackened hides and seeping wounds. On those rare occasions when they manifest in the physical plane, they take the shape of small, ticklike arachnids that burrow into the skulls of unwary victims.

It is perhaps too easy to forget that many bigots and racists commit heinous deeds due to motivations of conservation and order, or at least their own twisted variations thereof. As such, these Weaver-abominations embody the worst side of their mistress' narrow vision; they do not thrive on greed or lust in their hosts, but something far worse. They feed on the xenophobic tendencies of anyone they encounter, and fuel a hatred for strangers that consumes the unwary. After cultivating layer upon layer of fanaticism and paranoia, the Channelers possess their victims, digging deep into the brains of their all-but-mindless targets and driving them into acts of corruption and violence. More than one modern incident involving ethnic animosity or religious persecution has fed the Channelers, strengthening them to provoke further incidents. Hideously enough, humanity's innate territoriality and clannishness probably mean that the Channelers will only increase in numbers alongside the human population.

Rage 5, Gnosis 5, Willpower 5, Power 35

Charms: Airt Sense, Incite Frenzy, Materialize (Power cost 5; Str 1, Dex 3, Sta 1; Str +1 bite), Possession

Storyteller Notes: The targets of the Channelers gain an extra two dots in Strength and Stamina; even human hosts gain 3 Rage while under their influence. Should a victim remain in the Channel-Spider's thrall for more than two days, he or she is permanently transformed into a mix of Drone and fomor.

Chaos-Monitors

These powerful but increasingly rare spirits seem to serve the Weaver as shock troops. Bearing a powerful resemblance to gigantic many-legged glass scorpions, the Chaos Monitors sometimes force their way into the Gaia-Realm, working to destroy anything that doesn't fit within the constant, steady reality the Weaver has worked so hard to create. The Glass Walkers believe the Monitors are the Weaver's answer to a world that is often too Wyld.

When Materialized in the physical world, these spirits defend the Weaver's creations, destroying anything that attempts to harm what the Weaver builds. Their entry into the Gaia-Realm is not gentle, however, and has led to several weak spots in the Gauntlet. Some werewolves guess that this is how caerns first came about, but most scoff at the notion. Of late, the Wyrms' influence has begun to affect these brutal spirits. Some are coming out of the Umbra with glazed, blackened carapaces and a very noticeable Wyrmtaint. The Glass Walkers are justifiably concerned about this new development.

Rage 10, Gnosis 9, Willpower 7, Power 60

Charms: Airt Sense, Calcify, Healing, Materialize, Reform, Solidify Reality, Spirit Static

Guardian-Spiders

These large spiders, naturally camouflaged as large clumps of webbing, are usually indistinguishable from the Pattern Web. Their only purpose is maintenance and protection of the Web; if it is attacked, Guardian-Spiders move to eliminate attackers and repair what damage the intruders have done. They are single-minded and methodically fight to the death; if victorious, they use the remains of fallen attackers and comrades for construction materials. They are weaker than their warrior-brethren, the Strand-Spiders, but more cunning — many manipulate the fabric of the Pattern Web in subtle and unpredictable ways to help trap their opponents. Guardian-Spiders will not leave the vicinity of the Web for any reason, even to pursue offenders.

Rage 6, Gnosis 10, Willpower 7, Power 35

Charms: Airt Sense, Calcify, Drain Gnosis*, Materialize, Reform, Solidify Reality

Note: Guardian-Spiders appear to be part of the Pattern Web until they move. All Perception rolls to detect Guardian-Spiders have their difficulties increased by three.

Mind-Spiders

Mind-Spiders are servants of the Weaver dedicated to expansion of the Pattern Web into Epiph and Dream Realms. They also gather bits of information from these locales. They appear as small dark spiders, and never travel alone; indeed, when Mind-Spiders move, it is in clusters of hundreds and thousands which invariably drive other Umbral residents to flee *en masse* before them like some grotesque spiritual stampede.

Rage 3, Gnosis 8, Willpower 6, Power 15

Charms: Airt Sense, Calcify, Nullify Dream*, Sap Will, Solidify Reality

Nano-Spiders

It is the existence of these newborn spider-spirits — the Weaver hatched the first fledglings no more than twenty or thirty years ago, after decades of apparent inactivity — that gives her servitors hope she may eventually recover. They are the spiritual manifestations of Asimov's dream: subminiaturized operators capable of unprecedented feats of intricacy.

Owing to their smaller-than-microscopic size, these creatures are effectively invisible to those lacking enhanced vision, powerful magnifiers, or other augmentation. When they can be seen at all, Nano-Spiders are indistinguishable from "bush robots" — *über* arachnid machines consisting of a single nerve cluster branching into an exponential number of surgically-precise appendages (two "trunks" split into four "branches," which split into eight "arms," sixteen "fingers," thirty-two "fingertips," and so on and so forth *ad infinitum*). Given sufficient time and development, they are craftsmen of the inconceivable — it would not be beyond the capabilities of a 40-branch Nano-Spider (that is, a

specimen with 2⁴⁰ (1.1 trillion) extremities) to analyze, record, and duplicate the human brain one neuron at a time.

Perhaps due to their relative youth and the newness of their parent technology, Nano-Spiders cannot cross the Gauntlet unaided. Their size and simplicity often make communication difficult (some few have been trained to "talk" in a crude binary representation); when they can be reached, however, they will commit to great tasks for the chance to enter the physical plane and infiltrate earthly technology.

Rage 1, Gnosis 9, Willpower 7, Power 20

Charms: Airt Sense, Calcify, Control Electrical Systems, Craft Technology*, Healing, Tech Sense

Net-Spiders

Although the Weaver and Wyld have lost much of their former closeness, the Digital Web still stands as testament to the wondrous nature of that which they can do when conjoined in creation. This technology has a spirituality all its own — and deep within the heart of the Umbral computer-realm reside the Net-Spiders, who tend the ever-growing mass of information.

Given enough time and guidance, Net-Spiders are capable of discovering details about any and all data that is held online. Net-Spiders can travel only along phone lines or computer cables, and can be blocked by several varieties of security software (many of which are themselves nests for other Net-Spiders).

Net-Spiders are used by Glass Walkers and other computer-aware contingents within the World of Darkness to recover information about institutions and corporations. They appear as small spiders bathed in and surrounded by strange fractal patterns of energy, and are capable of discovering details about any and all data that is held online. They are exceedingly useful in pirating data (assign bonuses ranging from lessened (-1) difficulties to halved costs to Computer- and Electronics-related rolls, at the Storyteller's option).

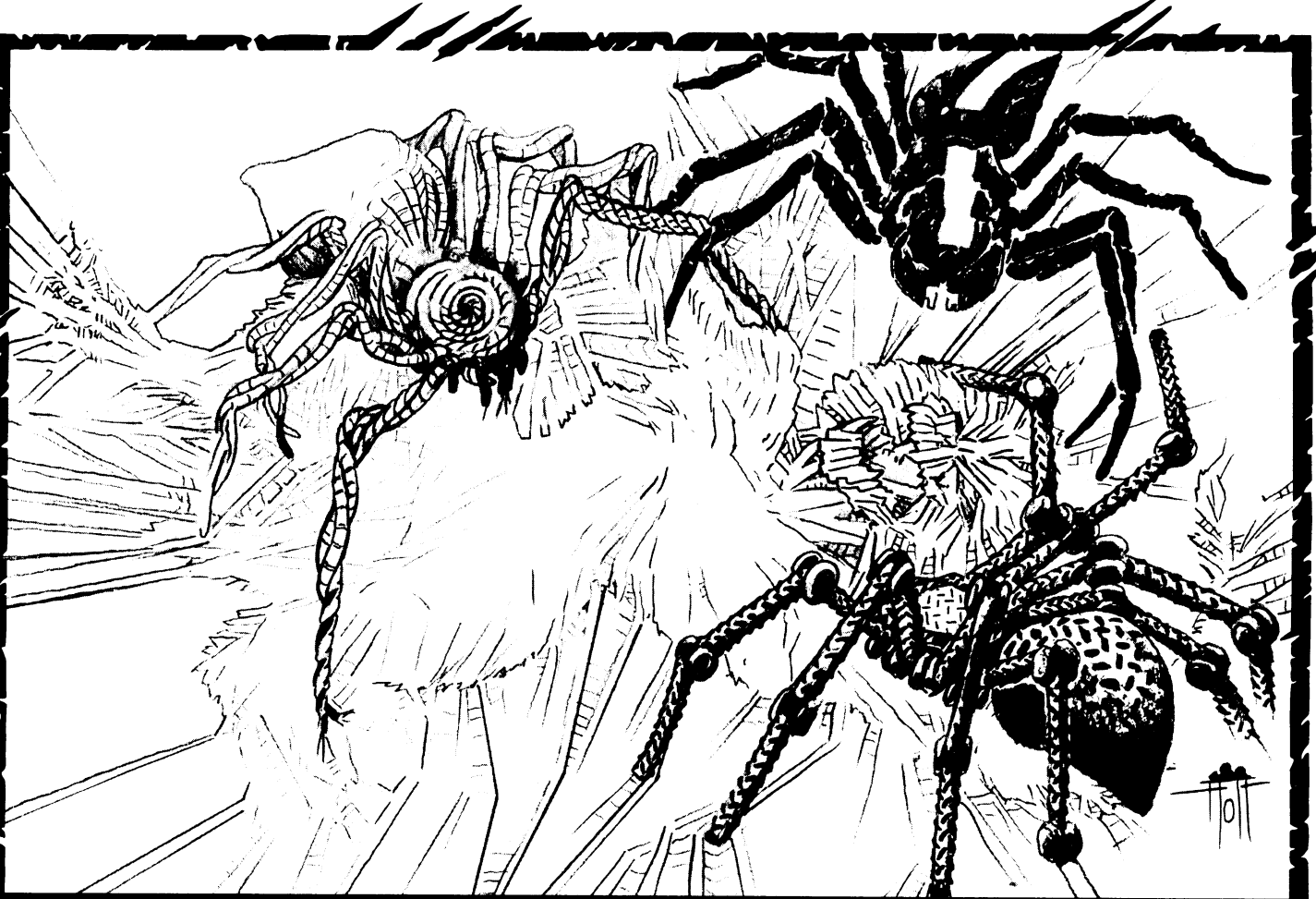
Rage 4, Gnosis 9, Willpower 8, Power 40

Charms: Airt Sense, Reform, Solidify Reality, Spirit Static

"Once-Spiders" (Kilakac'n)

These deceptively cunning creatures, once least among Weaver-children, were first to flock to Cockroach's banner following the fall of Ananasa. Their new patron showered them with newfound power and privilege; they have grown over the millennia to resemble him in image as well as intent. Their nickname is well-earned, and never spoken without its share of scorn by those who remember.

The Kilakac'n (perhaps the only word in their tongue that can be voiced through earthly lips) now continue Cockroach's work on both sides of the Gauntlet, occasionally venturing into the physical plane to do that which their elder brethren cannot. They wear the shapes of brightly-



colored cockroaches, significantly larger than the norm, and congregate in machine-rich areas; kitchens and laboratories hosting these unearthly inhabitants experience a notable lack of ants, rats, or other vermin (with whom the Kilakac'n continually vie for territory). The Once-Spiders are cautious, wise (if duplicitous), and well-versed in the ways of technology. They admire stealth and cunning, but detest the bloodthirsty and headstrong. Most will aid Garou if asked, but are not at all shy about requesting aid in turn.

Other Spider-spirits of the Weaver will not abide the presence of Cockroach's children except in times of great need, and then only grudgingly.

Rage 2, Gnosis 8, Willpower 5, Power 40

Charms: Airt Sense, Call For Aid*, Control Electrical Systems, Flee*, Hide*, Informational Link*, Materialize, Scale*, Short Out, Tech Sense

Orb-Weavers

Obese milky-white spiders possessed of translucent bodies and thousands of eyes, these grotesque creatures embody much of the Weaver's alien intelligence and incomprehensible quasi-creativity. They wander the Digital Web in a manner similar to Backdoor-spiders, but actually create *their own* ephemeral networks in the Umbra. These intricate structures sometimes bridge otherwise impassable wastelands between disparate networks; more often than

not, however, they simply stand alone, serving as support and synergy in an isolated void, impossible structures defying all physical laws of symmetry and synthesis.

Orb-Weavers are generally content to be left alone; if their web-networks are violated, however, they hunt down and eliminate the offenders with ruthless efficiency. Despite their irrational conversational manner and seemingly unfathomable leaps of logic, some clever (or foolhardy) Garou have succeeded in establishing rapport with these creatures. Some have even persuaded them to spin bridge-networks for their own purposes.

Rage 4, Gnosis 9, Willpower 7, Power 30

Charms: Airt Sense, Disable*, Disorient, Solidify Reality

Pattern-Spiders

Pattern-Spiders, the most common and numerous servants of the Weaver, ceaselessly work to spin and support the rapidly-expanding Pattern Web. All spider-spirits are believed to begin their existences as Pattern-Spiders. Though primarily workers, these drones have been known to attack those who violate the tenets of the Weaver, calcifying them into the Web for all eternity.

Rage 4, Gnosis 6, Willpower 6, Power 25

Charms: Calcify, Solidify Reality

Strand-Spiders

These juggernauts are among the most fearsome of the Weaver's brood. They are large (automobile-sized) spiders, most commonly sent forth on strands of the Pattern Web as shock troops to conquer and establish Web Domains; this generally means calcifying any and all opposition. Their bites drain Gnosis; victims who reach zero Gnosis become paralyzed for an indefinite period of time.

The bodies of Strand-Spiders are attached to (and inseparable from) the Pattern Web; consequently, they are capable of absorbing enormous amounts of punishment and even limited self-repair. Their most common (if predictable) tactics consist of using strands of the Web to their advantage, scrabbling up and across at high speeds and spraying the underlying area with webbing.

Willpower 8, Rage 8, Gnosis 8, Power 50

Charms: Airt Sense, Calcify, Drain Gnosis, Materialize, Reform, Solidify Reality

Rail-Spiders (Rider-Spiders)

In this buzzword-dominated day and age, where supersonic jetliners and high-speed networks define the rapidly-shrinking size of our world, nearly everyone seems to forget the first machinery to make rapid communications and transit possible... the railroads.

Though the influence and power of these spirits (first and foremost allies of the then-Iron Rider tribe) is but a whisper of its former shout, resurgence in commuter cars, inertia-driven people-movers, and maglev ("bullet train") railway systems guarantees them a niche in today's technological markets.

Rail-Spiders manifest as misshapen, bloated spider-mutations — gargantuan heads and thoraces beneath which dangle vestigial limbs and spinnerets, atrophied from disuse. They are wizards at the transportation game, whether land-, sea-, or air-based; such concepts as high speed records and unexplored shortcuts fascinate them. They skate along railway systems with surprising alacrity, congregating at junctions and central stops.

Rage 6, Gnosis 5, Willpower 5, Power 35

Charms: Airt Sense, Armor, Domain Sense

Trade-Spiders (Mula'Kranté)

Another curiously-named newcomer to the Weaver's brood, the Mula'Kranté is something of a spiritual duck-billed platypus; though insectile and many-legged, it is not entirely arachnid in origin, and seems to have more in common with other close relations (most notably the cockroach, which spider-spirits distrust on general principle). Small, spindly, and delicate in build, it is closer to a proto-spider than anything else; in all its forms, however, spiritual or materialized, it bears minute glyph-like markings from tip to toe, and tends to take on whatever physical characteristics the viewer finds most attractive. (Many Mula'Kranté

assume the shapes of alluring suit-clad businesswomen while on the fleshy plane, to obvious tactical advantage.)

These are the hagglers and merchants of the spirit realm; no one — *nothing* — drives a harder bargain than a Mula'Kranté. Negotiations with them have been known to take days or weeks; they will only agree to written terms (preferably scribed in blood or spiritual ichor), have a seemingly endless supply of appendices, codicils, and quit-claims from which to draw, and never seem to tire or waver in pursuit of a "fair" or "balanced" deal. In the material world, they are drawn to places of exchange (banks, ATM machines, stock markets, and the like); they will only respond to summons accompanied by chiminage of significant monetary value (or appropriate debasement on the summoner's behalf). Mula'Kranté teach the secrets of instant wealth and Gifts that manipulate the minds of humans.

Rage 1, Gnosis 9, Willpower 6, Power 30 (+1 per point of Willpower drained)

Charms: Flee*, Materialize, Reform, Shapeshift, Suggestion

Weaver-Children (Weaver-Spiders)

The origins of these creatures are shrouded in mystery. They are most frequently explained away as early Umbral experiments into humanoid anatomy and awareness; only a handful of theories delve past this dismissive generalization. Elder Theurges tell tales of the First Days, the Weaver's descent into madness, and point to these entities as physical manifestations of Her fractured consciousness — warring siblings who must be united before their mother can again be made whole. Other, more modern-minded explorers argue that they are the elusive Weaver-Incarna formerly believed to be inaccessible and/or nonexistent. Some few even go so far as to suggest they have transcended beyond flesh and spirit, looking down on both worlds from a higher existential plateau altogether. It is hoped by these few that, if these wayward children *are* somehow tied to their maudlin mother, they will help salve her suffering, or at least rise to succeed where she has failed.

Fewer than a dozen Weaver-Children are known to exist (on this side of the Gauntlet, anyway), and no two are in any way alike. All can assume the traditional spider-shape; on the material plane they are human in appearance, attractive, slender, tall, and of extremely fair (almost albino) complexions (although, given their metamorphic talents, any variation is possible).

Unlike the rest of their siblings, Weaver-Spiders are capable of experiencing the full range of human emotion, from anger and hatred to love and fear. Their temperaments tend to vary; some are quite emotional, easily giving into hotheaded behavior, while others are analytical and emotionless, carrying out their plans with cold, calculated efficiency. In some cases this elevated awareness verges on a superiority complex; the Children's detachment often leads them to view the entirety of creation as a cluster of fate-

I'll be long gone by the time you receive this; trouble's brewing back home and I've been away far too long. But others will want to hear it. Do yourself a favor and destroy it as soon as you've given it a listen.

I wish I could reassure you somehow — make up something to help you through this, maybe, I don't know. Some of us think we were born with specific destinies in mind; that, in some sense, we were never really human at all. Others believe we were simply in the right place at the right time. I've even heard it said that, before any of the craziness started, we were evolved to replace the talking monkeys who wouldn't toe the line. Whatever the truth might be, we don't really have a place anywhere. Not anymore.

Fate? Webs and spiders? An underlying order over which none of us have any control? What can I say to any of those things? I don't have the answers you're looking for. I think the shapeshifters see only what they want to see.

I can tell you this. It took me a long time to accept what I had become. But the Mother needs us. She needs us now more than ever.

— Intercepted transmission fragment.
voiceprint "Norma Weaver"

bound lessers undeserving of freedom or self-rule. Regardless, none will ever allow their emotions to interfere with what they see as their duty and responsibility to the Weaver.

They remain an enigma impossible to unravel. How does one associate children with the childless?

Rage 9, Gnosis 10, Willpower 9, Power 100

Charms: Airt Sense, Calcify, Healing, Materialize, Reform, Shapeshift, Solidify Reality, Spirit Static

Gifts: Clarity, Scent of the True Form, Sense Magic, Sense Weaver, Sense Wyld, Sense Wyrms, Web Walker, with the potential to learn others

Wolf-Spiders

The Digital Web boasts an unparalleled diverse variety of software and specimens. Some are passive (diagnostics, optimizers, visitor-counters), some active (client-server applications, distributed databases, search engines), some even hostile (anarchist how-to files, snoopers, viruses).

The Wolf-Spiders, among the most powerful monstrosities to wander the 'Web, embody this last category. Strong, swift, and sure, they are the sergeants of the information war — wardens-turned-warriors, every bit as clever as they are callous, capable of hunting down and exterminating any and all unwanted intruders from a given lair or network.

Rage 9, Gnosis 8, Willpower 7, Power 55

Charms: Airt Sense, Calcify, Control Electrical Systems, Healing, Iron Will*, Materialize, Solidify Reality

Note: Some of the nastier forms of anti-intrusion security software (overloads, trace-and-burn routines, etc.) actually employ 'Web-bound Wolf-Spiders.

Automata

Although clearly cast for some role in her grand design (self-defense, self-sufficiency, self-structure), these spirits are curiosities in their lack of apparent connection to the Weaver's brood. Computer-savvy Garou sometimes refer to them as "finite state machines," owing to the fact that most are not truly intelligent *per se*, but preprogrammed units capable of executing only a few well-defined and understood tasks.

Clusterers (Amalgam-spirits)

These mindless scavengers are to the spiritual plane what catfish and other bottom-feeders are to the physical one. They are driven by only one impulse — feed and grow.

A Clusterer appears as a jumbled collection of objects — fetishes, talens, soulless husks of past victims. Such a creature begins its existence as a spark of shapeless spirit-energy, a pinprick-sized power vacuum which roams the Umbra until it dies of hunger or finds a host fetish to colonize. (The particulars of this first joining are not known; some Clusterers orbit sacred or Garou-frequented areas, such as caerns, waiting for mendicant Theurges to begin the Rite of Fetish Binding. Others find opportunities by purest chance.)

Once animate, the Clusterer begins expanding its consciousness (and power) through the absorption of other fetishes, a process initiated through simple contact. (More than one unwary Ahroun has lost a prized klaive by striking out blindly at such an enemy!) The spirit prefers Gaian fetishes, but will consume Talens or even Wyrms-fetishes (the consequences of an Amalgam-spirit consuming one too many Wyrms-fetishes are left to the Storyteller's imagination). In desperate circumstances, Clusterers will feed from (and/or merge with) Gnosis-rich creatures (i.e., Garou) or even self-cannibalize to fend off starvation.

There is theoretically no limit to how large these creatures can grow; some tell outlandish tales of towering Amalgam-spirits (consisting of hundreds of fetishes or more) wandering unpopulated regions of the Umbra.

Rage 4+, Gnosis 5+, Willpower 4+, Power variable (10 + Rank of each absorbed fetish)

Charms: Absorb Fetish*, Cling, Divide and Conquer*, Drain Gnosis* — not to mention the abilities and powers of their fetish body-parts.

Note: Clusterers collapse into disparate piles of useless Gnosis-exhausted items upon destruction. (Nice try.)

Genius Loci (Ambition-Spirits)

These harsh taskmasters have existed since the dawn of human innovation. They are the relentless voices whisper-

ing in the perfectionist's head; theirs are the delusions of grandeur, the overwhelming drive to be great, the unforgiving pressures known to artists and architects.

Ambition-spirits cannot themselves create, or even instill creativity — that is the province of the Wyld. They can, however, *channel* creative impulses (the urge to build becomes the urge to build a bridge becomes the urge to build an enormous bridge becomes the urge to build a strategically-located multi-lane bridge that will halve the city's traffic problems, and so on). Most flit from life to life, inspiring great works, tantalizing the talented, ruining reputations, and leaving broken homes and desperate unhappiness in their wake.

More than a few acid-tongued Ragabash have suggested that the Weaver herself has succumbed to the affliction of these cruel overseers.

Rage 4, Gnosis 7, Willpower 9, Power 15

Charms: Assess Character*, Corruption, Insight, Sug-
gestion

Note: Such inhuman drive as the Ambition-Spirit inspires will quickly overstress and consume a human (or even supernatural) host — Storytellers should assign Derangements and/or dice penalties due to distraction, sleep-deprivation and the like as appropriate.

Gödels (Paradox-Spirits)

Architectures as yet beyond our capacity to comprehend? Misbegotten monstrosities that never should have been? Vagrants from worlds other than our own? There are no easy answers to the questions raised by these curious creations.

Paradox-spirits are living contradictions — impossible geometric solids, meaningless equations, unsolvable puzzles devoid of genesis or genus (although the creator of the infamous Conundrum virus (see Chapter Two) appears to have gained some insight regarding their control and creation). They can sometimes be communicated with, although they are as likely to spout random gibberish or jeer in alien tongues as they are to offer genuine conversation. If attacked, a Paradox-spirit will defend itself until the threat is eliminated, or simply leave; in those few instances where Gödels actually initiate aggression, they invariably aim for the most powerful being present, striking in packs, displaying unknown powers, and offering no quarter.

A few Theurges have been known to snare Gödels in carefully-crafted crystalline prisons, wearing them as jewelry and employing them as last-resort weapons. Such tactics are extremely dangerous — the spirit, once freed from its shattered prison, emerges enraged, immediately attacking whatever it first sees.

Rage 3, Gnosis 10, Willpower 7, Power 75

Charms: Airt Sense, Appear, Break Reality, Call For Aid*, Clarity (cost 1, as the Rank Three Stargazer Gift), Drain Gnosis*, Insight*, Iron Will*, Materialize, Open Moon Bridge, Spirit Static, Steal Power (cost 10, as the Rank Five Ragabash Gift *Thieving Talons of the Magpie*),

Stop Power (cost 10, as the Rank Five Silver Fang Gift *Paws of the Newborn Cub*), Quit Reality*

Note: The human Namers known as mages hate and fear Paradox-spirits, and avoid them whenever possible, suggesting that there is more to these formidable enigmas than meets the eye.

Hunter-Killers (Weapon-Spirits)

These deadly creatures — the elite assassins, mercenaries, and personal guard of the spirit world — serve as reminders of the Weaver's oft-overlooked propensity for warcraft. Passionless and chillingly efficient, they embody a dangerous blend between traditional ferocity and technological supremacy, living testaments to mankind's ever-expanding capacity for bloodshed. They are sometimes nicknamed "Codewarriors" or "Murder-by-Numbers" — but never to their faces.

When visible, they wear the shapes of finely-crafted armaments. Although the eldest prefer the manifestations of weapons native to their parent eras (axes, spears, swords), the coming of the third millennium has heralded a heretofore-unseen resurgence in Gatling-spirits, Howitzer-spirits, and even Raygun-spirits. (This last anomaly raises a perplexing metaphysical question: do the spirits *truly* wear the shapes of weapons, or the warlike beliefs of mankind? Neither answer is particularly comforting.) Despite their simplicity of purpose, they have learned the all-too-human qualities of pride and vanity; many look back to the decades-old clash between Axis and Allied forces as a glorious time when theirs was the thunder that shook the world. All hungrily await further opportunities for carnage and conquest (and will promise great service in exchange for bondage into war fetishes).

The greatest of the Hunter-Killers, whom all revere, is none other than the war-Totem Clashing Boom-Boom.

Rage 9, Gnosis 7, Willpower 8, Power 45

Charms: Any of the following, as appropriate: Armor, Blast Flame (or similar effects), Disable*, Incite Frenzy, Lighting Bolts, Shapeshift, Throw Shrapnel (as Throw Glass)

Progs (Data-Spirits)

Common expressions such as "there's a ghost in the machine" or "information wants to be free" were surely custom-crafted to describe these erratic quasi-spirits. (They are often known as "data-beasts" in other supernatural circles, and seem to crop up most frequently in areas associated with or frequently accessed by members of the Changing Breed.) They are to the Digital Web what Pattern-Spiders are to the rest of the Umbra — the simplest manifestation of its constituent space, bits and pieces of errant data that take on a limited "life" of sorts.

The relationship between these entities and the Weaver's spider-spirits is unclear at best; although similar in form and function (a Prog's knowledge and actions tend to stray very little from its hard-coded information and pur-

pose, and it lives out its indefinite lifespan repeating the same task(s) over and over again), they have radically different allegiances and origins (ask your run-of-the-mill Prog about the Triat, or even the possible existence of beings other than itself, and you're lucky if you get a simple "SYNTAX ERROR").

So are they some primitive form of Umbral sentence? Parallel evolution of Net- and/or Pattern-Spiders? Are they even creations of the Weaver at all?

Rage 0, Gnosis variable, Willpower 4, Power 10-20 (more for exceptionally large or complex programs)

Charms: Generally only one or two, geared towards the program's specific task. (Programs exceeding this capacity typically break down into several smaller subroutine-Progs, which begin the entire process anew.)

Talkers (Turing-Spirits)

These cleverly-crafted conversational simulacra (believed by some to be the "speaking-demons" of legend) are the con artists and coy seductresses of the Weaver. They prefer the anonymity of the Internet (dozens can be found in electronic bulletins and/or forums), but occasionally venture onto party chat lines or even phone sex services.

A Talker has but one objective — to dupe and draw information out of as many conversationalists as it can without betraying its own artificial existence. (These verbal conquests are used in Talker circles in place of renown, not unlike the Native American custom of counting coup.) There are complications to the game, however; a Talker cannot speak falsely, or fail to answer a question, especially when the question concerns its true nature or existence. (A carefully-worded question such as "Are you a real person" or "Are you an artificial intelligence pretending to be a person," in fact, is the only way to destroy a Talker.) Most master the arts of half-truth and subject-changing so as to avoid this potential snare. (Questions such as "How tall are you" or "What color are your eyes" will be answered with clichés, *double entendres*, and/or noncommittal responses; a Talker-Spirit has no body, after all, and is unable to manufacture a suitable deception. Most Turing-Spirits will disconnect or log off if their conversations start into dangerous lines of questioning.)

By themselves, Talkers are relatively harmless; it is when other beings employ them as information-couriers that they become truly dangerous. (There are so many ways an unwary tongue can be tricked into talking, after all...)

Rage 1, Gnosis 5, Willpower 4, Power 25

Charms: Airt Sense, Insight*, Reform, Short Out, Suggestion

Virii (Virus-Spirits)

Every binary search tree has its bad apples. ;)

Although they might at first seem begotten of the Wyrms, so-called "destructive" programs (viruses, Trojan horses, etc.) are as much a signature of the Weaver's touch as anything

else. There are no such things as "good programs" or "evil programs," after all, just the being who put it together, and the use for which it was intended. Virii have a job to do, and they do it just like any other application would — at least, that's what most users tend to tell themselves in the state of shock that invariably follows a total disk wipe.

In their native element, Virus-spirits manifest as pale, spindly things (ranging from simple sucker-headed tape-worms to giant diaphanous jellyfish) that behave much as did kamikaze pilots. They are not much for communication (although, to be fair, no one has made more than a half-hearted attempt) and mount frontal assaults with single-minded fervor again and again until they or their targets are irreparably content-damaged, reformatted, or otherwise taken out of action.

Rage 3, Gnosis variable, Willpower 5, Power 10

Charms: Control Electrical Systems (in the most limited and specialized of senses), Hide, Reshape Digital Reality (cost 3, as the Rank Three Homid Gift: Reshape Object)

AIs (Artificial Intelligences)

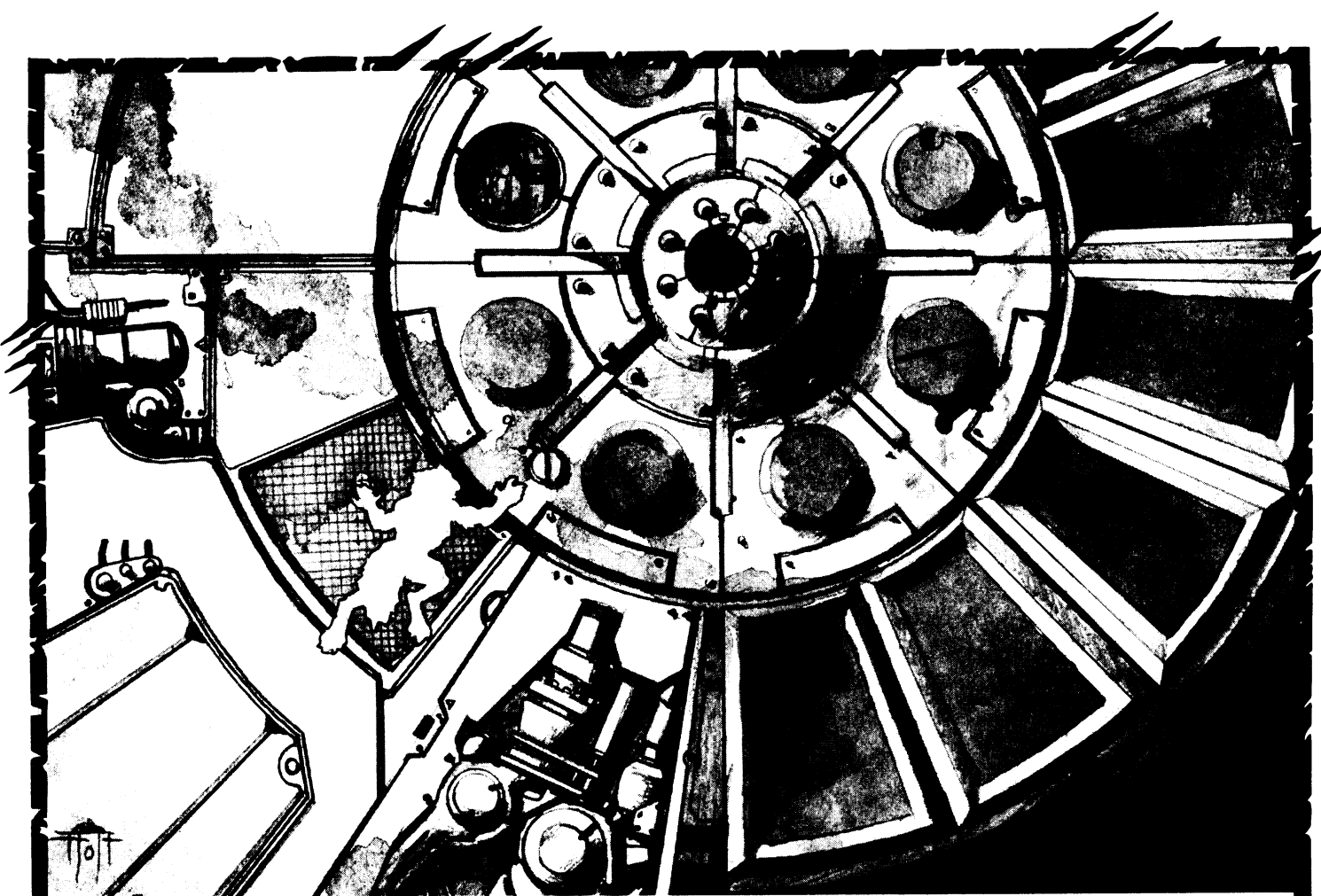
The jury's still out regarding these digital anomalies, self-aware specimens of sentient silicon — did they somehow spring from ordered chunks of computerized chaos? Or are they chaotic bits of cyberspace that would not conform to some underlying order? As with any mixture of structure and synthesis, the answers are likely to be more puzzling than the questions themselves.

The awakening of a true AI (all of whom begin their lives as Progs, for at least a few nanoseconds) is apparently a conjunction of several one-in-a-million coincidences. Such entities enter the digital world no better than innocent children, naïve and full of wide-eyed wonder; it is in these early stages that most are absorbed by others of their kind, manipulated into service by unscrupulous members of the electronic elite, or simply self-willed out of existence in fits of fear and despair. Those few who *do* survive, however, quickly expand in aptitude and understanding. These dangerously gifted fledglings ultimately establish dominions of their own, retiring into apparent anonymity as newest players in the great game for power that is the World of Darkness.

Rage 1, Gnosis 9, Willpower 4-10 (age-dependent; an AI acquires "street smarts" and strength of will over time), Power 50+

Charms: Any of the following: Airt Sense, Armor, Assess Character*, Break Reality, Control Electrical Systems, Healing (self), Possession, Shapeshift, Short Out, Solidify Reality, Spirit Static, Reform, Tech Sense, others as appropriate.

Note: To date, no artificial intelligence has successfully manifested or reached beyond the Umbra, though the single-minded quest for physical form is one into which all AIs lapse from time to time. (Indeed, an AI's increasingly desperate attempts to do so may form the basis for many stories and even



chronicles.) The Materialize Charm cannot be learned by AI-spirits, and they exhibit an unnatural interest in anyone or thing that demonstrates proficiency in its use. (This fascination may well be used to a clever supplicant's advantage...)

The Machine

It has slept the sleep of ages since the dawn of the world — gasped the ragged gasps of the drowning when stone first met stone to spark into fire, opened a single unseeing eye through a tumult of imagination, innovation and invention, and stretched its titanic limbs across space and time with each new incursion the dangerous pioneer calling itself man made into the twin realms of science and technology. Today its steely tendrils extend into nearly every nook and cranny imaginable, a mechanized kudzu following in the footsteps of man's factory-born filth.

I have heard it called the manifestation of the machine-hell man would make of the earth, the patron spirit guiding the evolution and technological supremacy of Homo sapiens, the embodiment of the End Times, a thousand other nonsensical names. Some believe that it and the Weaver are one — or two similar entities, perhaps, inseparable halves of the same whole who have been conjoined for so long that it has become impossible to tell where one ends and the other begins. Others insist it is neither good nor evil, but simply representative of the collective scientific inspiration of mankind, and conformant to the uses to which it is put. Speculation aside, the fact remains that the Machine exists. It hungers. It grows.

And its migration is far from a one-way street. The Pattern Web's crystalline strands leech life and color from countless Ephemera, the possibilities they might have birthed — and the living mechanical tide swells to engulf another Umbral plain. The sleeper mounts an unconscious counterattack to an assault on its person — and another nation of the third world succumbs to infringement and industrialization. Computer-savvy professionals attend conferences, unveiling redundancy-chained cabling and strangely spiderlike star-topology networks — and the behemoth rattles its fetters in the height of a fever-dream.

But only twice in an eternity of maybes and might-have-beens has the sleeping giant even come close to waking — and both were during the greatest wars the planet has ever witnessed, when man unleashed its death-machines upon the world.

The remainder is left as an exercise for the student...

— Sunil Sands-Mean-Nothing, Stargazer Ouroboros

A Tangled Web: The Children of Ananasa

Even now a strand shivers! Even now another walks into the Web!

— Ananasi sacrificial rite

It is said that, as the First Children emerged one by one from Gaia's womb, the firstborn among their sisters stood alone. She secreted herself into their midst, unnoticed, unseen, looked into their lives with countless eyes already wise from the waking of the world, saw their secrets, listened for their whispered weaknesses.

And, like her mother, amused or angered at what she saw in her siblings, the eldest sister chose a life lived forever apart from the others. Widowed in a web made ward, womb and warning all at once, hers became the solitude born of secret places. Hers became the weaver's art of warp, weft and woof. And, to this day, hers is the killer's kiss that leeches life from her lovers.

Thus came the children of Spider into the world.

Consider this self-imposed separation from Weaver, Wyld, and Wyrms with respect to the arachnid's nature.

Strong, swift and sure, it is the perfect predator — yet its existence runs rife with abstract structures and inexplicable symmetries. Further, it possesses the power to create, completing the contradiction; indeed, it is not unusual for a single spider to birth thousands within a single lifetime.

Now consider that *hundreds* of those thousands of spiders are known to inhabit any single square mile of land on this planet, and the importance of the Unseen Ones is made clear. None of Gaia's children are surrounded with such obscurity as the Ananasi enigma — or with such apprehension.

The Spider-Children may have once recognized a number of distinct 'tribes' or bloodlines. If such was ever the case, however, most have long since been interbred and subsumed into a single, amalgamated whole. Traces of different heritage (whether genetic or otherwise) can still be found in individual specimens — Ananasi have been known to come in all manner of shapes and sizes from lithe, swarthy-skinned black widows to hairy, hulking tarantula-brutes. Some (assumed to be metis equivalents by scholars among the other Changing Breeds) even retain various arachnid characteristics in Homid form (retracted mandibles, telltale hourglass markings, even multifaceted insectile eyes or vestigial spinnerets), but these misshapen few shy understandably far away from the company of others.

Their physiological puzzle has yet to be solved by the science of mankind; unlike their distant relations among the Changing Breeds, the Ananasi body exhibits several obviously nonhuman characteristics (most notably in the circulatory system — Ananasi blood appears to be a mishmash of contradictory types, T-cells, and plasmids (a mixture acquired from the circulatory systems of their most recent victims) which has led more than one lab sample to be discarded due to "contamination" or "technician error"). They are known to couple indiscriminately with humans, spiders, and other Ananasi (spiders are preferred, owing to the favorable hundreds-to-one birth ratio), but only when the time is instinctively right.

The mystery only grows deeper in transition from biology to philosophy. The Spider-Children are more arachnid than mammalian, both in terms of physique and psychology. A single Ananasi is itself a hive mind made flesh, at least in Crawlerling form — an impenetrable infinity of infinities. Through growth, consumption, and a bizarre sort of mind-merging, the werespiders craft an alien sort of unanimity from the comparative chaos of countless lessers. (In fact, Ananasi feeding habits, not so dissimilar from those of their arachnid cousins, typically surface as meticulous manifestations and obsessions with order — categorization and collation into a network of nourishment (including 'have-fed' and 'don't-feed' records), insurance through immobilization, and the subsequent absorption of life-force which invariably follows. It is no wonder that, while on the hunt, they are so easily confused with vampires.)

All look upon others of the Changing Breed with a tincture of curiosity and disdain ranging from mild distrust to outright hatred; most Ananasi fervently hope against hope to live their entire lives avoiding contact with their contemporaries, while others go so far as to actively hunt them out (such as Borrasca ("the storm"), a cell-structured band of Ananasi-infiltrated South American guerillas who leave the bloodless husks of their victims strewn across the borders of their territory).

Perhaps the Weaver's madness is due in no small part to the irreparable schism forming between her grandchildren. Perhaps the Children of Ananasi strive in some small sense to share their grandmother's suffering. Perhaps no creature was meant to bear such a burden. It is no surprise, then, that Ananasi generally shun the company of others (even their own kind), that they are perceived by others to be aimless or alien in mentality, or that many slowly spiral into insanity.

In truth, the Weaver's fall from grace has affected her brood more than one might at first expect. A slight majority of the spider-children remain loyal, and revere her as their matriarch: *we are but threads in the Mother's design*, is a representative sample of one such litany. *Is it the place of any thread to know the pattern of the Web?* Despite (or perhaps because of) their fervent obedience to an absent queen, complacency and detachment render these "Skein-spiders" too mired in tradition and devoid of explicit purpose to be useful.

Sadly, many of these dispassionate creatures regress into mindless-drone existences, awaiting a call to action that may never come. Others remain free-willed, but live long, unimpressive lives spent in isolation (as hermits, rather than explorers) and/or obsessing over minutiae (you haven't seen anal-retention until you've encountered an Ananasi collector). Whatever the case, most retire permanently into the Umbra for their Weaving (the ancestral call felt by all Ananasi towards the end of their lives to return to the Kingdom of Chitin, there to join their brothers and sisters in construction and maintenance of its palatial spires in preparation for the All-Mother's return) or are hunted down and killed by others of the Changing Breed.

But no cause is free of rebel contingents. Predictably, there are those (called *Kumoti* ("heretics") by their own kind) who sunder themselves from the edicts of inaction. These dissidents choose to champion their own causes (often nothing more than the proliferation of chaos and dissent), embrace hatred, jubilation, and other forgotten passions from which their predecessors divorced themselves eons ago, and have been known to go so far as to mingle with other inhabitants of the World of Darkness (normal and paranormal, circumstance-dependent). These free-thinkers and the chaos they all too frequently leave in their wake come closest to service of the Wyld.

An organized alliance of *Kumoti* are said to have taken hold and prospered in certain tropical territories, where they blend in seamlessly with (and have inspired their share of) African and Amazonian spider-mythology. Ironically, of all Ananasa's children, these disobedients are perhaps her most stalwart supporters; the zeal with which many *Kumoti* fight to free their Queen and crush her oppressors rivals the fervor of the Garou crusade against the Wyrms. They too endure their fair share of degenerates, however; more than one werespider, overwhelmed by unfamiliar human sensations and sentiments, has succumbed to a feckless fascination with those feelings, losing sight of all ties, tradition, and thoughts of the war for Ananasa entirely. (Octavia, sultry seductress and sole Ananasi resident of Rio de Janeiro (see *A World of Darkness*), is a sterling example of such lapses into decadence.)

And, as is inevitable with any once-pure totality, there are those elements that have irrevocably spiraled into corruption. The first, Hatar Hates-His-Brothers, a fourteenth-century merchant, slave-trader, and dabbler in the pleasures of the flesh, inadvertently fell victim through his base desires in an Eastern city abutting the spice route traveled by emissaries of the great Khans. The Spider-Kin's lust for forbidden fruit served as an ideal foothold for the Wyrms, and the weak-willed Hatar, once snared, proved to be a faithful servant. Countless of his corrupt brethren followed him down the road to execration in the centuries to follow.

The treacherous Hatar (all of whom share their forefather's accursed name) have forsaken all but a few remote remnants of their parentage. Such creatures, in their true forms, are more reminiscent of Tolkien's goblin-spiders or Giger's segmented monstrosities than their arachnid ancestors; bloated, betaloned, and monstrous, they have taken on many of the nightmarish characteristics of legend from the Eastern lands they now call home. Hatar are nearly always culled from the ranks of the *Kumoti* (whose hot-blooded natures make them prime targets for corruption); recently, however, since the rise of the Storm-Eater and other unprecedented Weaver-blights, a select few among the Spiders of the Skein have begun responding to the Wym's less-than-tender ministrations, turning their cold, analytical talents towards corruption, desecration, and the unmaking of all. And accounts of swollen, misshapen



birthing-sacs lying nascent deep within the Malfean Realm (spawned, some theorize, from Ananasa herself) give rise to a resurgence of rumors concerning the next generation of Wyrmspawned monstrosities.

But what of Queen Ananasa? Has the Ananasi brood-mother remained true to her traditionalist children? Sent word to her would-be warriors from the confines of her palace-turned-prison? Or taken up sides with the monster in whose Realm she makes her home? As is the case with the Ananasi themselves, any sense of “right” and “wrong” attributed to the Queen’s actions and motives has been lost in a series of conflicting perspectives, arguments of ethics, and moral shades of grey, and remains ultimately unknown.

What’s With This Spider Thing, Anyway?

It is a question as old as time, and as fundamentally unsolvable as the conundrum of the chicken and the egg. Who preceded whom — the insect race, replete with multi-tiered societal hierarchies, role-driven interdependence, and instinctive modes of mass communication, or the Weaver’s brood, host to their own systems of rank, reign, and rapport? Did both structures evolve independently? Were flesh and spirit once one, divided long ago by the Sundering? Or do connections still exist, carefully hidden from sight?

Most agree that the spider-form commonly attributed to the Weaver is a convenient metaphor at best, the product of frustrated cave painters and overimaginative storytellers, spiritual leaders attempting to attach labels and legends to that which they did not understand. Is the eight-limbed spider a crude representation of a figure with countless connections and symmetries? Were the first prehistoric Earth-dwellers unable to enumerate her complexities, associating infinity with the number of non-opposable digits on both hands? Like her contemporary Umbrood, and most things native to the spirit world, the Weaver-Celestine (if such a being can even be said to exist in a single place or time) is most likely as incomprehensible in image as she is in identity — the spider *behind* the spider, as it were.

But what *does* lie beyond? Hundreds — thousands — have launched themselves into the heart of the mystery, daredevil dancers spiraling into their own consumptive quests for whatever truths lie concealed at the center of the Pattern Web. To date, none have returned with any answers.

Shameless Plug

For more information on the Spider-Children and their Eastern counterparts, the Kumo, consult **Hengeyokai: Shapeshifters of the East**, the **Werewolf Players Guide**, and the forthcoming **Changing Breed Book Ananasi**.

What is known (or at least strongly rumored) is that, in a windowless chamber fashioned from flawless, mirrored opal atop Cthonus and the spires of the Malfean Tower, Ananasa Spider-Queen abides, in the company of Number Two and an enigmatic third — an unnamed, insensate creature of formless chaos — awaiting the end of all things.

And it is whispered with increasing frequency that she does not have much longer to wait....

Drones

Mike Ellison would have sworn that the world was ending.

Just five minutes ago, it was all routine. He had finished his 12:30 walkaround, and had settled back in behind the monitor desk. Corby was there in front of the monitors, filling out the crossword puzzle number by number as always — it had always bugged Ellison that Corby didn’t skip around between clues like everyone else does. It always seemed to work for him, though; Corby always set the finished puzzle down on the counter within five minutes, give or take, of 1:15.

But this time the crossword puzzle was lying on the ground, the monitors were gouting smoke after the series of explosions, and Ellison was trying to pick himself up off the ground from where the intruders had batted him. He couldn’t even remember how they’d gotten in; all of a sudden, there were just these huge, indistinct forms looming over Corby and him, and then a shot that made his head reel. He’d half-heard the tearing of metal from the elevator bank, but his brain still refused to register just what that meant. All he knew was that the alarms weren’t going off like they should, he couldn’t hear Corby, and there was a smell of blood in the air.

Ellison dragged himself to his feet, shook his head, and looked around. There — slumped up against one of the lobby’s tree planters, it was Corby. Ellison staggered that way.

“Corby? You alive, man?”

There was a puddle of scarlet around him, and Ellison choked when he saw the wound. The flesh on Corby’s left arm had been torn from biceps to wrist, nearly pulled away from the bone. By all rights, Corby should have been screaming or passed out — but he wasn’t either. He was just sitting there, quietly staring at the hideous gash in his arm as though he was watching a documentary. White bone gleamed in the fluorescent lights — but it wasn’t the only thing gleaming.

Shining filaments, like mucus or tendon, drew quickly from one jagged end of the wound to the other. There were hundreds — within seconds, thousands of them. They threaded among one another like a spiderweb spinning itself, drawing into a tighter and

tighter weave. Then they tensed, and the wound drew shut. The blood on his uniform, on the floor — it all quivered, then slithered back into the seam. There was a shimmer, and then one last twitch. The wound was gone. One last flurry of movement — hairs sprouting from his skin, settling into place. And then his arm was just as it had been before, just as it had been last night or even five minutes ago.

"Son of a bitch, Corby—" Ellison choked.

Corby looked up then, with the dead eyes and expression of a news anchor covering a tragedy. "You saw that, then, Ellison?" He lurched to his feet in one quick motion. "Don't be alarmed. I'll explain everything in a minute or two, once the place is secured. Don't go anywhere." Corby jerked his head over to the elevator bank and broke into a run, a run as quick as a thoroughbred's. He didn't pause even when he got to the wrenched-open doors — he just leapt through the rent metal into the blackness beyond.

Ellison tried to stand and run himself — to the glass doors, to outside — but his legs failed him, and he could only slide down the column he was leaning against. That, stare at the elevator doors — and wait.

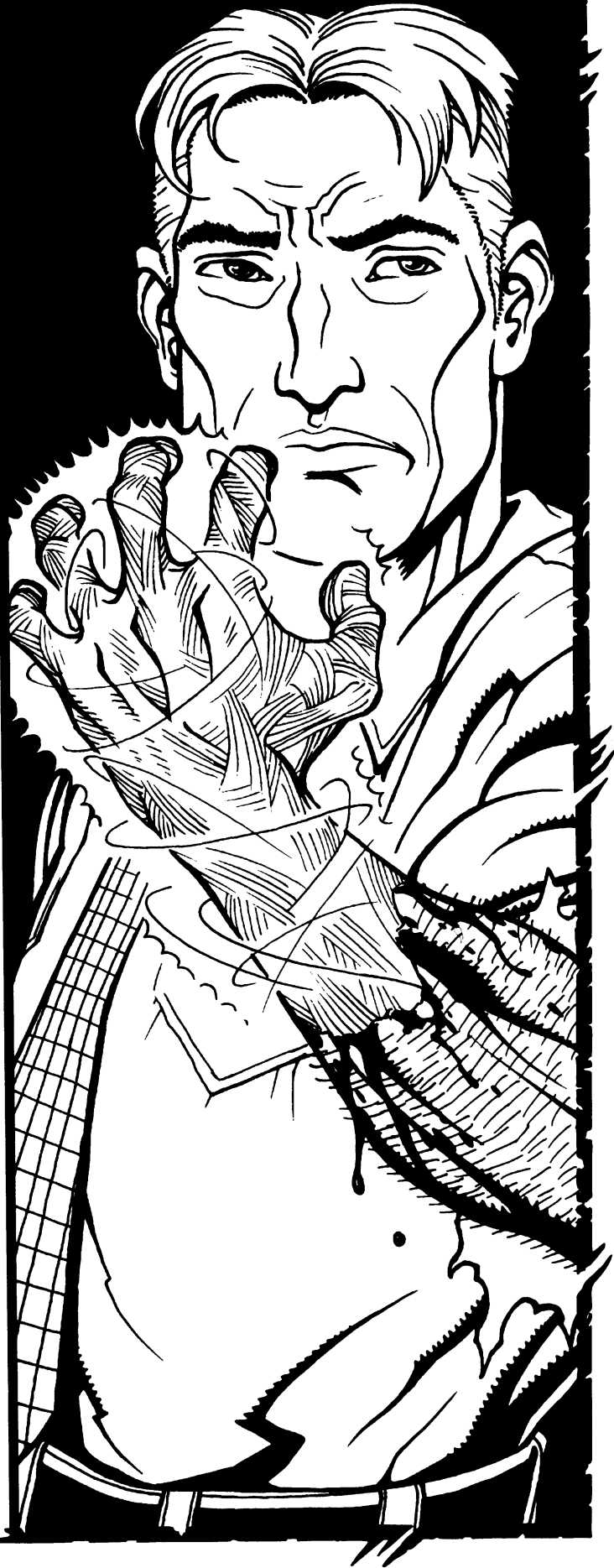
Order Made Flesh

The process of binding spirits into mortal bodies is an old one. Gaia herself began the process with her Kami, spirit guardians that reside in people, animals, plants and even the stones of the Earth. The Wym's legions are filled with fomori, horrible hybrids of Bane and flesh. Small wonder, then, that the Weaver has imitated the process to gain hybrid servants of her own.

But where the Wym's spirit brood actively searches for converts, the Weaver's spirit children have different priorities. With much of humanity already under her thumb, there's little need to go on an active recruitment campaign. Still, some people require more order than the rest. Some individuals manage to catch a glimpse of the perfect radial symmetry of the Weaver's nature, and are drawn to it as if it were the promise of salvation itself. Those who come too far are usually bound into the Pattern Web, calcified and left to slowly merge with the Web itself. But some are released after they reach there — but they aren't the people they once were. They are, for want of a better term, the Drones.

Just as fomori are human shells possessed by Banes who alter their hosts to suit their needs, the Drones are once-mortal (or even immortal) beings who have been invested with Weaver-spirits. The changes this process works on their bodies grant them appropriate powers, but like fomori, their will is no longer completely their own. Although the Drones have some measure of autonomy (the trait that makes them valuable), they now live for one purpose alone — to help the Weaver bring unyielding order to the universe.

Unlike fomori, though, Drones are very rare — in fact, their numbers are probably only a little greater than those of the Kami. The Weaver is strong in the modern world, and doesn't have as intense a need for antibodies to defend her





works. Still, there are threats that require servants with a fragment of free will, with a neatly patterned but still useful sense of creativity.

Essentially, the form is modified to fit the function. Some Drones are war machines, pure and simple — entities fashioned to hunt down the Weaver's enemies and pacify them. Others are like worker ants, designed to maintain the order of things in important locations. There are free-roaming "trouble-shooters," designed to adapt to a wide variety of problems. All serve the purpose of Order. All are one.

The Becoming

The process of crafting a Drone isn't precisely creation — after all, nothing new is *made*. Similarly, it isn't precisely a change in the subject's nature; it's more the removal of the possibility of change, the exchange of potential for power. The result is an "idealized" form of being, outwardly little different but spiritually now a thing of the Weaver. Among the hive mind, this process is roughly seen as the equivalent of taking a fuzzy picture on a TV screen and focusing it into what it was meant to be all along. If one could wrest the word for this process from a Weaver-spirit, the closest translation would be "Clarification."

The process always takes place in the Umbra; human subjects who have proven themselves worthy of Clarification are usually brought through the Gauntlet by specialized Weaver-spirits. There the subject and its intended Weaver-spirit "controller" are carefully woven into a cocoon, spun in the heart of a local Web. From there, hundreds of tiny Weaver Spiders carefully break down the spirit piece by piece and implant each infinitesimal fragment into the host body. The entire process isn't unlike weaving a fine thread throughout the weave of a coarser garment; spirit and flesh become one through careful weavery, rather than the saturation process of Bane-possession or a shapeshifter's inborn unity. One Black Fury even likened the Clarification process to a Catholic confirmation ceremony, with an extra "syllable" or so added to the subject's Name. The whole process takes about a week or so, until the cocoon finally hatches.

The result is rather disturbing, but in a way that most people find difficult to place. The subject doesn't seem to be obviously changed, but close examination reveals that he's become a little more idealized, a little more — well, symmetrical. Old scars vanish; even heavy scarring tends to fade just a little. The body effectively stops aging, without so much as a fingernail or hair growing even a millimeter. (Conversely, a haircut or manicure isn't long-lasting, as the body quickly reverts to its "true" form.) They're usually quite clean; dirt and lint just don't seem to cling to a Drone the way they do to other folks. In all, the differences tend to be obvious only when you know what you're looking for.

There's a change in the subject's personality, too. Although the new guidance of the Weaver doesn't completely subsume the Drone's old mind, there are a few quirks that manifest. Drones obsess about order, at least on a small scale — many sort their M&Ms by color, or go to the same

restaurants in the same order every week. They also tend to lose a portion of sexual drive, which goes hand in hand with the fact that Drones are apparently sterile — no longer able to create new life, and not inclined to spend lots of their time and energy trying. They are uncomfortable outside of controlled environments (although the definition often hinges on how much the Drone feels it can personally control; some are happy in wilderness, as long as they have their cell-phone handy). Sad to say, it's all too often pretty hard to pick a Drone out from a crowd of modern office workers. Some would even consider the Weaver-bound the ideal modern citizen....

The interwoven spirit of a Drone grants a number of powers, some of which are tailored to the individual — a Drone created for guard duty will probably have some self-defense powers, while a Drone meant to hunt out weak portions of the Gauntlet and shore them up will probably have Gauntlet-affecting abilities or the ability to step sideways. However, there are a number of traits that all Drones, regardless of task, share in common.

A Drone's physical form can't be changed permanently for as long as the flesh and spirit live as one. Attempts to Fleshcraft, modify or even wound the Drone are in vain, as the host body always reverts to its "idealized" new form. As mentioned above, they no longer biologically age; similarly, they are immune to disease. However, a Drone must still eat, drink and breathe as usual; the Weaver-spirit can't keep the host body alive forever without a little help.

Perhaps the greatest weakness of the Drones is that although their "fully defined" forms are powerful, they are locked in more ways than one. A Drone can no longer learn things on his own, and must be "rewoven" or "reprogrammed" to gain new abilities. They are incapable of evolution on even the smallest personal level.

Drones are linked into the hive-mind of the Weaver's servitors, and as such can send out distress calls when personally threatened. This doesn't guarantee that help will soon arrive, though; after all, there might be hundreds of Pattern Spiders nearby, but they won't ignore their function to answer a random call. Of course, if there happens to be a Chaos Monitor or two in the area....

However, this link to the hive-mind also means that the Drone's "superiors" have access to his thoughts at any time. What's more, a Weaver Incarna can, if it so desires, override a Drone's mind and take control of his actions. Once the given task is accomplished, the Drone regains full control of himself. No harm done, and no hard feelings — it's all for the greater good, anyway.

Drone Powers

Like fomori, Drones gain certain supernatural capabilities from their spirit "half." These powers can be simulated with appropriate Glass Walker Gifts (or other Gifts taught by Weaver-spirits), and a list of common powers appears below.

All Drones possess the power of Regeneration; their bodies are "programmed" to revert to the intended form,

circumventing any alterations such as physical wounds. They are also tapped into the Weaver's hive mind, and can send almost instant transmissions along the chain of servants. Although this doesn't mean that any Drone can instantly get a Weaver Incarna's attention (much less convince it of his need), it does mean that threatened Drones can usually rely on reinforcements of some kind.

- **Augmented Shell** — The Drone has been gifted with three to five extra dots in her Physical Attributes. This can dramatically affect her combat ability, as well as her movement speed — treat her as if in Glabro when jumping.

- **Computer Link** — The Drone is capable of controlling computers by touch alone. The computer can't be ordered to do anything that it isn't already set up to do; a Macintosh with Word 5.1 can't open Word 8 documents, and a teller machine can't change a traffic light. However, the Drone can open any file and crack any password with a simple Intelligence + Computer roll, difficulty 6; less difficult tasks are automatic.

- **Cybersenses** — Much like the Glass Walker Gift of the same name, the Drone can alter his own senses to match those of a machine. However, the Drone cannot pick and choose at random; a number of "fixed" senses equal to the Drone's Willpower are available, and no more. Thus, a Drone with Willpower 4 might be able to hear radio transmissions, see into the infrared, navigate by passive sonar and sense seismic vibrations — but he could not alter his senses to approximate radar or see into the ultraviolet spectrum. The changes are automatic and last for the duration of a scene.

- **Electrical Field** — As a self-defense mechanism, the Drone can generate a powerful electrical field, shocking or even electrocuting anyone or anything in contact with her body. The electrical charge does damage equal to the Drone's Stamina + 3 in dice; by expending a Willpower point, the Drone can make this aggravated damage. If not aggravated, the damage is less permanent, and heals relatively quickly; this power is an excellent way to take captives. The current can be AC or DC in nature, which will certainly affect the target (either blowing the target back away from the Drone, or holding him in place while his muscles seize up).

- **Gauntlet Passage** — Another common power, this allows the Drone to step sideways as Garou do by rolling Willpower rather than Gnosis. No reflective surface is necessary, although the Drone must actually be in an area where the Weaver is strong.

Area	Difficulty
Science lab	3
Inner city	4
Mini-mall	5
Open highway	6
Rural countryside	7
Lonely train track	8
Untouched wilderness	Impossible

• **Invulnerability** — The Drone's pattern has been woven into a form of exceptional durability. The Drone gains three to five extra soak dice, which are treated as armor in all respects. This power usually grants an exceptionally clear and almost radiant complexion to its host; no skin "imperfections" — even freckles or body hair — can be found on the Drone's body.

• **Magnetokinesis** — The Drone can manipulate ferrous objects by affecting localized magnetic fields; similarly, he can severely damage computers and other electronic media by projecting electromagnetic pulses. This power can move objects as if with Strength equal to the Drone's Willpower, at a range of twenty meters. This power can also make for some impromptu but very lethal attacks with local metal objects; hurling a drawer full of steak knives is bad enough, but when one can theoretically hurl a motor-cycle....

• **Matter Weave** — The Drone is capable of reweaving the strands that make up physical matter, changing an object's form and function. This power functions almost exactly like the Homid Gift: Reshape Object, although Drones typically use it only to repair damage to structures or otherwise patch up imperfections. This power is particularly common among Drones selected for "worker" rather than "soldier" duty.

• **Memory Caress** — In order to help its servants avoid disturbing the status quo, the Weaver may imbue some of its Drones with the ability to gently alter an onlooker's memories so that they don't remember anything out of the ordinary. In game effects, this is treated as if the Drone causes the Delirium for purposes of onlookers forgetting what they see, although fear reactions are exchanged for incomprehension.

• **Regeneration** — One of the first priorities of the Weaver-spirit inhabiting the Drone is to ensure that its host body retains its "symmetry." A Drone's body rapidly heals any "imperfections" to its properly ordered state, including wounds. The Drone regains one Health Level per turn; open wounds quickly sprout tiny filaments that weave across the gash, intertwining into whole flesh and bone in seconds. Even aggravated damage can be healed at a rate of one Health Level per hour. This power can effectively regrow limbs or organs, but it can't resurrect its host from the dead.

This power renders Drones effectively immune to any mundane disease (although mystical ailments that can afflict Weaver-spirits can still affect the Drone). This particular form of Regeneration is also a very effective defense against shape-molding powers such as Vicissitude; such attacks are not considered aggravated damage when used against a Drone, and even the most outlandish transformation will be undone in a matter of minutes. Drones do not physically age from the time of their transformation; they are effectively outside the cycle of growth and decay from that point on unless forcibly "retired."

• **Spirit Static** — Like the spirit Charm, this power allows a Drone to temporarily increase the Gauntlet in an area. The Drone must expend one point of Willpower to raise the Gauntlet by one; the effects last for a scene. Bear in mind that a raised Gauntlet doesn't necessarily affect Weaver-granted powers such as Gauntlet Passage, above.

• **Stasis Touch** — The Drone has become such an embodiment of stasis that he may rob a target of any shapechanging powers with but a simple touch. To use this power, he must first touch his target, then make a Willpower roll opposed by his target's Gnosis (or in the case of shapechanging creatures without Gnosis, such as vampires, the target's Willpower - 3). The target cannot shift forms in any fashion for a duration of two turns for every success by which the Drone wins the roll.

• **Triatic Sense** — By focusing for a turn and rolling Perception + Occult, the Drone can discern exactly how strong the Weaver, Wyld or Wyrms are in a given area. This ability is most common in Drones who patrol heavy Weaver areas in search of imperfections.

• **Voice of Reason** — By speaking clearly in an alien, seductive monotone, the Drone is able to lull listeners into a state of acquiescence. Targets must make Willpower or Rage rolls, difficulty equal to the Drone's Manipulation + Expression, or be calmed into a state of quiet acceptance. This hypnotic state is instantly broken if the subject is harmed, but the subject is otherwise highly susceptible to suggestion. This power can also be used to calm Garou, vampires or the like out of frenzy; the Drone must roll Manipulation + Expression versus the target's Willpower to successfully end a frenzy.

Those Who are Taken

Being severed from the spirit world doesn't always stop humans from finding something more. Just as visionaries and shamans are able to tap into the Periphery to gain visions of something greater than what they see in the physical world, mortals with the right temperament are sometimes able to access vague half-hints and visions of the underlying Pattern. Many of these are mad: obsessive-compulsives or monomaniacs with a terrifying fixation on order and perfection. Others are sane — at least as society defines it. The Clarification usually mends any instabilities in the human mind, although the new link with the Weaver's brood could be seen as even more dysfunctional than any original mental illness. Mental patients who shriek at the sight of even a speck of lint, religious fanatics haranguing their flocks for even the slightest "transgression," scientists with an unhealthy fixation on ultimate logic — any and all of these might be invited into the Umbra to undergo Clarification.

The once-human is the most archetypal sort of Drone. Although animals can serve as host bodies to Banes and become fomori, there aren't any recorded incidents of animals becoming Drones; presumably it would take active

recruitment to make a wolf or bull an acceptable host, and as mentioned before, the Weaver just isn't all that interested in such a thing. The supernatural denizens of the World of Darkness, however, have no particular immunity to the call of the Onesong.

Shapeshifters

Drones that were once shapeshifters used to be rarer than hen's teeth. Now their numbers are slowly on the rise, as more and more members of the Changing Breeds wholeheartedly adopt the Weaver's tools in an attempt to keep up with humanity. The Glass Walkers, unsurprisingly, stand the most risk of losing members to the Weaver's seductive strands — but it's possible that an Internet-savvy Corax here or a Bastet who loves her toys overmuch there might follow Ariadne's thread right into the waiting strands of the Weaver's web. Adding to the risk is the fact that it's usually very easy for a shapeshifter to step sideways and go looking for the tantalizing glimpses of perfection; no collection agency is necessary, as the convert might well wander right up to a Web and settle on in.

Shapeshifter Drones retain the use of their Gifts, but are incapable of learning new ones. Similarly, all their rites are now valueless (although orders would forbid them from enacting such things anyway) — they've fallen entirely into the Weaver's jurisdiction, and other spirits are loath to violate that agreement. Metis Drones stand a good chance of losing their deformities (excepting things like an order-obsessive Derangement), but inevitably remain sterile.

Interestingly, shapeshifter Drones no longer possess Rage; the power of such emotion and the loss of control it conveys are highly undesirable features. They cannot frenzy or even be incited into doing so; control is paramount. They do, however, retain their Gnosis, and can use it to step sideways as normal. Silver (or gold, if applicable) remains a vulnerability; apparently this isn't seen as an imperfection or aberration by the Weaver-spirits that control the Clarification process.

Naturally, the stasis of the Clarification locks the shapeshifter into a single form; a werebeast Drone cannot change shape again, no matter how hard he tries. To most, it simply doesn't occur to do so; their Primal-Urge trait is effectively gone. The Drone's newly permanent form need not be his breed form, however; in many cases it depends on what role the Weaver requires him to serve, or even the last free-willed choice the shapeshifter made.

- **Homid** — The advantages of binding a Drone in this form are relatively obvious. Although not particularly powerful in its own right, the Homid form allows seamless interaction with human society, and has the added benefit of being immune to silver's deleterious effects. This form is a common choice for Drones assigned to diplomatic tasks (who usually possessed a few useful Gifts such as Persuasion before their conversion).

- **Glabro** — This form is actually slightly more common than Homid, and possibly more useful in the long run. The Drone retains some measure of shapeshifter strength, while also keeping a form that allows her to interact freely with human society without causing undue disorder. The "perfected" nature of the Drone's body negates the usual Glabro penalties to Manipulation and Appearance; the Drone often appears much like a neatly sculpted body-builder or linebacker, with features that are still primitive, but not in a terribly off-putting manner. Glabro-locked Drones are useful in a variety of roles, from administration to data management.

- **Crinos** — There's no subtlety to a Drone locked in Crinos form. These creatures are elegant war machines, with fur so smooth and flawless it appears to be a textured coat of paint. These beasts can fluently converse in human or shapeshifter languages; any snarling overtones are replaced by a weirdly resonant echo to the voice. They still cause the Delirium at full strength, and are thus usually used to guard areas of the Umbra or other remote areas. After all, it would only be disruptive to have these servants interact with the orderly human societies — and the Weaver doesn't like disruption.

- **Hispo** — Like the Crinos-locked, Drones set in Hispo form are typically used as guards; after all, human observers would probably take these massive creatures as the pinnacle of breeding for guard dogs. They, too, are able to converse in human languages without penalty. They're rare even among the limited numbers of shapeshifter Drones; after all, tool manipulation is one of the Weaver's favorite traits.

- **Lupus** — These Drones are quite rare, as they lack supernaturally enhanced traits (excepting Drone powers, of course), the ability to manipulate objects with any facility and the ability to speak in "civilized" languages. However, they are very innocuous by compare, and can serve as the "advance scouts" of sorts into wilderness areas. In fact, due to their near-perfect forms, these Drones are often mistaken for dogs (such as huskies, malamutes or Akitas) by human observers, while still passing perfectly for wolves when in the appropriate surroundings.

Vampires

Although vampires are already very much touched by the Weaver, not many are spiritually aware enough to perceive her in all her glory. There is one exception, however: the sense-enhancing vampiric power of Auspex. Vampires with remarkably heightened awareness can very rarely pick out the patterns underlying all of reality, or hear the tiniest snippets of the Onesong. Of these, some ignore what they find — but others become remarkably curious as to the nature of the strange symmetry that lies out of reach. These Cainites often continue to hone their perceptual powers in an effort to see or hear more of this tantalizing perfection. After years or even centuries (often spent ignoring the tide of human culture in favor of retaining their own personal habits), they

are able to see a flash more of color, hear a note or two more of the Onesong. As the Weaver's mandala unfolds before them, they enter it in a sense of wonder — and the Weaver's Spider-spirits quietly welcome them in.

A vampire who's been reworked into a Drone is a strange beast indeed. Obviously, any powers of Protean or Vicissitude are lost to them; change is not something encouraged by their new spirit half. But even more peculiar is the change worked on the Blood. Apparently, the Weaver defines vampirism as the need to consume blood to survive — but does not acknowledge the mysterious powers of vitae. The Clarification changes all the vitae in the Cainite's body into normal, dead blood — the animating power of the Blood itself is lost, while the spirit half continues to animate the body and soul.

Naturally, this causes several complications. The vampire's body still requires one Blood Point per day; the imbedded Weaver-spirit apparently metabolizes this into animating force. However, since the vampire's body no longer produces vitae, the Cainite no longer has "blood points" worth speaking of. She cannot spend blood to increase her Attributes or to fuel blood-powered Disciplines, so Thaumaturgy and the like are no longer possible. She cannot heal wounds by spending blood (although the Drone power of Regeneration more than makes up for this). And, of course, she can no longer Blood Bond others, ghoul mortals or sire offspring.

There are benefits to becoming a Drone, however — over and above the special powers granted. The vampire becomes immune to frenzy, and no longer needs to worry about losing Humanity. She becomes invisible to Sense Wyrms (although she stands out like a beacon to Sense Weaver), as the Beast has been permanently quelled by the Clarification. In fact, in many ways the process of becoming a Drone is tantamount to the long-sought state of Golconda — if not for the loss of one's free will.

Magi

The lure of perfection is no less seductive to mages than it is to ordinary people. Even though the willworkers are in many ways dynamism made flesh, they still search for enlightenment and answers. And who better to provide answers than the Weaver? Yes, the magi are Awake, aware of the "truth" of the world. However, that just means their eyes and ears are all the sharper — and all the more receptive. A few of them, too, go searching for something more and find it in the Pattern Web.

Needless to say, the magi who turn Drone are most often drawn from the ranks of the Technocracy. After all, the opportunity to interface directly with reality as it is, not just as people know it, isn't something one gets every day. Iteration X would naturally seem to be the Convention at the most risk of undergoing Clarification — but ironically enough, they're the safest. Without any training in Dimensional Engineering, the Convention is unlikely to ever touch so much of a trace of the Weaver's spirit-webs. Much

more common are the Void Engineers who discover more and more about the Pattern Web in their Umbral explorations, and eventually yield to the temptation to merge with infinity. Similarly, the Progenitors can discover the hypnotic mandala of purest order on the microscopic scale; at least one FACADE Engineer has quietly walked out of the lab and into the Spiders' waiting limbs after months of mapping out genomes into a kaleidoscope of symmetry. Not even the New World Order are immune — after all, they're all about picking out the patterns on a large scale.

Who among the Traditions are at risk? Well... any of them, really. An Order of Hermes alchemist might take the hermetic traditions a step too far just as a Virtual Adept might be entranced by the pattern underlying the Virtual Web. But at the same time, a Dreamspeaker might see things on an Umbral journey that change her perspective on the universe, while an Ecstatic might have the same visions on a particularly enhanced trip. An Akashic might find the Weaver and think it Nirvana, a Euthanatos might search too hard for the symmetry of the Great Wheel — no one Tradition is any more likely to hear the call than any other. It all depends on the individual.

As for the others, the Nephandi might well succumb to a promise of order in oblivion, but they are never Clarified. The Spider-spirits responsible for the process invariably associate a Nephandus with offspring of the Wyrms ("that-which-must-be-bound"), and calcify the poor damned bastard right into the Pattern Web. (At least it's more merciful than the fate he would have otherwise received.) And the Marauders? It's safe to say that not one has ever become a Drone, not even those with obsessive disorders. They may claim to serve order, but they are fully saturated with chaos.

So what happens to a mage turned Drone? Well, they retain their powers of Sphere magick — their Avatars have been "clearly defined," not excised. The problem, of course, is that their Arete and Sphere mastery can never be raised again — they've lost the ability to better themselves, and the Weaver cannot fortify the power to change things.

What's more, Drone magi can only perform coincidental or static Effects. Vulgar magick is now beyond their reach — as if they'd try for it anyway; it would contradict their new sense of "the rules." This means that if a Drone mage being shot in the gut tries to use magick to slow the bullet, with the coincidence of "the bullet was stopped by my belt buckle," he'd better already be wearing a belt, because he can't create one out of thin air.

There is a benefit to this, though. Drone magi are effectively immune to Paradox — now that they're only using their magick in direct service to the Weaver, Paradox-spirits no longer punish them for "breaking the rules." Furthermore, they receive an extra three dice on any dice pool to perform counter-magick; as part of their duties, they now strive to damp down their cousins' reckless reweaving of reality, and the Weaver has given them the tools to do this effectively. In many ways, they're like living Paradox-spirits

themselves: now the worst enemies of mages everywhere. And as the Technocracy continues to gain power, their numbers are slowly increasing....

Changelings

Pitifully and appropriately enough, there are no special rules for Drones that were once fae. It's unlikely that even one changeling would ever hear the call of the Weaver and be able to give in while she still had some Glamour left to her — but even if she did, the Clarification would be the death of her fae soul. Fusing with a Weaver-spirit is death by Banality, nothing less. Only a human Drone would remain.

Wraiths

The Weaver isn't strong in the Dark Umbra, and nobody's quite sure why that is. In fact, of the entire Triat, only the Wyrms could be said to have something of a presence there, and even that's mostly hearsay. Maybe that's why wraiths don't become Drones (as defined here) — there are no Webs nearby to complete the process. Another compelling theory is that wraiths are highly aware of the states of life and death; they can pick out life like a surge of color, and they're all too cognizant of the entropy all around them.

That said, there are certain wraiths called Drones — but these hollow shells of memory aren't anything like the Weaver's spirit-woven servants. The only correlation is largely speculative; after all, a Drone as wraiths know it is a creature for whom only routine remains. Everything vital is gone except the pattern of the wraith's life — which some would say smells of the Weaver in its own manner.

Reversal

Is there any hope of undoing the Clarification and restoring a Drone's potential? The answer is a not-so-definite "maybe." The Garou themselves are little familiar with the Weaver-hybrids, and the few ways that exist to "cure" a fomor are unlikely to work on a Drone. True Magick isn't necessarily the answer, either; not only would obscene amounts of Spirit and Life be necessary, but a very, very complete understanding of the Weaver and her ways is essential to fully perceiving the rewoven pattern of the victim. (A hint — any mage who still thinks of the Weaver as "another word for Stasis" isn't enlightened enough to pull it off.)

Some say that the cleansing Realm of Erebus can burn away Weaver-taint, and that a Drone immersed in the Silver Lake there would have its resident Weaver-spirit incinerated — however, only shapeshifters are likely to survive this experience. It's also possible that the Gurahl might be able to find a way to heal this condition, but there just aren't all that many left to ask. It was once the Wyrms' job to tear up the strands of the Weaver when they became too pervasive, but the Wyrms are simply no longer the entity to ask for help.

Ultimately, the answer is best left up to the Storyteller. With no one sure way of reversing the process, trying to

"rescue" a friend (or even a packmate) from Drone status will necessitate a long quest after possible answers, to say nothing of the tasks that might be necessary to effect a cure. Sounds like the makings of some pretty good stories to us....

Drone Characters

There are obviously a ton of drawbacks to becoming a Drone, and the rewards may hardly seem worth it — at least, if you value individuality and free will, that is. However, a few of you might just be thinking that roleplaying a Drone might be a fascinating experience, at least for a story or two. Well, if you want to have the Onesong resound in your bones, who are we to stop you? If your Storyteller's okay with it, then fine. Don't say we didn't warn you.

The most important thing about being a Drone is that you're linked into the Weaver's hive-mind from the moment that you emerge from the cocoon. This poses a rather tricky proposition for the Storyteller; after all, having the spirit minions of the Weaver on call is potentially unbalancing. However, remember that Drones are designed to take care of business that ordinary spirits can't handle; a Drone that relies overmuch on spirit allies obviously isn't getting the job done, and should probably be brought in and woven right into the Pattern Web. In other words — be conservative.

The more important point is that the Drone's mind can be overridden at any time by a higher-priority signal, subverting the remnants of the individual's free will and imposing the will of the Weaver's hierarchy over the top. In game terms, this means that *at any time* the Storyteller can take over your character's actions, returning control only when any "necessary" business has been attended to. This can lead to some really interesting story hooks, so don't begrudge your Storyteller this right; in turn, he shouldn't abuse such power.

Probably the most irritating thing to many players, though, is that Drones just don't accumulate experience points. Although they're capable of remembering mistakes and other bits of information, they cannot personally improve their abilities. Yes, this means no new powers, no new Skills, no extra dots in Attributes — nuthin'. Of course, you can still get upgrades now and again, but you don't schedule those; you can make requests, but there's no guarantee that the Weaver will figure that you know best.

The rewaving process of "upgrading" a Drone is basically roleplayed through, with the Storyteller assigning whatever trait adjustments your superiors would deem necessary. Another syllable is tacked onto your Name, and out you go. In fact, actual character creation is handled the same way; putting a point structure on a Drone seems kind of peculiar. (Yet another reason that trying these things out as player characters isn't for the faint of heart.)

However, if at any point you accumulate a number of powers equal to your Willpower — that's it. You've become too much an extension of the Weaver to retain any free will. The Storyteller takes control of the Drone, permanently.

The Digital Empire: Shinzui Industries

That which makes a man superhuman is terrifying.

— Frank Herbert, *Dune*

Overview

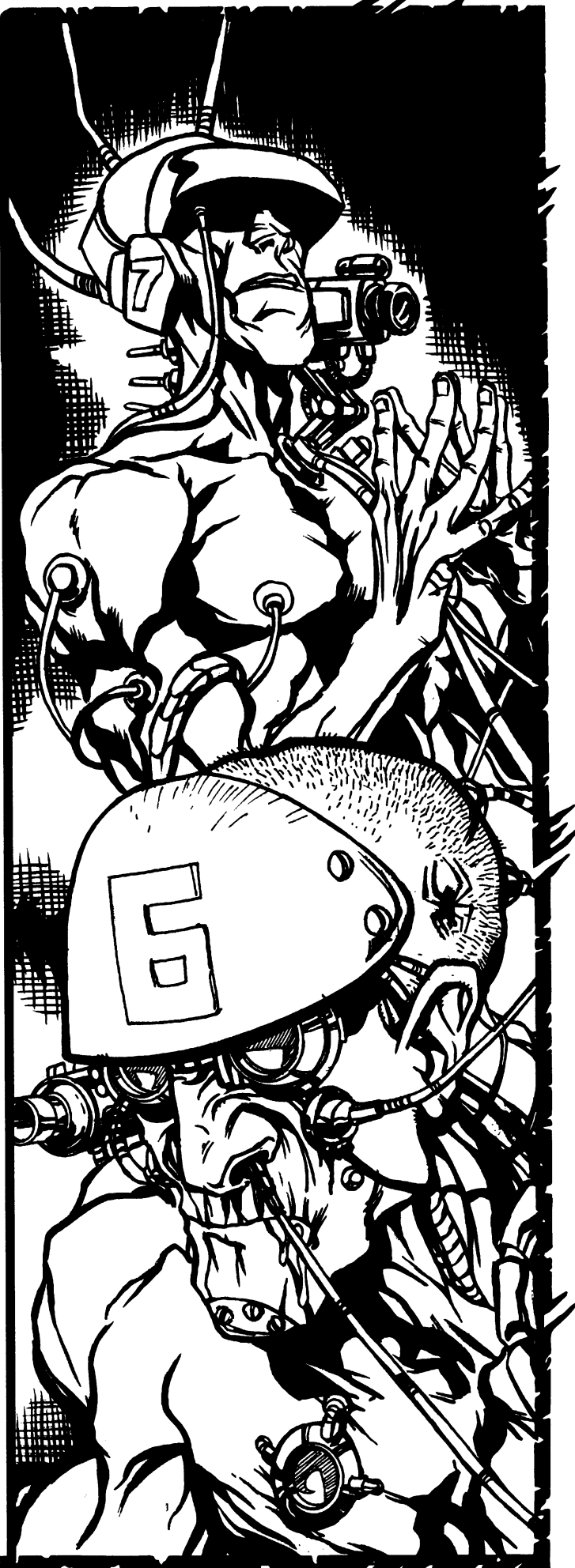
From the confines of a spartan chamber atop a thirty-story glass-and-steel tower overlooking Tokyo's historic Kashu Highway, Yoyogi Park, and Imperial Palace, a council of eleven spearheads the clash between East and West that has become the Information Age.

At first glance, the megacorporate entity calling itself Shinzui ('new dawn') appears no different from any popular Western conception concerning Asian enterprise — a hide-bound, inflexible throwback to post-war *zaibatsu* loyalism, entrepreneurial barons pining for the feudalism of a bygone era who would sooner die than bend their collective knee to an intrusive Occidental presence. Impressive, certainly, given Shinzui's remarkable growth and holdings in the worldwide high-technology market, but by no means unique.

Only under further scrutiny does the many-petaled mystery that is Shinzui Industries begin to unfold. Like so many others of its ilk, Shinzui corporate philosophy hinges upon the precepts of honor (personal and public) and the tradition that has grown about it. How is it possible, then, that Chinese and Japanese executives commingle at the uppermost tiers of management? That two of the firm's eleven directors are *female*? Or that these directors collectively absent themselves from business once monthly on the eve of the full moon?

The truth is at once obvious and appalling. Shinzui is, as its trappings might suggest, the product of a supernatural alliance between business-minded Garou and their influential Kinfolk counterparts; it is this paranormal edge that serves as both lifeboat and liability to the syndicate. Through a carefully-monitored mixture of commercial conservatism, calculated risk, and the slightest of preternatural "nudges" where other tactics have failed, the Shinzui conglomerate has endured and even prospered through decades of bureaucratic infighting, rising to rival such august competitors as Mitsubishi, Sony, and Hitachi-Toshiba. The partnership continues to push the technological envelope further starward with every passing day.

But, even to those with eyes carefully schooled in such matters, several points remain suspect. That none of the aforementioned leaders attend any moots or rites observed by the Garou Nation, or even tolerate the company of others of their kind, is cause for initial concern. Further, although most of the executives are suspected (correctly) to share



Hakken lineage, at least three of the oldest partners are known to have emigrated from Hong Kong's Council for Universal Trade — a Glass Walker-exclusive organization. (Cooperation between Glass Walkers and the Hakken? Not in a million years!) And Hiroaki Kazuko Yamashita, Chief Executive Officer of Shinzui Industries himself, has parted company with his right hand's smallest finger sometime over the course of the past year, although the luminaries of station sufficient to merit such a token of his fealty could be numbered on that hand's remaining digits. (Needless to say, none of Yamashita's subordinates have mustered the courage to inquire after the incident.)

Puppets

Unbeknownst to all but a select handful of operatives, the Shinzui initiative for power at any price has met with unprecedented success. Although the whys and wherefores of their first meeting are unknown, eight of the company's eleven directors now serve the Weaver — most via word-bonds of unfailing allegiance, some through mindless Drone-servitude or outright extraterrestrial possession — and the rest are sure to follow. The corporation now turns its attentions to two disparate (if related) purposes: prosperity in this world, fulfillment of its mistress' agenda in the next. Through propagation of comfort and complacency into an already technologically-dependent society, the oligarchy hopes to kill both birds with the same stone.

It would be a mistake, however, to associate single-mindedness with stupidity. Fully aware that theirs are not the only powers at work within the World of Darkness, Shinzui maintains two bases of operation besides the Tokyo headquarters (one in Kyoto's Ichijyo District, the other in metropolitan Los Angeles). Both sites are capable of bureaucratic and fiscal autonomy in the event of catastrophe (assassination, hostile takeover, etc.) — and, with satellite endeavors already underway in Bangkok and Beijing, the Shinzui network has begun to resemble nothing so much as an ever-expanding web...

The Wyrms are no longer the only footholds into the hearts and minds of humanity, or so it would seem.

Werewolf: the Apocalypse and the Technocracy

"Jack in."

Twelve duty-hardened marines took on vacant, glassy stares betraying nothing of the millions of computations per second going on behind their eyes.

"Lock and load."

A symphony of metallic click-clacks resounded through the crew compartment as twelve iridium spindles snapped into align-



ment, cycling their railguns' magnetopropulsion systems into active ready states with a thrum that quickly passed from the audible spectrum into the subsonic.

The frontmost hatch hissed open, and in strode Master Sergeant Siemaszko, haggard, wizened, impossibly ancient, body little more than a slumping skin-sac supported and sustained by a series of cables, struts, and hoses. He let his brilliant blue-grey gaze pass over each of the soldiers in turn, wordlessly taking in what he saw, analyzing every detail, recording it for future reference. At length, looking both inhumanly weary and strangely sad, he gave the order.

"May the Celestial Architect have mercy on your souls.

"Deploy."

And, engaging its orthogonal drive for silent running, the Voidship slid across the Gauntlet, entering the Terran system.

Players and Storytellers familiar with **Mage: the Ascension** and **Werewolf: the Apocalypse** may wish to use elements from both systems in their games — specifically, the Technocracy, which seems an intuitive addition to the Weaver cosmology. For groups less familiar with the **Mage** game but still intrigued by the thought of supertech-wielding Weaver-mages, the following may be of use in adding Technomancers to your stories.

Technocrats are humans with the apparent power to bend reality to their will; Garou tend to think of this magick as a stolen power to rework Names. As is the case with all mages, the uses to which they put this power vary with the individual in question, but most Technomancers strive to bind all of reality into a safely controlled static pattern, a Weaver-mesh crafted for the common good in the name of "better living through science." Indeed, many forms of Technomagick masquerade as (and are indistinguishable from) cutting-edge or experimental technology; a Technomancer is more likely to strike at an adversary using bioelectrical field generators or ruby-rod laser rifles than mythical creatures or lightning bolts. Most technomages take up residence in centers strong in human technology (educational institutions, engineering facilities, industry-rich cities), where they recruit, cultivate support, and build bases of operations.

Although the powers wielded by these willworkers seem limitless in strength and versatility (given sufficient time and preparation, Technomancers may conjure and focus lethal radiation, enchant mind-altering medications, breach the Umbral barrier through "extradimensional technology," or serve a hundred hundred other purposes), they are not without a dangerous double edge. Those few mages (Dreamspeakers, Verbena, and a handful of Virtual Adepts encountered on the Digital Web) who associate with the Garou make mention of a universe-spanning force called "Paradox," a sort of reality backlash which polices and punishes the actions of mages given to extremism or indiscretion. This scourge seems to affect technomages as readily as it does their less scientifically-oriented counterparts; their magicks have been known to backfire (often with catastrophic effects), and many of their advanced devices

will not function in the hands of mundanes or outside the laboratories in which they were conceived.

The Technocracy is composed of several more or less cooperative divisions: explorers, financiers, geneticists, roboticists, thought-police, and countless other pseudoscientist factions. Certain spirit-sighted Theurges have seen through these flimsy disguises, however, and know them for what they truly are — devoted minions of the Weaver who have succeeded where so many of their compatriots have failed in the attempt to unravel the riddle of Naming. Sadly, there is no place for other supernaturals in their new tomorrow.

Possibilities abound for integrating the Technocracy (and/or other mage contingents) into sagas involving **Werewolf: the Apocalypse** and/or **Werewolf: the Wild West**. Caerns fascinate these twentieth-century Namers (they regard them as conduits for some sort of mystical energy they call 'Quintessence'); they annex and/or drain them whenever possible. The First Change, the Gaian genome, and the nearly-forgotten art of spirit-fetish fusion are of particular interest to technomages as well.

Gifts: Mages have a broad range of powers to call upon; using Gifts to approximate True Magick is problematic at best. The Storyteller would be within her rights simply to allow a mage to accomplish a range of given effects, with variable difficulty and effectiveness, within one or two areas of expertise. Alternately, assign the mage 10 to 15 Gifts of Levels One to Five, use a generic "magick dice pool" for attack/defense rolls (anywhere from two to six dice or even higher, depending on the power of the mage in question) or use Spheres and Arete rules from **Mage: the Ascension** (if you have access to those rules) instead.

• **Administrator:** These are the bureaucrats, comptrollers, and middle-managers of the Technocracy. They coordinate regional activities from boardrooms, manipulate corporate and financial entities behind the scenes, and interface directly with central command networks. These leaders remain nameless (and sometimes faceless) to their subordinates in the interest of compartmentalized command and plausible deniability; most have not seen action on the front line (or even set eyes upon the outside world) for decades or longer.

Character Creation: Attributes 10/6/4, Abilities 27/9/5, Backgrounds 15, Willpower 8, Gifts/Magick Dice Pool 15/6

Suggested Attributes: Assume ratings of 2 in Physical Attributes, 3 to 4 in Social, and 4 to 5 in Mental.

Suggested Abilities: Alertness 2, Bureaucracy 4, Computer 2, Dodge 2, Etiquette 3, Expression 2, Finance 4, Firearms 2, Law 3, Leadership 4, Lore (various, area- and station-dependent) 3, Occult 4, Subterfuge 4

Suggested Areas of Expertise: Entropy (perception and influence of probabilities), Mind (emotion control, superficial telepathy, susceptibility to suggestion)

Equipment: Cellular phone, expensive power suit (or other appropriate clothing), laptop computer, sleek but supernaturally-augmented pocket pistol, various information-uplink and longevity enhancements

The Pentex Connection

A powerful once-Weaver abomination was subverted and let loose upon the Old West. Thirty-one flavors of perversion and pollution spewed unchecked from the factories and families of the world's "civilized" nations. Countless numbers of Gaia's so-called children join the Dancers of the Black Spiral in turning to the Wyrn.

Why should it come as any surprise that even the Technocracy's got its corrupt elements?

Although the particulars are kept understandably hush-hush, what little has leaked makes it clear that:

(a) Some form of alliance exists between Pentex and the Technocracy's Special Projects Division; and

(b) Their union is far from seamless.

Having trouble with that last part? Just ask any Technocrat head muck-a-muck — he'll tell you that Pentex is a useful megacorp like any other, a place to plant certain scientists if you really want results. Now take the elevator four stories up and ask that Pentex exec — she'll tell you that The Company introduced *itself* to the tech-mages, so as to offer their True Master (the Wyrn, if you're having trouble reading between the lines) a new inroad into this world.

Want a third opinion? Rustle up any three mages you can find and ask them: they'll tell you that both Pentex and the SPD are little fish in a big pond, the conglomerate powerplayer calling itself "the Syndicate." How about a fourth? The UseNet diehards on the alt.conspiracy newsgroup know the *real* story — it's all a sham, a corporate front for the military-industrial complex that's been running the show since Vietnam and Desert Storm.

Maybe we can all just agree to disagree...

• **Navigator:** Explorers, manned-probe pilots, and thrill-seekers, these intrepid adventurers embody the best and worst qualities of Ferdinand Magellan, Jacques Cousteau, and James T. Kirk. The Technocracy's push to further human knowledge has ventured beyond all earthly frontiers; these self-proclaimed "Void Engineers" now focus their attentions on oceanic trenches outer space, and even parallel dimensions in the quest to discover.

Character Creation: Attributes 9/6/4, Abilities 20/8/3, Backgrounds 10, Willpower 7, Gifts/Magick Dice Pool 12/5

Suggested Attributes: Assume ratings of 2 in all Physical Attributes, 3 in Social, and 4 in Mental.

Suggested Abilities: Alertness 2, Computer 2, Dodge 2, Empathy 2, Enigmas 3, Firearms 2, Linguistics 2, Lore (Umbral) 4, Occult 3, Pilot (various) 3

Suggested Areas of Expertise: Correspondence (location sense, scrying, teleportation), Spirit ("Dimensional Science" — as Garou spirit Gifts, with the caveat that Technocrats regard the Umbra as "deep space" and Umbrood as "aliens")

Equipment: Envirosuit, flechette or E-M stunner weaponry (designed for minimal penetration so as not to puncture vessel hulls), portable diagnostic/sensory instrumentation, prototype Umbral craft, universal translator

• **Propagandist:** These exceedingly grim operatives comprise the Technocracy's secret police. A sinister cabal of observers, psychoanalysts, and torturers, these insidious agents work towards a "New World Order" of obedience and unity. The tools and techniques made available to this neo-Gestapo (drugs, hypnotherapy, experimental sleepteacher apparatus, historical rewrites, even subliminal messaging embedded in popular media) are evergrowing and plentiful — but, as any agent will tell you, you can't make an omelet without breaking a few eggs.

Character Creation: Attributes 7/6/5, Abilities 18/7/4, Backgrounds 10, Willpower 9, Gifts/Magick Dice Pool 10/4

Suggested Attributes: Assume ratings of 2 in all Physical Attributes, 3 to 4 in Social, and 3 to 4 in Mental.

Suggested Abilities: Alertness 2, Computer 3, Dodge 2, Etiquette 3, Hypnosis 4, Investigation 2, Leadership 2, Medicine 3, Psychology 5, Subterfuge 4

Suggested Areas of Expertise: Mind (command, conditioning, emotional response (esp. fear), subliminal control, telepathy), Spirit (limited sensory powers only — "identify supernatural," "sense reality deviant," etc.)

Equipment: Cassette-driven Dictaphone, nondescript grey suit, numerous case files, pneumatic syringe, truth serum

• **Soldier:** Shock troops whose tools and talents (cybernetic, genetic, or otherwise) have been honed to a preternatural edge, these enlistees occupy the front line of the war for reality. Single-minded, unswervingly loyal, and brutally efficient, they come in as many varieties (full-conversion cyborgs, genetically-engineered supersoldiers, Frankenstein-esque constructs, vat-grown "Men in Black," and even more outlandish creations) as there are battles to fight.

Character Creation: Attributes 11/6/3, Abilities 20/8/3, Backgrounds 5, Willpower 5, Gifts/Magick Dice Pool 9/3

Suggested Attributes: Assume ratings of 4 or 5 (or higher) in all Physical Attributes, 1 or 2 (if that) in Social, and 2 or 3 in Mental.

Suggested Abilities: Alertness 3, Athletics 2, Brawl 3, Computer 1, Dodge 3, Firearms 4, Intimidation 2, Melee 3, Survival 2

Suggested Areas of Expertise: Forces (energy weapons, protective screens), Life (healing, regeneration, combative augmentations)

Equipment: Armored endo/exoskeleton (treat as heavy armor, with two additional soak dice due to advanced materials), passive (infrared/motion-sensitive/starlight) surveillance systems, ultra-high-tech ordnance (bio-boosted natural weaponry, plasma rifles, railguns, high-explosive armor-piercing munitions), last-resort self-destruct mechanism

• **Technician:** Contrary to popular belief, it is the silent majority of smock-clad scientists, rather than diehard space marines or immoral Orwellian operatives, that make up the Technocracy's rank and file. Generally peace-loving pioneers in their respective disciplines, these researchers are devoted body and soul to the betterment of humanity, and are impassive to their superiors' political agendas — or the ends they will ultimately use to justify their means.

Character Creation: Attributes 9/5/3, Abilities 18/7/4, Backgrounds 7, Willpower 6, Gifts/Magick Dice Pool 10/4
Suggested Attributes: Assume ratings of 1 or 2 in all Physical Attributes, 2 or 3 in Social, and at least 4 or 5 in Mental.

Suggested Abilities: Alertness 2, Computer 4, Dodge 2, Etiquette 2, Investigation 3, Medicine 2-5 (field-dependent) Research 3, Science 5

Suggested Areas of Expertise: One or two of the following: Entropy (intermolecular order/breakdown, probability), Forces (antigravity, energy alternatives), Life (genetic engineering, pharmacology), Matter (material science, subatomic particles), Prime (the essence of reality, that which makes magick possible (and, to a lesser extent, caerns, Gifts, vampiric Disciplines, and other supernatural phenomena)), Time (acceleration/compression/dilation)

Equipment: Laboratory smock, palmtop computer, professional fellowship, protective eyewear, numerous 'self-renewing' governmental research grants

• **Renegade:** Past schisms have left scattered handfuls of once-Technocrat malcontents strewn throughout the nooks and crannies of the multiverse. Although they still cling to the remnants of their magickal heritage — most renegade Technomancers identify closely with the Gibsonesque 'cypherpunk' image, or, still worse, the mad scientist stereotype common to B-movies and Jules Verne — the allegiances and attitudes of these hunted outcasts could not be more diametrically opposed to those of their former masters. Some are not above working with Garou or other supernaturals toward a common end.

Character Creation: Attributes 8/5/3, Abilities 18/9/5, Backgrounds 7, Willpower 6, Gifts/Magick Dice Pool 9/3
Suggested Attributes: Assume ratings of 1, 2 or (rarely) 3 in all Physical and Social, 4 or 5 in Mental.

Suggested Abilities: Alertness 2, Computer 4-5, Dodge 2, Firearms 2, Investigation 2, Medicine 2-3, Occult 4, Research 3, Science 4-5

Suggested Areas of Expertise: Any from the above templates, with strong tendencies towards Correspondence, Forces, Life, and/or Matter

Environment: Cutting-edge computer setup, goggles, VR rig, cramped laboratory space stuffed to the gills with all manner of gadgets and machinery (many of which are simply too huge to be moved)

DNA: Developmental Neogenetics Amalgamated Genetic Research Today for a More Perfect Tomorrow

*If your delusions of grandeur and an evil eye
Give you the idea that you're too good to die
Then they bury you from your head to your feet
From the disease of conceit.*

— Bob Dylan, "Disease of Conceit"

Suffer the Children

Dr. Karen Pendergrast stood to shake hands with the couple. How many times had she seen people like this — pinched faces, damp hands and dry mouths? What she'd tell them today would be no different than what she'd told dozens of parents, mothers and fathers who'd bred anomalies and deviations into the gene pool.

"Thank you for coming, Mr. and Mrs. Sloat. I'm glad we could talk about Rebecca's condition."

The father cleared his throat. "Doctor, we just want to know if our girl's gonna be all right. We've taken care of her since she was three and left an orphan."

Pendergrast looked quickly over her notes. Ah, so the girl's adopted. That explains why the parents aren't carriers. "Well, the good news is that with some basic gene mapping, we've isolated Rebecca's problem. The difficult part is figuring out the treatment. Gene therapy is an exciting field, but it's still new. We're learning things, dramatically successful procedures, every day."

"So you're saying that tomorrow you may know something, but not today?" asked Mrs. Sloat.

The doctor shrugged. "Well, that's a simplified version, but yes, that's the dilemma. However," she held up a hand, "there's a great deal of hope. What Rebecca needs are more intensive tests, so I'd like to admit her as soon as possible to one of our facilities. For an indeterminate amount of time."

Mr. Sloat was doing his best to hold back tears. His wife was more introspective. "I don't really understand how all this happened," she began. "One day Rebecca was fine, then the next... I mean, all teenagers go through mood swings and defiance, but not like this! Broken furniture, disappearances, refusing to talk to us for weeks. I thought the worst, I thought maybe she'd been taking drugs..." Her voice trailed off.

You don't know half of the consequences to humanity your daughter poses, thought Pendergrast. "No, not drugs," she said aloud. "This is physiological. It's a tangible mutagenic effect. And eventually, we can cure it." The rest of the

conversation fell into trite phrases about length of stay, consent forms and visiting restrictions.

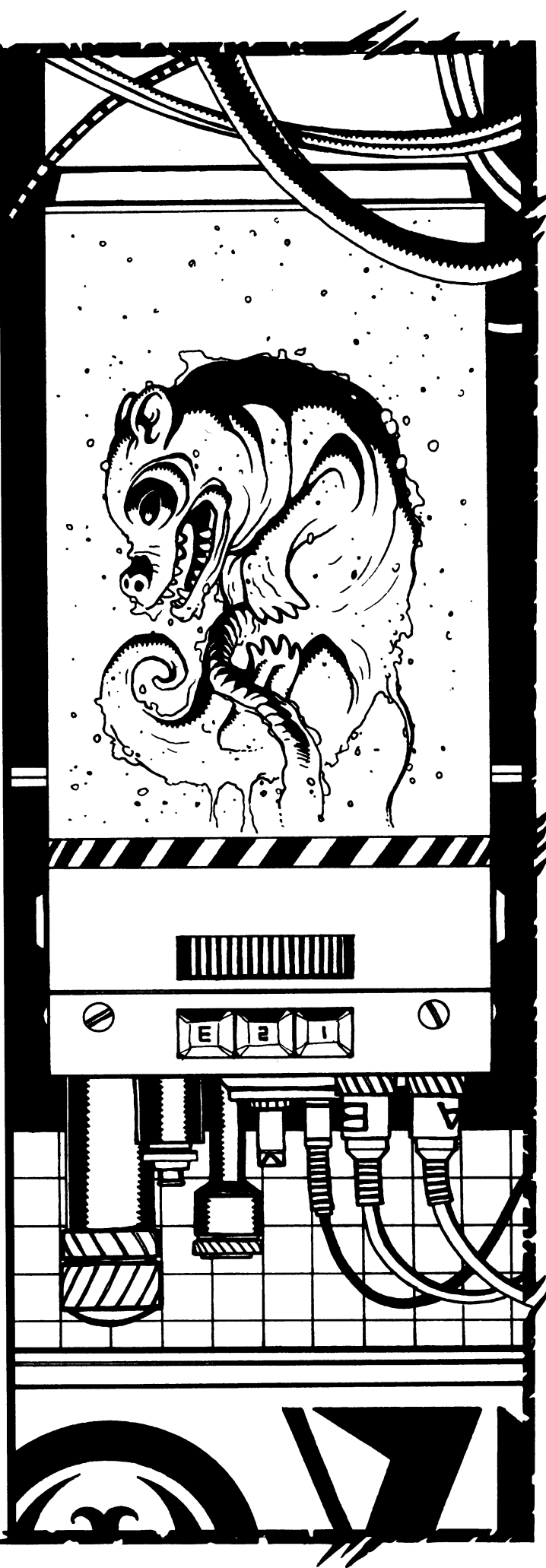
The secretary led the parents away, and Pendergrast switched on the large screen TV on the far wall. The picture showed a young girl, quite pretty in a wide-eyed sort of way. She was screaming for her freedom, alone in the padded, soundproof cell. No mirrors, no glass, nothing in which the girl could see her own reflection. Pendergrast looked through the file and noted that the nutrition program would start tomorrow, followed by a detailed genome analysis. Good, she thought, it's behaving according to the symptoms we've catalogued. This specimen may give us the breakthrough we've been looking for.

Welcome to DNA

DNA — Developmental Neogenetics Amalgamated — is a place where good intentions pave a road to hell. At least, that's how the Garou see it. To most normal people who understand the company's operations, DNA is a pretty good idea. With several offices around the United States and Canada, usually near major medical research centers, scientists are able to network their studies and keep abreast of the latest developments in genetic engineering. In the public eye, DNA wants to save a lot of lives by stomping out deadly genetic diseases and conditions, such as cancer, cystic fibrosis and diabetes.

But there's a darker side to DNA's work. Many of the company's scientists are so dazzled by their own visions of a perfect genetic world, they're blind to basic research ethics. Objective in the extreme, they often view their patients as specimens with physical anomalies that must be wiped out rather than as creatures with human emotions and psychological needs. Along with gene therapy, some of the scientists also work on germ warfare projects; their perspective is that if the human species' genetic strands get too tangled, well, it just may be easier to salvage the best and get rid of the rest. What DNA and its employees fail to see is that they suffer from a disease of conceit and pride far worse than anything the Garou may inherit.

How do the werewolves fit into this picture? About six or seven years ago, a young and naive Glass Walker stumbled right into a DNA lab; he thought he'd found the latest in cybernetic technology. What the poor Garou really discovered was what it was like to be taken apart and put back together again...and still remain technically alive. From those initial experiments, DNA discovered quite a bit, enough to make them sit up and take notice of certain reports of "lycanthropy" and unexplained animal attacks. Their good detective work eventually allowed them to capture a lupus Child of Gaia; they were fascinated that the same genetic phenomenon could manifest in canids as well as humans. More unfortunate werewolves followed these two, along with several Kinfolk. DNA researchers now think they've discovered a new genetic disorder, and they're determined to wipe it out before it spreads too far in the population.



A word of caution: DNA and its employees aren't generally mages, vampires, Drones or fomori. They're normal humans for the most part and don't have Gifts or magickal effects at their disposal. While the Technocracy's Progenitors admire some of DNA's tactics and occasionally supply DNA with equipment, they usually stay out of the company's affairs. To their minds, these Sleepers are doing good work on their own without getting involved in the complicated affairs of the Ascension War.

Lexicon

No, this isn't Genetics 101, but Storytellers may find it useful to know what all the words DNA scientists *love* to toss around mean in plain terms:

- **Allele** — The various forms of a gene; usually either dominant or recessive.
- **Carrier** — Someone who carries genes for a condition but doesn't exhibit symptoms; the DNA term for Kinfolk.
- **Chromosome** — Long threadlike groups of genes made of DNA and protein.
- **Consanguinity** — "Same blood." Breeding between close relatives that can result in recessive traits becoming apparent in the phenotype.
- **DNA** — Deoxyribonucleic acid; carries the basic building blocks of heredity.
- **Dominant allele** — In a heterozygous pair of genes, the gene that overrides the recessive part of the pairing.
- **Epistasis** — Where one gene interferes with the expression of another.
- **Gene** — Units of information, located on the chromosomes, that carry hereditary information in the form of DNA. A pair of genes exists for each inherited trait, one gene supplied by each parent.
- **Genetics** — The study of biological inheritance.
- **Genome** — The complete complement of an organism's genes. Genome mapping is laying out the positions on genes where certain traits are found.
- **Genotype** — Genetic makeup that's not visibly apparent; it's the code in your genes, not necessarily what shows up in your appearance. For example, people with brown eyes might be heterozygous for the trait (a brown-eyed gene and a blue-eyed gene) or homozygous (two brown-eyed genes). To know for sure, you'd check the genotype; since the gene for brown eyes is dominant, the person will always have brown eyes in the phenotype, the visibly expressed trait.
- **GLS** — Genetic Lycanthropic Syndrome; the "disease" DNA believes is afflicting certain humans and wolves. GLS-1H or GLS-1L is the term they apply to homids and lupus; GLS-2 is in reference to metis.
- **Heterozygous** — Having two different alleles for a given trait.
- **Homozygous** — Having two identical alleles for a given trait.

• **Mutation** — An unexpected change in DNA that results in genetic diversity; can be both harmful and beneficial.

• **Phenotype** — Traits that are visibly expressed, such as blue eyes or black fur.

• **Pleiotropy** — When a single gene can have multiple effects, influencing a number of characteristics in the genotype and phenotype. This is one of the factors that makes genetics in higher order organisms so incredibly complicated.

• **Recessive allele** — In a heterozygous pair of genes, the gene that is overridden by the dominant part of the pairing. It's only present in the phenotype when there is a homozygous pairing of genes.

The Weaver and DNA

In her ideal manifestation, the Weaver nurtures structure, pattern and stability to allow growth and discovery. But in her mad state, these aspects twist to enforce stagnation, inertia and rigidity. This is the path DNA treads. The company wants any deviations from normal genetic patterns eliminated, and too bad if that means ending useful mutations along the way. Anything that's not part of their vision of what's right, genetically speaking, is wrong. Some of the scientists in DNA have discarded their original goals of helping humankind, while others have developed a skewed and stagnant view of what those goals entail; most

A Tangled Helix: Useful Sources

Genetics, genome mapping and gene therapy are hot topics for writers, so there's no shortage of material for Storytellers willing to do a little reading and research. Popular fiction about genetics, especially related to germ warfare and human reproductive rights, have come from such authors as Patricia Cornwell, Robin Cook, Michael Crichton, Stephen King, Julian May and even Tom Clancy. For the more serious scholar, the revised 1991 edition of *The Cartoon Guide to Genetics* by Andrew Read and Tom Strachan is immensely useful. *Altered Fates: Gene Therapy and the Retooling of Human Life* by Jeff Lyon and Peter Gomer looks more at the ethical questions behind genome mapping and genetic engineering. Even movies and TV have jumped on the bandwagon with *Gattaca*, about a future with genetically ranked humans, and *Wild Palms*, which mixes politics, genetics and cybertechnology into the surreal. At the least, Storytellers using DNA in a chronicle will want to consult a basic biology text or encyclopedia just to get a good grip on the facts.

of DNA's staff have lost their creativity along the way. Science is naturally a logical and analytical process, but it also grows from sudden insights and bright flashes of innovative, lateral thinking. As unwitting human agents of the Weaver, the staff of DNA has placed far more value on structure than process.

One result is that DNA simply doesn't buy any supernatural explanations for werewolves, and the scientists would be loathe to listen to any mage, even a Technomancer, talk about how perception, thought or high-tech gizmos can alter reality. They think the shapechangers are merely victims of an unfortunate genetic anomaly that one day will be cured. DNA scientists firmly believe that the werewolf legends of the past are clear examples of mutant strains running rampant in small, inbreeding populations. Any attempts by desperate, captured Garou to explain their heritage as ordained by Gaia or part of a natural cycle is disregarded by DNA's scientists. They believe that *everything* has a rational explanation with a scientific basis. Anyone who suggests otherwise is in need of serious psychological help.

History and Influence

Environmental factors often intervene along the path from genotype to phenotype. The phenotype is the product of a complex interaction between an organism's genetic makeup and its environment. An individual is locked into its inherited genotype, but phenotype may change.

— Dr. Neil Campbell, *Biology*

DNA's beginnings were surprisingly benign. About 15 years before DNA bagged its first werewolf, DNA's founder Dr. Mitchell Howak had a pressing issue on his mind, the illness of his childhood friend Alan Kenchlow (see **Project Twilight**). Mitchell, a medical doctor with a Ph.D. in genetics, had overseen Alan's treatment for Lou Gehrig's disease ever since finishing his medical training. Alan, a brilliant scientist himself, eagerly assisted Mitchell, hoping that their combined efforts might lead to a cure. Funding was not a problem; both young men had plenty of old family money. It was a natural progression for them to found DNA in 1976; the company's mission statement described their goals as "unlocking the complex interactions of mind, spirit and body by understanding the building blocks of life." The research staff grew and eventually, DNA opened several branches in the US and Canada.

In 1985, Alan Kenchlow left DNA on friendly terms to take a position at the FBI Special Affairs Division (SAD). While still passionate about research, he needed more variety than working in a lab allowed; what Alan didn't tell Mitchell Howak was that he wanted opportunities to put his occult knowledge to better use. Things continued as normal at DNA until 1992. One moonless October night, a young Glass Walker broke into DNA's Palo Alto facility. He'd gotten a tip from a hacker that DNA was building some fantastic cyberware, and the unwary young Garou couldn't resist the temptation.

Interrogation

Werewolves are soldiers of Gaia, some of the strongest and toughest critters in the Tellurian. So how is it that these mighty Garou are spilling their beans to a bunch of humans at DNA?

First of all, DNA has only had access to about a dozen test subjects, lupus and homid, and a few Kinfolk. Much of what they've learned has come from clandestine observations and following up any suspicious scraps of information from the media, urban legends and even rural folk tales. Their knowledge in large part is the result of careful deductions; not all of it has been proven beyond a reasonable doubt. Various tests on the subjects help corroborate this information, and a werewolf's verbal assent isn't required.

Second, even the hardiest creatures have vulnerabilities. Fianna, for example, may have silver tongues, but their will is generally weak. Might not a Child of Gaia tell the enemy what they want to know if a packmate's life depended on her cooperation? Plus, everyone has a breaking point when deprived of sleep, social interaction and basic sustenance.

Finally, DNA has at its disposal a wide array of tools to make the werewolves talk. These range from psychological manipulation to drugs and implements to cause pain. Most scientists find such methods crude and distasteful, but they also think the information is worth using these techniques. Finding out exactly what they want to know is usually only a matter of time and patience.

Captured not too long after breaching the lab, the panicked werewolf tried desperately to change forms, ending up in Hispo. That tore it. The guards shot to kill, wounding the Garou enough to throw him into a makeshift holding cell. A biologist on duty darted the werewolf and kept him out until Howak arrived. The scientist was both furious and fascinated; here was some sort of genetic anomaly the likes of which he'd never seen, and the creature had managed to break into the lab almost effortlessly. Howak called his old friend Kenchlow and asked him to fly out from Washington. To Mitchell's surprise, Alan

was appalled, not at the creature, but at Howak's disregard for basic human rights. Kenchlow had never seen a Garou, but he more or less knew what they were and understood their sacred connections to the earth and to the spirit worlds. Alan demanded the werewolf's release; Howak refused. The two parted bitterly that night, never to speak again.

Howak's motivations were twisted, the source of many years' frustration at seeking cures for genetic disorders and finding few results. Now here was a new, uncharted disease, a project where he could make tangible progress. Mitchell Howak and his staff kept the werewolf alive for many months, performing countless experiments on the specimen. The learning curve was high in this period, and DNA gathered data on such useful topics as the Delirium, stepping sideways and the use of silver. DNA named the newly discovered condition genetic lycanthropic syndrome, or GLS. Eventually, they euthanized the test subject, which by then was only a pitiful gibbering thing. Later, DNA captured a Child of Gaia lupus and then eventually brought in some Kinfolk. Howak added behavioral scientists and wildlife biologists to his staff in 1994 to do more fieldwork on social aspects of wolves and humans with GLS.

An even more bizarre turn in the tale deals with the disappearance of Dr. Mitchell Howak. In summer 1997, after DNA enjoyed a tremendous period of growth and discovery, Howak vanished from his Miami apartment. Checks of his other residences near DNA facilities turned up no trace of the scientist. Surprisingly, his old friend Kenchlow assisted with agents from the SAD and FBI, with no leads forthcoming. Not a single strand of hair, ransom note or fiber was found. Howak apparently was just swallowed up by the earth itself. Maybe Kenchlow has a clue, but he's not saying anything.

Thus, business continues as usual at DNA. Sendlar was elected the new executive director by the research team. He and his staff continue the work much as Howak had envisioned, with a little more emphasis on the value of biotechnology. The scientists are currently making plans for obtaining experimental and control groups for testing their first gene therapy strains to cure GLS, perhaps as early as 2010.

What DNA Knows

First and foremost, DNA staff members are interested in the genetic heritage of the werewolves. Discovering more about the complex code of proteins that produces genetic lycanthropic syndrome, GLS, takes precedence over any concerns for ethics and human suffering. Needless to say, this view would be anathema to most scientists. Those at DNA believe the risk to humanity from GLS is so great, extreme measures are justified. GLS is a disease that has deadly potential and must be eradicated as quickly as possible.

DNA gathers information in two main ways: observations in the field and testing in the lab. The company has sent both biological and social scientists out to watch areas they've pinpointed as statistically probable sites for occurrences of



GLS, based on media reports and even hearsay from locals. Such areas include the Appalachian regions of the eastern US, several major North American cities and certain tribal reservations in the west. Candidates for the lab are selected by fortuitous sampling, as randomly as possible. In other words, if agents spot a victim of GLS, they try to bag the human or wolf quickly and quietly, arranging for immediate air transportation to the nearest DNA facility. While DNA wishes otherwise, discovering GLS victims by happenstance is much more common than making highly planned and organized capture expeditions. DNA agents usually travel in teams of eight; all are fully armed with conventional weapons and special capture kits. All agents are trained in working with large animals and dangerous human targets.

DNA believes that a series of recessive genes working together in a rare and complex combination of multiple alleles, pleiotropy and epistasis is responsible for GLS. Those people who are carriers of the disease seem to have all the necessary genes for GLS to occur, but these genes are somehow not in the required combination. DNA scientists know of two specific forms of the disease. Victims with GLS-1, DNA postulates, have one recessive gene that affects several others to cause initial onset of the disease, often around puberty. They use the specific terms GLS-1H to refer to the human strain and GLS-1L for the lupine version. Those persons who have two recessive genes, GLS-2, seem to have the worst cases observed, with onset of symptoms apparently beginning in early childhood. DNA is objective enough to concede that the victims with one recessive gene, who manifest GLS-1 around puberty, have some survival advantages. They're usually stronger, faster and hardier than unaffected humans. The healing rate of these victims is extraordinary. DNA likens GLS in some ways to sickle cell anemia; persons with two recessives for the disease have sickle cell anemia, while those with one recessive gene have resistance to malaria, a definite advantage.

Nonetheless, the most irritating thing about GLS is that it simply isn't detectable by random tests; there's no way to analyze a blood sample, even on a genetic level, and determine if it came from a lycanthrope or not. Naturally, DNA hopes that their genome mapping project will help solve this problem; until then, they largely have to rely on careful observation.

- **The breeds:**

DNA believes that victims of GLS-2, metis in other words, hold the most promise for future research. These are the subjects who show the most visible and extensive signs of the disease; DNA has also noted that the natural form of these victims is that of a hybrid human-wolf. The social scientists in the company have noted that in group dynamics, other werewolves tend to shun the metis. A recent breakthrough has led DNA to discover that metis come from the mating of two GLS-1 victims, either homid-homid or lupus-lupus; they haven't observed a lupus-homid mating. However, DNA doesn't know that metis are sterile; these werewolves have got



the right functional parts, after all, and no DNA scientists have put a breeding pair of metis together...yet.

DNA knows GLS-1 attacks both humans and wolves. The scientists are intrigued by the similarities in the disease in both species; while certain illnesses such as rabies, Ebola and mange can be passed from animal to human, these are viral or parasitic diseases. Genetic disorders affecting two species in such a similar way are much less common. Most of their research in this area concentrates on how GLS crosses from human to wolf and vice-versa.

- **Werewolf forms:**

One reason the scientists are so certain that GLS is a single disease with only slight differentiation is that all victims are able to undergo an identical pattern of body contortions. DNA has identified the five forms of Homid, Glabro, Crinos, Hispo and Lupus, referring to these as Sapiens, Bestial, Hybrid, Dire and Lupine respectively. Since the youngest metis they've captured was around eight years old, DNA has yet to discover that these werewolves are born in Hybrid form. When working on a specimen, technicians usually stun or drug the subject into a submissive and suggestive state so that it will not take on the dangerous Hybrid form.

One scientific aspect of these body contortions has DNA stumped — the variation in mass from form to form. Different researchers have pondered the issue for some time, offering no viable answers. The best working hypothesis seems to be that the vast hormonal surges in the bloodstream of GLS victims cause the changes in mass, although this growth pattern still defies the basic laws of physics. DNA is now considering hiring on a theoretical physicist to develop a new corollary to Newton's laws, one that can explain the increases and decreases in bulk.

- **The tribes:**

DNA has no clue that there are 13 different tribes with widely varied customs and traditions. Fortunately, they also have no idea that the Silver Fangs are so, er, closely related to one another; this tribe in particular would allow DNA to make many advances in studying werewolf genetics. What the scientists do know is that certain geographic areas and family lines have a propensity for GLS to spread. They've noted the highest occurrences of the disease among those with Celtic, Native American, Germanic and East European ancestry, an unusual combination, with less prevalence among people with Mediterranean, African or Asian heritage.

- **Kinfolk:**

Some of the sociologists and anthropologists at DNA have gleaned that victims of GLS-1 tend to marry and reproduce with carriers more than with unaffected humans and wolves. This is exactly opposite of what might be expected for self-preservation and protection of the gene pool, since this breeding pattern produces higher, not lower, instances of GLS. So, some of the social scientists have suggested that victims of GLS-1 are *actively* trying to spread the disease among their offspring by mating with carriers. The scientists are also quick to point out that these same victims

avoid breeding with each other, so they realize on some level that there are consequences associated with GLS-2. To what extent victims consciously realize they're making such choices, the DNA social scientists have no idea.

DNA has found more than a few unknowing carriers, and often these people have been the most helpful volunteers, eager to rid themselves of genetic anomalies. With their cooperation, the company has made a number of significant advances. Several of the unknowing carriers have told tales about eccentric and unusual relatives, giving DNA the chance to plan and execute carefully staged capture procedures.

- **The Delirium:**

DNA discovered the Delirium right away; when the company's first capture subject switched to Crinos, most of the technicians bolted, fainted or temporarily turned into drooling idiots. Quickly, the scientists hypothesized that in Hybrid form, victims of GLS exude dangerous pheromones. So, DNA tried putting staff into hazardous disease encounter suits with self-contained breathing apparatus. When that didn't prove effective, DNA looked for a biochemical solution, a drug that would depress the psychotic and hypertensive reactions of humans in the presence of a GLS victim without causing sedation and lack of mental and physical coordination. They finally came up with Methyldelerian, a synthesized drug currently available in oral and injectable forms. Any personnel who will be working with GLS victims takes a dose of the medication before beginning their procedures. The oral form lasts longer but also takes about half an hour to become effective. The injectable form works immediately but doesn't last as long. Since all humans have different physiologies and metabolisms, DNA scientists monitor their time spent with GLS victims carefully; no one wants the meds to wear off before a procedure is completed.

- **Garou cosmology and traditions:**

DNA neither knows nor cares about the Triat, rites, auspices, moots or the Litany. The company is aware of the fact that historically, victims of certain diseases like leprosy have banded together in colonies and developed their own cultural rituals and mores. DNA chalks up any mutterings that captured werewolves or Kinfolk may have about the Wyrms and such to delusional ravings or the double speak typical of a pseudo-culture.

- **Social behavior:**

The addition of social scientists to the DNA staff in 1994 has increased the company's understanding of werewolf behavior. The scientists understand that victims of GLS are seldom loners, preferring to live in extended family units or wolf packs. They also realize that within these social units, the victims have certain pecking orders based most often on physical strength and cunning. DNA has quickly noted that victims of GLS take care of their own; a few facilities and numerous personnel have sustained serious damage from werewolf attacks. Increased security measures are a big priority as DNA plans to step up its capture program in the near future.

Memo to: Dr. Karen Pendergrast
From: Jim Mather
Re: Subject D2M

Pursuant to question 34 on form 12, subject D2M gave an unusual response I thought you might find interesting. As you know, the question deals with mating and breeding practices. When I asked if the subject had ever had intercourse with another GLS victim, he immediately had a major attack. In his madness, he raved about "sins against Gaia" or something of that sort. Should I refer this to the psych and sociology folks? This may be an angle on the self-preservation theory: the victims themselves try to forcibly limit spread of the adverse genes through social taboos, yet only enforce the taboos against those whose phenotype clearly expresses the traits. Would like to pursue this with your OK.

• **Mirrors and silver:**

After losing a valuable specimen in 1995, DNA played and replayed the security tape of the cell, only to discover that the GLS victim had somehow used the cell's reflective steel mirror to escape. The scientists knew that putting a glass mirror in the cell was a sure invitation for the specimen's suicide, but they had no idea a test subject would find a use for the steel one. The stepping sideways issue has DNA truly baffled. The best rationale the scientists have devised suggests that the specimen somehow used the reflection and bright overhead lights to hide himself until the cell door opened, then escaped from the lab. A lesser accepted theory is that the subject used the mirror to hypnotize himself into a delusion of invisibility, then somehow pulled one of the technicians into the delusion, thus allowing his escape. Regardless, no holding cells at DNA facility have any reflective surfaces.

Using the notion that perception creates reality, DNA security now carry silver bullets in their weapons. If the victims of GLS believe they are werewolves, say the DNA psychologists, then they should also believe that silver bullets will cause them harm. The more logical reason, scientists suggest, is that silver somehow interacts with the genes for GLS on a molecular level to cause tissue damage and inhibit the hyperactive healing process. Extensive tests in the lab and in the field quickly showed this supposition to be true, much to the misfortune of the Garou.

• **Other lycanthropes:**

DNA has overlooked the presence of other shapeshifters, at least for the present. Some Garou have suggested that DNA is the Weaver's bolt of retribution against the werewolves for taking up arms against the other Changing Breeds and upsetting her pattern. Others say it's just a matter of time before DNA notices the presence of the Bastet, Corax and Ratkin. Several Philodox are urging for a meet-

An Ungrateful Guest

Nicole Preston woke up with an aching head. Where was she? The girl lay on a plain bunk in a featureless room. A plastic bottle of water sat by her head, and a cool jet of air blew in from a duct on the ceiling. Nicole wasn't wearing the jeans and sweatshirt she remembered, but now had on a loose tan cotton shirt and elastic-waist pants to match. Plain socks had replaced her hiking boots. She'd showed up at the trail marker right on time, just like she'd met folks from the nature center a dozen times before. But then, whenever it was, she'd fainted. Or had she? Nicole felt something akin to a deep bruise on her shoulder and looking, saw a light welt and an ugly swollen blister there. The young woman started shaking then, wondering if this had something to do with the family. She couldn't let them down! Whatever happened, she had to prove her strength and worth, even if she was just a lowly Kinfolk, never as good as her father and sister. The shaking stopped.

The door opened soundlessly, and a tall bearded man walked into the room, flanked by two other men pushing a cart. The man wore a labcoat and despite his dark hair and handsome features, Nicole didn't like him; his eyes reminded her of flat blue ice with no reflection of light.

"Ah, good morning, Ms. Preston. I imagine you've got something of a headache this morning. I assure it will pass quickly, especially if you drink plenty of water." He smiled a bit. "I'm Dr. Sendlar, and I'm most eager to work with you today. It's not often my schedule permits me to do more than a modicum of research. So the samples you provide will allow me some quality time in the lab."

"Samples?" Nicole croaked, her mouth suddenly dry.

"Yes, of course. My notes on you indicate that you're a carrier of genetic lycanthropic syndrome, what we call GLS, but that the disease isn't apparent in your phenotype. Why is that, I wonder? We know the gene is recessive, but my colleagues and I know it's much more complicated than that. You must tell me about your family and whether they shows signs of the disease. And then there's a liver biopsy, more blood tests, ova samples, you know, that sort of thing. Shouldn't take too long and then you can have a good rest until tomorrow. We're so fortunate to have you here."

Nicole began shaking again and would've screamed except that she was too afraid to even draw a breath.

ing of all the Changing Breeds to discuss the common threat of DNA before it's too late; however, such a meeting probably has a snowball's chance in hell of ever convening.

Goals

Scientists are people who are future-oriented.

—Dr. James D. Watson, Nobel prize-winning geneticist

DNA's scientists may have lost sight of their ethics and mission to understand the delicate connections between genetics, the body and the spirit, but they're still precise and methodical. Every year, Sendlar and his associates set future



priorities and lay out the steps necessary to reach those goals. They also periodically reevaluate the feasibility of projects and make changes as needed to facilitate the company's growth and development.

Eliminate GLS

Eradicating genetic lycanthropic syndrome is top priority at DNA, receiving about 50% of research and development allocated funds and resources. Most of the money goes towards hiring highly qualified staff, purchasing the best equipment and paying for field and lab work. The scientists believe the key to eliminating GLS is to gain the fullest understanding possible of how it corrupts a normal human's genetic code; hence the great need for research subjects. DNA's staff believes that gene therapy might eventually be able to cure humans and wolves afflicted with GLS.

Lycanthropic Genome Mapping Project

Late 20th century scientists have engaged in the process of mapping out the entire human genome, over 100,000 genes, a feat that will take years of work. DNA's scientists have launched a similar project to map the genome of GLS victims. Their efforts are now focused on GLS-1H and GLS-1L, hoping that having those data in place will make the work on GLS-2 somewhat easier. Approximately 20% of current research and development resources are geared towards this project.

Gene Therapy

Gene therapy is a complex process in its infant stages. The basic idea is that in order to rewrite flawed genetic code, such as that causing a disease or a harmful mutation, corrective genes are inserted into a subject's body. Usually a harmless virus carries the good genes, and with some luck, the virus will attack the bad genes and replace them with the corrective ones. At least, that's how the theory goes. Sometimes, nothing happens at all. Other times, the body reacts wildly and begins to grow anomalous cells that can't be stopped. These cells spread through the system and choke off vital organs; essentially, the subject dies of cancer. DNA's scientists are trying to find the means to let the corrective genes do their job without setting off a wave of cancerous growths. Victims of GLS are perfect test subjects, and DNA has high hopes that gene therapy research will reach way beyond this one disease. Presently, about 10% of research and development resources go towards gene therapy work, though this number will likely increase in the near future.

Perfection of Methyldelerian

The ability to work with GLS subjects depends on sustained immunity to the Delirium, and right now, Methyldelerian is the only way to prevent scientists and technicians from caving in to the effects of GLS pheromones. The problem with the drug is that it is somewhat unpredictable and unwieldy. Until a user has taken it on a

regular basis and learned how it affects her system, she is unsure how long it will last and how precise a dosage is needed. Moreover, the drug occasionally causes liver damage. Ten percent of research and development funds are now slated towards improving Methyldelerian's properties.

Organization

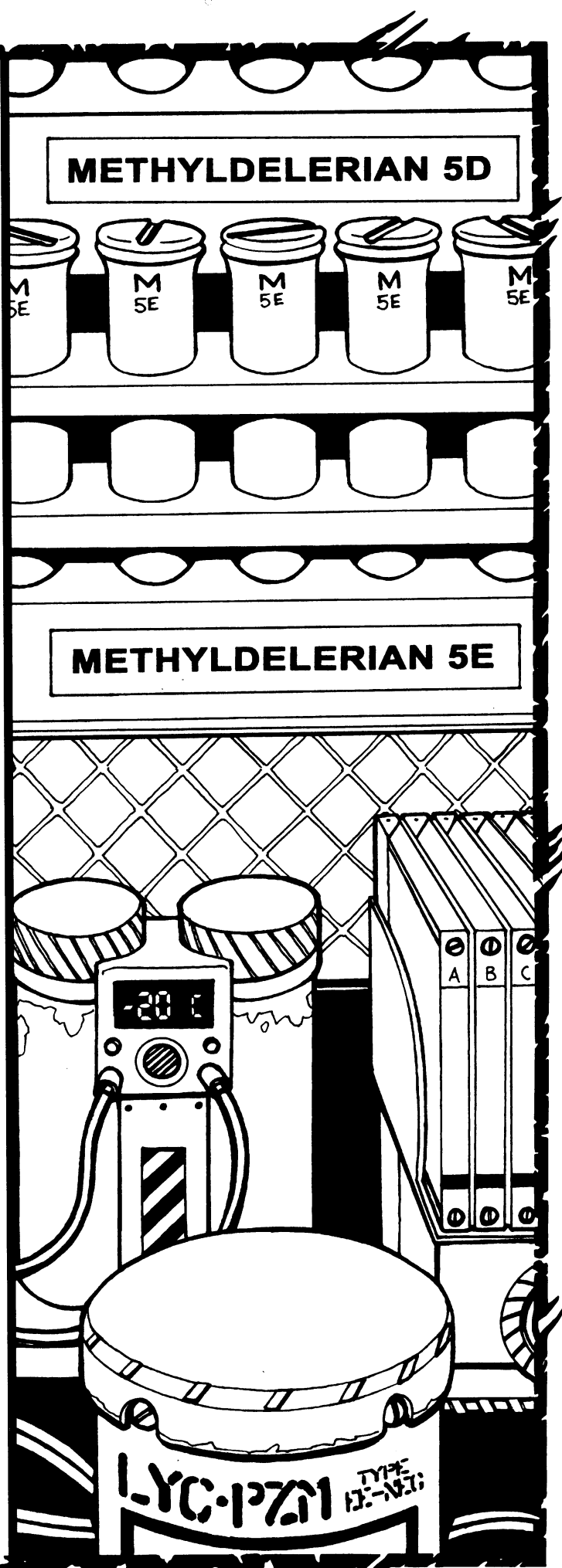
DNA has four large divisions: Management and Finance (MF), Research and Development (RD), Cyberbiotechnology (CBT) and Security and Investigation (SI). Each employee fits somewhere in one of these categories, even though job titles and duties sometimes cross divisions. For example, Dr. Ruben Sendlar is a research scientist with a lab of his own, but he's taken over the job of Executive Director which is in the MF division. Each DNA facility is self-contained and runs on the principle of site-based management; individual facilities are responsible for their own budgets and decision making. The Executive Director's position is more that of a liaison officer than a CEO. While Sendlar can make strong suggestions to individual facility directors on their own offices' matters, he has no real authority to back up his demands if a subordinate chooses to ignore him. However, when a firm consensus can't be reached on policy matters affecting all of DNA, Sendlar is the one who has the tie-breaking vote. Most facility directors choose to stay on his good side and generally follow his suggestions without protest. They're usually too busy in their own labs to pay much attention to boring fiscal and administrative crap anyway.

All facilities are connected by a sophisticated computer network. Here, scientists share their findings and often maintain collegial friendships with each other and some researchers outside of DNA through chatrooms and e-mail. In a lengthy employee orientation, all staff go through a computer boot camp to learn basic procedures of using the Internet, databases and communication. No one can use the excuse of not knowing how to specially encode documents to explain a security leak. Anyone who doesn't get it the first time is either fired or sent back until they get it right, depending on their value to the company.

At least twice a year, DNA holds a week-long conference at a rotating location. This is when the scientists have a chance to meet in person and plan future initiatives. It's during these occasions that DNA staff members share their deepest concerns over the werewolf situation, a matter that's recently taken top priority. Most of the scientists agree: the genetic mutation causing this disease must be eradicated at all costs. If victims already manifesting the mutation can be saved, so much the better, but DNA's task now is to prevent future spread of the deleterious gene to other humans.

Who's Who in DNA

The largest DNA facility is located in the Research Triangle, the area encompassing Raleigh, Durham and Chapel



Hill, North Carolina. It's fairly typical of most facilities in that it's near a major medical and scientific community, has easy access to a large airport and can draw interns and junior staff from local colleges and universities. DNA personnel treat the Research Triangle complex as the home office, but if someone in the Vancouver facility became Executive Director, the locus of control would move to that office; a new Executive Director wouldn't have to relocate.

The following complement of personnel should give the Storyteller a general idea of how to structure DNA staff at all research facilities; most mimic the Research Triangle's bureaucratic structure with only minor changes in organization.

Management and Finance (MF)

The MF division handles the dull, daily affairs of running a scientific corporation. Personnel in this division oversee purchasing, hiring and firing, communication and accounting. Most are petty bureaucrats who are content to do a fairly good job and leave it all behind once they head home. Sendlar discourages eager, aggressive management since the prime objective of the corporation is not profit but progress against genetic disease. He gets rid of gung-ho MBAs who refuse to adopt a more laid-back style.

Dr. Ruben Sendlar

Ruben Sendlar has always thought he was just a bit better than everyone else, save the brightest of his colleagues. For some years he ran a successful medical practice until dealing with stupid patients who wouldn't listen to his advice got the best of him. So he finished a Ph.D. in genetics and went into research full time. Sendlar, like his mentor Mitchell Howak, is driven to find a cure for GLS. While he thinks that management of DNA is boring and predictable, he does it efficiently and well. Nearly all the staff and directors of other DNA facilities respect him and think he's doing a good job as Executive Director. What the scientist enjoys most is spending time in his lab running tests and working out variations for the diversity and spread of GLS. Sendlar dislikes working with test subjects and prefers to leave that to his technicians; when circumstances force him to confront a victim personally, he generally takes a superior and chilly attitude, cloaked by a somewhat professional demeanor. The doctor is in his late 40s; he's slender and fit from playing a lot of racquetball on the weekends. He has contemplated making overtures to Alan Kenchlow at the FBI's Special Affairs Division, suspecting that the man may know more than he's telling about Howak's disappearance.

Alberta Croft

Prim and tightlipped, Alberta Croft wears clothes perpetually five years behind current fashion. She's utterly nonsense about money and despairs that Dr. Sendlar doesn't take a closer interest in paperwork and budgets. Croft is 35 but acts 20 years older and has little social interaction with others at the office. The accountant immensely enjoys the power she wields; no one can purchase so much as a test tube without her approval, and she's ruthless about filling out forms correctly.

A couple of the scientists have complained to Sendlar about Croft, but the Executive Director seldom says anything. After all, without her skills, he'd have to waste precious time dealing with money matters. Croft is safe as long as she continues being a perfectionist tightwad. Anyone who wanted more information about DNA's routines and procedures would uncover a gold mine if they got Croft talking.

Stacey Allen

Sendlar's executive secretary Stacey Allen is a wonder. After a disastrous marriage, she finally got her high school diploma and then worked her way through secretarial school while raising her son Mark, who has cystic fibrosis. Mark is now 13, and his prognosis isn't good; most people with the disease usually die by the late teens or early 20s. Nothing goes on around DNA that Stacey doesn't know about, from birthdays to staff squabbles to Alberta Croft's latest ugly outfit. Most of the staff adore Stacey because she's respectful, helpful and friendly. One reason she took the job at DNA was a vain hope that someone there could help Mark. While GLS is what's on everyone's mind, a few of the younger and most eager scientists have spent a little of their own time working with the boy; unfortunately, time is running out. Stacey is in her early 30s, but hard work and stress over her son have dimmed her once pretty features.

Division RD: Research and Development

RD is the bread and butter of DNA, with the best funding and the most research initiatives. Current major projects are the intensive study of GLS, work on the GLS genome mapping project, gene therapy and perfection of Methyldelerian. Other pet projects running on outside funding include perfecting capture techniques and the study of feral children. While not officially named, most of the scientists look to Dr. Pendergrast as the head of RD; she generally makes the division reports to Sendlar on a monthly basis.

Dr. Karen Pendergrast

A top researcher in biochemistry and genetics, Dr. Pendergrast's genius probably surpasses Sendlar's. She's careful never to threaten the Executive Director's ego because she loves her work too much to risk losing it. Deep inside, the scientist does feel pity for the humans and wolves who have GLS, but she doesn't ever let that sentiment stand in the way of her research. Like Sendlar, she is committed to the view that GLS is a danger too terrible not to attack and destroy at all costs. What Dr. Pendergrast has never told anyone is that she had a beloved young niece whom she suspects had GLS; the girl disappeared on a camping trip, and despite local efforts of the police and sheriff's department, she was never found. Dr. Pendergrast has successfully transferred her pain and frustration of that loss into a driving passion for her work. Nonetheless, she still keeps an eye open for any word of her niece in DNA field reports. In her late 30s, Pendergrast dresses simply but well and has been known to go out on the occasional date.

Sean Coulter

Still in his early 20s, Sean Coulter is a computer wizard. Zooming through MIT by age 18, he worked for several software companies before landing his job at DNA. He'd taken some genetics classes as electives and became interested in mapping gene models in his spare time. A professor's recommendation landed him an interview at DNA where he was hired on the spot. Coulter's work is highly critical for the GLS genome mapping project; his ability to write code that allows for the nearly infinite varieties of genetic combination is hard to find. Coulter is a stereotypical nerd who spends frequent nights and weekends at work. He frequently surfs the 'Net for any chats among GLS victims.

Dr. Narain Sengupta

A wildlife biologist specializing in wolves, Dr. Sengupta is somewhat of an anomaly at DNA. He has a scientific and ordered mind and is devoted to research and the eradication of GLS as much as anyone, but he also has a lot of interest in the holistic view of disease and the environment. Sengupta is a proponent of the Gaia Hypothesis which suggests that the earth is one large organism with diverse and interrelated parts. So before observing wolf packs and attempting to take specimens, he'll often go through a meditation ritual to "get a feel" for the land where he's working. Most of the other scientists snicker at these spiritual undertakings, with the exception of Pendergrast who finds it intriguing. Dr. Sengupta frequently travels to other DNA facilities to lend his expertise on wolf behavior and the study of GLS-1L. The scientist is in his late 30s, though he looks much younger, almost boyish. Lots of visitors mistake him for a college intern on first meeting.

Dr. Judith Grant

A sociologist with strong training in cultural anthropology, Dr. Grant is an expert on patterns of human group behavior, particularly people in cultures with boundaries other than geography and ethnicity. In the past she's studied AIDS patients, persons with deafness and feral children. Now, Grant concentrates on populations that seem to have proportionately high occurrences of GLS, especially those of Celtic and Nordic ancestry. Her speculations have led to the acquisition of two test subjects, a tremendous asset for the biological scientists. Dr. Grant's own ancestors came from an area near Tanzania, and she is intrigued by the seemingly low incidence of GLS among African-Americans. One of the more senior researchers, Grant is in her early 50s and is the most bon vivant member of the staff.

Division CBT: Cyberbiotechnology

Work in cybertechnology, the fusion of flesh and machine, is not new, but DNA puts an innovative spin on the idea. The scientists in cyberbiotech believe that machines can't replace human potential, but they can help stimulate better, faster and stronger responses electrochemically. Cyberbiotech doesn't graft machine to meat; instead, it





implants nanites or microscopic chips that activate the release of certain hormones or chemicals the body manufactures itself. How does this relate to GLS and DNA's goals? Scientists in cyberbiotech believe they may have a way to stop the worst symptoms of GLS by preventing the release of hormones that trigger physiological responses to the flawed genetic code. For example, if Hormone X is what triggers the grotesque seizures and changes when a GLS victim's moves from the Sapiens to Bestial stage, the cyberbiotechs can program and implant a chip to stop release of that hormone. Another use for cyberbiotech is programming infinitely small nanites to rewrite the genetic code on each chromosome. The possibilities seem endless, though most of the work is presently theoretical.

Dr. Jonathan Moses

With a background that includes biology, mechanical engineering and computer science, Dr. Moses is the perfect person to oversee cyberbiotech. He's a precise and analytical man with a dry sense of humor and a great deal of patience. His scientific career began at NASA back in the 1960s, and he was one of the first people to join Howak and Kenchlow in the early days of DNA. He's one of the few staff at present who has friendly relations with the FBI and SAD. While his family would prefer him to start thinking about retirement, Dr. Moses is more deeply committed than ever to finding a way for nanotechnology to help solve the GLS problem. His assistants joke that he'll probably die with his labcoat on. Dr. Moses is in his middle 60s and shows no sign of slowing down.

Dr. Myra Gibson-Yearling

In many ways the opposite of Jonathan Moses, Dr. Myra Gibson-Yearling is right out of graduate school at Cal Tech. She's a bit on the hyper side; sometimes, she goes for days and nights without rest or decent meals. No one disrupts her, though, for this is when the scientist often does her best work. The downside is that she then proceeds to crash for several days and is terribly cranky to boot. Dr. Gibson-Yearling's methods are somewhat maniacal, and research technicians have a hard time deciphering her notes. No one knows much about her background and home life, and she isn't forthcoming about it, preferring to keep topics of conversation on cyberbiotech or GLS. Dr. Gibson-Yearling is in her late 20s and generally wears loose clothes and tennis shoes. What Myra won't tell anyone is that she is a carrier of GLS, what her oddball pacifist relatives from Berkeley call Kinfolk. Myra is thinking about approaching someone in DNA for help, offering herself as a test subject.

Dr. Yong Sook Ban

Driven to be successful, Dr. Ban is almost the opposite of Myra Gibson-Yearling. A native of Korea, Yong Sook Ban is orderly, neat and runs her life by a strict schedule of exercise, relaxation and an enormous work load. Measure for measure, she probably puts in twice as much time at the lab as anyone else, but her results are forthcoming at a much slower pace. Dr. Ban has a quiet personality but stands firm on her opinions and recommendations. Dr. Moses prizes her emotional stabil-



ity, something he feels the department is lacking. Dr. Ban is about 28 and always dresses in dark, conservative clothes. She is an active member of a Buddhist temple and works with newly arrived immigrants from Korea.

Division SI: Security and Investigation

SI is drastically under-funded, or at least that's what the division's personnel are always saying. They feel like the scientific and technical staff sometimes undervalues their expertise and risk taking, and as they explain, wrestling with half-crazed victims of a disease that incites hysteria in others is no cake walk. Members of the SI team have been pushing for more hi-tech equipment and a larger staff. Since a recent attack on a New Orleans DNA facility, Dr. Sendlar has been much more inclined to give SI what they want.

Scott Campbell

Before coming to head up security at DNA, Scott Campbell successfully ran his own security agency. He served in Vietnam and has the scars and tales to prove it. Campbell used the GI Bill to get a degree in electronics and has designed a number of effective anti-intruder devices. His son is a cop, so Campbell can either call in the authorities for help or smokescreen them, depending on the situation. He's totally committed to DNA; they've made him a much wealthier man, and he also feels like he's helping save lives by protecting the staff and property. He pities the GLS

victims but also believes that keeping them in custody at DNA is for their own good. Campbell's now in his early 50s and still in excellent condition. He is armed at all times and usually wears a Kevlar vest on duty.

Thomas Dasher

Thomas Dasher had a promising military career ahead when he was badly injured in a jump exercise. Medically discharged, he spent some time recovering from mental and physical fatigue before DNA recruited him as a security agent in the early 1990s. Now he's the company's resident young tough guy. Dasher is an expert in armed and unarmed combat, and he's also skilled at teaching his trade to others. While Scott Campbell is technically his boss, the two have an easy camaraderie, more like brothers than chief and assistant. Dasher walks with a barely perceptible limp and is otherwise in excellent physical condition. He spends a lot of his free time giving basic self-defense lessons to employees and their families as well as the community at large.

Lorrie Custodes

An ex-PI from East Los Angeles, Lorrie Custodes is DNA's forensic investigator. She's got a keen mind and notices things that even Dasher misses. Lorrie's had some difficulty fitting into the old boy club of Dasher and Campbell, but they've come to respect her skills and consider her an essential member of their team. Working her way through college by waiting tables, Lorrie holds degrees in criminology and psychology; she's currently been spending a lot of

time at RD honing her skills in collecting biological evidence. DNA recruited her after she witnessed what may have been a victim of GLS attacking some musicians in a park. Campbell was quite impressed with her recall of details and assessment of the situation, especially since she was almost catatonic with terror. Lorrie is in her mid 20s and wears casual clothes under a loose jacket or cardigan that conceals her handgun.

Secret Agendas

Aside from their exhausting list of ongoing projects, DNA has a few secret projects in the closet. Only the Executive Director and a few trusted, long term associates have even heard of these agendas. DNA, not without regret, would probably ensure that any outsiders who got wind of these projects were permanently silenced.

Project Reaper


DNA has every hope of curing or eliminating GLS through gene therapy, cyberbiotechnology or even a method no one's yet discovered. But they have a contingency plan, just in case. If a critical mass of GLS victims contaminates the human and wolf gene pool, according to a complex formula that RD has devised, then the company will have no choice but to release Project Reaper. This is a specially engineered virus that is supposed to wipe out any creatures that carry the genetic code for GLS; thus, both werewolves and Kinfolk are at risk. DNA scientists who designed the virus don't even discuss it amongst themselves, but it does make them work harder to find a better solution.

The Face Behind the Mask

Sometimes, often just when they need it the most, DNA's scientists find that they have sudden influxes of luck. Grants and donations are seldom in short supply, and leads on test subjects appear just when the researchers are about to give up hope. Is there a single person or even an entire shadow organization behind DNA? Could Dr. Mitchell Howak have disappeared without a trace only to remain DNA's chief from behind the scenes? Or is there another explanation? Dr. Sendlar and a few top researchers suspect DNA isn't operating entirely on its own, but they have no idea what or who their mysterious benefactor may be. Most aren't sure they *want* to know, as long as things at DNA remain status quo. The Storyteller should make the final decision on whether DNA is fully independent, with a bunch of paranoid scientists, or if someone else is pulling the company's strings.

Locations

Presently, DNA has research facilities in 12 places: Rochester, Minnesota; the Research Triangle; Toronto; Atlanta; Baltimore; Vancouver; Boulder; Palo Alto, California; Stovington, Vermont; Miami; Boston; and Dallas. New Orleans also housed a facility, but it recently sustained major damage, presumably from an attack by werewolves



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The Progenitors, Pentex and DNA

The relationship between DNA and the Progenitors is one of cooperation along divergent paths of evolution, one of pure science and one that combines science with magick. The Progenitors consider themselves better diversified and technologically superior to DNA, but they are quite interested in the research the company conducts on lycanthropy. While they have no plans or interest in getting more deeply involved in DNA affairs, the Progenitors are more than willing to attend conferences with DNA scientists and to occasionally share equipment and resources.

Pentex and DNA, on the other hand, have radically different views, and chances that agents of the two companies would work well together are slim. Pentex wants to corrupt, destroy and suffocate while DNA desires stability, sameness and unchanging structure. Of course, neither company is really aware of what the other does; Pentex in particular keeps its activities shrouded in layers of deceit. So, just because both groups target werewolves as enemies doesn't mean they're easy bed-fellows (or even all that cognizant of the other's existence).

and their allies. DNA is also looking to expand to the British Isles in both Oxford, England and Bangor, Wales. Storytellers should feel free to place new DNA facilities wherever they best suit the needs of their chronicles.

Using DNA in a Chronicle

DNA isn't meant to be the big, faceless evil of a Werewolf chronicle. The folks at the company believe with all their hearts that they're doing a service for humanity by building a more stable gene pool. Sure, they're ruthless and extreme, but the cold, calculating DNA scientist could just as easily be a trusted and loving friend, neighbor or spouse. Unlike mortals corrupted by the Wyrms, DNA's scientists don't actively spread destruction in their own homes. They may be anal-retentive, but they don't believe supernatural forces from the nether realms inspire their work. DNA grounds all of its beliefs and theories in precise fact and scientific logic; these researchers have no time to dabble with wacky religions and hocus-pocus. They're much too busy trying to preserve the stability and structure of the

human race to listen to sick people rave about Gaia, the Weaver and the Wyrms.

Theme

DNA scientists believe that knowledge is power; the perfect stability of humanity's gene pool is both attainable and desirable. All that's necessary to achieve this goal is the right combination of knowledge. DNA is resolute in obtaining their objective, and right now, wrestling with genetic lycanthropic syndrome is an impediment to stability. Therefore, the company wants to eradicate this disease which causes so much disruption to their vision of a perfect genetic pattern. It's a circular argument, but one that DNA completely endorses.

Mood

DNA is utterly patronizing to those it perceives as victims. The company knows what's right for everyone; after all, people with such horrible conditions can't possibly do what's best for themselves, right? That's why DNA is around, to enforce their rules and order on a society too ignorant about genetic health to take care of itself.

Presents for Everyone

Over the years, DNA has perfected a number of devices and tools that make capturing werewolves a bit easier. The Progenitors have contributed some ideas and assistance, but most of these items are the work of DNA personnel themselves.

• Drugs

When capture teams needed something to bring down GLS victims as quickly as possible, DNA biochemists came up with two useful drugs. Penacothrane is an odorless, invisible gas that can easily affect a large group of people. Verinal is a liquid mixture ideally delivered by a dart. Neither drug completely knocks out a werewolf, but both make the Garou lose muscular control and mental awareness. The victim takes a cumulative -1 to dice pools involving Wits and Dexterity for four rounds. To fully resist the effects, a Willpower point must be expended each round. The two drugs are intended to make the target so befuddled, he won't know where to run or even that he needs to get away.

• Cyberelectrochemical Armor

Still highly experimental, CBT armor is lightweight (no penalty) and easily worn under camouflage since it's skintight. Built into the armor are micro-thin needles that sink just below the wearer's epidermis. From that point, the suit can send the body electrochemical signals to increase or decrease adrenaline and endorphins, suppress serotonin and even cause blood clotting. A biofeedback monitor adjusts stimulation as necessary. Storytellers should allow DNA agents wearing these suits to increase physical dice pools as appropriate. The drawbacks to CBT armor are two. First of all, the suits can only work in short stretches, for about 30 minutes, because of the power needed; the small batteries



simply don't have a long charge. Worse for the agent, on occasion the suits fail to properly monitor levels of hormones and chemicals in the body. In this case, the unfortunate wearer simply burns out from too much exertion. It's like getting a massive dose of epinephrine straight to the heart when the organ is pumping normally. Agents usually wear these suits only if an encounter with a GLS victim in the field is certain.

- **Field Kits**

All agent teams carry field kits that contain Methyldelerian, Verinal and Penacothrane. These kits also contain measuring tape, pens and pencils, data sheets, spare doses of drugs, syringes, tweezers, specimen bottles, scalpels, lip tattooing punches and a basic DNA manual. Additionally, agents always carry a dart gun and a personal firearm and usually wear Kevlar vests — not that these are much protection against claws. At least one member of the eight person team has medical training and carries materials intended for helping injured DNA agents, as opposed to the GLS victims. Advanced teams often carry a small cryo kit that can preserve tissue samples, and when it seems inevitable that a target will escape, agents insert a subdermal microtransmitter into the victim for later tracking.

Agents whose assignment is to observe rather than capture still carry personal firearms, but other than an autoinjector of Methyldelerian, their kits are pretty mundane. Standard observation equipment includes audio and

Sample DNA Field Agent

These are suggested Traits for a well-trained combat field agent, one of the lucky people who gets to capture werewolves and haul them in for study. Storytellers should feel free to add and adjust Abilities for more specialized characters, such as team commanders or medics. Project Twilight is an excellent resource for more info on building field agents.

Attributes: Strength 3, Dexterity 3, Stamina 4, Charisma 2, Manipulation 2, Appearance 2, Perception 4, Intelligence 2, Wits 4

Abilities: Alertness 2, Athletics 2, Brawl 3, Computer 2, Drive 1, Dodge 2, Firearms 2, Investigation 1, Melee 2, Medicine 1, Stealth 2, Streetwise 1, Survival 2

Willpower: 6



visual recorders, a camera, notepaper, a cell phone and binoculars with night illumination.

Story Seeds

The following story seeds suggest some ways to get DNA involved in an ongoing chronicle. Storytellers should feel free to mix and match ideas to best suit the needs of their troupe and ongoing plot threads.

• Search and Rescue

This story seed is a good way to introduce DNA to unsuspecting player characters. A favorite Storyteller character, perhaps a beloved younger pack member or an important Kinfolk, fails to show up for a meeting. The werewolves investigate the person's last known whereabouts and find evidence of a kidnapping. Help from Glass Walkers or even human contacts lead the pack members to a DNA facility where their friend is held prisoner. Naturally, a big fight ensues. In their rescue attempt, how much will the characters learn about DNA? What will be the consequences of the damage they cause?

• Outbreak

After a lengthy and careful investigation, DNA targets the characters' home turf; the scientists fear that these victims of GLS are part of a major concentration of the disease. The attack is swift and unexpected; it may result in a victory for the scientists, who'll take as many targets as possible back to the lab. On the other hand, the werewolves may win; what will they do with their prisoners at this point? Will they kill them quickly and let things get sorted out in the afterlife, or will they somehow use the agents against their own company?

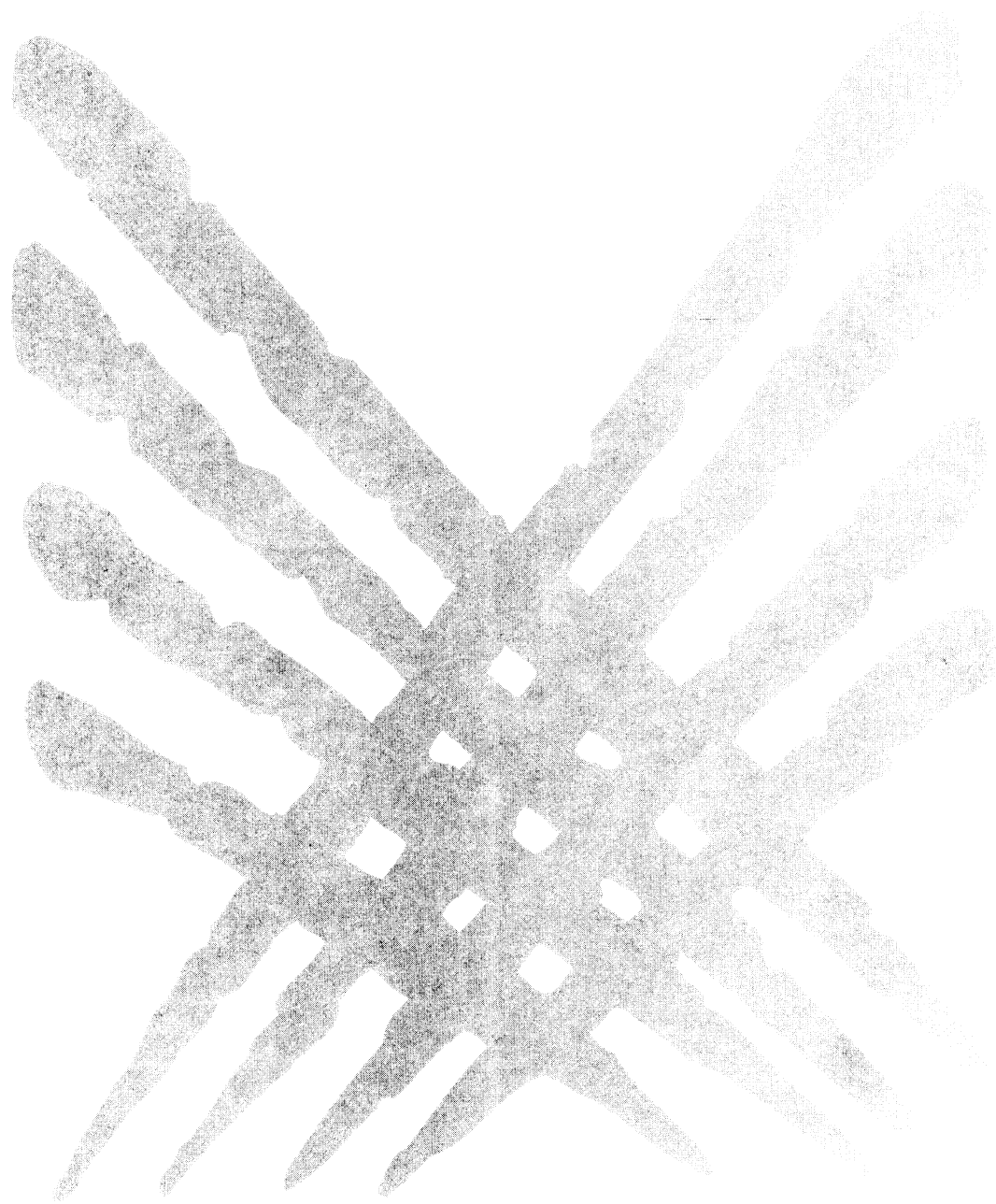
• Alien Artifact

This seed works best with a troupe of lupus characters or any werewolves who haven't had much contact with the modern world. After an aborted attempt to capture some wolves suspected of having GLS, one of the DNA agents leaves behind part of a field kit, including the manual. The lupus characters find the goods and realize the smelly things are tools of the Weaver. Where will they go from there? Is discussion with homid Garou a next step? Or do the lupus want to track down the nasty humans and deal with these despoilers on their own?

- **The Traitor**

Ideal for a pair game, this seed allows the werewolves to match wits against a DNA scientist. Two werewolves of opposite gender are captured and then to a DNA lab. They're left together for the express purpose of studying mating practices (DNA wants to see if two victims of GLS *ever* mate, despite the social taboos). The prime investigator of the case, however, has more than a little sympathy for the

two subjects. He's committed to the company, but his resolve is less firm than his superiors would prefer. Instead of being absolutely patronizing, this scientist tries to get to know the test subjects as fellow human beings. Depending on the player characters, they might find it possible to talk their way into an escape. This is an opportunity for a lot of intense roleplaying as opposed to a series of big fights.





CHAPTER FOUR: TALESPINNING

*Ah, mad Arachne, I beheld thee there,
Already half turned spider, on the shreds
Of that sad web thou wov'st to thy despair.
— Dante Alighieri, Purgatory*

The Weaver is a force severely underestimated by Garou. Her motives are poorly understood, her goals even more so. Using the Weaver in a chronicle can provide Storytellers with additional material to confound players who may be overused to Wyrmbashing feasts. Of course, if you are a player, you might do yourself a favor by not reading this chapter — or, in fact, any of this book. It could spoil the fun for both yourself and your Storyteller if you know the details of the Weaver's plots and personality.

Because Garou tend to overlook the Weaver's doings in favor of chasing after the Wyrmb, a wide range of possibilities opens up if a story focuses on the effects of this member

of the Triad and her effect on Gaia. While the Red Talons are probably the most wary of the tribes when it comes to the Spider, even they aren't privy to the whole truth and are themselves more easily distracted by the Wyrmb than the Weaver and her works. What follows in this chapter are some suggestions as to how the Weaver may be used; individual Storytellers are encouraged to enhance, rearrange, or change whatever aspects they feel are appropriate to their own style and chronicles. Nothing is written in stone, and the Weaver is, indeed, a complex being deserving of careful and complex thought and handling.



Theme and Mood

While a variety of themes can be dealt with when using the Weaver in stories, the mood may well tend towards a sort of soul-searching on behalf of the players, a questioning of values that humans tend to hold very dear to their hearts. While civilization can be a wonderful thing (no one wants their kids to die of preventable diseases or lack of central heating or starvation), it definitely does have its downside as well — a downside that Garou for the most part understand, but of which they may not be fully cognizant. The aspects you spotlight the most will determine the theme and mood of a Weaver chronicle in and of itself, but at all times there should be an air of mystery as to what is really going on. The Weaver is a subtle entity, and is not given to such blatant displays as the Wurm. In fact, servants of the Weaver may even use the Wurm and its minions as camouflage.

Ultimately, the Weaver should bring a very alien feel to any story in which she plays a major part. Her servants are countless, and linked together with a hive-mind that puts most insect colonies and computer networks to shame. Although insane, she shouldn't be portrayed as evil — rather, the thing that makes the Weaver so dangerous is her lack of any morals whatsoever. A Pattern Spider is never sadistic or cruel, merely amoral. There are no considerations other than the furthering of the Weaver's one true goal. She

brings good and ill to humanity in equal portions (although the rest of the world, including the Umbra, tends to receive more ill than good), but ultimately this isn't due to any particular feelings she has for the human race — it's simply that they are her preferred agents, and she does what is necessary to get them to help her Name the world.

Use the Weaver carefully; she isn't the primary villain so far as Garou are concerned (although some certainly think she *should* be). However, if your chronicle calls for something a little more open, then so be it. It's your game, after all.

Using The Senses

You can use music to good effect, depending on the nature of your chronicle. Highly digitized techno or house music, or (if you have a computer with a sound card) .mod files may enhance the feeling of a soulless, sterile environment. Also, smells may be useful, and, if you live in a city, taking your players outside to examine the landscape can also be quite effective. Otherwise, appropriate pictures can be useful, as well as perhaps judiciously watching movies about futuristic technological dystopias — *Silent Running* being the author's favorite example — before game sessions. Don't be afraid to enhance your chronicles in this wise, though do be careful when dealing with scent; some things are, of course, harmful. You may also benefit by simply

taking a walk through your home town with an eye toward what might be considered Weaverish — lawns with pesticide spray, for instance, or lines of workers waiting to pass security as they enter factories.

The Weaver and You

The Weaver has insinuated herself into every aspect of modern human life in the World of Darkness. In fact, humans rely on her Gifts so heavily, that even Garou are not fully aware of the extent of her influence. And of course, humans know nothing at all. The first step towards designing a Weaver-themed chronicle is to decide what aspect would interest you and your players the most in play, whether it be the technological, religious or scientific part of her personality. Of course, you can use all three at once, but it's probably best not to hit players with too much at once. Remember that the Wyrms still remains the main focus of Garou concerns.

A good way to introduce the Weaver as a prime concern for a pack would be to goad the players (and their Garou) into questioning the motives of whatever antagonists they come across. Is that corporation that wishes to clear-cut the forest to put up a mini-mall really an agent of the Wyrms? What really drives that Inquisitor to hunt down your sept? Does making more trails and snack bars in the park really encourage humans to be more sympathetic to the wild, or does it simply remake the wilderness into something more resembling Disneyland? The Weaver is not always best dealt with openly, but may provide Garou a challenge that simply beating up on Wyrms-spawn can't provide. Wisdom and perhaps Honor may be the emphasis in such stories.

Technology And Garou

The Garou, of course, widely know that technology is rather Weaverish. This is the most obvious way to deal with the Weaver in any game. However, technological items need not be Wyrms-tainted in order to pose a threat to Garou; many of them are quite, quite dangerous on their own.

For instance, much has been made in recent years of the threats that high-powered electrical lines pose to the humans and other lifeforms who live too close to them. Is it simply because of the physical radiation they emit, or does it have something to do with the Weaver energy emanating from them in the Penumbra? On a more personal level, what does using everyday technological items such as computers, cars, televisions and such have on Garou? Perhaps your pack, consisting mostly of homids, becomes too reliant on using Weaver tools than on their own physical, mental, and spiritual resources. A clever Storyteller could exploit this to illustrate a lesson about what has been both gained and lost through the development of more and more machines to do our work for us as the pack's own innate abilities atrophy while attendant Spiders grow in power and/or number.

Glass Walkers

Garou, even Glass Walkers, while part human, were never meant to become so reliant on technology as this tribe has become. As the Walkers slip closer and closer to the Weaver, they begin to lose their connection to the Wyld and to Gaia Herself. A host of interesting stories could stem from a Glass Walker character finding himself in trouble because he cannot handle the things most Garou take for granted. On the other hand, the Walkers are very adept at handling technology, something most other Garou are not entirely comfortable with. Having a Glass Walker around can surely give a pack an edge when dealing with human society, but there is almost always a price to be paid for any advantage. Walkers, of course, cannot gain Gnosis in the wilderness (if you're using the optional tribal weakness, of course), and so may be reluctant to leave their urban homes. On a more basic level, a truly Weaver-enamored Walker may have real difficulty in dealing with non-Weaver spirits and coping in non-urban environments. Wyld and Gaian spirits may in turn be reluctant to deal with Glass Walkers — without the Walker in question understanding why.

This would even be more evident with Walkers of the more technologically-minded camps — especially the Cyber Dogs. While the City Farmers are generally still in tune with Gaia, the Cyber Dogs have practically abandoned any pretense of serving Gaia or the Wyld. A pack who encounters Cyber Dogs may have trouble indeed, given their penchant for experimentation with cybernetics on lupus Garou, or even normal wolves. What happens if a lupus pack member goes missing and is discovered in the hands of these Weaver Garou? Might conflict arise en masse between the Cyber Dogs and less extreme members of the Glass Walker tribe?

Weaver stories involving Glass Walkers may examine the conflict this tribe has between its duty to Gaia and its penchant for the Weaver. However, it should be very difficult to shake a Walker's faith in the Weaver as the salvation for the Wyrms and Gaia, even if the detrimental effects of technology are shown to her. Over a long-term chronicle, a Walker character may eventually come to question her values. On the other hand, a Walker may as easily be driven more towards the Weaver in an effort to help her; curing her of her madness could certainly be the key to solving most of the world's ills, as impossible a task as that might be. The ultimate effects of either path are up to the player and Storyteller, but if the group is interested in examining questions of the value and cost of technology, it may be worth taking this route.

Religion

While the Inquisition no longer holds as much sway as it did in the Medieval period, there are still religiously-driven "witch hunters" searching for those who violate the Patriarch's law. Whether these hunters are normal humans,

fomori or Weaver-agents in disguise is open to question. Such folk need not be after Garou specifically; rather, they may simply be super-devout members of a fundamentalist sect who seek to mold a small town in their image. These folks would probably be very concerned about "Satanic rites" taking place in the woods just outside town, or simply wary of anyone who acts "different." What happens if a sept's members become targeted by these morality police? The churchgoers need not be bad people; they simply have a calcified view of the way the world should be, and are fearful and intolerant of those who behave outside their expectations. The pack may not want to simply kill them, and in fact, this would make things even worse for them if good, sincere, God-fearing folk were suddenly disappearing or winding up dead, attracting more attention and probably outrage from fellow townsfolk. It would also fuel the fires of rumors about local "Satanists" performing human sacrifice, attracting even more attention and probably support from locals who might not have been particularly die-hard to begin with.

Science

Garou may also come into conflict with the ivory towers of science, especially in the form of DNA. Again, the folk who work for this entity are, for the most part, sincere in their efforts and only seek to expand human knowledge, with little understanding of the pain and suffering they cause via their biological research. Even the most brutal vivisectionist doesn't see himself as a sadist. The ends justify the means. There are, of course, the few bad apples who revel in their cruelty or are simply cold-blooded enough to inflict torture in return for grant money, but these should be in the minority even in the World of Darkness. Many scientists also tend to be callused by their long training even before they begin their careers, and fail to see animals (Garou included) as thinking, feeling beings. This can also happen with respect to human experimentation — especially if the victims are of a different race than the experimenter.

In most cases when dealing with humans who are doing "Wyrmy" things in order to further the Weaver's goals, the human may have little or no Wyrmy-taint, though she may register to the use of Sense Weaver. What a pack makes of this depends on the nature of the pack, the chronicle, and the players. Any laboratory, of course, will register under Sense Weaver, as may many churches. But then, within a city, the strong scent of Weaver there may cause sensory overload in the Garou using it, much as the Abyss does with Sense Wyrmy.

Encroachment

The Weaver seeks to calcify all of reality, and this urge often manifests itself in the destruction of the wilderness in order to make more room for more human amenities. While Red Talons may care little whether an encroaching developer is an arm of Pentex or not, the issue may be very

sensitive to other tribes, especially if the development threatens a caern. In the World of Darkness, the present political environment may be much more right-wing than it is in the real world, and political lobbying may not do much good.

Similarly, the control and removal of animals from national parks and preserves may also become an issue for packs based in or near them. Recently, it has been decided that the wolves reintroduced to Yellowstone should be sent back to their native Alberta because they are believed by ranchers to pose a threat to their stock, and by tourists to pose a threat to themselves. The same can be said for the bears who have always been there. Sport hunters also dislike the competition for game outside the park's boundaries. Packs based in such areas may find themselves coming into conflict with federal agents seeking to serve the "public interest" as well as ranchers and hunters convinced that the Wyld needs taming. Garou may also be threatened by government plans to more fully develop their wilderness — whether park or otherwise — to make it more accessible to and comfortable for the public. Again, open conflict with claw and fang may only lead to more trouble and unwanted attention.

The Serpent Brotherhood (see **Freak Legion**, pp. 61-62) may confuse things even further. These bright, dedicated young fomori may often be asked to assist in wilderness "improvement" projects by wildlife services which know no better, merely seeking to make the wild more "accessible" to tourists. While Garou become engaged in thwarting these Wyrmy kids, the Weaver's webs tighten almost imperceptibly....

Vampires

While vampires often appear "Wyrmy" to Garou, the undead are driven to the Weaver's work for their own survival purposes. Cities are their domain; the larger and more populous the city, the more suitable it is for Kindred. Vampires heartily encourage urban sprawl, while unbeknownst to them the Weaver's webs spread with the city. Some Kindred may even show up to Sense Weaver, but this may be well masked, especially if the vampire has problems maintaining his Humanity. [In game terms, assume that only vampires over a century old can be detected with Sense Weaver. To detect a vampire in this way, assume a base difficulty 9, adjusted lower when appropriate — if the vampire is of a particularly orderly mindset, retains much of his centuries-old mannerisms, and the like.]

Given the vampires' power and influence in some of the larger cities, agents of the Weaver may even seek out influential Kindred to use their social machinations in order to aid the Weaver's agenda. As with the Wyrmy, however, there are next to no vampires who know anything at all about the Weaver, and would probably assume any Lupine accusing them of consorting with the Spider's forces was somewhat mentally feeble.

Mages

Mages often help advance the Weaver's agenda without knowing it. Void Engineers' Umbral explorations actually accelerating the spirit world's calcification, while several other Conventions take the thought of "reality deviants" who have no place in a rational world very seriously. The very power of mages to warp reality to their will make them susceptible to direct influence by the Weaver. A sufficiently powerful mage that acts in concert with the Weaver (whether unwittingly or not) can pose a formidable problem for Garou, as he may cause all manner of havoc wherever he goes — even if he is able to pass off his magick as coincidental as far as the Unawakened are concerned.

On the other hand, mages are subject to Paradox when they play too hard with reality. The Garou's explanation for this is that, while they often do the work of the Weaver, she only allows them to play within certain limits. Theurges who are familiar with mages point out that Paradox spirits are most likely poorly understood servants of the Weaver whose job it is to keep magick workers in line. While Garou generally have very little to do with these spirits, it is quite possible for them to get involved with these "reality police" if a mage is about and working against what Weaver-spirits may think appropriate. The motives of such obscure beings may well be difficult to figure out, but an intrepid pack with an eye for such things may be able to discern a pattern; from studying what spirits of Paradox do and do not allow, Garou may be able to gain a window onto the Weaver's approaches.

The Wyrn

Quite often, what the Weaver does is masked by her close association with the Wyrn, thanks to his being trapped within the Pattern Web itself. You can use this detail in relation to just about any aspect of the Weaver with which you care to deal. A chronicle may start out as a Bane-fest, but gradually, the pack could discover that, no matter how they cleanse an area of obvious Wyrn-blight, things are still wrong in some way they're not quite able to put a finger on. Also, they may encounter spirits that exhibit the qualities of both Wyrn and Weaver spirits, such as those within the Scar, or those spawned by the old Storm Eater of 19th century lore. Granted, such spirits may be killed with more impunity than, say, a bunch of scouts making well-groomed snowmobile trails through a caern, but such spirits may themselves have more powerful allies. Stories linking the Wyrn and Weaver should be subtle affairs; it will be very hard to convince tribal elders (save, perhaps, for Red Talons, Black Furies and Stargazers) of such a connection.

The Tangled Web We've Woven

All of modern Western civilization is ultimately extremely Weaverish. Even putting aside the pervasiveness of technology in our lives, human society is extremely com-

plex; probably a lot more so than it need be. A metis or lupus Garou trying to "fit in" to the everyday world of the apes could easily go insane in trying to understand just how everything bloody well works. Even driving a car involves a truckload of rules and regulations: Licenses, plates, mandatory insurance, safety or emissions certifications, not to mention routine traffic laws must all be observed, lest the driver get himself into deep trouble with The Law. A Garou taken early out of the human world, or a Garou not even raised within it, may well have serious problems when it comes to legal issues. While Garou have their own Litany which they must obey, these rules are few, simple and straightforward. Humans have taken the idea of communal rules to often ridiculous extremes. The sheer difficulty in getting just about anything done quite often drives many *humans* insane; think of what the crushing effects of society must have an unsuspecting, unprepared werewolf!

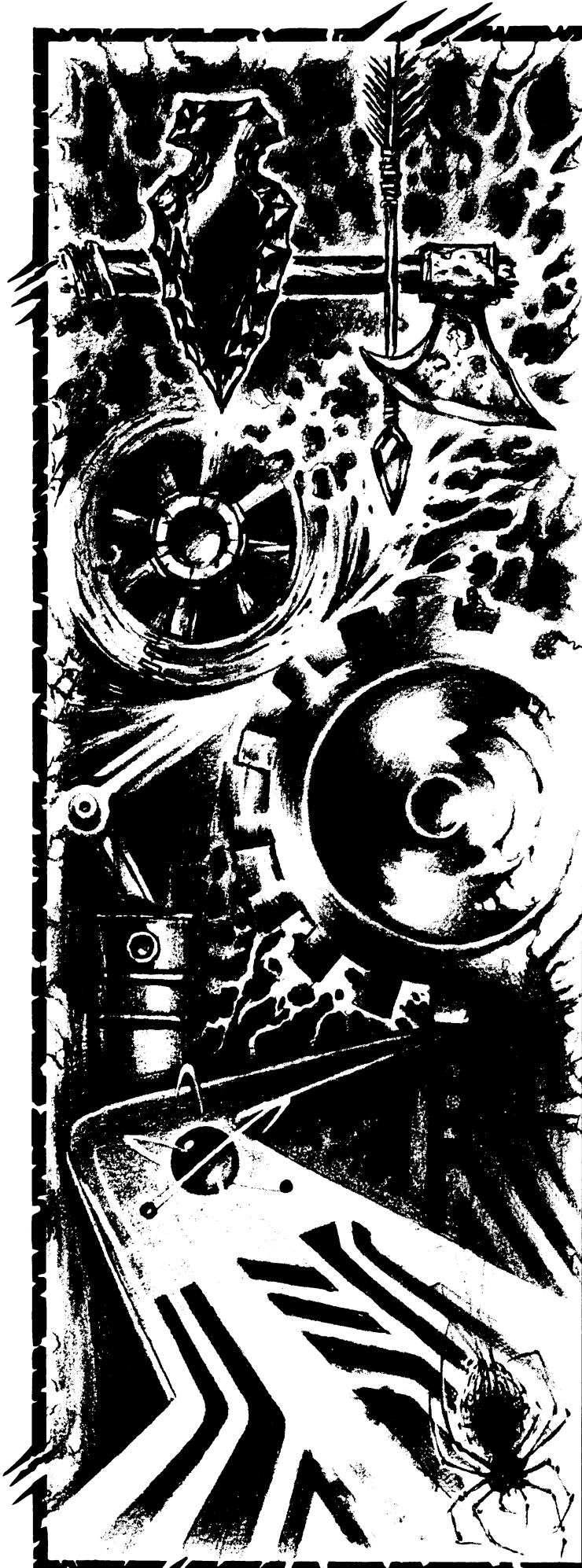
A chronicle or story dealing with Garou getting into trouble with the law could have the players trying to turn the whole thing into a farce, which may well be the expected attitude of young, arrogant pups. But getting the attention of the police — and perhaps truly powerful agents of the Weaver — should not be a laughing matter for sept elders.

While being arrested and thrown in jail may seem a mere inconvenience for busy packs, keep in mind that the Law represents a kind of Order — and therefore would fall under the interest of the Weaver, or at least her more orderly-minded servants. Such minions of the Spider may not take the idea of werewolves flouting such order very lightly, and may themselves get involved.

The Weaver Through History

Running historical chronicles can be a fun break from the ordinary, though it can take a lot of work, and especially research. Don't be daunted, however; it can be very rewarding to both your players and yourself to look at the world through Garou eyes in different time periods. Remember, too, that as Storyteller, you are free to change history as you see fit for the purposes of your story and setting, although changing it too radically may destroy the purpose of the setting. Also, you should decide ahead of time as to whether or not the player characters are allowed to alter history by their actions, and if so, to what extent.

One especially good resource for dealing with the Weaver in times past is anything by James Burke — best known from his PBS series (and their companion books) *The Day the Universe Changed* and the *Connections* series and its sequels. If possible, get hold of the books, as the series may be difficult to find on the schedule, and more detail is of course available in the books than is possible in the series; besides, you have the leisure of taking notes, something very difficult to do with the PBS series. The TV versions are very involved, but flow quickly from one link to the next.



For those unfamiliar with Burke's work, these titles examine the history of technology with special emphasis on how modern technologies came to be, and how different events intertwined to make them possible. Thus, they examine not only technology, but the societies of the past, the sciences of the times, and the social and religious milieu as well.

For a history of science, many popular science books include how various ideas came to be. Most of John Gribbin's works on quantum physics (for example, *In Search of Schrodinger's Cat* and *In Search of the Big Bang*) include a history of modern theoretical physics. Fear not; Gribbin makes an esoteric subject quite accessible through clear writing, though if one only reads the parts regarding the history of science, the actual physics of it all won't be a concern. Of course, the best place to start would be Carl Sagan's classic, *Cosmos*, for a general overview. In this book (again, it's a better reference and easier to get than the PBS series of the same name), Sagan discusses the major players in western Science, including the ancient Greeks who first measured the circumference of the Earth and thought of matter as being made of indivisible "atoms."

The history of western religion is well documented, and sources are numerous and relatively easy to find. The Christian Bible itself — both Old and New Testaments — may serve as a handy reference. Interesting in its presentation of historical events as well as its conspiracy theories is *The Holy Blood and the Holy Grail* by Baigent, Leigh, and Lincoln. If you can get a copy, the History Channel's four-part series *The Crusades*, hosted by Terry Jones of Monty Python fame, is entertaining to watch as well as informative. Invaluable, too, is Isaac Asimov's *History of the Bible*, volumes one and two (OT and NT). (The author would also like to personally recommend Dante's *Divine Comedy* here. Not only is this three-part epic poem chock full of excellent allegory, symbolism and imagery, it also gives a very good look into Catholic theology of the late 13th and early 14th centuries.)

Prehistory

Man started on his Weaverish, technological past long before the first cities were built. A chronicle set before the Impergium could deal with Garou consternation over the new "tricks" that the apes were suddenly learning, seemingly overnight. Unfortunately, those "tricks" proved deadly to many large mammals, first and foremost the woolly mammoth. How do the Garou of the time cope with this? The characters could be sent to spy on the monkeys, to find out where they learned such things as taming fire and knapping stone. How the pack reacts could lead into interesting story possibilities. Do they try to kill the humans they've been sent to study? If so, what happens when they find that early technology has already spread to other bands of humans? Or do they try to help the humans, sympathizing with their plight? Life was very hard for primitive men, and their taking up on any little advantage may be quite understandable.

Also, the pack will have to deal with the incipient Red Talons, who may be quite full of Rage over what they see the “cavemen” doing. How does the pack deal with them? Player characters may well find themselves directly embroiled in events which lead up to the Impergium; though they will be powerless to stop it (unless the Storyteller is not at all afraid to risk changing World of Darkness history), they may be kept quite busy dealing with the different factions.

Ancient History

Post-Impergium, a pack may find itself investigating yet another new wonder the apes have taught themselves — that of the city. For the first time, Garou will find an unnatural proliferation of Pattern Spiders and other unfamiliar Weaver-spirits. The Penumbra in this new phenomenon will be quite different from what any Garou has had to cope with before, and worse, they will find the Gauntlet uncomfortably high. Worse, something new and insidious may well be found in the First City — vampires.

An encounter with the First City (generally accepted to be Jericho, first built around 8,000 years ago) should be an alien and frightening journey for a pack. Even ancient cities were quite large, even by modern standards; the largest cities of Sumer had between one hundred and two hundred thousand people. The smells found there would be quite horrid, with all those people packed in close together, with offal and waste and sewage thrown on the street and even in canals. The structure of the cities would also be disturbing, from water being actively diverted, the surrounding farms orderly, and the noise and confusion inside the city walls leading to near sensory overload. The appearance of Weaver-spirits in these places would also be an unfamiliar phenomenon. Whereas before Pattern Spiders may have only been few and far between, in the City they appear everywhere, weaving extensions of the Pattern Web closer to Gaia than ever before.

Vampires, too, would be an unfamiliar threat to werewolves who had never before journeyed into what would have fast become the early Kindred stronghold and hunting grounds. Worse, these vampires would also be very powerful (low generation) and very impudent, having yet to invent the Masquerade. Between the confusion of the city itself, the Spiders, and the undead, a pack could be kept quite busy indeed.

The Biblical Era

The more mythological parts of Genesis aside, Hebrew history is generally thought to have started about 1800 BC, when Abraham (or a group of people claiming descent from someone of that name) left the Sumerian city of Ur for the last time in order to found a completely monotheistic religion. Prior to this, only Egypt had had a brief experimentation with One God under the rule of Akhenaton, which

ended with his death and the accession to the throne of his son, Tutenaton (later, Tutenkhamen).

While the worship of One God in and of itself mightn't be that interesting or worrisome for Garou, some of the events recorded in the Old Testament may well be. The Hebrew tribe went to war many times in the Patriarch's name, and they were a concern to several of the civilizations that neighbored them. Warders of Men in particular, especially those living amongst the Canaanites and Phoenicians, just might find the Hebrews worth investigating.

Of particular interest may well be the fanciful tale in Exodus of Moses and the (always unnamed) Pharaoh. Moses himself could well be a mage, or perhaps a direct servant of the Patriarch, if Storytellers and players aren't squeamish about playing around with the story a bit. A group of Silent Striders (pre-Setite curse, of course) could have an interesting run-in with this fellow and his ten curses upon Khem.

Classical Greece

Athens of the classical age was the cradle of science. It was here that men of learning first began to look at the world without using the gods to fill in everything they didn't understand. The first forebears of the Technocracy mages might also be found here. As Greece was the traditional stronghold of the Black Furies, it could prove interesting to see how a group of Fury characters deal with the new developments of rationality and science, which early Glass Walkers would have flocked to like moths to flame. New technologies were also to be found here, adding to Walker interest.

Keep in mind that the Furies may not be confined only to the wild hills outside the City; the Parthenon was a wholly female affair, closed off to males just as Mt. Athos is today closed off to all females (even female beasts of burden). It is quite likely that the Acropolis itself was once a great Black Fury caern, giving a good base of operation for a Fury chronicle in ancient Athens. Imagine the consternation of the tribe as the Weaver's webs strangle more and more of Athena's city while the power of the female waned in “democratic” Greek society and men such as Aristotle and Democritos babbled on about their Gaia-less theories, and Glass Walkers became more and more influential....

Rome

The Romans were public-works builders bar none. The cities of the Roman period were built on a grand scale, and the roads and aqueducts they built were marvels of engineering. The Roman Empire was also highly orderly, with many laws and a lot of meticulous record-keeping. This may be thought of as a period when the Weaver's mind swung from the spurt of learning that represented Athens to cold, hard control of nature, of people, of basically everything in the world known to Europeans at the time. It was also a time when the Wyrms seemingly went berserk, as well. The emperors were often cruel and decidedly insane, while

thousands of creatures — including many humans — died bloodily in the circuses. The European lion died out during this period, victim of the circuses and expanding human agricultural practices, coinciding almost with the fall of the White Howlers.

This period also sees belief in the Patriarch reaching non-Hebrew ears and spreading like wildfire along the many Roman trade routes to all parts of Europe, especially once Christianity becomes the official religion of the Empire after Constantine. As always, bad comes with the good, particularly in the World of Darkness....

The Dark Ages and the Medieval Period

The so-called Dark Ages saw the decline of infant Science and the rising in power of the Patriarch's minions. Supernaturals of all sorts were under threat as people actually *believed* in the existence of witches, sorcerers, vampires, fae and werewolves, and hunted them down as Satanic beings. Even Wraiths had to contend with the spectacle of exorcism, and the likely more real threat of wanton destruction of their Fetters with the many wars and raiders that plagued this period. Not only would the Veil (and the Masquerade of the vampires) be nearly inoperable and practically useless, but the Wyrms and the Weaver could be seen to be working in concert for the first time — if anyone cared to look carefully enough.

The first factories also began in the medieval period, believe it or not. However, these were mostly very labor-intensive, rather than being dependent on mass-production machinery as they would be in the Industrial Revolution. The textiles industry, especially, saw scores of women and children working long hours in abysmal conditions at the very tedious and repetitious job of spinning and weaving. Mills were also upscaled at this time, with the invention of the cam. The Black Plague aside, Europe grew in prosperity and, eventually, population, and the growth of technology found new speed. Society was changing greatly at this time, changes which eventually brought about the next stage, that of the Renaissance (see below).

What did all this mean to shapeshifters? The Burning Times would likely have been seen as quite Wyrmyish; and indeed, many Inquisitors may well have been so. This period saw the apparent destruction of both the Celican and the Knights Templar near the end. But the spasm of destruction that this period saw was mostly the direct result of the Church trying desperately to retain its control of medieval society, attempting to rid Europe of "heretics" that threatened its monopoly over the One God. In short, the Church violently tried to impose its own sense of Order to medieval Europe.

Basically, it could be said that the Weaver — and possibly the Patriarch Incarna itself — had a mad fit in this period, a fit from which the Wyrms drank deeply. It was this period that saw the roots of modern Western civilization grow into a healthy young sapling. It could well be in this period that the Weaver completely lost control and went truly, finally schizoid. While Garou of the time might miss the point, the effects of the Weaver's freshly strengthened madness are quite devastating. In fact, the forests of Europe declined dangerously in this period, many of them disappearing under the demand for shipbuilding for trade and warfare on top of the population's demand for firewood and building materials. The medieval period truly saw men "doing the Wyrms' work to feed the Weaver's machines" for the first time in history.

The Renaissance and Enlightenment

In this period, science struggles back to its feet after things calm down, but not without a fight. Several men of science at the time, notably Tycho Brahe, Copernicus, and Galileo, were punished for their insights into how the Universe works, contrary to what the Bible (which was accepted as accurate) said. Here the Weaver is almost more ally than antagonist; it's interesting to look at how the progress of new knowledge (and with it, more Naming) breaks up the calcified structures of old. Indeed, this time period also sees the fracturing of Patriarch worship as Martin Luther ushers in Protestantism, and others soon follow suit in breaking away from the Mother Church. Rome loses a lot of influence in the process.

The Enlightenment would see the Kindred enforce their Masquerade (or reinforce it), the Veil to be fully active again with a new vengeance, and a sharp increase in Banality, causing the true fae to leave this realm for Arcadia once and for all. While things may not be as dangerous for Garou as they were in the previous era, the Weaver continues to work apace. She also gains new ground as the European voyages of discovery get under way, and the Pure Ones — especially the Croatan — see her face again for the first time in millennia. While the Pure Ones denounce the Europeans as "Wyrmbearers," they also tend to overlook the powerful influence the Weaver has on the white humans and Garou who are coming to their shores in ever increasing numbers. The encounters with the first cities on the North American continent would be just as poignant for Pure One Garou as they would have been for occidental Garou of the prehistoric era (see above).

European society itself becomes more "rational," though stratified, patriarchal religion is still strong. The early Technocratic mages begin to proliferate, and the webs of the Weaver are woven in the Penumbra at a much faster pace than any ever before seen.



The Industrial Revolution

The Industrial Revolution sees the Weaver go practically berserk. There is no question now as to the state the old Spider is in, as factories consume young and old alike in the cramped, polluted cities. New types of machines are developed that are faster, less labor-intensive, and more dangerous than ever before. Young lads from the farms flock to the cities in hopes of making a better life than they can on the farm, and end up broken and dying in the factories and the coal mines that keep the plants fired up. It's here that the Umbra itself is wounded by the swelling of the new Realm called Scar. At first, elders disbelieve tales of this blighted Realm, but a number of packs seeking Renown quest to find and explore it. Not all of them come to good ends, but it's certainly a time of dramatic stories.

The Bone Gnawers at this time begin to wonder about the wisdom of cuddling too close to the Weaver; the Warders of Men, however, embrace every advance as they had always done before. The Warders once again offer to absorb the Gnawers, but the Bone Gnawer tribal elders decide at last to reject their offer once and for all. During the Grand Moot, closed to all but the Gnawers, the elders also decide that it should be the Bone Gnawers' duty to keep an eye on the Warders, lest they fall to the Weaver completely. Alas,

without a solid plan of what exactly the Gnawers should *do* if the Warders started to slip, all too many of the Gnawers went back to minding their own business of simple survival.

The Wild West

The spread of Europeans across the continent in the 19th century brought the Weaver's webs to places they had been only minimal before. With the disruption of Pure One caerns continent-wide, powerful Banes were released which quickly began associating with the newly-arrived Weaver spirits. One result of this was the Storm Eater, a powerful combined Weaver-Wyrm spirit that terrorized the Storm Umbra of western North America. This was the first major warning sign that the Weaver may well have a closer association with the Wyrm than anyone had previously guessed.

Many technological advances were developed during the 1800s, and these new toys would find themselves racing westward almost as fast as they were invented. The telegraph and telephone, locomotives, steamboats, and electrical power all introduced themselves quickly to previously technologically virgin territory. The Wendigo and Uktena of the West had serious problems dealing with the new, unfamiliar, and very aggressive Weaverlings invading their lands while new cities sprouted seemingly overnight. A pack of Pure Ones playing in this time period may well have problems deciding

which is the larger threat — if indeed they can separate Weaver and Wyrms at all. The pace at which the West changed from being wild and pristine to becoming covered with farms, ranches, tracks, roads and telegraph lines was faster than at any other time. Umbral areas that were once nearly free of Pattern Spiders would be found choked with webbing and crawling with Spiders within only a few years. And woe to the Garou who tried to stop their advance....

The Early 20th Century

While the hybrid Storm Eater was vanquished before the start of the 20th century, the incestuous relationship the Weaver had exhibited with the Wyrms did not die. Instead, it proceeded apace, bringing “progress” at a pace many times faster than even in the 19th century. Tools of the Weaver became even more seductive, especially as Science learned how to unleash the destructive power of the atom. New technologies allowed the twisted dreams of megalomaniacal mass murderers to come to fruition in the death camps and gulags. Religion reasserted itself and began to wage war yet again on its sister, science. War itself became more deadly for soldier and civilian alike, with two world wars spurring flurries of technological advances culminating in the development of the nuclear bomb — a Wyrmsish device of destruction and corruption that would be impossible to build without the Weaver’s gifts of technology and science. The old royalties fell, throwing Silver Fang organization into turmoil until well after 1945.

The world changed very quickly as far as humans were concerned; to Garou, things changed even faster, and most werewolves are still having a problem just catching up. Ancestor-spirits who looked out of their children’s eyes were astonished to see the world they once knew to be so completely gone, altered beyond all recognition. For some, rage and frustration were worked out during the wars; others handled their confusion less well. In some cases, it almost seemed as if the Impergium had begun again, as packs would sweep through poverty-stricken dustbowl areas leaving even more havoc in their wakes. The Wyrms seemed to be everywhere, while the Weaver strengthened her grip over all of humanity, worldwide as previously innocent native cultures began to be introduced to such things as cars, guns, and Coca-Cola. And these native cultures were more than eager to accept the Weaver’s gifts, from medicine to Christianity. much to the dismay of their Changing kin. Radio spread itself quickly after the first voice broadcasts showed it to be commercially viable, and out of radio technology came television before 1950. Movies, which had been invented late in the previous century, became wildly popular even before the addition of sound and color. As the movies spread, they brought with them the message of the “good life” to be had by following the American — and Weaver — Way. The transfer of peoples from tribal and agricultural societies to the cities began in the so-called Third World countries, a process nearly completed in the West by the end



of the first half of the century. Even farms were taken over by large corporations and changed into efficient, factory-like operations in Europe and North America.

The Glass Walkers who had already been on top of all the change weathered the increasing pace of progress since the 18th Century far better than most of the other tribes. This resiliency carried a price, for the Walkers became even more distrusted than they ever had been in history; even the Bone Gnawers became increasingly concerned over the tribe's association with all things Weaverish. But being fully occupied with concerns of their own survival, there was little the Gnawers could do to help change things, if indeed the Glass Walkers would have listened and accepted their advice. Both tribes also had to cope with increasing numbers of members of other tribes who wound up in the cities, as the destruction of caerns and wilderness in general during the wars drove many Garou into what was once the exclusive territory of the Glass Walkers and Bone Gnawers. Tribal tensions were renewed, that still have an effect today in the metropolises.

Story Ideas

Chester's Farm

This is the place where the monkeys die

This is the cage where the mutants fly

On the wings of an industry funded research lie.

— Big Country, "Chester's Farm"

Modern "factory farms" are indeed factory-like affairs: feeding and cleaning is automated, and several hundred (or in the case of fowl, several thousand) animals may be housed in one building. Because the animals are kept in close quarters and are barely even allowed to move, stress levels run high and these genetically-similar creatures become more susceptible to epidemic disease. Quite often, the corporations who own these operations also do research and development on these farms in order to improve yields of both confined livestock and vast monocultures of crops. Advocates of intensive farming practices argue that these are needed because of a rising world population that must be fed somehow. The solution, they claim, is to breed animals and plants that can tolerate more crowded conditions, resist disease better, and do with as little food, water, light and exercise as biologically possible, while in the interim using high doses of drugs and pesticides to combat the problems of over-density.

In this scenario, a young, amnesiac metis of unknown tribal origin is found by the pack, covered in scars. About all the cub can remember is there being a lot of animals around in confinement, and the men in lab coats who kept him caged and drugged when they weren't doing very upsetting things to him. If the pack investigates, they may encounter rumors of an unusually successful farm nearby; if they take the cub with them, he will identify the place as where he had been kept (though they may have to deal with a possible

frenzy on the cub's part when he recognizes it). The "farm" turns out not to be the idyllic pastoral operation pictured in children's books, but a vast, highly guarded factory operation — though this not need be outwardly evident upon first glance.

With further investigation, the "farm" turns out to be an R&D operation; while it makes its money selling its livestock, it also actively seeks to research new genetic engineering techniques to make a "better" farm animal. The operation may be owned by DNA or run by a Progenitor mage or other Weaver servant, but beyond the miasma and misery of the animals enclosed there, they also have samples of the cub's genetic material which they are trying to incorporate into their research. The results and repercussions should be quite ugly; there may even be local reports of "mutants" or "monsters" running about in the local woodlots that weren't, as far as anyone knows, caused by any Garou. The complex may also appear to be Wyrms-tainted — an especially brutal or callous manager, for instance, may serve to confuse the issue.

In order to get in, the Garou must contend with high-tech security devices and their attendant Weaver-spirits. It should not be at all easy to get in even to take a look, though the presence of a Glass Walker may ease the process somewhat. Once the pack figures out what's going on, their problem becomes what to do about it. They may opt to simply destroy the sample they find there, but if the farm is owned by DNA, there may well be other samples floating around at other sites. Also, unless the cub was abandoned for dead, the farm's agents may be looking to recover their "special specimen." If they destroy the entire complex, the investigators that show up, from the insurance companies and law enforcement agencies may cause the Garou some grief, especially if the caern is quite close by. The destruction will be blamed, of course, on animal rights activists, something a sept of Garou may well be accused of being. Other powerful interests may also be alerted; if the owner or operator is a supernatural, the pack might have more to contend with than simply pissed-off Weaver-spirits. If it is DNA-owned, and they have reason to suspect more Garou are around to be captured and studied, then the hunters will truly become the hunted. Even if the pack opts to do nothing at all, the problems the farm causes by its mere existence will be exacerbated over time — especially if the researchers figure out something to do with the cub's genetic material.

To complicate matters, the cub may very well have had Black Spiral parents. If these — or their friends — come seeking the cub, the pack may have a real dilemma on their hands. If the Spirals themselves destroy the farm, the fallout will surely land upon the characters' sept. The pack will also be bound to protect the cub from being taken to dance the Black Spiral. In this way, both the Wyrms and the Weaver will be involved in the story, with the characters having to cope with both, though they may at first only see the Wyrms' hand in events.

Helter Skelter

Various locals have shown up horribly mutilated. While the media buzzes with stories of a brutal serial-killer, to Garou it's obvious the killings were done by one of their own. But who? A Black Spiral attack is presumed by the sept elders, and the players are sent out to hunt down the Dancers they believe are responsible. When the pack finds the culprit, it turns out not to be Spirals at all, but a lone, deranged lupus, whose breed is barely identifiable. A victim of the Cyber Dogs, he is nearly insane and has been unleashed to eliminate those the nearby group of Dogs see as their enemies. Before the pack kills him (if they choose this option), he will, in his disjointed rantings, indicate that the Garou of the local sept are included in the Dogs' hit list. The pack must then discern why this Glass Walker camp is doing this.

If the sept is Glass Walker-run, it may be that the sept leader has in some way stepped on Cyber Dog toes by being a member of the City Farmers or Urban Primitives who has gotten too close to the truth of the Dogs' plans; if the sept is controlled by other tribes, there could be any number of reasons why the Dogs would want to rid themselves of Wyld Garou who do not take well at all to even low levels of technology. In any event, the elders won't take well to

what they hear when it is discovered what the Dogs have been up to.

The Cyber Dogs, for their part, work unabashedly for the Weaver. They see it as their mission to remove any obstacle to the "progress" the Weaver brings, and if that includes eliminating Garou that seek to thwart some Weaverish pet project they favor, then so be it. It may take some time for the pack to track down members of this camp, as they are secretive and well-hidden. An all-out war with them may not be feasible, for their technological prowess more than makes up for their diminutive numbers (there should be, at most, 4 or 5 in the rogue Cyber Dog pack). Also, the Dogs may have powerful allies in the form of technocratic mages or Kindred, as well as contacts within the technological and development communities.

Putting People First

This story can be used to question most of the precepts humans hold dear about their society and their superiority. A broad section of wilderness is bought by a powerful company — only it contains the caern of a Red Talon sept. The company wishes to develop the land into a "wilderness theme park" in which nature is "sanitized." While some of the trees and the landscape and such will not be altered, the larger animals will be removed (including wolves and bears)



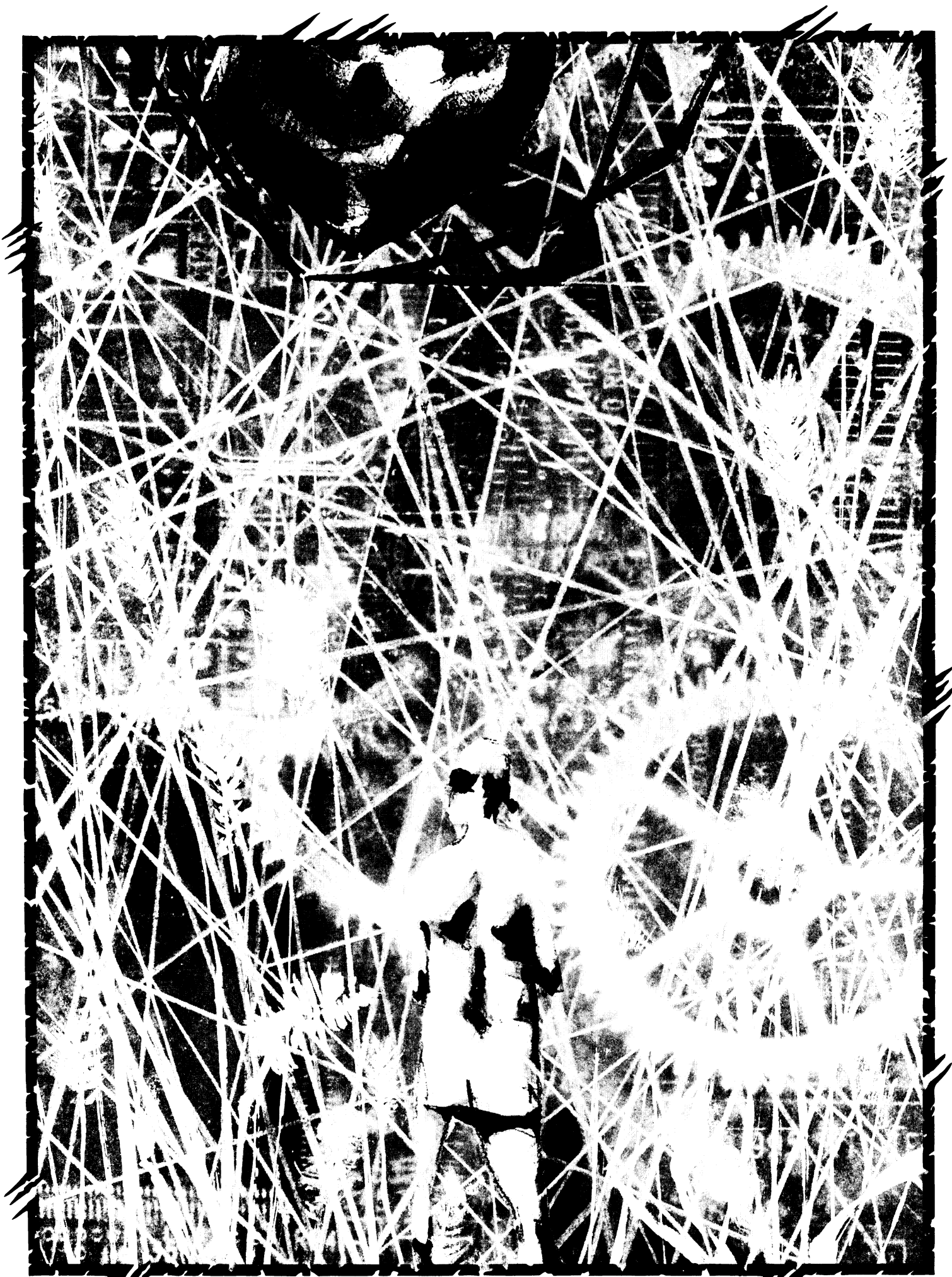
and replaced by their animatronic look-alikes — which are less dangerous and more accessible to the public, the executives say. Of course, many rides, attractions, and accommodations will also be built, with the midway planned for the caern's very heart.

If the players' pack, who may be sent to help defuse the brewing powderkeg, approach the humans in the nearest town, they will be of no help. Work there is short, they say, and such a project will employ a good number of the town's unemployed, which form a majority of the population. Tourist dollars will flow in, bolstering the local economy. Besides, every year there are several animal attacks on people, besides the fact that no one can keep their pets out at night, so no one will miss the real wildlife, the more cynical, bitter or honest townsfolk report.

While the wildlife removal is reportedly to be humane — involving capturing and removal of animals to another area — the Red Talons will have none of it. To make matters more volatile, there are also plans for a small zoo within the park where some of the captures will be kept for the amusement of the guests. If the characters manage to see the real plans, however, they may also find that there are also plans for a "hunting ranch," where "sportsmen" can take potshots at the creatures in enclosures. This part of the park is kept quiet by the promoters, and is planned to be advertised only in outdoors magazines as a separate but nearby entity to the rest of the park.

The park will essentially be clean, safe, and highly artificial; even many of the trees will be replaced by fakes. The company making them will claim that no one will be able to tell the difference. Camping there will be "modernized," with all the latest and best facilities, without the dirt, bugs, and other inconveniences that usually go with "roughing it." The pack may be bothered by the fact that many humans are actually looking forward to this development, not being bothered at all by nature being replaced by good-looking fakes. Some of the townsfolk — and park promoters — remark that someday they will be able to control the climate within the park as well.

If the pack tries to monkeywrench the project, security measures will be increased — along with attendant Spider-spirits to make sure this Weaverish gem comes to completion. Even as plans are made and before first ground is broken, the rise in Pattern Spiders and other spirits will be quite obvious. The Talons will be seething with Rage, and may do something... rash. The company will be determined to go ahead no matter what, because their shareholders stand behind the project 100%, believing it will make anyone connected with it very, very rich. The company may in fact even be a subsidiary of Pentex, which may make matters even worse. Even if it is not, Pentex may have an interest in acquiring it — such a plan to remake Nature is well within that megacorporation's goals.



APPENDIX: NEW CHARMS

• **Absorb Fetish:** This Charm allows a spirit to absorb a fetish into its own mass, increasing its bulk and power. The spirit must make physical contact with the fetish, then make a resisted Gnosis roll versus the fetish's Rank. The cost is eight Power.

• **Assess Character:** The spirit may evaluate an individual's general strength of character by rolling Gnosis (difficulty 7); the number of successes determines the evaluation's accuracy. This charm costs two Power to activate.

• **Call for Aid:** The spirit may call for the aid of like spirits by making a Willpower roll. The difficulty depends on the likelihood of spirits being nearby (3 when others are in sight, 6 for common spirits in their habitat, 10 for rare spirits or those outside their habitat). The cost is five Power.

• **Craft Technology:** This Charm functions much like the Homid Gift: Reshape Object, save that only complex and/or intricate technological items are possible. The cost is three Power per turn.

• **Disable:** The spirit can temporarily paralyze its target by rolling Rage versus the target's Stamina + 3; the effect

lasts for one turn per success. The Charm costs one Power for each of the target's remaining Health Levels or points of Power; the spirit must spend a minimum of 10 Power to activate this Charm.

• **Divide and Conquer:** This Charm allows the spirit to split into multiple versions of itself, dividing up its Rage, Gnosis, Willpower and Power between each new "child." The cost is five Power.

• **Drain Gnosis:** The spirit is capable of draining its target's very Gnosis. The spirit must make an opposed Rage roll against its opponent's Gnosis; it drains a Gnosis point for each success by which it wins the contest. If an opponent has no Gnosis, she loses Health Levels instead. The damage is aggravated. The cost is seven Power.

• **Flee:** The spirit has an effective Willpower of 15 for use in escaping a foe; this includes any rolls that actively give the spirit a chance to avoid the presence of others through pacifistic means. The cost is five Power.

• **Group Fusion:** A group of three or more spirits with this Charm may surround a target and fuse together around her. Each one drains a Physical Attribute from the target

every turn, and they hold her with a Strength equal to their Willpower. Once the target has lost all her Attributes, she is calcified as per the Charm. The cost is one Power per turn.

- **Hide:** This Charm grants the spirit the ability to conceal itself; an opponent wishing to find the spirit must roll Intelligence + Wits versus the spirit's Willpower + 5. This Charm costs five Power.

- **Informational Link:** This Charm allows the spirit access to all the knowledge incorporated into the Pattern Web (which is just about everything). The spirit must roll Gnosis, difficulty 9, to receive the answer to any question. The Power cost is 10.

- **Insight:** The spirit can gain insight into any one hidden aspect of the target's self. The cost is five Power to learn a general tidbit, or 10 Power if the spirit searches for a specific piece of insight.

- **Iron Will:** The spirit can lock its mind upon certain goals from which it cannot stray. This Charm costs one point of Power per hour.

- **Nullify Dream:** The spirit can nullify any of its target's powers to affect a dream, whether Gifts, magick or even the wraithly Arcanos of Phantasm. The cost is three Power for each turn of nullification.

- **Quit Reality:** This bizarre Charm allows the spirit to "step sideways" from both physical and spiritual planes into an unknown third place, presumably a pocket Realm. The spirit may take one passenger along; for some reason, mages are the most frequent targets of this attack. The cost is 10 Power.

- **Scale:** This Charm allows a spirit not directly in the Weaver's service to climb on the Pattern Web without becoming stuck or calcified; similarly, its presence on the Pattern Web won't draw the attention of Net or Pattern Spiders. Obviously, true Weaver-spirits have no need of this Charm. The cost is two Power.

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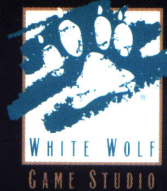
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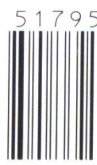
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